A YOUTHFUL HOMILETIC:

A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP

BETWEEN PREACHING AND ADOLESCENTS

By

Richard W. Voelz

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Approved:

Professor John S. McClure

Professor Ted A. Smith

Professor Dale P. Andrews

Professor Bonnie Miller-McLemore

Oh! That Good Things might be Produced
among our Young People, by our Discourses
on them!

- Cotton Mather
The Best Ornaments of Youth
Delivered on September 3, 1706

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was not what I had intended to write upon my entrance into the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt. In a seminar during my first year as a graduate student at Vanderbilt, I related some of my preaching experiences that centered on young people. Upon the conclusion of my presentation, then Professor Brad Braxton exclaimed to me, "That's the book we need!" I wrestled with what this might mean for me and for my nascent academic career. As I will show, preaching and youth have not proven to be the coziest partners in contemporary times, nor have those who have shown academic interest in both parties. Obviously there is a gap in the academy's literature writ-large concerning these topics. This was not yet the problem for me. I was still concerned with the reception of this material as a topic worthy of the academy's ongoing attention. Much to my delight, Professors John S. McClure, Ted A. Smith, Robin M. Jensen, Brad R. Braxton, and Bonnie Miller-McLemore have all displayed tremendous enthusiasm for this project, which has only served to confirm my "call" (if one can speak of such a thing in the academy – and I think one can) to think and write in this area. Others in the Academy of Homiletics have encouraged me as I have engaged them in conversation about my project and to them I am thankful.

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No writing occurs without a solid community that tests and encourages the writer. Primarily, the graduate students in the Homiletics and Liturgics cohort at Vanderbilt

thing. She has cheered me on until the end. As my wife she believes in my work and as an educator she believes in the capacity for young people to do great things. She has provided the assurance that there is wisdom in listening to young people. Thank you.

Finally, I must thank the young people, many of whom I will never meet, who find it compelling to take up Christian and homiletic identities. I am hopeful that my work will help us to listen to them in ways that build up the communities in which they live.

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Introduction

Every so often the news cycle displays a timely confluence of subject matter not normally given much attention by major news outlets. The last week of August 2010 happened to be one such news cycle. Within four days, three national news items emerged which explored the relationship between youth and adults, and on the relationship between youth, adults, and religion.[1]

The most significant of these reported on the findings of a new book about Christian faith among North American adolescents by Kenda Creasy Dean, Professor of Youth, Church, and Culture at Princeton Theological Seminary, and well-known scholar on youth and Christianity. In the article, John Blake summarizes Dean's study in this way: "Some critics told Dean that most teenagers can't talk coherently about any deep subject, but Dean says abundant research shows that's not true. 'They have a lot to say,' Dean says. 'They can talk about money, sex and their family relationships with nuance. Most people who work with teenagers know that they are not naturally inarticulate.'"[2] Dean and Blake are referring to the research of Christian Smith and Linda Lundquist Denton, funded by the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), in which Smith

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[1] John Blake, "Author: More Teens Becoming 'Fake' Christians" http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/08/27/almost.christian/index.html?hpt=T2 (accessed September 9, 2010); Bernd Debusmann, "Older People Enjoy Reading Negative Stories About Young" http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE67U43Z20100831 (accessed September 9, 2010); Betty Rollin, "Interfaith Divorce" http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/august-27-2010/interfaith-divorce/6874/. See also Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian : What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[2] Blake.

and Denton propose that young people in contemporary America are inarticulate about their faith, characterizing it as innocuous "moral therapeutic deism."[3] Dean acknowledges that the value judgments about young people's faith are deeply tied to the way that adults and communities of faith address faith with young people. Many young people are, according to Dean, becoming "fake Christians" as a direct result of the character of faith found among their parents and presented by their churches. But she also notes that it is an inappropriate generalization to label young people on the whole as inarticulate about their faith, or as possessing a faith that cannot stand up to the challenges of life. According to Dean's study, the situation of youth, adults, and religion in contemporary North American culture is much more complex than we recognize on the surface.

This kind of news items represents only a very small slice of the representations of youth found in academia, media and culture. While young people enjoy positive depictions in some representations, others present a more dubious view. There is a palpable ambivalence concerning young people. Smith and Lundquist Denton's summary of their research into the religious lives of teenagers reveals this kind of ambivalence:

> American teenagers can embody adults' highest hopes and most gripping fears. They represent a radiant energy that opens doors to the future for families, communities, and society. But they also evoke deep adult anxieties about teen rebellion, trouble, and broken and compromised lives. Parents, teachers, and youth workers behold their teenagers with pride, hope, and enjoyment, but also often worry, distress, and frustration….So, many adults worry deeply that, whatever good there is, something may also be profoundly wrong about the lives of American teenagers.[4]

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[3] Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching : The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[4] Smith and Denton, 3.

At the heart of their last sentence is a deeply seated fear. It is a fear that adults are doing

something wrong, that secular culture is a monstrous force bound to consume the

goodness of young people, or that that perceived goodness is merely a ruse. In the

present climate it is difficult to gain an understanding of young people and easy to let

media representations rule the day.

With the overwhelming presence of ambivalent media representations and

confusion about young people, how are we to understand, interact, and advocate for them

in a responsible way, especially in the arena of religious and theological studies? Bonnie

Miller-McLemore rightly says,

> Taking children seriously as a theological subject requires a movement across the
> conventionally separate disciplines in the study of religion. It requires a circular
> hermeneutical movement – from an exploration of dilemmas, to an investigation
> of religious resources, back to renewed practice. This movement includes
> moments of serious social scientific, historical, biblical, and constructive religious
> and theological exploration as part of a larger practical theological effort in the
> public arena. In short, the best way to study moral and religious dilemmas of
> children and child rearing is from the perspective of practical theology
> fundamentally refined.[5]

The present project seeks to work within the scope of that mandate. It does not take long

to recognize that the larger cultural discourse surrounding young people most often does

little justice to them, painting them with broad and antagonistic strokes, and both with

increasing frequency. Religious and theological studies possess the critical tools to

explore those religious dilemmas concerning children in ways that can make an impact

on wider arenas of discourse.

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[5] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Children and Religion in the Public Square: 'Too Dangerous and Too Safe,
Too Difficult and Too Silly,'" in Mary Elizabeth Moore and Almeda Wright, eds., *Children, Youth, and
Spirituality in a Troubling World* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2008), 41.

Miller-McLemore writes about a burgeoning movement in religious and theological studies to correct those discourses. But in all of these discussions on adolescents and religion, the voices of those who work in preaching and homiletics are silent. What can account for this? Adolescents act as listeners and preachers each week in Christian congregations across North America. Yet adolescents are conspicuously absent as major subjects of homiletic reflection. Unfortunately, this is an area of great neglect, a dilemma that requires investigation and renewed practice. This dissertation is situated precisely in that gap, and strives to be an example of the kind of practical theological study Miller-McLemore describes, in the hopes of enriching the larger public arena.

Some of the resources for this practical theological work are already in place, as we will see. Homiletics as an academic discipline has made a concerted effort over the past generation to address and be addressed by underrepresented groups. No longer is the adult white, middle class male the sole voice in preaching and developing homiletic theory. Instead, homiletics has followed a similar, if delayed, trajectory in American theology that has been informed by African-American liberation theology movements, feminist and womanist theologies, Latin American liberation theologies, Asian and Asian-American theologies, multiculturalism and pluralism, disability studies, post-colonialism, and other intellectual movements and perspectives that celebrate the contributions that diverse voices make to preaching. But to date there is nothing about adolescents.

As I will show, within the broad field of practical theology, I believe homiletics has been content to allow the fields of religious education and professionalized youth

ministry to speak about religion and young people in contemporary times. I also believe that homileticians typically concede to stereotypes that young people do not listen to sermons or are deficient listeners (or similarly deficient and trivial speakers), and thus do not necessitate homiletic reflection.   This dissertation seeks to reverse both of those trends by gaining a specifically homiletic view of adolescents as well as an adolescent view of homiletics.

To do so, we must bring into focus three important methodological concepts that will help to define what we are doing. First, talking about adolescents in an area where they are neglected is not simply adding another "other" to a discussion currently enjoying discussions about the "other." That is to say, we are not just pitting "youth" or "adolescent" theories and practices of preaching against "adult" theories and practices of preaching. Operating in this manner would create a center-margin dynamic that does not give an accurate picture, or helpful resolution of the situation.[6] The social grouping of "youth" presents a different kind of "otherness" – an identity marker that is temporary for individuals, rather than permanent. As such, I do not seek to add another "other" to homiletic discourse, or engage in a discourse of competing otherness (who is the most "other" to preaching?). Rather, this dissertation suggests that the notion of adolescents as entirely other to preaching can avoided through careful attention to the various ways that adolescents have engaged preaching in the North American context.

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[6] Nancy Fraser describes this scenario as a "subaltern counterpublic" formed in contradistinction to a "dominant public" that controls the public sphere, with the intention of "formulat[ing] oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs." See Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus : Critical Reflections on The "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routlege, 1997), 80-85. In the case of homiletics, there is no recognizable counterpublic consisting of younger preachers engaged in the work of creating a counter-discourse. We will, however, seek to construct a kind of non-adversarial/non-oppositional kind of counterpublic in chapter six. In this sense, there is no center-margin tension, nor should we seek to create one where it does not exist. See Fraser, 80-85.

Second, without the abilities to speak and write in academic discourse, we are necessarily engaging in a different type of writing about the experiences of those who are marginalized. I believe the type of homiletic work I am doing engages in what is variously known as "advocacy theology." David Jensen defines advocacy theology in his writing on children when he says, "an advocacy theology seeks to speak with those whose voices are often not heard. Children's voices often drown in the cacophony of commercialization and violence that characterize the (post)modern world. Attempting to hear them is fraught with peril: often we think we hear their voices when we really are hearing only ourselves and our intentions for children."[7] In this project, I am making theologically-informed arguments for those who are not able to advocate on their own behalf within the confines of academic theology, being careful not to mistake my own voice for the voices of the young people to whom we will listen.

This leads to the third, and perhaps most important methodological commitment. We must decide how we are going to talk about the period of life known as "adolescence" and the group we call "adolescents." As discussed earlier, conversations about the traits associated with those known as "adolescents," "youth," "young people," and/or "teenagers" are defined by a number of different viewpoints including, but not limited to: commercial marketing, media depictions and popular culture, developmental psychology models, educational structures, and combinations of all these.[8]

One way of framing the popular definitions that pervade American culture is through what I will call "ontological adolescence." This is a concept that is borrowed

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[7] David Hadley Jensen, *Graced Vulnerability : A Theology of Childhood* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005), xiii.

[8] I will use the terms *adolescent*, *adolescence*, *youth*, and *young people* interchangeably. I do not use the word *teenage* or *teenager* because of the negative cultural images attached to these terms.

and re-shaped from Victor Anderson, who presents "ontological blackness" as a way of describing how race for African Americans is constructed and re-constructed into a deterministic function of identity formation, apart from the varieties of African American experience.[9] Anderson defines his term as "a covering term that connotes categorical, essentialist, and representational languages depicting black life and experience" and his work "examines the ways that racial discourse operates rhetorically in African American cultural and religious thought. The disclosure of the ways that race is reified – i.e., treated as if it objectively exists independent of historically contingent factors and subjective intentions – in the writings of historical and contemporary African American cultural and religious thinkers."[10] Anderson conceives of racial discourse in contemporary America as a function of rhetoric with implications not only for discourse, but also for cultural and economic systems and social structures, as they relate to (and shape) the experiences of African Americans.

I will argue that much the same is true of how adolescents are defined in the contemporary cultural imaginary, such that we can borrow Anderson's terminology. For the present situation, I name the problem "ontological adolescence," which, like Anderson's term, is a term that connotes categorical, essentialist, and representational languages depicting the lives and experiences of young people in America. Depictions of

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[9] Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness : An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 11.

[10] Anderson, 11. There are two main differences, however, in the ways that I appropriate Anderson through ontological adolescence. First, although the concept is reified in language and culture, ontological adolescence does not take on the same type of binary polarities that cannot be transcended for African Americans (14). Rather, these polarities (i.e. – youth/adult) are not only open to transcendence, but that transcendence is encouraged in many ways. Second, ontological adolescence differs from Anderson's concept in that it does not make use of any "cult of heroic genius" whereby a devotion to the essentialized categories of youth as a group is appropriated as a celebrated point of reference for youth identity (13-14).

young people have hardened into stereotypes that disregard historical factors and

contemporary differences. Cultural and educational theorist Henry Giroux observes that

> The dominant media now habitually reinforce the public perception of young
> people as variously lazy, stupid, self-indulgent, volatile, dangerous, and
> manipulative…The American public is relentlessly treated to stories about how
> American children don't have a grasp of basic modes of history, language, and
> mathematics, and yet there is a deafening silence in most of the reports about how
> conservative policies have systematically disinvested in public schools, turning
> them largely into dull testing centers for middle-class students and warehousing
> units and surveillance centers for working-class and poor youth of color.[11]

Giroux implicates not only media, but the marketplace in how it "limit[s] the roles

available for youth to those of consumer, object, or billboard to sell sexuality, beauty

products, music, athletic gear, clothes, and a host of other products."[12] As a result,

Giroux says that "while youth have been increasingly removed from the register of public

concern, civic commitment, and ethical responsibility – viewed as a bad social

investment – they linger in the public imagination as dim-witted, if not dangerous,

ingrates, unworthy of compassion and so justifiably relegated to the civic rubbish pile."[13]

Giroux's language here exhibits rhetorical flourish, but presents the "problem" of youth

in stark relief. Contemporary representations of youth reify their roles as

inconsequential, at best, and disposable at worst. This project seeks to account for the

ways that discourse surrounding preaching, in particular, has participated in the

promotion of ontological adolescence, limiting young people's roles as they relate to

preaching. In response I want to invite homiletic thinking, as part of the larger public

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[11] Henry A. Giroux, *Youth in a Suspect Society : Democracy or Disposability?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 14.

[12] Giroux, 14.

[13] Giroux, 16.

arena of thought, to new imaginations of young people through listening and through renewing theories and practices of preaching for, to, and with youth.

Scope

To my knowledge, this is the only doctoral dissertation on preaching and adolescents in North America. I say this in order to point out, at the outset, that I will not address every question or aspect of the relationship between preaching and youth. As a corollary, it is important to point out what this dissertation is not doing. I am not writing a set of prescriptions or a how-to manual for preaching to youth in either intergenerational or youth-only settings. Those books exist and I believe that their benefit is limited.[14] I do believe, however, that communal best-practices might arise from the kind of communicative practices I describe in chapters four through six. I do not, however, seek in any way to delimit those kinds of practices here.

I am also not using developmental psychology as a way to inform the relationship between preaching and adolescents. While developmental psychological models might help frame some general expectations of adolescents (cognitive, emotional, physical), using those models to prescribe universal homiletic practices does not necessarily promote the type of homiletic engagement I will advocate. By avoiding these approaches, I also hope to avoid at least one problem that sometimes accompanies developmental models: the problem of positioning the adult as the all-knowing observer and manager of adolescents.[15]

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[14] Some of these will be examined in chapter three. I have written elsewhere about those works and make suggestions for the practice of preaching in youth-only settings. See Richard W. Voelz, "Oh Be Careful Little Eyes What You See: Preaching to Youth and Homiletical Analysis, A Case Study," in *Practical Matters* 2 (2009), http://practicalmattersjournal.org/issue/2/practicing-matters/oh-be-careful-little-eyes-what-you-see (accessed September 22, 2010).

I do hope to accomplish a few goals as a result of this project. First, and most importantly, I hope to set a theologically and ethically grounded agenda for faith and homiletic communities. Rather than uncritically incorporating the representations and relationships indicative of ontological adolescence into the homiletic practices of a community, I hope that thorough examination of history, culture, and discourse, articulation of a theologically appropriate homiletic, and critical listening to youth sermons will lead toward new understandings of youth in academic homiletics as well as communities of faith. As a byproduct, I believe that this project has implications for practical theology beyond the scope of homiletics. That is to say, in describing a "disposition"[16] for adolescent-adult homiletic relationships, I hope to envision the kind of conditions that can permeate other adult-adolescent relationships. In doing so, rehabilitated representations and renewed relationships become a theologically-informed basis for public life beyond the church and academy.

Overview

In order to reach these goals, we will first seek to establish a specifically *homiletic* history of adolescence in North America in chapter two. As a way of narrating this history, I will summarize the substantial social history of American adolescents as listeners and preachers. A historical survey of the relationship between preaching and young people in North America will show that adolescents have not always displayed ossified social characteristics and that their relationship to preaching has not always been that of "other," as contemporary voices position them. Instead, the contemporary

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[15] In assuming a cautious stance about the rigid use of developmental models, I take some cues from "critical youth studies" and "critical psychology" in regard to developmental psychology. I will explore this further in chapter four.

[16] Use of this term is detailed in chapter four.

relationship between preaching and adolescents is one that has developed and changed (in both positive and negative ways) over time due to shifts in social and religious life in North America, and due to changes in the roles of constituent disciplines within practical theology. Constructing this history also begins a preliminary practice of listening to adolescents, which I will advocate as a necessary condition of a renewed relationship between preaching and young people later in the project.

Chapter three will trace how the trajectory of the relationship of preaching and adolescence exhibited in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century solidifies in contemporary literature. In this period homiletics grows silent regarding young people, effectively ceding its voice to religious education. In contemporary mainline denominational, university-based homiletic theory, I will identify an overwhelming silence toward adolescents, but also places where ontological adolescence creeps in as a way of describing adolescents as deficient listeners. In contemporary youth ministry literature that discusses preaching we will see how adolescents are portrayed as an undifferentiated audience with idiosyncratic needs/tendencies to which preaching practices should cater. Finally, I will explore how the contemporary literature of critical youth studies, childhood studies in religion, and religious education of youth helpfully frames adolescents and their religiosity, but ignores homiletic theory and practice. Each of these types of discourse lack the ability to fund homiletic theory and practice that adequately responds to adolescents, so I will locate the need for a homiletic discourse that honors the rich texture of adolescents' lives and is able to renew the relationship between preaching and adolescents.

Chapter four will present a theological and ethical corrective to the problem I describe in chapter three. If the discourses of ontological adolescence, or silence, are the prevailing approaches to young people, then we must envision new ways for adults to imagine youth, homiletics, and the relationship between the two. As a way to reinvigorate this imaginary, I will advocate new communicative practices among homiletic communities fueled by a normative disposition characterized by liberation and formation. In order to flesh out what I mean by liberation and formation, I describe these twin poles in terms of Christian theological ethics. This disposition provides a foundation for listening and speaking to one another that resists representations characteristic of ontological adolescence and opens up a new kind of public, homiletic sphere of interaction. In this new homiletic space, young people's homiletic voices can speak back to existing homiletic theories and practices, and speak back to Christian theology and practice, even as adults maintain an interest in their formation.

Guided by liberation and formation, homiletic communities are compelled to engage in in-depth, critical, and reflective listening to young people as not simply as listeners to, but also as *producers of* preaching. In order to do so, chapter five will present a method for the kind of listening mandated in chapter four by incorporating the tools of rhetorical analysis. Since false representations are at the heart of both silence and ontological adolescence, we will formulate a constructive method that begins with listening to adolescents' sermons, then use methods of rhetorical criticism that are capable of interpreting the ways that adolescents construct two kinds of communicative identities: (1) homiletic identity and (2) Christian identity. In other words, we will seek to interpret the ways that young people self-identify as those who preach and as those

who are Christians. A final component of the rhetorical analysis posits a way for communities to evaluate these sermons in the modes of liberation and formation through the normative lens of their own theological and homiletical commitments. In this chapter, I hope to present a method that can be reproduced in communities committed to renewing homiletic relationships with young people.

Chapter six will instantiate the method developed in chapter five. In this chapter we will listen to thirteen instances of adolescents' preaching and place them within the interpretive and evaluative schemes proposed in chapter four, filtered through my own homiletic and theological commitments. A theologically-informed ethic of listening forms one of the main commitments of this project, so their sermons are provided in full, in both transcribed form as well as video format as a multimedia component.

My denomination, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), gives the following as a statement of identity: "We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us."[17] Beyond revising preaching theories and practices, it is my hope that this dissertation helps us engage in a type of listening practice that moves communities of faith, young and old, away from fragmentation and toward wholeness – the kind of wholeness that we Disciples believe is characterized most clearly in our experiences at the Lord's Table. For Disciples, this is a table that acknowledges the agency of all (indeed, in the Disciples' tradition presiding at the table is not restricted to ordained clergy), while recognizing that plurality may open us all up to new insights and practices. As we engage young people through critical and reflective listening here, we

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[17] "About the Disciples", http://www.disciples.org/AboutTheDisciples/tabid/67/Default.aspx (accessed August 31, 2010 2010).

open ourselves to the insights that they might bring regarding preaching and Christian

faith, even as we pay close attention to the formative needs that young people present.

Chapter II

Beautiful and Dangerous: Adolescents and Preaching in Historical Perspective

The relationship between preaching and adolescents did not form in a vacuum determined by timeless concepts about the religious, social, and psychological natures of youth. Instead, adolescents have had as variegated a relationship with preaching as any other group. Not simply the bored teenagers that often characterize the contemporary imaginary, young people have been regularly engaged with preaching as capable subjects. They have also consistently undertaken significant homiletic activity of their own. In order to provide a context for how the contemporary dispositions toward adolescents developed, this chapter will summarize the substantial social history of American adolescents as listeners and preachers.

Assuming that young people's social roles are historically contingent (a chief commitment of critical youth studies, highlighted in chapter three), a homiletically-centered historical survey of adolescence in America will show that adolescents have not always held the same social traits or religious roles. Neither has their relationship to preaching always been that of "other," as some contemporary voices assert them to be. While the discourse about groups that are marginal to preaching often reinforces a margin/center dynamic, examining the multi-faceted roles adolescents have played through the history of preaching in America can help us avoid the mistake of permanently inscribing adolescents as a marginal group in relation to preaching. This is important in

order to avoid characterizing adolescents' relationship with preaching as trivial or as merely sporadic and momentary.

The historical narrative of adolescents and preaching presented in this chapter will demonstrate that the depiction of adolescents as an undifferentiated group that relates passively to preaching in contemporary literature is a relatively recent development. Even as early American preachers variously characterized young people with a theological anthropology of simultaneous danger and beauty, young people did not hold a passive relationship with preaching. The characterization of the passive youth has arrived as part of a historical development. This development shows a diminished role for preaching in American adolescents' religious lives along with an increase in the role of religious education as the primary realm for youth engagement in the church.

I envision two roles for this historical narrative. First, this kind of historical narrative breaks open contemporary assumptions about adolescents and preaching and exposes the stratification of the power to speak in contemporary homiletics along the lines of age. Second, this narrative initiates a preliminary practice of listening to adolescents about preaching and subsequently pushes toward transformed practices of listening and speaking for, to, and with adolescents.

Preaching and Young People in Eighteenth Century America

In late 17th century and throughout 18th century New England, sermons to young people abounded. As congregations gathered regularly to hear preaching and young people's societies met, ministers like Cotton Mather made youth part of the focus of their preaching with great resolve. Mather declared in 1704, "I am sure, it is a Time for them

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that have any value for Souls, and especially for them whose peculiar work it is, to spread

the Nets of Salvation for Souls and to save them out of the Nets which the Enemy of

Souls is every where laying for them, to labour with Enquisite Contrivance and Fervency,

that our Children may from This Time, have Our God for Theirs."[1] This charge

undergirds the thrust of preaching to young people of Puritan New England which

Mather undoubtedly learned from his father and which Mather would spread to his clergy

colleagues.[2]

The sermon to young people was a crucial component of both regular and

occasional preaching. Cotton Mather indicated that young people were a particular

portion of preachers' audiences when he said,

> When the Word of God is Opened and Applied in the Sermons of His Ministers;
> young Persons make a part of our Auditory. Young Persons are to take their
> Portion in all the Sermons of the Evangelical Ministry, wherein Wisdom says
> unto them, 'Unto you, O Men, I Call, and my Voice is to the Sons of Men. Yea,
> the Prudent and Faithful Stewards in the House of God, will sometimes Carve out
> a Special Portion for the Young Persons in their Auditory.[3]

As a fundamental form of communication in Puritan New England, Harry Stout rightly

points out that "the sermon would become as important for social meaning as for spiritual

enlightenment. It not only interpreted God's plan of redemption and told the people how

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[1] Cotton Mather, *Youth under a Good Conduct: A Short Essay to Render Young People Happy, by Engaging Them in the Wayes of Early & Serious Religion : Made, at Boston-Lecture, 2.D. I.M. 1704. : [One Line of Quotation in Latin]*, 44 p. ; (12mo) vols. (Boston, in N.E.: Printed and sold by Timothy Green, at the north-end of the town, 1704), 4.

[2] Without question, Puritan preaching is not the only preaching available in this era, nor is the Puritan experience in New England representative of all early American experience. In describing Puritan New England, however, we are exposed to a significant thread of religious life in early America, albeit one that is partial and limited.

[3] Cotton Mather, *The Young Man Spoken to Another Essay, to Recommend & Inculcate the Maxims of Early Religion, Unto Young Persons; and Especially the Religion of the Closet. In a Sermon Preached Unto Them on a Special Occasion*, [4], 43, [1] p. ; 15 cm. (12mo) vols. (Boston,: Printed by T. Green, for Samuel Gerrish, at the Sign of the Buck in Marlborough Street, over against the South-Meeting-House, 1712), 10.

they must live as a church but also defined and legitimated the meaning of their lives as citizen and magistrate, superior and inferior, soldier, parent, child, and laborer. Sermons were authority incarnate."[4]

The dual roles of "social meaning" and "spiritual enlightenment" (theology) will be examined below. A homiletically-centered history of adolescence in this period shows how preaching helped define the social category of youth. It will also show how youth was defined as a theological category worthy of special treatment. Of course the social and theological are intricately intertwined in Puritan preaching, as Stout observes, but the two categories are distinct enough to evaluate separately.

Young people, however, were not simply constructed through sermonic discourse in this period. Of particular significance are the various ways that young people exercised homiletic agency. Although young people were not preaching and publishing sermons in Colonial America, there are some subtle and not-so-subtle ways that young Americans' voices shaped preaching in this period.   Attention to these instances will begin the work of listening to youth about preaching.

Young People as a Social Category in Eighteenth Century Preaching

A persistent question when studying young people through different historical periods is "who are/when is youth?" In colonial preaching there seems to be no standardized and published range as such. Instead, general categories sufficed into which a flexible range of ages fit. Samuel Moodey, for example, distinguished groups of ages in 1707: "And as this Judgment shall be Universal with respect to Persons, viz. Youth as

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[4] Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul : Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 23.

well as Children and Infants below them, and Middle, with Old Age above them; so shall it be Universal with respect to the Works done in the Body, Eccl. 12.14."[5] Cotton Mather two years later distinguished between "young men," "old men," and "children" as a result of the conflation of the categories contained in two scripture texts: 1 John 2.14 (young men) and Psalm 148.12 (old men and children).[6] Again in 1714 Mather preached on the occasion of the death of two individuals in Boston, "a youth in the *Nineteenth* year of his Age" and "a *Child*, hardly more than seven years of Age."[7] Sermons preached upon the deaths of the young are especially helpful in this regard. Benjamin Colman preached upon the death of Elizabeth Wainwright, whom he called a child, "having just compleated the Fourteenth Year of Her Age."[8] And likewise, Thomas Prince preached and dedicated the published sermon to "the youth of the town of Boston" upon the deaths

[5] Samuel Moodey, *The Vain Youth Summoned to Appear at Christ's Bar. Or, an Essay to Block up the Sinful Wayes of Young People, by Most Solemn Considerations, Relating to That Judgment Unto Which They Are Hastning in a Lecture-Sermon (June 25. 1701) Preached at York, in the Province of Main [Sic]*, 64 p. ; (12mo) vols. (Boston in N.E.: Printed and sold by Timothy Green, at the north end of the town, 1707), 7.

[6] Cotton Mather, *Youth in Its Brightest Glory an Essay, Directing Them That Are Young in Age, to Become Strong in Grace, by the Word of God Abiding in Them. : Published by a Religious Society of Young Men, That Were the Hearers of It. : [Three Lines in Latin from Virgil]*, 36 p. ; 14 cm. (12mo) vols. (Boston,: Printed & sold by T. Green, 1709), 3-5.

[7] Cotton Mather, *Vita Brevis an Essay, Upon Withering Flowers. Or, Mankind Considered, as First Flourishing, and Then Withering. In a Sermon, Preached on, the Joyful Death of a Valuable Youth; and the Awful Death of a Desirable Child, in the North Part of Boston*, [2], 36 p. ; (18mo) vols. (Boston,: Printed by John Allen, for Nicholas Boone, at the Sign of the Bible in Cornhill., 1714), 29-30, 33-34.

[8] Benjamin Colman, *A Devout Contemplation on the Meaning of Divine Providence, in the Early Death of Pious and Lovely Children Preached Upon the Sudden and Lamented Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Wainwright. Who Departed This Life, April the 8th. 1714. Having Just Compleated the Fourteenth Year of Her Age*, [2], vi, 28 p. ; (8vo) vols. (Boston,: Printed by John Allen, for Joanna Perry, at her shop on the north-side of the Town-House., 1714).

of three young men aged 22, 32, and 20.[9] These specific age citations continue

throughout the 18th century, mainly occasioned by the untimely deaths of young people.[10]

Jonathan Edwards, one of Prince's colleagues, "held special religious meetings

for 'children' who were 'under the age of sixteen' as well as for 'young people' between

the ages of sixteen and twenty-six.'"[11] Jonathan Edwards gave a course of occasional

sermons spanning from 1740-1741 that divided the ages by children (ages one to

fourteen), young people (ages fifteen to twenty-five), middle-aged (ages twenty-six to

fifty), and elderly (ages fifty and beyond).[12]

Besides Edwards, these preachers do not seem to be heavily invested in making

specific age and age bracket groupings in their sermons.[13] The specificity of

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[9] Thomas Prince and Mather Byles, *Morning Health No Security against Sudden Arrest of Death before Night a Sermon Occasioned by the Very Sudden Death of Two Young Gentlemen in Boston, on Saturday January 14th, 1726,7. : Dedicated to the Youth of the Town*, The second edition. [Three lines from James] ed., [6], 37, [3] p. ; (12mo) vols. (Boston: Printed for D. Henchman, and sold at his shop in Cornhill., 1727), A3.

[10] See Joseph Emerson, *Early Piety Encouraged a Discourse Occasion'd by the Joyful and Triumphant Death of a Young Woman of Malden, Who Died of the Throat-Distemper, Sept. 6. 1738. Aetat. 21. : With a Dedication to the Children and Youth of Said Town*, [2], viii, 30, [2] p. ; 15 cm. (8vo) vols. (Boston: Printed by J. Draper, for H. Foster, in Cornhill.,, 1738); Israel Holly and Isaac Watts, *Youth Liable to Sudden Death; Excited Seriously to Consider Thereof, and Speedily to Prepare Therefore the Substance of a Discourse, Delivered on the Day of the Funeral of Three Young Men, Who Were Killed by Lightning, at Suffield, May 20, 1766*, The fifth edition. ed., 18 p. ; 20 cm. (8vo) vols. (Hartford: Printed by Thomas Green., 1767); John Stanford and Charles I. S. Hazzard, *The Goodness of God in the Conversion of Youth a Sermon on the Death of Charles I.S. Hazzard, Son of the Late Alderman Hazzard, Who Died of the Late Epidemic, Aged 18 Years. : In Which Are Introduced, an Account of His Very Early Enjoyment of the Grace of God, and the Exercise of His Mind to the Period of His Death. Transcribed from the Diary Written with His Own Hand*, 60 p. ; 19 cm. (12mo) vols. (New-York: Printed by T. & J. Swords, no. 99 Pearl-Street., 1799); Josiah Stearns and Simon Peirce, *A Sermon, Preached at Epping, in New-Hampshire. On Lord's-Day, September 19, 1779*, 40 p. ; 19 cm. (4to) vols. ([Exeter] State of New-Hampshire: Printed, and sold, [by Zechariah Fowle?] at the printing-office, in Exeter., 1780).

[11] Catherine A. Brekus, "Children of Wrath, Children of Grace: Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan Culture of Child Rearing," Marcia J. Bunge, ed. *The Child in Christian Thought*, Religion, Marriage, and Family Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 302.

[12] Harry S. Stout, Nathan O. Hatch, and Kyle P. Farley, eds., *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 156.

[13] For other ways that early American religious leaders made age distinctions through religious practices and otherwise, see Ross W. Beales, Jr., "In Search of the Historical Child: Miniature Adulthood and Youth

contemporary age brackets due in large part to educational and economic constraints do not apply to this time, nor should they be expected to. It is important, however, to see that preaching helps broadly define the numerical ages of concern. Numerical ages do not hold as much social significance as do other major events that move individuals through Colonial American life.

Colonial preachers identify three major, interrelated factors in the life course that seem to distinguish youth from the middle-aged, full-fledged members of the community. First among these is that youth are still under the strong leadership of their parents. Almost every sermon to young people from this time contains within it an instruction for young people to obey their parents. Some also contain specific instructions to parents about their duties to young people as members of the faith community.

A second factor is that of work. Preaching to a society of young men, Benjamin Colman urged that as a part of early piety,

> in the beginning of your Youth you are put to Trades; what is there to be done for you in these early Years but to instruct you? What business have you to do but to learn?...NOW O Young People is your chusing time, and commonly your fixing time; and as you fix not it is like to last. Now you commonly chuse your Trade; betake your selves to your business for life, show what you incline to, and how you intend to be imploy'd all your days. Now you chuse your Master and your Education or Occupation.[14]

Young men, even of their twenties and early thirties were still on the path to choosing their occupation. Making a living by work, either by trade, inheritance of family farms, or business often led young people out of the family home. In regards to parents and

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in Colonial New England," Harvey J. Graff, ed. *Growing up in America : Historical Experiences* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 94-109.

[14] Benjamin Colman, *Early Piety Again Inculcated from Those Famous Words of Solomon, Eccles. Xii. 1. Remember Now Thy Creator in the Days of Thy Youth in a Sermon Preached to a Society of Young Men, in Boston, July 10. 1720*, [2], 36 p. vols. (Boston: Printed by S. Kneeland, for D. Henchman, and J. Edwards, and sold at their shops., 1720), 32-33.

work, Harvey Graff says that what is at stake for independence, and thus leaving youth, is

"competence," by which he means

> for [young people] to achieve independence, their families had to protect and transmit, or the individuals had to obtain (alone or with aid), an adequate degree of competence. In times of sweeping transformation, means of protecting and transmitting as well as obtaining the skills and abilities that constituted competence shifted too. Where one started with respect to geography, wealth, family, gender, and age mattered a great deal.[15]

Certainly not everyone would be able to secure the ideal or ideal factors of "competence"

which signified independence and thus would muddy an otherwise clear transition into

adulthood.[16] Young women in particular were not addressed by many of the male-

specific depictions of youth.

Some sermons during this period, however, are more inclusive by pointing to

another social indicator of youth: the precursor to marriage and child-bearing. Again,

Benjamin Colman observed

> there are other and Superiour Relations which the Young Person hopes in a few Years to come into, and this will make him a blessing to his own Family when he comes to have one; a blessing to his Consort if he marries, a blessing to his Children if God give him any, a blessing to his Servants when he has them under him. And so the Young Woman becomes a blessing in the house of her Husband, a blessing to her Children and Servants, if from her early days she be truly Religious…And now you dispose of your self in Marriage ordinarily, place your Affections, give away your hearts, look out for some Companion of life, whose to be as long as you live. And is this indeed the work of your Youth?[17]

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[15] Harvey J. Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 27-28.

[16] This is one of the strengths of Graff's history. He highlights the many paths on the journey from youth to adulthood in American history that are complicated by race, gender, economic status, and geography. As a result, Graff presents a history that refrains from simplistic, overly stratified renderings of the journey.

[17] Colman, *Early Piety Again Inculcated from Those Famous Words of Solomon, Eccles. Xii. 1. Remember Now Thy Creator in the Days of Thy Youth in a Sermon Preached to a Society of Young Men, in Boston, July 10. 1720*, 31, 33.

Youth are either on the cusp of life with marriage and children or have recently arrived at it. Colman's sermon, and others like it, served to reinforce the social conventions surrounding the period of youth from the position that Stout calls "authority incarnate."[18]

In summary, the ages that constituted childhood and youth in Colonial America varied, but sermons help to fix the range of ages included in those categories. Even more, sermons from this period assign the social conventions of youth mainly around the relation to parents, work, and marriage/family. These points of contact in sermons of this time aid social historians as they try to understand the development of adolescence in America. While substantive, these social categories do not help interpret childhood and youth as fully *theological* categories.

Young People as a Theological Category in Eighteenth Century Preaching

A theological analysis of sermons from this period shows the category of youth to be loaded with significance. To be sure, sermons to young people in this era do not display great variety. Yet students of college age found them worthy of imitation and recitation. According to Stout, "on Sundays students [of Harvard] attended local churches, particularly the church at Cambridge, where they heard the best preaching in the land, which they later recited for practice. Surviving student notebooks contain complete collections of sermon notes that no doubt were invaluable when the young ministers came to fashion their own sermons."[19] The sermons are typical in form: opening of the text, statement of doctrine(s), proofs, and uses/enlargement.[20] In sermons

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[18] Stout, *The New England Soul : Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 23.

[19] Stout, *The New England Soul : Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 90.

preached to young people, the strong theological logic undergirding the Puritan style of preaching did not seem to be an obstacle for communicating with young people.[21]

Preachers do occasionally show concern for pulpit language addressed to young people. Samuel Macclintock prefaced his sermon on early piety by saying,

> I address myself to you in particular, and shall endeavour to adapt my discourse to your age capacity and circumstances, though I hope it will not be unprofitable to those of riper years…If I should seem to use plainness of speech, you will receive it not as the language of an enemy, but the faithful admonition of a friend, who would speak under a sense that he must give an account, and who feels himself interested in your welfare, and sincerely desirous that you may be happy both in time and eternity.[22]

Macclintock's goal was that of plain speech, in the sense that it was frank and warranted by the topic at hand. Similarly, Peres Fobes concludes the opening of his text by saying "guided by this plain text, I mean to address you, my young friends, in the plainest of manner."[23] These instances do not point to any specifics of what an age-appropriate type of pulpit language entails and the text of the sermons do not pare down or simplify the language. There is no indication as to what exactly Macclintock or Fobes do to "adapt" their sermons according to the audience other than thematically targeting young people as a specific audience.

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[20] O. C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 474.

[21] The contemporary concern for adapting sermon form to younger hearers, which will be assessed in chapter three, is not present.

[22] Samuel Macclintock, *The Advantages of Early Piety a Sermon Preach'd at Greenland, in New-Hampshire, and Now Published at the Desire of a Number of Young People, to Whom It Is Inscribed, with Sincere Wishes, That It May Be Profitable for Their Instruction*, 31, [1] p. ; 22 cm. (8vo) vols. (Portsmouth, New-Hampshire,: Printed by Daniel and Robert Fowle., 1770), 5.

[23] Peres Fobes, *A Sermon, Addressed to Youth the Substance of Which Was Delivered at Wrentham, Mass., August 4, 1793, on Lord's Day, P.M*, 20 p. vols. (Hanover, H.N.: Re-printed by Moses David, for I. Newton, Norwich, Vt., 1808), 4. Fobes seeks to reproduce the force of the text, or what J.L. Austin calls an illocutionary act. See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, William James Lectures ; (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). This is later the goal of preaching in Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989).

As a theological category, "youth" and "young people" are managed in preaching by (1) the major texts used and (2) the uses of those texts turned toward major themes, biblically-derived doctrines, and methods of biblical interpretation. Ministers in Colonial New England possessed a detailed and almost concordance-like knowledge of the Bible. From this encyclopedic knowledge, combined with the sermons they likely heard and imitated, they held a vast reservoir for preaching to young people. Scripture texts that contained the words "youth," "young," or that publicized the youthful ages of biblical characters were fair game for preaching. Even more, they were taken with the utmost seriousness as vocative texts to the young people of their day.

In the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament and the Psalms, preachers found the foundational texts for their sermons to young people. There are a few reasons for this, chief among them being the texts' direct address to young people or the nature of being young. As a book addressed to readers in all times and places, the Bible's admonitions to young people served as God's address to young people. The Wisdom literature also contains exhortations for wise living as well as instruction in how to conduct oneself. These texts fit perfectly for young people whose tasks were primarily taking up instruction in order to be a fitting generation to follow their parents and grandparents in the early stages of nation-building. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Psalms were also believed to be written by those whose youthful periods were instructive for young people: Solomon and David. To follow after the admirable parts of these writers' lives would lead young people to the type of piety to which their ministers exhorted them.

Numerous sermons use the first part of Ecclesiastes 12.1: "Remember your creator in the days of your youth" or Ecclesiastes 11.9: "Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment."[24] Even when these texts are not featured as the text to be opened, they appear liberally as texts of support. These texts, as will be seen below, served as the impetus to persuade young people toward early piety and a healthy fear of God's judgment.

From the Psalms, the beginning phrase of Psalm 25.7 served as a point of departure for talking about sin as it related to young people: "Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions." This cry from the lips of King David was a very suggestive text. Similarly, the instruction of the writer of Proverbs to young people against sin becomes a direct address as from Proverbs 1.10: "My child, if sinners entice you, do not consent."

In order to warn young people about the uncertainty around the number of their days of life, Psalm 90.5-6 provided a stark reminder that age is "like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers." Likewise, Israel Holly used a single phrase from Job 1.19 points to the uncertainty of years of life: "and it fell on the young people and they are dead."[25]

Texts from other areas of the Bible appear as opening texts, but not in the same volume as that of the Wisdom literature and Psalms. A popular opening text with literary characteristics of wisdom frequently comes from Titus 2.6: "Likewise, urge the younger

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[24] For clarity in this section, quotes from biblical texts are taken from the NRSV, unless otherwise noted.

[25] Holly and Watts.

men to be self-controlled." Cotton Mather, in one of his many addresses to young

people, took a pastoral cue from part of Zechariah 2.4: "Run, say to that young man."

For Mather, this part of Zechariah provided a divine ordinance and an extension of his

ministerial call. He believed "It is then an Angelical Service which I am upon. To bring

the Messages of Heaven to Young Men, is an Angelical Service."[26]

Strong biblical characters other than David and Solomon were also used. Moses,

Ruth, King Josiah, Obadiah, Samuel, Timothy, Mary the sister of Martha, and John the

Disciple are all used as examples of faithfulness to God in the time of youth. Use of

these characters will be explored below.

The biblical texts led ministers to develop major themes about the theological

nature of young people. These themes, in turn, helped shape perceptions about young

people at large and likely shaped young people's self-conceptions. As powerful and

central community rhetoric, these themes certainly provided biblically-derived principles

and themes by which young people managed their own religiosity.

Most significant among these themes is "early piety." Young people were

repeatedly encouraged to commit themselves to "early piety" or "religion." It is here that

young people faced a classic "double-bind" from preachers. In this double-bind, young

people were described as people with indelible sinful tendencies. Because of their youth,

they were prone to indiscretions born of a sinful nature. Samuel Stillman directly

addressed young people as "ye thoughtless youth" who "are too apt to give the preference

to their own understanding; or to imagine that they are better acquainted with men and

things than they really are." In fact, "there is no period of life more dangerous than that

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[26] Mather, *The Young Man Spoken to Another Essay, to Recommend & Inculcate the Maxims of Early Religion, Unto Young Persons; and Especially the Religion of the Closet. In a Sermon Preached Unto Them on a Special Occasion*, 1.

of youth. Then the passions are strongest, and the temptations to indulge them are almost

innumerable; against which they will not be cautioned, if they think they know as well

already, as any one can inform them."[27]

At the same time, the other half of the double bind appears – even within the same

sermons. Stillman began his sermon stating that "the youth [who] make a great part of

our state worshipping assemblies, are the flower of the community, and on them we

naturally place our expectations of future supplies in the Church and in the State."[28]

Young people were not only dangerous, but beautiful flowers in the prime time of life to

choose religion. They were moldable, in precisely the right time for the good

impressions a life of religion can leave. Israel Loring remarked, after having examined

the efficacy of old age and infancy for turning to God, that

> It remains therefore that Youth, which is the morning of our day, the flower of our
> time, is the fittest season of all others to Remember God in. Our Understandings,
> Memories, Affections and Strength are then in their vigour, and don't fail us;
> besides Young Persons are not yet plunged so deep into worldly incumbrances
> and cares, as in all likelihood they will be afterwards; and therefore this golden
> opportunity of life should be laid hold of, and improved to the best purposes.[29]

The time of youth was also, according to Josiah Stearns, "ordinarily, the time of the

more, and more powerful stirrings and strivings of the Holy Spirit."[30] Youth is the

preferred time to remember God and young people are often warned that it is very

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[27] Samuel Stillman, *Young People Called Upon to Consider, That for Their Conduct Here, They Must Be Accountable Hereafter, at the Judgment Seat of Christ in a Sermon, Delivered on Wednesday Evening May 8, 1771, in Boston, at the Desire of a Number of Young Men*, 31, [1] p. ; 19 cm. (4to) vols. (Boston: Printed by John Boyles, in Marlborough-Street., 1771), 7, 9.

[28] Stillman, 5.

[29] Israel Loring, *The Duty and Interest of Young Persons to Remember Their Creator as It Was Shewn, in a Sermon Preach'd at Lexington, on a Day of Prayer, Set Apart to Implore the Blessing of God on the Rising Generation. : And at the Desire of Some Young Persons in the Town, Now Published*, [2], iv, 34+ p. vols. (Boston in N.E.: Printed for Daniel Henchman, at the corner shop on the south-side of the Town-House., 1718), 11-12.

[30] Stearns and Peirce, 21.

difficult to turn to God once they grow older. Typically this warning came in the words

from Jeremiah 13.23: "Can Ethiopians change their skin or leopards their spots?"[31] In

fact, they are chosen vessels, many having been baptized in their infancy. The best

choice for them now was to ratify their faith by devoting themselves to "the religion of

the closet," earnestly seeking after God.[32] They are urged over and over to "remember

your Creator in the days of your youth."[33] Young people are utterly sinful and driven to

sin, yet at the most opportune time to take hold of God's promises and instruments of

God's work in the world.

No doubt, this push to early piety was out of the deep-seated Puritan concern for

individual salvation. But it also arose out of concern for the fate of the young nation, as

Stillman's sermon suggests. In order to establish America as a continuing city on a hill,

older generations needed the younger ones to take their faith seriously. As Stout

observes of the first generation of settlers' religious and political sentiment, "they were

still a covenant people, their only mistake was that instead of looking backwards to

England they should have been looking forward to the New World their children would

inhabit. The mission would live on for the sake of New England, and the founders would

serves as models for the rising generation who would grow up to enact in America that

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[31] See, for instance, John Barnard, *Two Discourses Addressed to Young Persons
to Which Is Added, a Sermon Occasioned by the Earthquake, Which Was October 29. 1727*, [4], iv, 99, [5]
p. ; 17 cm. (8vo) vols. (Boston in N.E.: Printed for S. Gerrish, at the lower end of Cornhill., 1727), 30-31;
Benjamin Lord, *Sober-Mindedness, an Excellent Character of Young Men
Considered in a Discourse, Address'd to the Youth: (Being the Substance of Three Sermons) Delivered at
Norwich; Chiefly on March 13, 1763*, [2], 42 p. ; 20 cm. (8vo) vols. (Providence, in New-England: Printed
and sold by William Godddard., 1763), 15.

[32] See, for instance, Mather, *The Young Man Spoken to Another Essay, to Recommend & Inculcate the
Maxims of Early Religion, Unto Young Persons; and Especially the Religion of the Closet. In a Sermon
Preached Unto Them on a Special Occasion*.

[33] See again, Barnard, 18ff.

which was impossible to achieve in Europe."[34] Placed on each succeeding generation would be the hope that America would become the place the first settlers had dreamed it would be. The surest way to communicate this was through sermons.

To accomplish this, young Americans would have to eradicate the bad behaviors toward which they were inclined. The second great theme, morality, played a large role in preaching to the youth of Colonial America.   As preachers unfolded their doctrinal statements and supported them with proofs, it is clear that older generations were concerned about the behavior of the young. Similar general lists of moral and ethical instruction clearly defined behaviors in which young Americans should and should not participate. In order to protect a young person's sinful lifestyle from hardening into a sinful lifestyle not easily put off in old age, ministers encouraged young people to put on good behavior while they were young. Included in these lists were behaviors such as obedience to parents, sobriety, chastity, modesty, keeping good company, not swearing, and refraining from particular types of entertainment.[35]

As outlined in some of the biblical texts cited above, the possibility of early death loomed large in sermons to young people. Whether it was through occasional sermons delivered on early piety or funeral sermons delivered upon the death(s) of young people, the possibility of early death provided a stimulus for young people to affix their lives to God. It might be easy for the contemporary reader to assign to this practice the stigma of a type of rhetorical scare tactic. While that may be true in part, it would be an oversimplification ignoring the realities of Colonial life. Deaths among young people

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[34] Stout, *The New England Soul : Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 54.

[35] For example, see Stillman. His sermon proceeds by outlining a list of this type.

were common and provided stark reminders that life may be very short for some.[36] A

pious life assured eternal rewards should one die early. Young people were not exempt

from death and preachers did not hesitate to talk about this reality. Jonathan Edwards

preached a sermon entitled "Youth is Like a Flower that is Cut Down" from the text Job

14.2, "He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." After addressing the hopefulness

of young people, Edwards' notes say

> When young people die, then the flower is cut down. A flower is a part of the
> plant that appears furthest from death and yet is nearest to it. There is no part of
> the tree that appears so lively as the flower, and yet no part of it that is so short-
> lived. How soon does it vanish; how soon does the wind blow away. This
> implies two things: 1. That death puts an end to all this pleasant, promising
> appearance of young persons and to all their concerns in the world. 2. It
> sometimes doth this suddenly. The flower is then cut down with a scythe; it falls
> at once. At one moment it stands in its flourishing state, in the next it is cut down.
> So it [is] as it were oftentimes with young people. How often do they die without
> many days' warning. [It is] unexpected. [They have] little time to think of death.
> Disease seizes 'em strongly, baffles all medicines, and hastens 'em out of the
> world.[37]

In extremely frank language, Jonathan Edwards and others address the reality of young

peoples' unpredictable and untimely deaths. Any warning to protect their souls was the

duty of the preacher and parents.

A final major theme emerging in sermons to young people ratifies the themes

explored above. If cultural norms had not attached enough authority to preacher, or if the

preacher's use of the Bible as authority was not enough to persuade the young person to

take heed of the preacher's instruction, then the preacher could certainly make his own

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[36] Graff puts early death in perspective for the second half of the 18th century: "Mortality and morbidity levels varied greatly from place to place and year to year. Infant mortality in Andover, Massachusetts, fro 1730 to 1759 stood at 156 per 1000; in late eighteenth-century Philadelphia it ranged from 187 per 1000 for the entire population to 146 for Quaker children and 254 for infants of unskilled laborers. Infant and child mortality rates were higher in the South. Early in the century more than one third of Chesapeake children died in their first year, while more than half died before age twenty." Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*, 28.

[37] Stout, Hatch, and Farley, eds., *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, 325.

authority clear. Israel Loring imagined the scene of those who "come short of heaven" where

> the sermons which here they took no heed to, but let them slip, as soon as they heard them, will then come afresh to their memories, and be as so much oyl to enrage the flames in their Consciences. Then Sinners will remember, how earnestly Christs Ministers did plead with them! How they wept over them! With what Bowels of pity and tender compassion they did intreat them to be reconciled to God! the thoughts of which will fill them with self-indignation, and they will curse themselves a thousand times for not hearkening to those melting calls.[38]

Cotton Mather makes an even stronger push for authority. Mather warned young people that preachers speak with the very voice of God: "Children, When sermons are Preaching, you have the Great GOD speaking to you in them. Instead of Sporting, or Sleeping, or any Irreverent Carriage here, Oh, with what Reverence and Godly Fear ought you to behave yourselves…Tis not a weak Man, but the Great GOD, who is now speaking to me! … You are Deaf to GOD, if you hear us not!"[39]

The preacher spoke *in loco parentis*, where God and preacher represent the divine parent, to young people. Youth were subject to the authority of the preacher's word, preached in the place of God.[40]

In addition to these major themes, the preacher employed methods of biblical interpretation that framed the ideal life for young people. Other than the literal renderings of biblical texts addressed specifically to young people, preachers employed

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[38] Loring, 30, 31-32.

[39] Mather, *The Young Man Spoken to Another Essay, to Recommend & Inculcate the Maxims of Early Religion, Unto Young Persons; and Especially the Religion of the Closet. In a Sermon Preached Unto Them on a Special Occasion*, 10-11.

[40] Other themes were present in occasional sermons to young people, though they did not play a major or recurring role in the occasional preaching. For instance, a group of young people gathered for a sermon on acquiring the use of arms: Elisha Fish, *The Art of War Lawful, and Necessary for a Christian People, Considered and Enforced in a Discourse, the Substance of Which Was Delivered in Upton, May 26, 1773. To a Company of Youth, Voluntarily Engaged in Acquiring the Use of Arms*, [2], 17, [1] p. ; 21 cm. (8vo) vols. (Boston, New-England: Printed by Thomas and John Fleet, at the Heart and Crown in Cornhill, 1774).

typology, particularly around biblical characters. In these biblical characters, preachers found the ideal form of Christian piety. As mentioned above, David, Solomon, Moses, Ruth, King Josiah, Obadiah, Samuel, Timothy, Mary the sister of Martha, and John the Disciple all serve as types of faithfulness in youth. Reaching beyond character typologies, Cotton Mather uses the doves of Isaiah 60.8, "who are these that fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows?" and the doves in the Noah story as a type of the ideal Christian young person.[41] As the doves fly to windows for protection, and returned to Noah, so should young people's souls return to God early in their lives. Similarly, Mather also uses a portion Numbers 35.12, referring to the land of Canaan, as a typology: "The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger." Mather's corresponding doctrine, aimed toward a society of young people, was "that the Distressed Souls of Men flying to the only Saviour, as their only Refuge, will find a Blessed Refuge, and Relief and Shelter there."[42]

Signs of Youthful Agency

Young people's anthropological and spiritual natures are rendered as natural and significant through homiletic discourse from this period. At first glance, these sermons' powerful theological rhetoric obscures young people's place in preaching, portraying them as merely listeners who would be wise to heed the preachers' instructions. Upon

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[41] Cotton Mather, *Columbanus. Or, the Doves Flying to the Windows of Their Saviour a Sermon to a Religious Society of Young People. June 4th. 1722. : [Five Lines in Latin]*, [2], 22 p. ; 15 cm. (12mo) vols. (Boston: Printed by S. Kneeland, for J. Edwards, sold at his shop., 1722).

[42] Cotton Mather, *The City of Refuge the Gospel of the City Explained; and the Flight of a Distressed Sinner Thereunto, Directed and Quickened; with a Special Aspect on the Intentions of Early Piety. : [Two Lines from Samuel]*, 33, [3] p. ; 14 cm. (12mo) vols. (Boston: Printed by T. Fleet and T. Crump, for Daniel Henchman, at the corner shop over against the brick meeting-house., 1716), 5.

closer inspection, however, young people were more active in the preaching process than a surface reading of the sermons suggests.

Inasmuch as the live preaching in Colonial America held a tremendous weight of authority, the published sermon was sure to continue the life of the sermon even further than its original context.[43] This was the particular intent of the ministers who delivered them. It may have also been through the agency of young people that these sermons came to be printed. Of the approximately fifty sermons analyzed from this period, sixteen contain in their preface that they were published at the request of young people, by a young people's society, or were actually published by young people. Approximately twenty-five contain no indication of who, if anyone, requested their publication. One was published at the request of the parents to whom the sermon was directed. Four were published at the desire of "many hearers."

It is certainly plausible that ministers directed publishers to include that their sermons were requested for publication by young people in an attempt to bolster their authority. This would serve as a sign that the preacher's words were powerful among a

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[43] There is no intent here to champion the printed sermon. Harry Stout is right to be skeptical in his assessment of the printed sermon when he says that "underlying almost every study of colonial preaching is the assumption that printed sermons are the best comprehensive index to 'what was said and done publicly.' This assumption goes back to Perry Miller who in his magisterial reconstruction of Puritan ideas and values relied almost exclusively on printed sermons to convey the changes and nuances of the 'New England mind.'…Only from the vantage point of unpublished sermons, however, can the full range of colonial preaching be understood." Stout, *The New England Soul : Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 4. It should be noted, however, that his skepticism is directed at using printed sermons in order to grasp the entire range of *regular* preaching in Colonial America. Equally up for debate is Stout's assertion that "the most accurate guide we therefore have to what people actually heard are the handwritten sermon notes that ministers carried with them into the pulpit."Stout, *The New England Soul : Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 5. My purposes are, of course, much more limited in scope and I make no pretense to characterize the 'New England mind' towards young people. Nor do I hope to ascertain exactly what was heard in the original preaching of these sermons. Rather, these printed sermons are taken "as is," a historical phenomenon in the religious and public life of Colonial young Americans. For use of the sermon in devotional life, see Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe and Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg Va.), *The Practice of Piety : Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia by the University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 116-123.

particularly coveted group of listeners or on specific occasions. Such suspicion is warranted, but not necessary. Equally plausible, with the number of sermons that contain no indication of "request," or are requested by parents or "many hearers," is that a great deal of these sermons were actually requested by young people. If so, what might this mean?

A skeptical view would be that they requested the sermons in order to procure favor from their minister. Their requests for sermons might have placated preachers, garnered social standing, or may have been for purposes other than the hoped-for early piety. Such homiletic subversion would still have shaped what constituted "successful" preaching among young people in the Colonial period. Still, the intentions of these requests may have been more benign. Religious fervor took root among young people, especially in the Great Awakening. At this time of religious intensity, "while all ages could be found in the new membership lists, the most heavily represented were young people below the age of twenty who entered the church at an earlier age than their parents. Included among the influx of youth was a rising proportion (roughly half) of males, again reversing earlier patterns in which females generally outnumbered males."[44] Recently converted or discerning young people may have found value in a number of these sermons and requested their publication for their own edification. If this were the case, then preachers would have been attentive to these requests and pondered their own

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[44] Stout, *The New England Soul : Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 197. For more on specific numbers and ages of conversion, follow Stout's notes in this section. See also Philip J. Greven, "Youth, Maturity, and Religious Conversion: A Note on the Ages of Converts in Andover, Massachusetts, 1711-1749," in Graff, ed. *Growing up in America : Historical Experiences*, 144-155; William F. Willingham, "Religious Conversion in the Second Society of Windham, Connecticut, 1723-43: A Case Study," *Societas* 6, no. 2 (1976).

preaching to young people accordingly. It seems likely that a variety of these forces would be at work in the requesting and publishing of sermons.

Closely related is the fact that these sermons were often preached in meetings of young people's societies. These voluntary associations were "intended to harness youthful energies…Ministers encouraged the formation of young men's societies, where youth could meet regularly to pray, sing psalms, hear sermons, and discuss religious subjects."[45] Again a tension presents itself. Were young people actively charging their ministers to preach to them or did ministerial authority run so deep as to strongly encourage their "invitation" to the young people's societies? Again, it is likely that diverse configurations of power and influence are at work in the preaching of these sermons before young people. It is important to note, however, that these associations were voluntary and preachers often named the kinds of impious activities of those likely not in attendance: those who constituted "evil company." Young people chose to attend to the sermons at these gatherings. In doing so, they contributed to the occasion for publishing the sermons delivered to the societies. Samuel Stillman commented at the end of a sermon: "I shall conclude with an address to the young men, at whose request we now appear in the house of God."[46] He went on to encourage their meeting:

> Each of you should studiously endeavor to promote the religious society, in which you are happily united. If rightly conducted, by prayer, reading, and free conversation on matters of experience, it may prove of special advantage to you. Watch over one another with all diligence, and reprove, if necessary, with meekness and love.[47]

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[45] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 29.

[46] Stillman, 29.

[47] Stillman, 31.

It is evident that the meetings, at least indirectly, influenced preaching. It is impossible to know exactly how the influences from requesting and meeting took form in Colonial preaching other than the substance and occasion of the sermons, particularly since the form and language closely resemble other sermons.

In another area, however, the direct influence of the voices of young people can be heard. In a number of sermons for deceased young people, preachers gave the voice of the deceased a role in the sermon. In this way, though young people were not occupying the physical spaces of preaching, their voices were incorporated (1) as proclamation and (2) as record of their conversations of faith.[48] Preachers who found faithful speech among the recently deceased incorporated it into their pleas for youthful piety. This practice is incorporated in a number of different ways.

In 1701, John Rogers printed a collection of three sermons for young people "occasioned by the imprisonment, condemnation, and execution of a Young Woman who was guilty of Murdering her Infant begotten in Whoredom – To which is added, an account of her manner of Life and Death in which the Glory of free Grace is displayed."[49] As the quotation from the title page indicates, Rogers adds the testimony of Esther Rogers to the sermons. This testimony is intricately detailed with narrative and records Esther's prayers. She displays a repentant heart upon the fervent work of ministers who

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[48] Some strands of contemporary homiletic discourse have elevated the latter characterization of this kind of speech to the category of "testimony." See, for instance, Thomas G. Long, *Testimony : Talking Ourselves into Being Christian* (San Francisco: San Francisco : Jossey-Bass, 2004). As will be seen below, these portions of sermons are excised or imitated in religious literature of the nineteenth century, typified in Sunday School literature.

[49] John Rogers and others, *Death the Certain Wages of Sin to the Impenitent: Life the Sure Reward of Grace to the Penitent Together with the Only Way for Youth to Avoid the Former, and Attain the Latter. : Deliver'd in Three Lecture Sermons; Occasioned by the Imprisonment, Condemnation and Execution, of a Young Woman, Who Was Guilty of Murdering Her Infant Begotten in Whoredom. : To Which Is Added, an Account of Her Manner of Life & Death, in Which the Glory of Free Grace Is Displayed*, [12], 153, [1] p. ; 14 cm. (12mo) vols. (Boston: Printed by B. Green, and J. Allen, for Samuel Phillips at the brick shop., 1701).

visit her while imprisoned. Similarly, Josiah Stearns included a few opening remarks in

his funeral sermon about the piety of the recently deceased young man. As a postscript,

he includes the ecstatic death-bed speech of Samuel Lawrence.[50]

Another method for incorporating this kind of speech occurred indirectly. Cotton

Mather preached upon the death of a young man and a child, and said of the young man,

"behold, I am the Instrument now to bring his Testimony."[51] Mather went on to describe

the young man's wishes, but only indirectly summarizing his thoughts. Similarly,

Benjamin Colman pointed to the dead bodies of faithful young people as a type of non-

verbal sermon:

> GOD can make the Death of your Companions a most awakening and effectual
> Sermon to you: and it may be worth anothers dying to do they Soul good, and
> bring thee home to Christ: It preaches to thee in a more affecting manner than any
> meer words can, and in the happy [unreadable] to Relatives, when their affections
> are stirred, and their Souls the more easily come at. And O that our Young people
> wou'd but hear the good Counsels from the Funerals of their pious Friends that
> die young![52]

Colman continued that the youthful deceased preaches as well to parents and elders.

As if the preacher's own words to this point could not capture the entirety of his

message, the episodes of dying and death-bed speech were relayed in moving fashion.

Cotton Mather spoke of a recently deceased congregant: "Finally; ABIEL GOODWIN,

shall without any Disorder now Speak in the Church! And…shall call upon our Young

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[50] Stearns and Peirce, 37-40.

[51] Mather, *Vita Brevis an Essay, Upon Withering Flowers. Or, Mankind Considered, as First Flourishing, and Then Withering. In a Sermon, Preached on, the Joyful Death of a Valuable Youth; and the Awful Death of a Desirable Child, in the North Part of Boston*, 32.

[52] Colman, *A Devout Contemplation on the Meaning of Divine Providence, in the Early Death of Pious and Lovely Children Preached Upon the Sudden and Lamented Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Wainwright. Who Departed This Life, April the 8th. 1714. Having Just Compleated the Fourteenth Year of Her Age*, 23-24.

People to bear the Yoke in their Youth."[53] Mather continued by narrating her life and the

course of her death, including lengthy quotations of her speech as well as her haste to

make correspondence with other sick people. Certainly this kind of speech could have

been uncritically imported imitation from religious speech young people adopted from

adults. Even if it was, it was thought to be very persuasive – possibly even more than the

preacher's own words. In this way, the faith of young people and their voices were

incorporated into early American preaching.

Though young people were not regular preachers in the privileged pulpits of early

America, this does not mean that they did not speak in significant ways. In addition to

youthful speech incorporated into sermons by established adult preachers, young people

participated in lay exhortation. Particularly during the first Great Awakening, young

people enjoyed a time of revival, which included some newfound freedoms in religious

life.

Elias Haven, commenting on the tremendous extent of the revival that led many

young people to account their "humiliation and repentance" as greater than some had

"had in [their] merriest Nights and Days," declared that "there are many young People in

this Congregation that are ready to witness for this."[54] Haven placed a footnote next to

this statement that reads "Preached at a time of general Awakening, especially among

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[53] Cotton Mather, *Juga Jucunda a Brief Essay to Obtain from Young People, an Early and Hearty Submission to the Yoke of Their Saviour, and His Religion. : With a Relation of the Glorious Peace and Joy, Which Brightened the Dying Hours of Mrs. Abiel Goodwin; Who Having Born the Yoke in Her Youth, Triumphantly Expired October 3. 1727. : A Sermon Preached at the Desire of the Deceased. : [One Line from Deuteronomy]*, [4], 32 p. ; 21 cm. (8vo) vols. (Boston: Printed for D. Henchman at the corner shop over against the Brick Meeting House in Corn-hill., 1727), 21.

[54] Elias Haven, *Youthful Pleasures Must Be Accounted for, at the Day of Judgment a Sermon on Ecclesiastes Xi. 9. Preached (in Part) at the Second Precinct in Wrentham, May 27. 1741*, 32 p. ; 16 cm. (8vo) vols. (Boston: Printed and sold by J. Draper, at his printing house in Newbury-Street., 1742), 24.

Young People." Whether or not this statement is a direct reference to lay exhortation, it does suggest the confidence with which ministers believed revival was taking place among young people. Additionally, Haven's statement expressed an ease with young people speaking about the experiences of their faith.

Not all people were happy with the opportunities that the time of enthusiasm gave to young people's voices. Charles Chauncy opposed the revivals that came to characterize the Great Awakening. Lay exhorters "worked to upset godly order in the churches [and] society…Besides disrupting the settled churches, they upset social order by encouraging laborers to 'continue abroad 'till late in the Night, and so as to unfit themselves for the Services of the following day.'" They also upset the ordered ministry.[55] Among these lay exhorters were young people. Chauncy opined:

> Another Thing that very much tends, as I apprehend, to do Hurt to the Interest of Religion, is the Rise of so many Exhorters. A Stranger to the Land, and the present Appearance in it, may be at a Loss to know, who are meant by these Exhorters: And I'm really ahsam'd to say, that the Persons pointed out by them, are Men of all Occupations, who are vain enough to think themselves fit to be Teachers of others; Men who, though they have no Learning, and but small Capacities, yet imagine they are able, and without Study too, to speak to the spiritual Profit of such as are willing to hear them: Nay, there are among these Exhorters, Babes in Age, as well as Understanding. They are chiefly indeed young Persons, sometimes Lads, or rather Boys: Nay, Women and Girls; yea, Negroes, have taken upon them to do the Business of Preachers. Nor has this been accidental only, or in a single Place, or at a private House; but there is scarce a Town in all the Provinces, where this Appearance has been, but there have been also these Exhorters, in smaller or greater numbers: Neither have they contented themselves to speak in the more private Meetings of Christians, but have held forth in the publick Congregations.[56]

Chauncy, who went on to cite reasons why women and others should not exhort, believed that according to the Bible, young people of both genders were included in the company

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[55] Stout, *The New England Soul : Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 204.

[56] Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England, a Treatise in Five Parts* (Boston,: Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for Samuel Eliot in Cornhill, 1743), 226.

of women and "Negroes" who caused disorder through their unlearned usurpation of speaking roles in congregations. And while Chauncy condemned it, he noted that "some may have a good Opinion of the Exhortations of these Persons, and encourage them in this Practice."[57] In other words, there was no unified "New England mind" on this subject. As much as the practice may have taken place, its occurrence was not without objection among religious leaders like Chauncy.

This is an interesting case when juxtaposed with the incidents of preachers appropriating the death-bed speech of young people as powerful sermonic language. There seems to have been a variety of opinions on the proper place of young people's religious speech in early America. While for some, lay exhortation by young people was in the proper spirit of the revivals, for others this kind of speech violated church order. On both sides of that argument, death-bed speech may have found approval or disapproval. Chauncy seems to disapprove more on the basis of challenged authority – that young people and others are "uncalled and unqualified" – than that lay exhorters were preaching unsound doctrine.[58]

Conclusion

Preaching to young people was a staple of occasional preaching in early American religious life and would continue to go on, though not in the same volume or form as the contexts of growing up changed. As will be seen below, this preaching was formative of the kind of preaching to young people that would continue (and, to a certain extent, continues today). A majority of the preaching proceeded in an authoritative manner from

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[57] Chauncy, 226.

[58] Chauncy, 233.

preacher to young people, resulting in the construction of the ideal young person of Colonial America, both theologically and socially. Even so, young people managed to insert their voices into the homiletic life of their communities. Through sermon requests, meetings, incorporated speeches, and exhortation, young people acted in their situations to exercise forms of homiletic agency. The young people of Colonial America were active listeners whose voices were heard through authorized preaching and lay exhortation.

Continuity and Change in the Nineteenth Century

As America entered the nineteenth century, it was recovering from the Revolutionary War. Social changes swept the young nation, including pushes to the western frontiers. Industrialization and urbanization rearranged the dynamics of many families, economic life, and the roles of churches. Later on, the Civil War would test the nation's ability to sustain its highest ideals.

These broad-stroke social changes were accompanied by religious changes as well. What would become known as the Second Great Awakening and its revivals swept the whole country for nearly half the century. Many denominations and churches moved toward creating powerful institutions by which they championed their causes. An increasing theological diversity resulted from the freedoms Americans enjoyed.

All of these changes touched the nature of adolescence in ways both great and small. This is not to say that the characteristics of adolescence in America changed in uniform ways across the experiences of young people. The social and religious changes of the nineteenth century affected adolescence, and thus young people's relationships

with preaching, in varied ways. Borrowing and slightly altering Harvey Graff's

categorization of "paths" of growing up in America provides an interpretive lens through

which the relationship between adolescents and preaching can be seen. Graff's scheme

accounts for changes in adolescence in the following ways:

> Four major paths of growing up stand out in life accounts dating from the 1740s
> to the early 1800s: traditional, transitional, female, and emergent. Other common
> paths are missing from the account because of biases in creating, preserving, or
> locating first-person sources. These include accounts by and about servants,
> especially women; poor and working people, both rural and urban; African
> Americans; and native peoples.[59]

These categories remain the same when Graff discusses the nineteenth century.[60]

It is appropriate, then, to talk about the relationship between young people and

preaching in terms of three paths: *traditional*, *transitional*, and *emergent*.[61] These paths

will include continuity and change in the style and substance of preaching,

characterizations of young people in preaching, the relationship between preacher and

young people, as well as the roles of young people as preacher. Female voices will be

integrated throughout discussion of these categories instead of relegated to another

category. The same difficulties Graff expresses, however, are present when attempting to

reconstruct a homiletic history of young people. The voices of servants, the poor and

working class, as well as African American, Asian American, and native peoples are

difficult to track since primary materials consist of mostly printed sermons. In the

available materials, however, changes in the theological and social renderings of young

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[59] Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*, 29. Graff further subdivides the "female" category
into traditional, transitional, and emergent paths.

[60] Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*, 68-69.

[61] See definitions, below.

people (from both adult and young voices) are apparent in the preaching of the nineteenth century.

Traditional Paths and Continuity with the Eighteenth Century

Graff defines the traditional path by describing how "stereotypes and images combine to form our common presumption of the normative path for the time…Sons followed in the footsteps of their fathers, within the bonds and bounds of family…In a word, notions of stability and continuity define, if sometimes misleadingly, the traditional path."[62] As it concerns the relationship between preaching and young people, "stability" and "continuity" with earlier preaching traditions characterize the traditional path. Much like the collection of sermons Increase Mather edited on early piety in 1721, the tradition of collected sermons directed toward young people continued in the nineteenth century.[63] Perhaps most significantly were Phillip Doddridge's sermons, originally published in 1734 and reprinted through multiple editions in both England and America.[64] It may be that when Mrs. Harriet Newell, at the age of thirteen (b. 1793), wrote of Doddridge's sermons in a letter to a friend (1806), she possessed the seventh edition of the collection, published in 1803 or a version handed down to her by older family members. These

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[62]Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*, 29-30.

[63] Benjamin Colman and others, eds., *A Course of Sermons on Early Piety*, [2], 34, 30, 36, 26, 52, 36, 32, 65, [1], 16 p. ; 17 cm. (12mo) vols. (Boston in N.E.: Printed by S. Kneeland, for N. Buttolph, B. Eliot, and D. Henchman, and sold at their shops., 1721).

[64] Philip Doddridge, *Sermons to Young Persons on the Following Subjects, Viz.--I. The Importance of the Rising Generation, Ii. Christ Formed in the Soul the Foundation of Hope, Iii. A Dissuasive from Keeping Bad Company, Iv. The Young Christian Invited to an Early Acceptance on the Lord's Table, V. The Orphan's Hope, Vi. The Reflections of a Pious Parent on the Death of a Wicked Child, Vii. Youth Reminded of Approaching Judgement*, 7th ed., 246 p. vols. (Hartford [Conn.]: Printed for Oliver D. Cooke, by Lincoln & Gleason, 1803).

sermons were worthy of serious reflection according to Newell, as she recommended

them to a friend, saying

> Did you ever read Doddridge's Sermons to Young People? They are very
> beautiful sermons. It appears strange to me, why I am not more interested in the
> cause of Christ, when he has done so much for us! But I will form a resolution
> that I will give myself up entirely to him. Pray for me that my heart may be
> changed. I long for the happy hour when we shall be free from all sin, and enjoy
> God in heaven. But if it would be for his glory, I should be willing to live my
> threescore years and ten. My heart bleeds for our companions, who are on the
> brink of destruction. In what manner shall I speak to them? But perhaps I am in
> the same way.[65]

Printed sermons continued to be integrated into the popular religiosity of nineteenth

century America. For Newell, Doddridge's sermons struck her as (1) "beautiful" and (2)

as a collection that encouraged her devotion to Christ, disposing her to speak to her

friends about the importance of faith. Although it might be helpful, it is unfortunately

unclear what Newell meant by "beautiful" in regard to these sermons. Regardless, she

found them to be persuasive in encouraging her faith and the expression of it to her peers.

It comes as no surprise then, with the popularity and tradition of these collections,

that other collections continued to be produced. Samuel Kendal's *Seven Sermons to

Young Persons* received printings in both 1809 and 1814.[66] While an overwhelming

majority of the printed sermons cited to this point originated in New England, the

practice even occurred in places outside of New England when ministers like James Muir

of Virginia published a general collection of occasional sermons entitled *Ten Sermons*, in

which two of the sermons were directed towards young people.[67]

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[65] *Memoirs of Mrs. H. Newell, Wife of the Rev. S. Newell, American Missionary to India*, (London: J.F.
Dove, n.d.), 6.

[66] Samuel Kendal, *Seven Sermons to Young Persons*, 192 p. vols. (Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1814).

[67] James Muir, *Ten Sermons*, 359 p. ; 18 cm. vols. (Alexandria [Va.]: Printed by Cottom and Stewart,
1812).

Through the first two decades of the new century, the conventions of preaching to young people remain largely the same. Major texts, themes, and occasions for preaching do not change, nor does the ambivalence toward young people as simultaneously dangerous and holy. The voices of young people, particularly the deceased, still appear as persuasive voices in the midst of their natural proclivity toward sin. Polly Miner, for instance,

> though now dead she yet speaketh. Those moving exhortations to piety which so lately melted your hearts cannot soon be forgotten; they must not be forgotten; they are serious calls to a godly and christian life, and must be remembered as memorials of her. They must also be remembered with some effect upon your hearts. If you forget them it will be your crime. They are intended by God himself, to rouse you from careless security, and make you examine your hearts, and see whether his love dwelleth in you.[68]

Though Abraham Brownson spoke these words about the recently deceased in preaching, not all religious leaders agreed on the suitability of young people for religious conversion.

As religious publications increased, so did the discussion of how to view young people in light of the new revivals. Although the format of the argument changed its location from sermons to essays in popular periodicals, the binary about the religious nature of young people continued. Preaching served as the test case about young people's religious nature, particularly the duration of the effects of preaching. In the *Western Missionary Magazine* in 1804 (reprinted from *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine)*, two pseudonymous writers exchange arguments about young people. The writer named Eubulus says of young converts that they "have much less of true religion, that what they are generally thought to have, or even than what they themselves think that

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[68] Abraham Brownson, *Memento to Youth a Sermon, Delivered at the West Church in Arlington at the Funeral of Miss Polly Miner, Who Departed This Life, June 6th, 1808, in the 21st Year of Her Age*, 24 p. vols. (Printed at Bennington, Vt.: Anthony Haswell, 1808), 21.

they have. Hence, in their future lives, they almost invariably disappoint themselves and

others."[69] Two months later, the writer Zepho relays his experience of being a guest

preacher where

> a number of youth of both sexes were present. Their vain and trifling airs were
> laid aside; their countenances fixed and deeply impressed; and the tear, expressive
> of deep concern, started in their eyes. They seemed to feel convinced of their
> souls would never die…Whether these impressions will be lasting or not, I
> pretend not to know…But, in whatever manner these tender impressions upon the
> heart and the conscience may be treated, by those who were then the subjects of
> them, one thing, in particular, from the interesting sense, forcibly struck my mind;
> and it was this: That the days of youth are the most privileged and convenient
> time to attend to the duties of religion. This is often denied.[70]

Young people remained wedged between two differing views concerning their religious

capacities. On the one hand they were hardened toward religion and on the other they

were the best case scenario for religious affection.   This traditional view is characteristic

of the preaching that emerges early in the nineteenth century and is contiguous with that

of the eighteenth century. There are, however, changes that mark a transitional

relationship between preaching and young people in the nineteenth century.

Transitional Paths in the Nineteenth Century

Graff's definition of a transitional path of growing up is helpful for defining the

transitional relationship in the nineteenth century: "Discontinuity, uncertainty, shifting

expectations, and shifting locations mark experiences of growing up along this path.

Transitional paths occupy the ground that lies, materially and metaphorically, between

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[69] Eubulus, "On the Imperfect State of Holy Affections in Young Converts," *The Western Missionary Magazine, and Repository of Religious Intelligence (1803-1805)* June (1804). These essays are reprinted in a number of contemporaneous journals.

[70] Zepho, "The Days of Youth," *The Western Missionary Magazine, and Repository of Religious Intelligence (1803-1805)* August (1804): 147.

traditional and newly emergent paths, between apparent stability and continuity on the one hand and manifest opportunities and new rhythms or schedules on the other."[71] As the nineteenth century progressed, marked changes occurred in the relationship between preaching and young people that preserve tradition and suggest, but do not fully embody, emergent territory.

Perhaps the largest indicator that a transition occurred in the relationship is the severe decline in the number of sermons available as the century progresses.[72] While the printed sermons emerge in an overwhelming number throughout the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century witnesses a severe decline of similar resources. As stated above, the traditional printed sermon does not disappear completely. The rapid decline in their availability, however, suggests that the relationship changed dramatically in this period. The question is how to account for the significant shift.

It is reasonable to suggest that perhaps one reason for this is the kind of preaching that occurs on the frontier as American Christianity pushed westward. Much of this preaching was unrecorded and delivered for more broad audiences in terms of age. That possibility does not answer for the decrease of these sermons in New England, however, with the established tradition of publishing sermons to young people. Perhaps as the young nation grew, the theology of covenant decreased and thus the need for the kind of theologically motivated covenant/nation-building sermons directed toward young people decreased. These are unsubstantiated claims. One way to account for this shift is demonstrable in the rise of sensationalist morality tales, which posed "serious

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[71] Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*, 30.

[72] This is indicated in thorough searches through research databases/catalogues such as ATLA and ProQuest, as well as the holdings of both the libraries of Vanderbilt University and Emory University.

competition [for religious leaders] in trying to attract audiences of nineteenth-century readers."[73]

Perhaps the most significant explanation for the decrease is found in the material evidence of one of American Christianity's most durable institutions: Sunday Schools. The Sunday School movement emerged in America as a powerful institution in the 1820s and 1830s.[74] Initially conceived as instruction for the poor, Sunday Schools grew increasingly diverse in target audience and produced one of the most influential tools by which young people were introduced to Christianity, exercised their religious voices, and by which adult Christians hoped to retain young people. Horace Bushnell's ideas of childhood religious experience, described in his book *Christian Nurture* (1847) demonstrated an intense concern for the church's young. According to Margaret Bendroth, his "understanding of childhood faith as a gradual process of enlightenment was controversial in its time; however, Bushnell's view soon came to dominate Protestant conceptions of childhood, especially in the twentieth century."[75] The transition to a strong educational program for youth on behalf of the church is also demonstrated in church architecture. Anne Loveland and Otis Wheeler show how the church architecture

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[73] R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God : American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 19.

[74] For two noteworthy studies of Sunday Schools, see Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School : The Formation of an American Institution, 1790- 1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability : Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). For resources on Sunday School literature, see "Shaping the Values of Youth: Sunday School Books in 19th Century America," http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/ssb/index.cfm, accessed October 20, 2009.

[75] Margaret Bendroth, "Horace Bushnell's Christian Nurture," in Bunge, ed., 350.

that emerges at this time provides a material marker of the shift from the centrality of the pulpit to the Sunday School classroom.[76]

Sunday School literature was used for instruction and given out as motivational rewards for young Sunday School "scholars." The Sunday School movement gave religious instruction to young people a new home. In many of the Sunday School primers and tracts, elements of preaching are found. The published sermon no longer dominated as it gave way to the Sunday School's institutional publishing. Publishers abbreviated sermons, edited them so as to include only the most vital stories, and placed them among other genres of literature.

One of the best examples of this is found in the collection entitled *Youth's Guide to Happiness*.[77] According to the title page, included in the collection were "poems, essays, and sermons…Particularly calculated for the PIOUS INSTRUCTION of THE RISING GENERATION."[78] Unlike prior collections of sermons, preaching was not the preeminent type of literature in this volume. The section of short sermons was preceded by a number of poems, short essays, and prayers for young people. *Youth's Guide* anticipates changes in young people's use of time, assuming that young people do not read the longer sermons of the previous era, which often consisted of twenty-five or more pages. The title to the section of abbreviated sermons reads: "Short SERMONS, designed for the use of those who have little time to read longer discourses."[79] The

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[76] See Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage : Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present / Joseph F. Kett* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1977), 120; Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch : A Material and Cultural History* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

[77] *Youth's Guide to Happiness Consisting of Poems, Essays, & Sermons*, 105 p. vols. (Newark [N.J.]: Printed by John Tuttle, 1814).

[78] *Youth's Guide to Happiness Consisting of Poems, Essays, & Sermons*, 2 (title page).

sixteen sermons included take up no more than two full pages each and construct a short series of sermons. There are no full-length sermons included in the volume.

Included in *Youth's Guide* is a familiar sermonic device from longer sermons of the previous era: death-bed speech. No longer preceded by lengthy plain-style discourses on the benefits of early piety, the death bed speech is taken out of context and stands alone as an "obituary." Evidently, the editors considered this kind of device to be a powerful and effective tool that should be retained from the previous era's preaching. *Youth's Guide* contains two such narratives, one of which is the "account of the happy death of Edwin Tapper, aged 15 years."[80] In a mixture of compelling narrative and Edwin's own speech, the editor provides an account of Edwin's last days as he bears witness to his friends about the love of God.[81] The account of Edwin's ecstatic death-bed speech takes up fourteen pages of the one hundred five page volume. When viewed in comparison with the length of the individual short sermons in the volume, it is clear that the emphasis on traditional preaching changed. No longer was the extended, traditional sermon the focal point for the formation of the spiritual lives of young people. Instead, homiletic arguments were shortened for those who have little time for reading and the more interesting components of the traditional sermon were featured prominently on their own merit.

Another literary device included in *Youth's Guide* is the extended dialogue, which serves as a type of question and answer on doctrine and morality. For nearly twenty

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[79] *Youth's Guide to Happiness Consisting of Poems, Essays, & Sermons*, 8.

[80] *Youth's Guide to Happiness Consisting of Poems, Essays, & Sermons*, 57. Edwin's account is also reprinted in tracts from the Philadelphia Female Tract Society (1805), among others.

[81] For an excellent account of the rise of narrative in nineteenth century preaching at large, see David S. Reynolds, "From Doctrine to Narrative: The Rise of Pulpit Storytelling in America," *American Quarterly* 32, no. 5 (1980).

pages, the fictional characters Charles and Henry exchange ideas on the truthfulness of the Bible, the nature of baptism and regeneration, sin and salvation, and ends with the encouragement to "Read your Bible with prayer: frequent those places where Christ is preached."[82] This kind of transitional literature simultaneously displaces the place of printed preaching and encourages the reader to seek out preaching.

In other literature intended for the young, young people were able to express themselves beyond death-bed speeches. *The Guardian and Monitor*, a joint monthly periodical for youth provided a variety of literature for young people.[83] Among the poetry, commentary on *The Pilgrim's Progress*, reports of revivals and deaths, excerpts from letters and memoirs, dialogues, short stories, and Sunday School anecdotes, young people's voices are also found. Upon the first issue of the newly joined publications, "a youth" leads the issue with an essay on the new year.[84] The "youth" makes observations about the progress of the world and particularly extols the effects of Sunday Schools, saying "they may be numbered by tens and hundreds, who are now rejoicing, and will forever rejoice, that they were ever connected with a Sunday School."[85]

The transitional sentiment can be found not only in the literature of the Sunday School movement, but also in the report literature of nineteenth century religious organizations. For instance, the Providence Female Tract Society's annual report in 1817 observed of its work

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[82] *Youth's Guide to Happiness Consisting of Poems, Essays, & Sermons*, 57.

[83] For more on *The Guardian* and *The Monitor*, see the summaries provided on "American Children's Periodicals: 1789-1820," http://www.merrycoz.org/bib/1820.htm#06.1819.01, accessed October 20, 2009.

[84] "The New Year," *The Guardian and Monitor* 7, no. 1 (1825).

[85] "The New Year," 6.

> While we feel deeply interested in the permanent establishment of the schools, and discover more of their necessity and utility, we yet feel the same pleasing confidence in religious tracts, which first originated the Society. A Missionary in Georgia, recently wrote to his friend in this town respecting tracts – "I could form no estimate of the value of these silent messengers of salvation, until since I have been employed in this field. They interest, they captivate the feelings of people in every grade of society. The last great day can alone reveal to men, the good that has been effected by these powerful, pungent, melting preachers of righteousness.[86]

The authoritative voice of the New England preacher was no longer the sole authority, nor was it the only effective preacher. Whereas preachers like Cotton Mather had urged his young listeners to listen to his sermons as if they were the voice of God, Sunday School and tract literatures emerged as commanding "silent messengers" that became "melting preachers of righteousness."

The impact of the diverse literary genres contained in Sunday School literature cannot be overstated. The atmosphere of American Christianity and its communicative practices were shifting to a palpable attention to the listening audience. Charles Finney and those who followed in his footsteps used preaching techniques such as speaking in plain language, eschewing doctrine for practical matters, aiming for the emotions, and perceived theatrics, which all achieved a great deal success (and not a little controversy).[87] The revivals introduced by Finney and others were immensely successful among young people, such that Kett concludes that "*most* of the converts in revivals during the early 19th century were in their teens or early 20s."[88] Out of this perfect storm, the perceived need to create "interest" among listeners grew. Young people, as chief

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[86] Providence Female Tract Society, *The Second Annual Report of the Providence Female Tract Society*, 12 p. vols. (Providence [R.I.]: Printed at the Rhode-Island American office, 1817), 7.

[87] Edwards, 509-520.

[88] Kett, 64. Italics mine. Graff also characterizes youthful conversion as a transitional characteristic. See Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*, 70ff.

proponents and targets, were among those who needed to hear something interesting.

Jacob Abbot's tract *The Young Christian* is worthy of quoting at length:

> I have made no effort to simplify the language. It is not necessary to do this even
> for children. They, will understand the language of maturity easily enough, if the
> logic and rhetoric are theirs. I have attempted, therefore, to present each subject
> in such an aspect, and to illustrate it in such a way as is adapted to the young
> mind, using, however, such language as has suggested itself spontaneously. It is a
> great but a very common error, to suppose that merely to simplify diction is the
> way to gain access to the young. Hence a sermon for children is seldom any thing
> more than a sermon for men, with easy words substituted for the hard ones. This
> goes on the supposition that the great difficulty is to make children understand
> religious truth. Whereas there is no difficulty at all in this. The difficulty is in
> *interesting them in it*. They will understand readily enough, if they are interested
> in the form and manner in which the subject comes before them. These principles
> will explain the great number of narratives, and dialogues, and statements of facts
> which are introduced to give vividness to the conceptions of my readers.[89]

Though Abbott is writing about writing, not preaching, it is significant that he points to

the practice of preaching as an analogous task. The line differentiating this kind of

illustrative printed material and preaching is blurred. Printed again in 1882, Abbott's

advice about writing/preaching to young people codified.

Abbott's commentary and the practice itself found its way into what would

become one of the most successful homiletics textbooks in the American scene (1870).

In his lecture on "Preparation of Special Types of Sermons," John A. Broadus observes

> Everyone notices how few persons succeed decidedly well in speaking to
> children…In general, in preaching to children the three primary things to do are to
> interest, to instruct, to impress. Grown people may pay attention to what does not
> deeply interest them, but children do not, perhaps they cannot. In order to interest
> them, there must be clarity both in plan and style; they must understand. Two
> favorite words with children are pretty and funny. It is well, therefore, in seeking
> to interest children, to use the beautiful and the humorous; yet, neither must be

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[89] Jacob Abbott, *The Young Christian : Or a Familiar Illustration of the Principles of Christian Duty*,
Revised ed., Christian Library ; (New York: American Tract Society, 1832), 4. Italics in text. Again, cf.
Reynolds.

overdone. In all sermons to children there should be instruction by illustrations that will appeal to the childish mind.[90]

Broadus' emphasis on interest, instruction, and impression are reminiscent of Augustine's advice from *On Christian Doctrine* that preaching should "teach," "delight," and "persuade," but Broadus champions the interest function over that of instruction in the case of young people.[91] As a transitional path, Abbott and Broadus retain the important themes associated with preaching from the previous era, but bring the need for interest to the forefront, which is manifested in new sermon forms.

The movement toward literature and sermons that intended to generate interest, however, did not pacify young people's voices. Within the Sunday School movement's leadership, many young people also exercised religious agency. Anne Boylan observes that Sunday Schools possessed "a relatively youthful teacher corps. Although there were occasional reports, especially in the early decades, of extremely young teachers…most seem to have been in their teens and twenties. The founders of the first Sunday school in Utica, New York, for example, were five young women between the ages of 14 and 16…teaching had a special aura that appealed particularly to the young."[92] As teachers and superintendents, young people (both men and women) could occupy authorized spaces for religious speech that did not require ordination or seminary training. Teachers led "scholars" or "pupils" in Bible instruction and hymn singing, visited them when they were sick, and in the words of one Sunday School advertisement, endeavored to "lead

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[90] John Albert Broadus and Vernon L. Stanfield, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 253-254.

[91] See Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book 4, Chapter 12.

[92] Boylan, 114.

them to love Jesus, and to walk in the path of wisdom, and the way of everlasting life."[93]

Though the lessons and hymns were regulated, young Sunday School teachers

improvised under their adult-directed lessons.

These youthful teachers were endowed with a great deal of responsibility and

authority. Rev. Timothy Clowes, in preaching to the instructors of youth in Albany, New

York said that teachers

> are engaged in a most laborious and important work. It is generally considered
> that you have done all that is incumbent on you when you have taught the
> knowledge of that in which you are specially employed. But you are better
> informed than to thin thus. You combine in yourselves much of the character of a
> minister, and parent, as well as preceptor.   You are to bring up those who are
> under your care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. You are not only to
> teach them to read the word of God and the lessons of wisdom, but to impress it
> on their minds by your expositions and observations.[94]

Clowes addresses "public school" teachers, but according to Boylan, "Sunday schools

and common schools complemented each other in the nineteenth century, but their

functions often overlapped."[95] No doubt this sentiment transmitted to those young people

who took up Sunday school teaching. Tremendous amounts of authority for training up

children went to those young people engaged as teachers. Young people were invested

with characteristics of minister, parent, and preceptor for those under their charge.

As the frontier pushed westward and migration continued, the American

population soared. Unfortunately, as the numbers multiplied, the number of young men

educated for the ministry did not keep pace. As was the case with Charles Chauncy,

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[93] Boylan, 41.

[94] Timothy Clowes and Associated Instructors of Youth in the City of Albany (N.Y.), *A Sermon Delivered in St. Peter's Church, May 22d, 1816, to the Associated Instructors of Youth in the City of Albany*, 19 p. vols. (Albany [N.Y.]: Printed by Packard & Van Benthuysen, 1816), 17.

[95] Boylan, 22.

some did not approve of young people acting as exhorters (an emerging path, below).

Menzies Rayner, for example, made this declaration about young people:

> It has, in some places been a common practice, especially in what are called conference meetings, (which must be considered meetings for public devotion,) for persons very young in years, and younger still in knowledge and discretion, to rise up in the assembly, and undertake to teach and exhort the congregation; when it is evident that they themselves have no just ideals of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. From teaching and exhorting they proceed to dictate the prayers, and offer up the devotions of the congregation, in extempore effusions, with such an air of assurance, such extravagant and incoherent expressions, and such enthusiastic fervor, as puts common sense and modesty to the blush.[96]

Like Chauncy, Rayner is concerned with order in worship and ultimately with the authority of an established, educated ministry.

It is no surprise then, that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century sermons begin to appear across New England that are delivered before the newly formed American Society for Educating Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry. The convergence of religious institution-building, low numbers of educated clergy to match population growth, and some disdain for the exhortation of young people caught up in revival understandingly precipitated this society's formation. The purpose of the society was to turn promising young people toward the ministry, providing them with the means for a suitable education. This transitional path for young people was designed to harness their religious zeal and channel it into a properly educated (and orderly) ministry. Eliphalet Pearson declared that "in no age indeed did God ever press ignorance and enthusiasm into his service, either to propagate or defend his truth; but usually selected men of the best talents and education. Nor did the Author of our faith think his disciples qualified to preach his gospel, before they had, during three years, enjoyed the advantage of his

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[96] Menzies Rayner, *A Dissertation Upon Extraordinary Awakenings or Religious Stirs; Conversion, Regeneration, or Change of Heart; Conference Meetings; Extraordinary Gifts in Extempore Prayer; Evangelical Preaching; & C.*, 2nd ed. (Hudson: William E. Norman, 1816), 46-47.

instruction and manner of preaching."[97] The sermons before these meetings touted the

numbers of a growing population as compared to the number of available ministers in a

particular state. They then urged upon listeners (potential donors) that "above all,

thousands of pious young men must be educated for the ministry; and this speedily. A

little more sleep, a little more slumber, and all is lost."[98] The crisis of population growth

hurt the established churches' ability to minister as the nation expanded geographically

and numerically. But passivity in regards to those allowed to preach would not be

allowed, even as they recognized the need for young people to be turned toward the

ministry.

Emergent Paths in the Nineteenth Century

      The American Society for Educating Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry was

reacting to the resurgence of exhortation by young people that occurred in the Second

Great Awakening. This kind of exhortation, though it may have taken on patterned, over-

determined characteristics, is exemplary of what Graff calls an "emergent" path. Graff

states that

> In this period we begin to see the lines leading toward the modern understanding
> of growing up, a picture blurring at its edges with the transitional path. Hallmarks
> of the emergent path include conscious choice and self-direction, a search for
> opportunities including social mobility, the instrumental use of further (especially
> higher) education, and risk-taking in the commercial marketplace. None of these
> characteristics is unprecedented. Nevertheless, they remained atypical before the
> nineteenth century, although they were becoming more common. These
> behaviors look more to the future of growing up than to its past.[99]

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[97] Eliphalet Pearson and American Society for Educating Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry, *A Sermon Delivered in Boston before the American Society for Educating Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry, Oct. 26, 1815*, 28 p. vols. (Andover [Mass.]: Printed by Flagg and Gould, 1815), 8-9.

[98] Pearson and American Society for Educating Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry, 19.

[99] Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*, 32.

In the emergent path, young people generated homiletic energy and exercised homiletic self-determination. Not only did young people take on the activity of preaching in greater numbers, but new themes began to emerge in adult preaching to young people as the nineteenth century progressed. These themes accommodated the shifting social and religious scenes in the late nineteenth century. They also anticipated the trends in preaching to young people in the early twentieth century.

On the frontier, revivalist James McGready was astounded not only with the power of conversions among young people, but also in their ability to participate in the revivals through speaking. When narrating the activity of some young people's conversions, McGready said

> I have likewise stood present, when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus broke into their souls; and to the astonishment of all around them, these little creatures have started to their feet, and told all present their sweet views of the lovely, precious Lord Jesus…to hear them speak upon these subjects, the good language, the good sense, the clear ideas, and the rational, scriptural light in which they spoke, truly amazed me…They spoke upon these subjects beyond what I could have done.[100]

According to McGready, this was out of the ordinary, but was evidence of the work of God. McGready narrates the effectiveness of many nine, ten, eleven, and twelve year-old boys and girls who, after their own conversion, so affect older adults – including their parents – that McGready would say "the conduct of young converts, and especially of such as were but children, fastened more convictions at these times, than all the preaching."[101]

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[100] "A Short Narrative," *The Western Missionary Magazine, and Repository of Religious Intelligence (1803-1805)* (1803): 50.

[101] "A Narrative," *The Western Missionary Magazine, and Repository of Religious Intelligence (1803-1805)* (1803): 101.

Richard McNemar, recounted a meeting in 1801 where

> A boy, from appearance about twelve years old, retired from the stand in time of preaching, under a very extraordinary impression; and having mounted a log, at some distance, and raising his voice, in a very affecting manner, he attracted the main body of the people, in a few minutes. With tears streaming from his eyes, he cried aloud to the wicked, warning them of their danger, denouncing their certain doom, if they persisted in their sins; expressing his love to their souls, and desire that they would turn to the Lord, and be saved. He was held up by two men, and spoke for about an hour, with that convincing eloquence that could only be inspired from above. When his strength seemed quite exhausted, and language failed to describe the feelings of his soul, he raised his hand, and dropping his handkerchief, wet with sweat from his little face, cried out: 'Thus, O sinner! shall you drop into hell, unless you forsake your sins and turn to the Lord.' At that moment some fell, like those who are shot in battle, and the work spread in a manner which human language cannot describe.[102]

Of these particularly younger speakers, Ted Smith observes that

> Children might not have been able to get behind official pulpits. But children could and did climb up on benches, tree stumps, and the shoulders of adults. And a child could always speak from the spot she made sacred by falling on it in conviction of sin and then watering it with her tears. Because these sites had been sanctioned by the speech of ordained ministers and other adults, children could speak from them with a measure of authority.[103]

Not only was physical space open to them, but "Revival practices also opened up *rhetorical* space for child exhorters. The genre of exhortation provided a well-established form of authoritative speech that children could perform."[104] These temporary authoritative material and rhetorical spaces opened up an emergent path for young people, but others found these experiences to be more lasting.

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[102] Richard McNemar and Shakers. Presbytery of Springfield (Ohio). *The Kentucky Revival; or, a Short History of the Late Extraordinary Outpouring of the Spirit of God, in the Western States of America, Agreeably to Scripture Promises, and Prophecies Concerning the Latter Day: With a Brief Account of the Entrance and Progress of What the World Calls Shakerism, among the Subjects of the Late Revival in Ohio and Kentucky. Presented to the True Zion-Traveller, as a Memorial of the Wilderness Journey* (Joplin, Missouri,: College Press, 1974), 26.

[103] Ted A. Smith, "Out of the Mouths of Babes: Exhortation by Children and the Great Revival in Kentucky." *Practical Matters* 2 (2009), http://practicalmattersjournal.org/issue/2/analyzing-matters/out-of-the-mouths-of-babes (accessed September 3, 2010).

[104] Smith, "Out of the Mouths of Babes: Exhortation by Children and the Great Revival in Kentucky."

Rather than participate in extensive training for ministry at one of the flagship

theological schools, many young people who were filled with the enthusiasm of the

frontier revivals chose to exercise the freedom they found in their own preaching en route

(expectedly or unexpectedly) to more formal ministries. There is perhaps no more

prominent example of a young preacher in this time than that of Methodist Peter

Cartwright. In 1801, when Cartwright was sixteen, he attended a wedding with his

family, which gave rise to great consternation over his faith. Cartwright attended a camp

meeting not far from his home where "the power of God was wonderfully displayed;

scores of sinners fell under the preaching, like men slain in mighty battle; Christians

shouted aloud for joy. To this meeting I repaired, a guilty, wretched sinner. On the

Saturday evening of said meeting, I went, with weeping multitudes, and bowed before the

stand, and earnestly prayed for mercy."[105] Cartwright's prayer was answered and he

frequented camp meetings. At one meeting, in the midst of a gathering for prayer,

Cartwright debated and deposed a Jewish man who challenged the Christian faith. Upon

Cartwright's victory, "several of our mourners were converted, and we all rose and

started into camp at the top of our speed, shouting, having, as we firmly believed,

obtained a signal victory over the devil and the Jew."[106]

Cartwright's victory did not go unnoticed. That same year (1802), Cartwright

unexpectedly received his license to exhort. He said

> I had not been talked to by the preacher, nor had I formally attempted to exhort.
> It is true, in class and other meetings, when my soul was filled with the love of
> God, I would mount a bench and exhort with all the power I had; and it is also
> true that my mind had been deeply exercised about exhorting and preaching too. I
> told Brother Walker I did not want license to exhort; that if I did not feel happy I

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[105] Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1956), 38.

[106] Cartwright, 51.

could not exhort, but if my soul got happy I felt that I had license enough. He urged me to keep the license, alleging that it was the more orderly way, and I yielded to his advice.[107]

Later that same year, Cartwright at age seventeen was given the duty to form a circuit when his family moved. All the while wrestling with his call, the young Cartwright preached and accomplished his charge.

Young people preached among African American communities as well. Though there was no active revival at the time of Charles T. Walker's youth, he nonetheless began his preaching career before a formal education and any type of licensing. Walker was baptized at fifteen years old and "from the time of his conversion, young Walker was an active and zealous Christian, and at once became prominently identified with every branch of church work--the prayer meeting, the Sunday school and the preaching service. He had not been long converted before he was deeply impressed with the thought that he was called of God to preach the gospel."[108] After a few years of schooling, he was officially licensed to preach at age eighteen and ordained at nineteen. Walker became fairly well known "as a preacher in and around Augusta. Possessing a fair knowledge of the Bible, and at all times an earnest and enthusiastic speaker, the people literally crowded to hear the "boy preacher," as the Rev. C. T. Walker, on account of his age and youthful appearance, was called for a good many years after he entered the ministry."[109] Walker went on to have a very successful ministry, becoming known as the "black Spurgeon" on account of his eloquence and power in the pulpit.

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[107] Cartwright, 51.

[108] Silas Xavier Floyd and others, "Life of Charles T. Walker, D.D. ("The Black Spurgeon") Pastor Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, New York City," ([Chapel Hill, N.C.]: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001). http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/floyd/menu.html.

[109] Floyd and others.

Young women of this era, even within the more permissive frontier revival context, consistently toed the line of authorized speech. For instance, Rebecca Chaney Miller "struggled with 'deep anxiety and sorrow' after feeling called to preach at the young age of only sixteen, but when she attended her first camp meeting, she finally overcame her 'diffidence in public speaking.'"[110] Being young and a woman presented a double boundary to break through in terms of physical and rhetorical spaces to speak. African American women would have faced even another layer of limitation in their speech practices. Some managed to speak with authority by virtue of their marriage to clergymen. Others labored under more contentious conditions. Catherine Brekus records five women preachers in the nineteenth century under the age of twenty when they are first mentioned in historical material, including Sarah Hedges (18), Rebecca Chaney Miller (16), Fanney Newell (16), Hannah Pearce Reeves (19), and Sarah Righter Major (18).[111] In these instances, women worked to forge the emerging path that Graff characterizes as "an intricate, highly contradictory process that remade home, family, childhood and adolescence, and womanhood itself…From new modes of child rearing to more advanced, formal preparation for conducting and exercising the responsibilities and powers of 'women's sphere,' this route was filled with conflicts and wrought massive transformations."[112] Through preaching, these women challenged not only the assumptions about who was authorized to preach, but also, as Graff says, what it meant to be young and female.

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[110] Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims : Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845*, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 142.

[111] Brekus, 344-346.

[112] Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*, 71.

Finally, the major themes of adult preachers in the latter half of the nineteenth century belied major transitions in preaching, culture, and the perceived religious needs of young people. These emergent themes anticipated themes that would continue into the twentieth century. According to O.C. Edwards, "the Romantic preaching of liberal orthodoxy helped American Protestants to adjust to the great social change of the years after the Civil War, that of moving from an agricultural to an industrial society. Horace Bushnell, Henry Ward Beecher, and Phillips Brooks all were concerned with the social problems they saw…but they were too involved in the rise of middle-class Victorian culture and an urban, industrial economy to identify the characteristic evils they entailed."[113]

Emergent themes can be seen as early as Ebenezer Hebard's 1814 sermon which is an exposition of Proverbs 22.1: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."[114] While Hebard preserves a plain-style form, he leaves behind his text almost immediately in favor of extolling the virtues of making for oneself "a good name." A good name is found by moral choices and the formation of character. Forming character through moral choice becomes an almost ubiquitous refrain through the emergent preaching of this era. In 1845 Rev. Mark Trafton published a sermon on *The Duties and Responsibilities of Young Men* in which he outlined that "progressive improvement is stamped upon humanity by its great author. Each has his line of being to attend and improve…God expects, and humanity demands

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[113] Edwards, 648.

[114] Ebenezer Hebard, *A Sermon Delivered at Brandon, Lord's Day, October 23, A.D. 1814 Designed More Especially for the Benefit of the Youth*, 14 p. vols. (Rutland [Vt.]: Printed by Fay & Davison, 1814).

that he leave it in a better condition than he found it, improved, and advanced."[115] This is

quite a different expectation than the early piety demanded of young people in the

eighteenth century.

So are the exhortations of Samuel Barrett to not be "neglectful of health;" to

attend to "what becomes them in the presence of their superiors;" to "stay much at

home," which "is the nursery of nearly all the virtues" (certainly under the influence of

Bushnell); to understand "the nature and prerequisites of true freedom;" and to not be

"misled by wrong ideas of what is manly," among other admonitions.[116] Howard

Crosby's 1866 series of three sermons entitled *Social Hints for Young Christians* leaves

behind the exhortations of Puritan preaching to high standards of moral life.[117] Crosby

talked about humanity as a social creature and placed young people within that social

setting, addressed the need for appropriate understandings of conversation, and helped

young people explore the proper place of amusements in their lives.

The preaching of Henry Ward Beecher and Washington Gladden represent the

emergent themes full-blown. Beecher's *Lectures to Young Men*, first preached in 1844,

were preached on Sunday nights to large crowds in Indianapolis. The titles of the

lectures are suggestive of the new themes: "Industry and Idleness," "Twelve Causes of

Dishonesty," "Gamblers and Gambling," "Practical Hints," "Vulgarity," and "Happiness"

are among a few of the titles in which Beecher addressed young people in a new social

situation. The rapidly urbanizing, increasingly independent young men would be helped

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[115] Mark Trafton, "The Duties and Responsibilities of Young Men," *The American Pulpit* 1, no. 5 (1845): 104.

[116] Samuel Barrett, *Youths Void of Understanding a Discourse Delivered in the Twelfth Congregational Church, Boston, on the First Sunday of March* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, and Co., 1857).

[117] Howard Crosby, *Social Hints for Young Christians in Three Sermons*, 56 p. ; 18 cm. vols. (New York: Broughton & Wyman, 1866).

by "warning them against the moral dangers of life in the city."[118] Beecher's three hundred plus pages cautioned against laziness while advocating industriousness, outlined social graces, cautioned young men about brothels and other enticing amusements, and advocated the social practices which should lead to happiness.

Gladden's *Myrrh and Cassia: Two Discourses to Young Men and Women* plant the seeds of the Social Gospel in the twentieth century.[119] To the young men, Gladden bemoaned "the great decrease in family life, especially in our cities…Many of the social conditions resulting from the introduction of the large system of industry – the aggregation of capital and the congregation of laborers are injurious to morals."[120] In the midst of the new conditions the young men faced, Gladden encouraged them to attain high moral improvement and the "opportunities of mental improvement, such as no generation ever had [which] are within your reach…take responsible places in business and in the professions…to do battle in the van of all right causes; to wait upon the Lord in all holy ministries."[121] To young women, Gladden attacked those who portray "the kind of life that a young woman ought to live [which] is summed up in one word – uselessness…That is about the estimate of women held by many men; and it goes without saying that it is an estimate readily accepted by the indolence and selfishness of many women."[122] Gladden paved a new way forward first by simply addressing young women with an entire sermon, and secondly by championing womanhood as powerful and godly.

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[118] Edwards, 635.

[119] Washington Gladden, *Myrrh and Cassia Two Discourses to Young Men and Women*, 32 p. ; 20 cm. vols. (Columbus, O.: A.H. Smythe, 1883).

[120] Gladden, 5.

[121] Gladden, 12.

[122] Gladden, 22.

Gladden advocates women's education and work while arguing against viewing women as simply objects of beauty to placate men's desires.

Conclusion

Nineteenth century preaching provides a backdrop for the sea changes that occurred among America's young people. Preaching in this era reflected and shaped how young people constructed their identity. While some of the preaching stayed on traditional paths with respect to young people, transitional and emergent paths indicated a growing concern not only for young people's salvation, but also their place within society. The explosion of Sunday Schools and their literature carved out a niche in the church's relationship to young people that would gradually increase as the nineteenth century concluded and the twentieth century dawned. The preaching characteristic of these paths also indicate young people's attention to their own (self-)perception and awareness of their homiletic agency. The preaching of the nineteenth century was increasingly diverse in style, substance, and in persons who performed it as young women and African Americans of both genders used their voices for preaching. The twentieth century will also show changes in how young people related to preaching, as the age of the modern adolescent dawned.

Moves to the Margins in the Early Twentieth Century

If young people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries embodied a variety of engagement with preaching, both as listener and preacher, the first fifty years of the twentieth century paint a picture of movement away from those forms of diversity.

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While preaching to young people and young people preaching continue in the twentieth century, there were significant changes. The way people thought about growing up in America revolutionized as "the era of the adolescent dawned in Europe and America in the two decades after 1900."[123] The seeds of new themes in preaching from the nineteenth century converged with innovative trends in preaching to display an unrivaled confidence in young people. A major development occurred as religious education began to drive homiletic thinking about young people. As the influence of religious education increased, young people's homiletic agency diminished. The emergent path characterized by young people exercising increased homiletic self-determination would not blossom into a norm. Instead, in this era a positive image of young people was being preached while cultural images of young people were trending towards ambivalence. It is impossible to grasp any of these shifts, however, without understanding the shifts in thinking about adolescence in the early twentieth century.

Cultural Changes

The "era of the adolescent," as Kett calls it, was inaugurated through shifts in the cultural imaginary of Americans. According to Kett, three major academic, social and cultural shifts contributed to twentieth century constructions of the adolescent, all of which are inter-related: (1) the development of a psychological focus on adolescents, (2) new social and economic policies which determined adolescent roles, and (3) the pursuit of adolescents through the market.[124]

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[123] Kett, 215.

[124] Kett, 215-272.

The first of these shifts, in the field of psychology, was taken up by many, but perhaps no more influential than G. Stanley Hall's *Adolescence*, published in 1904. According to Kett, Hall portrayed "adolescent experience as torn by dualisms which disrupted the harmony of childhood; hyperactivity and inertia, social sensibility and self-absorption, lofty intuitions and childish folly…Hall insisted that the misbehavior and eccentricities of young people be viewed as normal outgrowths of biological maturation rather than as inexcusable departures from a fixed standard of behavior."[125] The latter statement is of great importance: Hall affixed significant character traits to the biology of adolescents. This served as a first step in normalizing expectations of adolescents. Hall's thoughts were not necessarily original. In fact, according to Kett, "Hall's ideas about adolescence were just a culmination of concepts that had flourished in less systematic form for much of the 19th century," including the thought that adolescents experienced a significant disruption and almost inevitable radical change at puberty.[126] Hall's work brought together science and religion, and placed young people at the center of research as subjects. Threads of this kind of research are discernable in later work on adolescents such as the developmental psychology of Erikson.

The drive to understand and manage burgeoning social-scientific views of the adolescent found their way into the social and economic policy of the early twentieth century. Adolescent populations declined (due to decreasing family size) in the first two decades of the twentieth century and the Great Depression made employment scarce for young people in the 1930s. National labor laws were enacted which encouraged businesses to hire adults. Public high schools became increasingly well attended due to

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[125] Kett, 217.

[126] Kett, 221.

compulsory education laws. Young people were gathered together in age-graded schools rather than in the adult workforce. Franklin Roosevelt's 1935 act to establish the National Youth Administration "trumpet[ed] the motto 'Youth Must Be Served,'" and launched a host of initiatives (backed by $50 million) that sought to put young people into places of education and managed labor.[127] These social and economic policies placed young people into managed spaces and, according to the not-so subtle language of Roosevelt's motto, transformed young people from producers into consumers.

As the Depression ended and World War II dawned, many young people had more free time and more disposable income. Eugene Gilbert's efforts to market products specifically to young people eventually found great success.[128] Magazines, automobiles, movies, fashion, and music established the empire found in contemporary youth cultures. Young people were dramatically less likely to be producers of goods and services (menial service jobs for adolescents developed later in the twentieth century) and more likely to either consume them or have the desire to consume them. The relationship between market and adolescents emerged as a driving force in the American economy in the first half of the twentieth century. The three major segments of the cultural imaginary (psychology, social and economic policy, marketing) also affected young people's relationship with preaching.

Adult Preaching to Young People in the Early Twentieth Century

In the same way that a decline in available preaching materials is evident in the transition from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, the number of available sermon

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[127] Grace Palladino, *Teenagers : An American History* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1996), 39.

[128] See Palladino, 97-115.

materials in the twentieth century is symptomatic of the socio-cultural changes explored above. Relatively few sermons or collections of sermons are available in the first few years of the twentieth century. In the years surrounding the Great Depression, however, there seems to have been a resurgence in writing, preaching, and publishing sermons for young people. The influence of the work of Hall, Roosevelt's "Youth Must Be Served," and the conditions in which many young people lived undoubtedly prompted preachers to attend to the young people of the nation through preaching in the 1930s.

The preaching of the 1930s and 1940s exuded confidence in young people. Preachers addressed young people concerning the progress of the era, social issues, character formation, and linked together country, work, and education. For some, modernism and fundamentalism surface as important issues that could affect young people. Sermons combined aspects of the Romantic and Social Gospel preaching of the earlier era with the influence of Harry Emerson Fosdick's preaching method. Frank Fagerburg, for instance, said that young people "are certainly thinking and asking significant questions, sometimes very disturbing questions…Young people's questions must be faced as candidly as they are asked."[129] Indeed, all of Fagerburg's sermons were titled as questions and respond to questions prompted by young people. In addressing the question "Do Things Work Together for Good?," Fagerburg decried "any attempt to soften the horrors of these Depression days. Their results are terrible beyond words. But of this I am certain – thousands of lives are going to come through like gold from the refiner's fire, with character strengthened and values made clear in the testing. There will

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[129] Frank Benjamin Fagerburg, *This Questioning Age, Sermons Preached to Young People*, The Judson Press Sermons (Philadelphia, Boston [etc.]: The Judson Press, 1936), i.

be men and women stronger than they ever have been."[130] In the face of the Depression

Fagerburg attempted to link the hard times young people experienced to a text

complicated by young people.

Similarly, others characterize optimistic views of young people. George Crapullo

noted in 1936 that

> Youth is on the march. Victims of an unprecedented period of hardship and
> insecurity, they have been plunged into the grim realization that all is not well
> with the world. The carefree, light-hearted, pleasure-seeking youth of the jazz
> age of yesterday have been supplanted by the serious-minded youth of the
> depression era, who are bent on doing something about the conditions that have
> made them the 'lost generation.' They are on the march to discover new ideals
> and new ways of living. They are in earnest.[131]

This kind of adult optimism in the character of young people was closely tied to the

future of the United States. Crapullo preached that "youth is demanding a new order of

life and they will get it, because of their convictions. The beliefs they hold now will

make the nation of tomorrow."[132] Daniel Poling, a national radio preacher, published a

collection of his radio addresses to young people. Poling declared of young people's

resolve at an international gathering of the youth organization Christian Endeavor, that

"for the first time in Christian Endeavor history, peace resolutions were written and

unanimously adopted…In every audience and with every group – with pacifists and non-

pacifists, with the young and with the old – the plan has been received with

enthusiasm."[133]

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[130] Fagerburg, 89.

[131] George A. Crapullo, *Messages to Modern Youth* (New York [etc.]: Fleming H. Revell company, 1936),
7. Some of Crapullo's sermons were also framed as responses to young people's questions.

[132] Crapullo, 23.

Poling's triumphalistic title, *Youth Marches!*, is matched by others such as *Keys to Conquest*, in which Gaston Foote compares Jesus to a football player and encourages young people's self-determination and ambition.[134] W.B. Riley also exhibits such confidence with his collection of sermons entitled *Youth's Victory Lies This Way*.[135] While Riley's emphasis on young people as the future of church and nation is evident, he brings another dynamic to preaching to young people. Even though Riley advocates redeeming work for young people and speaks about the trials of the Great Depression, his sermons are rife with polemic against the evils of modernism, both theological and political. He speaks of "'The Revolt of Youth' [which is] for the most part…wholly unorganized. It is the product of and accentuated by, liberal theology, loose morals, ill-

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[133] Daniel A. Poling, *Youth Marches!* (Philadelphia, Boston [etc.]: The Judson press, 1937), 95. For more on Poling, see Spencer Miller, Jr., "Radio and Religion," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 177, no. (1935); "Religion: Air Worship," *Time*1931. The development of national radio broadcasts of preaching to young people is significant. To this point, however, nothing has been said about Christian Endeavor, of which Poling was a former president. This voluntary youth society, begun in the late 19th century, became one in which much confidence about young people's religious nature was placed. Its growth and youth leadership were supposedly markers of robust religious growth among young people. It was viewed with success. Francis Clark observed of Christian Endeavor that "a happy trend of the times is the tendency to manage Christian work by business methods, to introduce the plans of the counting-house and the factory, spiritualized and adapted to the work of Christ, into the church and her agencies. This tendency is especially seen in the training of the young and in all the methods of Christian nurture. Earnest pastors have long felt the necessity of revivifying and quickening the young people's prayer-meeting, of setting the young people at work as soon as they come into the Christian life, of utilizing their force and energy in all its freshness and vigor." Francis E. Clark, "An Organized Revival among the Young," *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly* XVII, no. June, 1892, No. CII (1892): 573. Young people's religious inclinations and nurture (an overt reference to Bushnell), according to Clark, were to be "managed" through Christian Endeavor. By all accounts, this was an effective device to do so, but effectively separated young people on account of their age and minimized their ecclesial presence (though it is celebrated by Clark and, later, Poling) through adult "management." Organizations like Christian Endeavor placed young people in leadership roles that could be effectively managed by adults. The impact of their declarations was, at best, trivial, as seen in Poling's record of a decision concerning peace which was lauded by adults.

[134] Gaston Foote, *Keys to Conquest; Inspirational Addresses to Young People* (New York [etc.]: Fleming H. Revell company, 1933). This is quite a departure from the Puritan warnings to young people about games of the field. His sermons also intersect, at times, with the theology of "Muscular Christianity."

[135] W. B. Riley, *Youth's Victory Lies This Way* (Grand Rapids, Mich.,: Zondervan Pub. House, 1936).

advised luxury, and parental slackness."[136] He encourages faith in the integrity of the

Bible while discouraging the evils of evolutionary thought and all forms of communism.

The battle for young people's religious commitment was also the battle against the

temptations of modernist thought. Young people became a foil for arguments against

liberal thought.

Religious Education Eclipses Homiletics

The literature of religious education in the early twentieth century anticipates the

disciplinary divides seen in the contemporary literature. In this literature, advice on

religious education encompasses instruction to pastors on preaching to young people.

Bushnell's *Christian Nurture*, the advent of psychology, the institutionalization of

Sunday School, and movements to education all provided fertile ground for religious

education as a discipline to speak authoritatively to preachers.[137] It is here then, that

religious education begins to instruct homiletics on the best practices for preaching to

young people.

Paul Morris, writing on the role of religious education in winning young people to

Christ, directed: "Speak the language of youth and of the particular age of youth with

which you are dealing. This necessitates some knowledge of psychology. It is

sometimes a mistake of age to attempt to talk to youth in the terminology of a past

generation which is utterly foreign to his thinking…One who seeks to lead youth to

Christian decision must know the language of youth and interpret the religious experience

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[136] Riley, 30.

[137] The Religious Education Association, for instance, was formed in 1903. See also Harry Thomas Stock, *Church Work with Young People* (Boston, Chicago,: The Pilgrim press, 1929), 1-15.

in terms that they will comprehend."[138] Furthermore, the pastor functioned as a "youth

evangelist" who "with his superior understanding of the workings of the Spirit of God in

the hearts of youth…has an unequaled opportunity and responsibility for leading youth to

Christ."[139] Morris went on to describe, in psychological terms, the particular needs of

young men and women according to the different stages of their ages.

Harry Stock advocated a move toward more substantive periods of worship within

the church's educational program. He suggested

> both in the morning session of the church school and in the evening society or
> club meeting, provision should be made for a fifteen or twenty minute worship
> service. This should be a unit in itself, complete and separate…All the details
> ought to be so completely arranged that there are no loose ends requiring last
> minute attention. Worship is an art; a slight flaw may spoil the entire effect. The
> period of worship should prepare the heart and mind and will for that resolution
> which it is hoped will result from the teaching and discussion.[140]

Among the elements of worship in these programs Stock wanted two elements: (1) talks

and (2) stories. According to Stock, "talks are frequently a part of the worship service

but they should seldom be regarded as the major element. The person who is to give the

talk should understand that his time is very limited, and that his presentation is to relate

itself to the theme of the service and to that which precedes and follows. A five- or ten-

minute talk in the usual Sunday morning period is all that should be expected."[141]

Interestingly, Stock placed "stories" within the framework of worship as well, and

characterized them in this way: "Stories, well read or told, are often more effective than

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[138] Paul Judson Morris, *Winning Youth for Christ* (Philadelphia, Boston [etc.]: The Judson press, 1930), 18.

[139] Morris, 13.

[140] Stock, 93-94.

[141] Stock, 101.

addresses or sermonettes. Great care should be taken in the selection of materials. 'Sob stuff' must be avoided."[142]

In a section entitled "The Pastor and His Young People," Stock accounted for the difficulty of the full worship service and preaching to a congregation of diverse ages. Stock advised the pastor to account for young people in sermon preparation, and visualized the particular needs of a young person named "John Jones." Stock asked:

> But what about John Jones? What change needs to be made in the sermon for him? It will not be necessary to dilute the message; it may be necessary to simplify it or to couch it in terms which correspond with his present experience. There will need to be a certain concreteness which finds illustration in the realm of young life as well as adulthood…This will not be talking down to youth; it will merely be a recognition that they are there – or ought to be. Such an ability to include young people within the range of the sermon thought and yet not to single them out for extended special treatment, and also to lift their minds to truths which they cannot yet fully comprehend but about which they should be thinking, will be in no small measure a result of the pastor's constant contacts with young life.[143]

In Stock's statement, the religious educator begins to give direction to pastors about the kind of homiletic that is most effective in relating to young people. And for Stock, there were four types of young people to reach: "rebels," "idealists," "drifters," and the "perplexed."[144]

There is also an indication of the management of the voice of young people through allowing them measured, safe homiletic space. Stock, in directing the pastor about evening services which could be a combination of adults and young people, said "young people share in the pulpit responsibility at some of the evening meetings;

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[142] Stock, 101.

[143] Stock, 194-195.

[144] Stock, 210-216. Here again, the dichotomy of dangerous/beautiful exists in a classificatory system.

probably more young people have had their interest turned to full-time Christian service because of such experiences than by any other single method of church work."[145] Young people's pulpit responsibility is limited by the nomenclature of "full-time Christian service;" in other words, young people's speech is not yet adult or as effective as that of someone engaged in full-time ministry.

The preacher also received direction from the religious educator in Nevin Harner's *Youth Work in the Church*.[146] Throughout the book, Harner described youth as a prize to be won and held, and the religious education program of the church was the means by which this could be accomplished. Harner addressed the worship service of the church and its need to gain attendance by youth (momentarily excluding the sermon), saying "if they find it dull and uninspiring, or monotonously the same every Sunday, or shot through with concepts and language which they do not understand, of course they will not come and continue to come. How can we make our church services so attractive and meaningful and helpful to our young people that they will attend and participate gladly?"[147] This sentiment is new among the literature surveyed so far; Harner sensed some competition for the attention of young people and wanted to re-compose the liturgical elements of the church service in such a way that they would be attractive.

Harner devoted an entire section to "Preaching to Young People." For Harner "the attractiveness of a church service to youth – still using the word in the best sense –

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[145] Stock, 195-196.

[146] Nevin Cowger Harner, *Youth Work in the Church* (New York,: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942).

[147] Harner, 91. Interestingly, this work comes out at the leading edge of the years Palladino calls "the advertising age."

will hinge to a considerable degree upon the sermon."[148] In this section, Harner the

religious educator successfully eclipsed the homiletician when he asked, "What is good

preaching to young people?" Harner divided his observations into two categories: (1)

content and (2) form. The preacher who successfully manages content will "build a

bridge of words across the gap which separates them [meaning, doctrines and the issues

of youth] so that spiritual help and strength can march out of our ancient Christian faith

straight into the needy lives of youth today."[149]

The more difficult matter, according to Harner, was form. In order to understand

the form of successful preaching to young people, Harner performed a type of homiletic

analysis on a book of sermons to young people that includes preachers such as Harry

Emerson Fosdick and Halford Luccock.[150] Harner counted the number of illustrations in

each sermon, the clarity of its structure through number of divisions, use of humor, and

any distinguishing uses of language. Upon his observations, Harner concluded that the

most successful characteristics of preaching to youth were:

1. A rather free use of illustrations.
2. A clear-cut structure, easy to follow and easy to remember.
3. A speedy beginning, which enlists interest and gets at the heart of the matter quickly without the tedium of a long-drawn-out introduction.
4. Pungent phrases, which rivet attention and stand to be remembered.
5. A considerable understanding of what youth are thinking, what they are saying, and what they are worrying about.[151]

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[148] Harner, 96.

[149] Harner, 97.

[150] Sidney A. Weston, ed. *Sermons I Have Preached to Young People* (Boston, Chicago: The Pilgrim Press, 1931).

[151] Harner, 99-100. This train of through continues later in Leslie Conrad, "Preaching to Young People," *Lutheran Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1957): 144-150.

Harner summed up his understanding of this activity in this way: "Here, then, is a beginning at least of the science of preaching and speaking to youth."[152] This turn of phrase shows that Harner initiated, through a religious educator's eyes, that which determines good preaching among young people.

Harner also suggested the measured use of young people to determine the direction of regular preaching. According to Harner, "the preacher can consult with his young people from time to time about the themes upon which they would like to have him preach. This is not to imply that they know more than he does concerning theology, or concerning the art of sermonizing; but they know more than he does about their own problems, upon which they would like to receive help from him who is their spiritual guide."[153] This was careful management of the space and authority of young people (quite different from incorporating their voices into sermons as in earlier eras). While they did not know more than the preacher on issues of theology and preaching, they did know about their own lives. Harner set young people up as a focus group designed to help the preacher find material that appealed to young people in order that they would attend church services.

As religious education as a discipline emerged, it asserted its own homiletic voice as far as young people are concerned. Homiletic literature in the 1950's, such as H. Grady Davis' *Design for Preaching* (considered the first contemporary homiletic textbook, and who makes no mention of young people) appears to have ceded this ground

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[152] Harner, 100.

[153] Harner, 101. Compare with the contemporary "roundtable" approaches of John McClure and Lucy Rose which concede much more authority to all on both the issues of theology and preaching.

to the religious educators.[154] Regardless, young people in this literature are conceived in a way that characterizes them as homiletically passive subjects to be reached and managed. In this, the contemporary formulations of the passive adolescent listener are formed. This does not mean, however, that they ceased their roles as speakers in significant ways.

Young Preachers in the Early Twentieth Century

Young preachers in the early twentieth century were increasingly encouraged to pursue paths toward respectable, formal Christian ministries. As we have seen, Stock showed how young people's preaching was one of, if not the best way to turn young people toward full-time Christian ministry. The effect of this preaching on the religious communities in which it was performed is not mentioned, however. Young people's exhortation was not celebrated in the same manner as it had been in the frontier revivals. Rather than a celebrated but limited ecstatic occurrence, young people who showed promise for preaching were directed toward formal education and ministerial training.

R.N. Hogan, an African-American in the Church of Christ tradition, experienced the combination of an apprentice and educational model. Hogan,

> born 30 November 1902, in Monroe Country, Arkansas…went at age fourteen to live with the Bowser family [an African-American preacher and school principal] in order to go to Silver Point Christian [School]. Bowser took Hogan with him on preaching tours and gave him opportunities to preach. Soon Hogan became known as the 'boy evangelist' and converted over seventy people in his first three years of preaching. Bowser schooled Hogan thoroughly in the art of preaching, and Hogan mastered the creative synthesis of the rational and black preaching traditions that Bowser taught.[155]

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[154] Henry Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958).

Though Hogan had a large number of converts through his preaching, the situations and style of his preaching were managed by his mentor G.P. Bowser. In addition, the moniker "boy evangelist" signified that Hogan was doing something unusual for someone of his age. As such, the number of conversions attributed to his preaching was a number worthy of recording.

Mary G. Evans experienced a similar set of circumstances. Bettye Collier-Thomas records of Evans, a young African American woman born in 1891, that she felt called to preach at age twelve and preached for the first time in 1903.[156] Like the nickname given to Hogan, Evans was "dubbed the 'girl preacher,' [and] she was highly praised for her sermonic discourses. At fourteen, she received her local preacher's license at the AME District Quarterly Conference…She labored as a licensed preacher for one year, before entering the Indiana AME Conference under Bishop C.T. Shaffer."[157] Only a short time later, she felt the need to be educated to serve in ministry and entered theological studies at Payne Theological Seminary, graduating at age twenty and entering full-time ministry.

Among African-Americans and whites, women and men, this emerges as a common pattern in the twentieth century. Young people are encouraged to preach

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[155] Michael W. Casey, *Saddlebags, City Streets, and Cyberspace : A History of Preaching in the Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: A·C·U Press, 1995), 140. The apprenticeship model, most prominent in African American and Latino/a preaching traditions, will continue to be an important way that young people engage preaching into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and one that holds potential for the kind of liberative and formative processes I describe in chapters four through six.

[156] Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder : Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850-1979* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 148.

[157] Collier-Thomas, 148.

through carefully managed preaching opportunities, then take up more education through apprenticeship and/or formal education.

Conclusion

Young people's relationship with preaching through American history is one of varied experiences. Prior to the emergence of the more recent idea of the passive teenage listener who needs to be reached through special means, young people have championed preaching, spoken through adult preaching, spoken themselves, and have been continuously entangled in American preaching. Preaching has helped shape conceptualizations of young people. They have been characterized as sinners who endanger themselves and society. Conversely they have been depicted as the brightest hope of the church and world. Young people have spoken back to preaching in important ways as much as preaching has spoken to them.[158] Young people's historical relationship with preaching calls into question the lack of inclusion and involvement of youth in the contemporary relationship, and calls forth a theological and ethical foundation that can more appropriately fund their relationship with preaching. The next chapter seeks to explore the ways that the relationship between young people and preaching, characterized by the trajectories emerging at the beginning of the twentieth century, continue to ossify and become fixed in distinctly different, yet related literatures.

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[158] Even at this early juncture, it is important to point toward some ways that the homiletic history of adolescence functions not simply as an informative narrative that breaks up an ontological account of adolescence, but rather a historical narrative that can inform contemporary preaching practices. For instance, as early preachers specifically addressed the young components of their audiences, preachers might also seek to address young people as a particular audience-within-an-audience. Or preachers might decide to incorporate the speech of youth into their sermons as valued homiletic speech. Collections of sermons specifically for young people may also be appealing – not necessarily in book form, but rather in easily accessible formats (i.e. digital video or audio formats). Of course, encouraging young people's speech as preachers and including it among voices that hold the potential to instruct and revive ecclesial communities is certainly among the most important, as I will argue below.

Chapter III

Adolescents and Homiletics: A Tenuous Relationship

In contemporary homiletical literature, and in churches today, the relationship between preaching and adolescent youth is a tenuous one at best. Even as adolescents populate weekly worship services and stand in pulpits across North America, their homiletic activity (either as listeners or as preachers) receives meager reflection in literature concerned with either preaching or adolescents. The contemporary disposition is one of concession to a historical process charted in chapter two, whereby religious education assumed the functions of education, moral exhortation, and spiritual formation previously maintained by preaching. Although there has been no deliberate program to exclude young people, this chapter will explore how preaching and homiletics has maintained and perpetuated this alienated relationship with adolescents.[1] I will argue that this has largely occurred through tacit capitulation to a form of ontological adolescence. I will show how public images of adolescents have been incorporated into the work of (1) mainline denominational, and university-based homiletics and (2) youth ministry literature on preaching. This chapter will also take account of how the literature of childhood studies, childhood studies in religion, critical youth studies, and recent scholarship in the religious education of youth helpfully reframe the public images of adolescents and their religiosity, but are not concerned with homiletic theory and

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[1] Though the distinction between "preaching" and "homiletics" can be false, I mean that preaching is the practice of gathered listeners and preacher while homiletics is the disciplinary reflection on that practice. Thus I am interested in how adolescents are depicted in their relationship to preaching as a practice as well as how they relate to homiletics as a discipline.

practice. Understanding that homiletic discourse is rooted in wider claims about the tasks

of practical theology, the chapter will also explore, as a necessary byproduct, the

ramifications of the current relationship of adolescents and homiletics for practical

theology.

Ontological Adolescence in the Literature

It is important to understand the ways that ontological adolescence takes shape in

these literatures. In order to do so, I will define that concept as it specifically relates to

homiletics here. These literatures take an essentializing perspective about the *homiletical*

characteristics of young people. In speaking of discourse on children, Joyce Ann Mercer

identifies "an 'essentialized,' homogenized view of childhood as a generic age-defined

human status occurring in some natural and pre-social form separable from the effects of

its construction in a given historical and social context."[2] The materials I will examine

below tend toward homiletical appropriation of this definition. When youth are discussed

in regard to preaching, the literature is controlled by essentialized notions of youth where

they are depicted without any attention to history or context. A picture of youth emerges

that narrowly focuses on their need for homiletic formation, controlled by universalized

characterizations about their nature and experiences. We will see that young people are

characterized as lacking proper listening skills for preaching, that they are unable to

discern among competing religious ideas, that they are unable to talk about religion in

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[2] Joyce Mercer, *Welcoming Children : A Practical Theology of Childhood* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2005), 18. Mercer instead argues for a "strategic essentialism" that acknowledges "practical theology's emphasis on the practical effects of discourse, or the notion that our ideas and practices exist in deep co-integration such that the ways that we think and talk about something can produce real and practical effects." As a result, "decisions about the terminology concerning children must be made contextually. We must keep an eye toward the consequences of any particular usage and apply norms that concern whether a given use of terminology about children works toward their flourishing, or in support of their further oppression" (19).

significant ways, and that they are easily bored. Accordingly, the preacher must take responsibility for overcoming these deficiencies. Relying on these essentializations, and the studies that reify them, leads to models of preaching that lack particularity and are thus limited *to* and *by* those characterizations. In response, it is imperative to move beyond the essentializing-formation approach, which will be the focus of chapter four, as I add a liberative dynamic that listens to young people and overcomes oppressive essentializations, all the while maintaining a more complex understanding of formation.

Mainline Denominational, University-Based Homiletics and Adolescents[3]

Toward Listener-Centered Homiletics

Homiletic discourses emerging from mainline denominational and university-based research programs have directed their energy over the past fifty years toward an ever-increasing focus on the listener as an authorized partner for preaching. The story of the shift away from the preacher as sole authority figure has been narrated in different, but equally salient ways. In order to understand the contemporary picture of homiletics and adolescents' place within it, two schemes for categorizing North American homiletics are important.

Lucy Atkinson Rose narrates the role of the listener in North American homiletics through the metaphor of an ever-expanding group of gatherers around a table whose focus is the Christian scriptures. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century North American homiletics, or what she calls "traditional theory," the preacher's task "is to transmit the sermon's truth or message to the congregation…The preacher has some

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[3] I choose university-based and mainline denominational homiletic discourse as a mode of discourse because it has been a location of diverse thought and because it is the primary site of my own training in preaching.

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insight or belief that the congregation needs to understand and accept."[4] The passive role

of the listener shifts very little and the preacher's role decreases significantly in what

Rose calls "kerygmatic theory." According to Rose, in kerygmatic theory, "preaching's

purpose [transmission of the *kerygma* and God speaking as an event] widens the gap

between the preacher and the congregation because of the conviction that in the sermon

God speaks."[5] In more recent years, through what has become known as the New

Homiletic, preaching has focused on the creation of an experience for listeners.[6] Rose

calls the work of the New Homiletic "transformational," by which she means that

listeners are theoretically engaged in active participation with the sermon.[7] Finally for

Rose, "marginal voices" gather around the table where

> the preacher and the congregation stand together as explorers, while a text,
> meaning, or mystery lies on the other side or confronts us as Other. Thus situated,
> we as preachers have no message, gospel, or experience for the congregation to
> receive. In the pulpit we are not senders, and in the pew we are not receivers.
> The fundamental experience of connectedness redescribes the roles of the
> preacher and the worshipers and demands new probes into preaching's whys,
> whats, and hows.[8]

Rose's proposal manages a theological-ethical account of communication theory in North

American homiletics where power for interpretation and communication via the pulpit

has radically shifted its locus of authority.

John S. McClure also proposes a scheme for understanding the preacher/listener

relationship. McClure examines how the authorities for preaching have undergone

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[4] Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word : Preaching in the Roundtable Church*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 15.

[5] Rose, 38.

[6] Rose, 59ff.

[7] Rose, 61.

[8] Rose, 90.

deconstruction through changes in the nature and role of scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. Particularly in his chapter "Exiting the House of Experience," McClure traces the ways that the relationship between preacher and listeners has changed in the North American homiletic tradition.[9] Rooted in a positive attempt to negotiate the religious terrain in the post-World War II era, "the idea that speakers and hearers can link arms and share a common experiential journey toward the meaning of the gospel was essential" for New Homiletic writers.[10] These accounts of preaching have, by and large, carried the day. McClure suggests that

> the insistence by these homileticians on an authentic engagement with one's hearers began as a way to deal with legitimate emerging concerns regarding the potential abuses of power in relation to language and speech. I will argue that the insistence that preaching engage authentic, ordinary experience, while naively universalist in its inception, nonetheless opened homiletics toward an eventual encounter with multiple experiences and with real human bodies, in an effort to contest experiential and ecclesial hegemonies within church and culture.[11]

McClure indicates that post-World War II homiletic thought has been on a trajectory towards ever-widening accounts of experience. The preacher is no longer able to speak authoritatively and universally about human experience with the confidence espoused by the New Homiletic.

Rose and McClure both narrate a significant shift in homiletics. Preachers are finding it necessary to account for real bodies in the pews, because simplistic or universalized accounts of human experience ignore the diversity present in the midst of

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[9] John S. McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching : A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 47-66.

[10] McClure, 48.

[11] McClure, 48.

ecclesial gatherings.[12] Still, in an era abounding in discursive and political movements

attuned to those without agency, adolescents have not garnered the kind of self-

representation, theological attention, or discursive power that others have found in

homiletics. Instead, either silence toward youth or broad stereotypical assumptions

(ontological adolescence) stand in for young people in homiletic literature. In order to

offer a type of homiletic discourse that both builds on and corrects these more recent

trajectories in homiletics, the remainder of this chapter surveys the ways that different

disciplines either ignore adolescents, narrowly construct them in ways that deny

difference and/or agency, or disregards homiletic activity as an important locus of

adolescent religious practice.

Deficient and/or Missing Youth

Typically, adolescent responses to preaching are assumed and sometimes

stereotyped. For instance, Fred Craddock opines, "some of the congregation *especially*

the young people, find the 'points' useful for estimating the hour and minute when the

terminus can be expected. The process is simple arithmetic: time the first point, multiply

that by the number of 'points' announced ('I have three things to say about this matter

this morning'), and one has not only something to anticipate but a fair estimate as to

when to expect it."[13] While Craddock makes the case that the language about "points" in

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[12] See, for instance, the ways the rich texture of human experiences are honored in Kathy Black, *A Healing Homiletic : Preaching and Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996); John S. McClure and Nancy J. Ramsay, *Telling the Truth : Preaching About Sexual and Domestic Violence* (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1998); James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers, *Preaching to Every Pew : Cross-Cultural Strategies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); Christine M. Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance : Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/Knox Press, 1992); Christine M. Smith, *Preaching Justice : Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1998).

sermons is largely unhelpful, adolescents are caught in the middle of the assault that Craddock issues against deductive preaching. Whether they function as the superlative "straw man" who impels preachers toward inductive movement or more seriously as deficient listeners we do not know. But according to Craddock, young people compose an undifferentiated group of homiletical time keepers, awaiting the moment when the preacher resumes his/her seat.

Likewise, in his book *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, Henry Mitchell instructs preachers about rules of preaching for different genres of preaching.[14] Mitchell extols the virtues of concrete images, familiar language, familiar details, and timing. In the midst of his section on familiar language, he states that "genres couched in familiar language help hearers identify with and enter into growth encounters. One of the most effective ways to block the formation of concepts in consciousness is to speak in unfamiliar language."[15] He goes on to say

> This insight is evident in the way some people relate to youth. No matter how old the speaker is, the use of the latest youth lingo will procure her or him a bond with the teenagers. No matter how young the speaker is, the use of what seems to be stilted and strange lingo will result in inattention or being tuned out, for being perceived as 'out of touch.' Familiar language is a way of saying that the speaker identifies with the hearers, whatever the genre being used.[16]

Certainly to an extent, Mitchell is correct. There must be some sort of common language among preacher and young people or communication runs into significant obstacles.

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[13] Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority*, Rev. ed. (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 115. Italics mine.

[14] Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990).

[15] Mitchell, 80.

[16] Mitchell, 81. As far as I can tell, this thought section of the 1990 text did not make it into the revised version of this book in 2009.

According to Mitchell, however, if preachers cannot speak the constantly shifting linguistic practices of adolescents, then no hearing can be gained among them. Furthermore, Mitchell assumes a unified youth culture where adolescents by and large share a common "lingo." The proliferation of linguistic practices among youth presents a very difficult problem for the preacher if this statement is true. At any time the preacher can "hit" or "miss" a particular subgroup of people.

Two commitments undergird Mitchell's statement. The first is Mitchell's use of the term "identify" and "identification." In the modern context, this term was central to the work of the highly influential mid-20th century rhetorician Kenneth Burke. In his work *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke details his rhetorical philosophy.[17] According to Burke, persuasion (the goal of rhetoric) occurs as a condition of the rhetorical situation: "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so."[18] Or stated differently later in the text: "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his."[19] Burke also calls this function of rhetoric "consubstantiality."[20]

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[17] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). This approach to rhetoric and preaching continues particularly in two works: Craig A. Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons That Connect : Effective Communication through Identification* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992) and Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation : Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1999).

[18] Burke, 20.

[19] Burke, 55.

[20] Burke, 20-23.

Mitchell transposes Burke's theory, positing that the preacher can and must move over onto the experiential ground of adolescents which is, if not inferior to adult experience, then at least in a radically different category. Without its use, preaching is ineffective among adolescents. As John McClure observes of homiletic theories influenced by Burke, "the key to successful communication was the discernment and linguistic construction of a common ground of identification between speaker and hearer."[21] Mitchell assumes that common ground in the pulpit is gained in large part through linguistic practice.

Mitchell's second commitment is the homiletical rhetoric found in David Buttrick's *Homiletic*.[22] In it, Buttrick describes his conception of the way that sermons "form in consciousness" and, more specifically how "language does constitute the world-in-consciousness, the significant social world in which we live."[23] Mitchell imports Buttrick's thought wholesale and as such, "homiletic thinking is always a thinking of theology toward images."[24] The preacher's task is to search for the images most appropriate to the context and audience in which the preacher is speaking. Thus the preacher who desires to communicate with adolescents must extract images from adolescent language for preaching to be successful. Similar to Burke and Buttrick, Mitchell encourages the preacher to use the lingo of teenagers and images from their cultural situation in order for the sermon to form in consciousness. It takes no significant stretch of imagination to conceive of the difficulty this presents for preachers who preach

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[21] McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching : A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*, 48.

[22] David Buttrick, *Homiletic : Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

[23] Buttrick, 9.

[24] Buttrick, 30.

to the diverse ecclesial gatherings in which preaching takes place. The ever-expanding landscape of identities and the difficulty associated with representing them in language complicates the matter even further. The ethical implications of speaking out of others' experiences and using their language to do so are myriad, effectively reducing identities to easily-appropriated and representational linguistic features.[25]

Other references to adolescents are more ambiguous in nature. Paul Scott Wilson describes the task of the "four page" sermon with the metaphor of movie making. Sermon writing as movie making requires preachers to "shift the mental image of sermon composition from essay writing to movie making…a tremendous change in how we arrange our thoughts" and "more than simply telling plots, or becoming one character in a narrative, we will create entire worlds that address the senses, the mind, and the heart."[26] An almost negligible line is inserted within this paragraph on preaching-as-movie-making: "If preaching is to reach youth and teenagers especially, it needs an approach like this movie making idea."[27] Nothing more is mentioned about this statement; there is no explanation or cited research to indicate as to why the statement is precipitated. Wilson's intention seems to be rather benign. Much like Craddock's statement, adolescents are caught in the crossfire between one preaching theory and a new and improved theory which, as if to tout the extent of its effectiveness, can garner even the attention of young people.

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[25] See the insightful essays in Judith Roof and Robyn Wiegman, eds., *Who Can Speak? : Authority and Critical Identity* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

[26] Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon : A Guide to Biblical Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 11.

[27] Wilson, 11.

These statements provide examples of what communication theorists call "marked" and "unmarked" language. [28] "Youth" and "teenagers" are marked elements of homiletic language that signify listeners who need special homiletic attention. When "youth" or "teenager(s)" appear in homiletic discourse, they function as a kind of tacit assent to a universal idea of what and who youth are in relation to preaching. They are, in some sense, deficient as listeners and function this way without the need for elaboration on the part of the author. On the other hand, "adult" functions as the unmarked, oppositional term and indicates a more developed sense of sermon listening abilities, or at least better than "youth" or "teenagers."

Some homiletic studies unintentionally exclude adolescents. Christine M. Smith's helpful text *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance: Radical Responses to Radical Evil* maps out a theological and homiletical response to ageism.[29] She defines ageism as "the systematic exploitation and oppression of those in society who are labeled or deemed to be old."[30] She carefully highlights the evil ageism presents, and her focus on age suggests that homiletics might also notice youth who are equally exploited by culture at large and neglected in the pulpit.

As she narrates the increase of the aged population and decrease in the adolescent population in America, she notes that "our sermons and our ministries need to portray older adults as pictures of strength, resourcefulness, and endurance. Through ministries of word and action we need to call our congregations into conscious advocacy of the

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[28] See Jodi O'Brien, "Boundaries and Contradictions" in Jodi O'Brien, ed. *The Production of Reality : Essays and Readings on Social Interaction*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press, 2006), 426-442. See also the discussion on Lesko's "confident characterizations" of youth, below.

[29] Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance : Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, 38-61.

[30] Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance : Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, 39.

special kind of assistance that is needed for older adults to remain independent in the community."[31] She offers a useful corrective for preaching and Christian ministry. The ageing and elderly must be the focus of preaching as that population grows. Adolescents, however, lack the social and cultural capital needed to resist oppressive regimes of power in society, even as they possess tremendous resourcefulness, strength, and endurance of their own.

Detailing the challenge of preaching to a multi-generational audience, Joseph Jeter and Ronald Allen outline characteristics of different generations in *One Gospel, Many Ears*.[32] Jeter and Allen outline the multiple features of generations and how those defining features influence preaching. They also recognize a challenge for their own work:

> Even as we write and read, of course, a new generation is entering adulthood – those who have been born since 1981 (or so) that we have heard described as the Millenial Generation. The church needs *now* to begin to identify distinctive qualities in this rising group, and to learn both how to speak the gospel in the generation's language and how to help the newest generation speak gospel language.[33]

Later in the book they devote time to talking about children and preaching as well as faith development and preaching, but they choose not to go beyond the recognition that *someone* should devote time to this group.[34] Though they recognize adolescents as

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[31] Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance : Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, 45.

[32] Joseph R. Jeter and Ronald J. Allen, *One Gospel, Many Ears : Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregation* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2002).

[33] Jeter and Allen, 47.

[34] See chapters "Preaching and Different Modes of Mental Process" and "Preaching and the Least of These."

important, silence about adolescents in the midst of a volume about preaching among diverse listeners persists.

In a similar volume, Thomas Troeger and H. Eward Everding, Jr. apply cognitive learning theories, particularly Howard Gardner's theory of "multiple intelligences" to preaching.[35] While Gardner's theory applies to all ages, Troeger and Everding further their exploration of preaching to the whole congregation in two chapters: "Preaching and Children's Ways of Knowing" (chapter three) and "Preaching and Adult Ways of Knowing" (chapter four). Adolescents receive no attention in either of the chapters and receive no chapter of their own. Occupying a liminal space – no longer children and not yet adults – adolescents are granted no discursive space, even of a type that seeks to "engage the whole congregation."

Finally, the Listening to Listeners research group provides the homiletic guild and preachers invaluable resources from their study of congregants' thoughts on preaching. The books that arose from this group are remarkable in their findings. They set out to interview "slightly more than 260 laity" in order to understand how adult listeners hear and process sermons.[36] Though the study worked across denominational, ethnic, geographical, and gender lines, when it came to age the Listening to Listeners project "tried to interview people from different age groups – older *adults*, middle-aged *adults*, and younger *adults*."[37] Two fifteen year olds and two nineteen year olds were also

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[35] Thomas H. Troeger and H. Edward Everding, *So That All Might Know : Preaching That Engages the Whole Congregation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008). See their references to Gardner's works in the notes. See also their references to James W. Fowler's work.

[36] John S. McClure, *Listening to Listeners : Homiletical Case Studies* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2004), 184.

interviewed, amounting to four interviewees in the project.[38] This counts for about 1.5%

of the attention of the study, hardly a percentage representative of the number of

adolescents in churches or denominations.[39] The group certainly had to limit their data

pool, which is understandable, but the choice to limit their pool to an overwhelming

percentage of adults *as sermon listeners* is telling about the homiletic guild's assumptions

about who is listening to preaching and who is able to give meaningful feedback on

preaching.

Some Openings in the Conversation

The news about mainline denominational and university-based homiletics is not

entirely bleak. Most recently, the *New Interpreters Handbook of Preaching* contains two

article entries on preaching and young people.[40] Kenda Creasy Dean and Mark DeVries,

both scholar-practitioners in youth ministry, encourage preachers to overcome unfair

stereotypes of young people as listeners and champion the use of story/storytelling,

testimony, and object lessons as homiletical solutions for adolescents with little technical

homiletical insight or nuance.[41]

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[37]McClure, *Listening to Listeners : Homiletical Case Studies*, 184. Italics mine. It is not my intention to criticize the work of the Listening to Listeners group; in fact, their work in many ways sets an agenda that will be discussed below.

[38] Many thanks to John McClure for acquiring this information from Ron Allen.

[39] I have often heard, but cannot substantiate, that middle school and high school students make up around 10% of U.S. congregations. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, people age 10-14 make up 7.3% of the population and 15-19, 7.2% of the population. http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/dp1/2kh00.pdf, accessed December 6, 2006.

[40] See Kenda Creasy Dean, "Preaching to Youth" in Paul Scott Wilson, ed. *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 281-283. And also Mark DeVries, "Youth Ministry" in Wilson, ed. *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*, 337-342.

[41] I believe this is suggestive of a divide in practical theology which I will address below.

More significantly, Anna Carter Florence devotes two essays to preaching's relationship with adolescents. Florence's essay, "Preaching to the Exiles Who Live at Home: Youth, Testimony, and a Homiletic of 'True Speech'" indicts the academy concerning its silence concerning adolescents: "In the academy, too, silence reigns: only a very few scholars are writing about youth and preaching, and virtually none of them are homileticians. The message to our seminarians and churches is clear: *this is not an issue worth serious time and study*."[42]

In the first of Florence's essays, directed toward homiletics as discipline, her argument hinges on the notion that youth are, in the popular theological idiom, "exiles." In her opinion, "'exile' is a potent metaphor for youth. We preach to youth in exile from the church, and a church in exile from the culture. Everyone is disoriented; no one feels at home."[43] Building on Walter Brueggemann's work on testimony and counter-testimony, she believes that counter-testimonial speech will help youth form alternative identities in the midst of their exile, even as they learn the "mother tongue" of the church's speech practices.[44] She urges preachers to engage youth and youth culture, invite youth to openly discuss sermons and Scripture passages ("true speech"), and ultimately, to open the pulpit to youth beyond special occasions. For Florence, youth will experience preaching most effectively when "they see the church as offering an

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[42] Anna Carter Florence, "Preaching to the Exiles Who Live at Home: Youth, Testimony, and a Homiletic Of "True Speech"," *Journal for Preachers* 24, no. 1 (2000): 24.

[43] Florence: 27.

[44] For Brueggeman's work, see Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home : Preaching among Exiles*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament : Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, Pbk. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005). For an argument similar to how Florence expresses that youth learn the church's "mother tongue," see "Youth and the Language of Faith" in Craig R. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith : Education and Christian Practices*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 113-128. Although Dykstra does not talk about preaching, he does express a similar frame of reference to Florence.

alternative identity in exile through distinctive, peculiar patterns of true speech; their

pastors help them to 'get it' and proclaim it."[45]

Florence applies a sophisticated level of thought to the problem of preaching's

relationship with adolescents. She provides a helpful entrée into how young people

experience preaching in this essay. Her thought is influenced not only by Brueggemann's

use of "exile" but also by Yale school postliberal theology, and in particular the stream

made popular by Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon.[46] In this stream of thought,

culture functions with clear boundaries: church versus wider culture and in Florence's

version youth religious culture versus adult religious culture. As a result, youth function

as exiles among exiles or exiles-squared (exile^2). In order for youth to get past the first

level of exile from church, "the church's mother tongue must be spoken, modeled, and

taught in all of its true speech practices…the biblical pattern itself must be lived and

learned through the community's engagement of life and text."[47]

Her second essay, "A Prodigal Preaching Story: Paul, Eutychus, and Bored-to-

Death Youth," engages the story of Eutychus from Acts 20 and the contemporary

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[45] Florence: 29.

[46] See, for example, Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens : Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989); William H. Willimon, *The Intrusive Word : Preaching to the Unbaptized* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994). William H. Willimon, *Peculiar Speech : Preaching to the Baptized* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1992).

[47] Florence: 27. John McClure would characterize Florence's homiletic "memory" here as "mimetic." According to McClure, "the mimetic goal of memory [in preaching] is to re-flect (not in-flect), to begin to give to the originary scene of representation an analogous temporal form in the narratives that shape our experience." McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching : A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*, 33. Florence prescribes the pattern of testimony/counter-testimony as a biblical model most ably suited for the experience of adolescent listeners/speakers because it parallels the experience of Israel. I will attend more deeply to adolescents' homiletic "memory" more fully in chapter four when I suggest a different theological model. For now it is important to understand that Florence understands homiletic memory functioning in such a way that adolescents come to be apprenticed under preaching models that "imitate in contemporary language the form and performative force of the biblical text as if to place an ancient Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic original," or in this case a biblical-theological pattern, "on rhetorical display." McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching : A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*, 35.

preaching situation.[48] Here Florence reads Eutychus as "killed because he was literally

marginalized…it was the church's preaching (not to mention its spectacular lack of

awareness) that actually put him at risk…When performed in the local congregation, it is

more like a text of terror – for youth, for preachers, and for the church."[49] Her focus on

the all-too-common performance of preaching, such as Paul's preaching experience in

Troas, leads her to say that youth listening "is of no consequence to the rest of us. They

know the *rules* for sermons (no talking, fidgeting, pinching, fussing), but not the *art of*

listening, of entering the world of a sermon; that is a much more difficult and subtle

process that requires spiritual mentorship and companionship."[50] Florence advocates

more attention to students as they learn to listen to preaching and more compassion from

churches as they engage youth through preaching. Additionally, she reads Eutychus'

story in parallel with the story of the Prodigal Son, analyzing how Paul and the Prodigal's

father both throw themselves (*epipesen* – only used in this form in these two stories) on

the respective young men.[51] From these stories, Florence encourages preachers to

embrace youth and speak about the life that is in them.[52]

Florence presents a model of adolescents' marginality based on the church's

relation to culture and the church's inadequate relation to adolescents. In the end,

however, her ideas fail to challenge essentialized versions of adolescent religiosity

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[48] Anna Carter Florence, "A Prodigal Preaching Story and Bored-to-Death Youth," *Theology Today* 64, no. 2 (2007).

[49] Florence, "A Prodigal Preaching Story and Bored-to-Death Youth," 236.

[50] Florence, "A Prodigal Preaching Story and Bored-to-Death Youth," 238.

[51] Florence, "A Prodigal Preaching Story and Bored-to-Death Youth," 240-241.

[52] Florence, "A Prodigal Preaching Story and Bored-to-Death Youth," 242-243.

(ontological adolescence) and trade on ideas within the dominant culture that adolescents are artless religious listeners and religious exiles, when, in fact, the opposite may be the case.

A more constructive response might recognize a complex interaction between culture, experience, and adolescent religious agency. Kathryn Tanner's understanding that "change, conflict, and contradiction are now admitted within culture [and therefore] the anthropologist has no reason to insist on a culture's sharp boundaries" renders culture as a much more multifarious scene of interaction than Florence indicates.[53] This revised understanding that cultures are unstable and highly interactive with permeable boundaries exposes the models of discrete cultures Florence espouses: (1) ecclesial culture vs. wider culture and (2) adolescent religious culture vs. adult religious culture, and (3) artful listening vs. artless listening. Approaching culture this way, the exile metaphor (and particularly exile^2) fails to hold together as church and culture's boundaries become less definite and notions of adult and adolescent cultures (and their religious speech/listening practices) are seen in more robust interaction. Adolescents can and do experience distance from preaching. Likewise, the art of sermon listening is not high on the agenda of most youth. If, however, we adopt a revised understanding of the relationship between sub-cultures, we prevent distance from becoming a rigid marker of adolescent religiosity, and we allow that adolescence may be an important formative time for sermon listening, in which a range of practices for listening and speaking are deployed.

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[53] Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 53. See also Chapter 5, "Christian Culture and Society" for Tanner's critique of Yale school postliberal theology.

Youth Ministry Literature[54]

The literature of youth ministry constitutes another body of literature concerning preaching and youth, existing alongside mainline denominational and university-based homiletics. There is little to no interaction, however, between the two types of literature. Preaching and youth ministry often go hand-in-hand, particularly at retreats, camps, conferences, and separate youth worship services. A specialized industry supports youth ministry and thus there are homiletic materials, albeit few, concerning preaching specifically to youth. As such, this literature receives attention from those who almost exclusively work in youth ministry.[55]

This literature reveals a great deal about conceptions of communication theory, theology of preaching and the person of the preacher at work among those who specialize in youth ministry, and exhibits a relationship with contemporary homiletic theory that is distant at best. Even as this literature places adolescents at the center of its theory and discourse, it reveals a narrow construction of adolescents as an undifferentiated audience with idiosyncratic needs and tendencies to which preaching practices should cater. This way of rendering adolescence (1) assumes and promotes ontological adolescence and (2) creates a target-marketing approach to preaching to adolescents. It is important to understand that this literature presents a social and theological anthropology of adolescence that pervades a significant segment of contemporary North American

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[54] Most of this literature comes from so-called "evangelical" sources. In many ways the "mainline" versus "evangelical" dichotomy is too tidy and often breaks down particularly in youth ministry, especially in the case of biblical hermeneutics as will be seen below.

[55] This may be Anna Carter Florence's reference to "evangelical circles, where a distinct homiletic about preaching and youth already exists and flourishes." Florence, "Preaching to the Exiles Who Live at Home: Youth, Testimony, and a Homiletic Of "True Speech"," 23.

religious experience made more explicit than in the literature above because it centers its discourse on young people.

Creating Interest

Ken Davis' *How to Speak to Youth… And Keep them Awake at the Same Time* seeks to convey the "technical aspects of communication, as well as the heart of good communication."[56] One of few books to receive a second, revised edition in the field of youth ministry, Davis' book could be classified as a "standard" in the literature.

While Davis spends most of his time developing hints and helps for communicating to adolescents, he does spend a moment characterizing them as a group. Davis' characterization of their religious capacity is not unfamiliar when viewed in historical perspective. In terms of other character traits, quoting at length shows his commitment to what I am calling the ontological adolescent:

> We have the opportunity to address the most challenging, unique, and wonderful audience in the world. On the one hand, young people are hostile and skeptical, spoiled by a barrage of top-quality entertainment and turned off to much of traditional religion. On the other hand, they are moldable and tender, capable of great loyalty and commitment. Our audience is a self-conscious group of teenagers, who spend much of their lives wondering what their friends will think and giving very little thought to their own goals. They grow up in a culture that teaches them to avoid sacrifice and pain. Many kids live only for themselves and for immediate gratification. They want to believe they will live forever, yet they fear death and try to cram all of life into today. Many teenagers are lonely even in the midst of a crowd of their peers. They want to be noticed but are afraid to be different unless there is a group willing to be different with them. Many of their roles models present a message that is the antithesis of the Gospel.[57]

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[56] Ken Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time* (Loveland, Colo.: Group Books, 1986), 10.

[57] Ken Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 22.

He goes on to briefly describe the changing cultural manifestations of this description of adolescence in North America through the decades since the 1950's. For Davis, the cultural manifestations may change, but the essence of adolescence remains fixed. Of the adolescents of the 1990's, the time at which the revised edition was written, Davis believes that "if ever there was a lost generation, this is it."[58] Davis' ideas draw deeply upon the religious and cultural construction of the adolescent in the twentieth century, especially ideas that youth represent beauty and danger, and should invoke admiration and fear. The features of this kind of preaching audience, for Davis, necessitates a particular kind of communication.

Davis employs a homiletic shaped by what might be called niche-marketing. Tevfik Dalgic identifies niche marketing as "a method to meet customer needs through tailoring goods and services for small markets."[59] Niche-marketing requires a company to have "distinctive competencies," or ability to offer unique goods and services so that it might be positioned "into small, profitable homogeneous market segments which have either been ignored or neglected by others."[60] By identifying an audience with unique needs and exercising the ability to describe its universal characteristics, Davis is able to develop and market communicational competencies (methods for creating and delivering "talks"[61]) for those who speak to this specific audience.

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[58] Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, 23.

[59] Tevfik Dalgic, *Handbook of Niche Marketing : Principles and Practice* (New York: Best Business Books, Haworth Reference Press, 2006), 5-6.

[60] Dalgic, 7.

[61] As below with Fields/Robbins, Davis does refers to the communicational event as speaking or giving a speech or talk.

Part of that niche-marketing approach involves an approach to speaking and speech writing which always begins with topics that assume and address the universalized adolescent. Propositions take the following form: "Every _____ should/can _____ because/by _____."[62] For example, Davis gives this statement as a demonstration: "Every <u>Christian</u> can <u>learn to love his or her neighbor</u> by <u>applying three principles of neighborly love</u>."[63] In Davis' estimation, speakers should be clear about whether their speech communicates an "'obligation,' telling kids they *should* do something; or an 'enabling' speech, telling them they *can* do something."[64] This formula requires that the speaker provide supporting statements illuminating why or how (because/by), which the speaker should embellish with illustrative material that is able to address universalized adolescent experience(s).

Davis' overarching concern here is that there is a specific type of clarity and logic deployed in order to capture attention. He employs what he calls the "**SCORRE** method" for planning talks. This anagram stands for "**S**ubject, **C**entral Theme, **O**bjective, **R**ationale, **R**esources, **E**valuation."[65] He believes that "if you follow this process, your audience will listen *because you know how to make them listen*, and they will know your objective because you know your objective."[66] For Davis, clarity, logic, and interest go hand-in-hand. The speaker communicates a rationally conceived

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[62] Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, 52-60. As below with Fields/Robbins, Davis does refers to the communicational event as speaking or giving a speech.

[63] Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, 61.

[64] Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, 44. (1986)

[65] Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, 44. (1996)

[66] Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, 44. Italics mine.

proposition supported by appropriate resources and possesses the ability to make listeners listen because of the speaker's knowledge of adolescent experience. He conceives of speaking with the metaphor of aiming at a target, as in hunting, or again, the idea of a niche- or target-market. This conception of speaking is not limited, however, to arrangement of ideas.

Davis discusses the physical aspects of preaching to youth: use of notes, aspects of the physical space of preaching, and use of sound systems and microphones. He suggests that audiences build rapport with a speaker through his/her confidence displayed through "command of the language…choice of words…use of effective illustrations…clear presentation of the speech's objective…good eye contact, powerful gestures, an aggressive stance."[67] In addition, Davis urges speakers to be vulnerable, which "makes members of the audience believe you are communicating with them, not delivering a canned speech at them."[68] This simultaneous presentation of power and vulnerability expresses Davis' views on the submissive role of undifferentiated adolescent listeners in the preaching moment. Speakers are in control of the situation, able to manipulate listeners (benevolently, of course) in such a way that their messages are received by all.

Davis presents adolescents' lack of ability to maintain "interest" and "attention" as defining characteristics of the universal adolescent audience. In order to keep teenagers' attention, Davis explores the use of humor and use of the Bible. Humor,

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[67] Ibid., 101.

[68] Ibid., 101.

according to Davis, "gets the blood flowing and creates great interest."[69] He suggests always reading the Bible in understandable language, presenting biblical characters as real characters, avoiding over-spiritualizing details of the biblical text, and providing applications of the Bible to real life.[70] Rather than a rigorous attempt at biblical contextualization, Davis presents a more focused attempt to specifically market the biblical text in order to attract and sustain interest.

Davis concludes with the observation that "the principles…in this book are universal and necessary for effective communication to any audience. However, because we need to meet the listeners' needs, we must understand that each audience requires a slightly different approach in our method of speaking."[71] The differences he highlights between adults, junior high students, and high school students involve levels of attention span which can be overcome by the appropriate levels of excitement, timing, and humor. Youth can be brought out of their inevitable state of boredom and can be captured as an audience through the right delivery devices, measured specifically for adolescents. In Davis' opinion, all listeners can hear and understand if a speaker utilizes his method, which brings clarity and logic to a message, and is able to tap into the age group's interest needs. Though Davis does not seem to be in conversation with mainline denominational and university-based homiletics, he finds adolescents to constitute a uniform audience to which the speaker must tailor the unique goods and services he/she possesses.

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[69] Ibid., 135. Notice also the subtle arrangement of Davis' instruction by some of the categories of classical rhetoric: invention, arrangement, and style/delivery.

[70] Ibid., 143-150.

[71] Ibid., 164.

Dan Webster and Jana Sundene's essay, "Speaking to High School Students"

delineates how the youth minister can be an effective communicator when the youth

minister can "*understand his* (sic) *target audience* (the students), know how to *apply*

biblical truths to a student's life, and *develop practical communication skills*.[72] The

youth minister is called to four different overlapping areas (presented in overlapping

circles): (1) Understanding students, (2) Knowing our content, (3) Developing

communication skills, and (4) Knowing the power of the Holy Spirit.[73]

Speakers understand students by recognizing four major developmental issues for

youth: "experiencing physical and emotional changes, struggling with self-worth, and

tending toward conformity and mental confusion."[74] They also observe four cultural

forces on adolescents: fragmentation, a "me-istic culture," relativism, and escapism.[75]

Webster and Sundene attempt to build a homiletic built upon universal assumptions about

adolescents which are predominantly negative – deficiencies which can be corrected

through the kind of practices they describe. Adolescents, in a similar characterization to

Davis, are enveloped in a time of *sturm und drang*. They are struggling physically,

emotionally, psychically, socially, and mentally. They are inescapably caught up in the

nefarious pressures of "culture." The 1980's generation about which Webster and

Sundene write is ostensibly as much a "lost generation" as Davis writes about in the late

1990's. These tropes bolster the heavy-handed authority of preaching to adolescents

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[72] Dan Webster and Jana Sundene, "Speaking to High School Students" in Warren S. Benson and Mark Senter, eds., *The Complete Book of Youth Ministry* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 326.

[73] Benson and Senter, eds., 327.

[74] Benson and Senter, eds., 330.

[75] Benson and Senter, eds., 330-332.

while simultaneously perpetuating the idea of the ontological adolescent who, in this case, faces discrete developmental challenges.

Knowledge of content is shown in messages that are "grounded in biblical truths" and that interface with the developmental/cultural needs of students.[76] Regarding the development of communication skills, speakers are told that

> there is no formula available to guarantee that students will listen to the messages given to them…In general though, if we, as speakers, can learn to say things that make sense, are interesting, and apply to the lives of our students, then we will have a good chance of having them listen.[77]

Webster and Sundene identify competencies that the speaker to young people must develop in order to gain a hearing. "Interest" is fundamental and the language of transaction – giving a message to students – is used for the nature of communication. As a result, message preparation consists of spending time defining a key idea or thesis statement, crafting an introduction, and constructing the body of the message. The body should utilize major points that reinforce the key idea. They propose that "illustrations and humor are two *essential* ingredients in speaking to high school students," though the kinds of illustration and humor prescribed are without description.[78] Again, this homiletic advice is based on universal assumptions about youth – that they lack "interest" or the ability to discern difficult ideas and must therefore have ideas "illustrated" (read: simplified) to them and made humorous.

A more recent text takes a similar approach, but it is more important to see in this text the relationship between youth ministry and mainline denominational, university-

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[76] Benson and Senter, eds., 333.

[77] Benson and Senter, eds., 334.

[78] Benson and Senter, eds., 337. Italics mine.

based homiletics. Doug Fields and Duffy Robbins' *Speaking to Teenagers: How to Think About, Create and Deliver Effective Messages* is poised to become a standard text as Davis' has been since Fields and Robbins are extremely popular pastors/youth ministry experts.[79] They position their book against another that they co-authored saying, "you could read that book [the former] while you were standing in the aisle at the bookstore. But, this one is different. It's going to require of you a little more work – a little more thought and careful digestion."[80] This statement functions rhetorically to bolster the perceived rigor and import of their work. This more "advanced" youth ministry text, however, tends to take an adversarial approach to homiletic theory. While both authors claim a seminary education that they value, in their section on the importance of study as a preliminary practice for speaking, one of the authors writes

> When I was a seminary student, my homiletics professor was very difficult to impress…He was a good man, a great preacher, a very tough grader, and someone I really wanted to impress when I was a young communicator. But even today, I've got to force myself to remember he's no longer my audience and I'm not competing for a grade. When we study, we want to study for our real audience – that group of teenagers to whom we plan to speak, not the imaginary audience we want to impress…We've all heard youth ministry speakers who might have been

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[79] Duffy Robbins and Doug Fields, *Speaking to Teenagers : How to Think About, Create, and Deliver Effective Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007). Fields and Robbins share some of the same assumptions about adolescents as Davis and Sundene/Webster. For instance, similar to Davis' "lost generation," they point out "Obviously, our audience is a lot younger than most of the folks who sit in those pews on Sunday morning, but the reality of their pain and needs is just as real. There are hurting kids everywhere dying to know the good news of God's love" (16). The trope of hurting/angst-ridden/troubled adolescence remains, but they are simultaneously ripe for gospel preaching. And likewise, they pose six questions concerning potential blocks to communicating with young people: "1. First, we have to get them to pay attention to the message…2. And if they hear it, we need to make sure they understand it…3. Then even if they hear it and understand it, that doesn't mean they'll actually believe it…4. Even if they believe the message in that moment, there's still the challenge of helping each of them to retain it in their active memory…5. And then, of course, there is the question of obedience…6. And of the number who retain the message and have some measure of resolve to obey the message, there's finally this question: Will they actually flesh out the decision by taking action?" (18-19). Again, interest is a main feature followed by the need for clarity.

[80] Robbins and Fields, 12.

very effective had their audience been a panel of seminary and college professors. Unfortunately, the profs couldn't make it to youth group, and the teenagers who did show up were left confused and disconnected – and therefore bored with the content. It's nice that you still remember how to parse verbs and can articulate the historical context for the use of mud as Jesus' healing agent of choice. But it's far more important that you study with the intention of gaining knowledge so teenagers can recognize that God's Word is understandable, relevant, and has the power to transform their lives even in the twenty-first century.[81]

This, of course, is not a new thought for preachers and critics of preachers. In fact, their statement unknowingly echoes Harry Emerson Fosdick's classic lines in the essay "What Is the Matter with Preaching?":

> They [preachers] take a passage from Scripture and, proceeding on the assumption that the people attending church that morning are deeply concerned about what the passage means, they spend their half hour or more on historical exposition of the verse or chapter, ending with some appended practical application to the auditors. Could any procedure be more surely predestined to dullness and futility? Who seriously supposes that, as a matter of fact, one in a hundred of the congregation cares, to start with, what Moses, Isaiah, Paul, or John meant in those special verses, or came to church deeply concerned about it? Nobody else who talks to the public so assumes that the vital interests of the people are located in the meaning of words spoken two thousand years ago…Somehow or other, every other agency dealing with the public recognizes that contact with the actual life of the auditor is the one place to begin. Only the preacher proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites. The result is that folk less and less come to church at all.[82]

Fields and Robbins' challenge to the nature of preaching to adolescents unintentionally participates in a larger tradition that critiques homiletic pedagogy. This critique affects their outlook on how to "communicate" to or "teach" adolescents. At first glance, it is

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[81] Robbins and Fields, 108.

[82] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "What is the Matter with Preaching?" Harper's Magazine (July 1928), reprinted in Mike Graves, ed. *What's the Matter with Preaching Today?*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 10.

easy to mistake Fields and Robbins' outlook as a wholesale adaptation of Fosdick's own

"project method" of preaching whereby "preaching's primary concern is people's real

problems."[83]   Fosdick believed, "We need more sermons that try to face people's real

problems with them, meet their difficulties, answer their questions, confirm their noblest

faiths and interpret their experiences in sympathetic, wise, and understanding

cooperation."[84]   This kind of personal pastoral preaching, however, is not the goal nor is

it the starting point for Fields and Robbins (although addressing personal crises and

personal transformation is an expected *result* of speaking to young people). Instead, they

cite persuasion and teenagers' obedience as the ultimate goals of "messages."[85] Without

the sophistication of the rhetorical tradition of homiletics in naming what they do, not

once do they claim their own activity as "preaching." In fact, the entire framework of

their book is built on a classic rhetorical model of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* (in that order)

rather than an explicitly homiletical model.[86]   This classical rhetorical model and more

specifically its ordering are important in relation to the statements above. Fields and

Robbins desire to construct a way of communicating or teaching that primarily relies on

the relationship of speaker to audience and on being able to effectively persuade the

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[83] G. Lee Ramsey, *Care-Full Preaching : From Sermon to Caring Community* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2000), 14.

[84] Fosdick, as quoted in Ramsey, 14.

[85] Again, this is a rhetorical model not foreign to traditional homiletic theory, but also not explicitly acknowledged. For instance, see Broadus and Stanfield, 170ff; Robbins and Fields, 37-43.

[86] There are only two references in the book to homiletical texts. The rest come largely from communication theory.

audience through their needs/interests/emotions, which is different from providing therapy through preaching.[87]

Only after heavily treating *ethos* and *pathos* as avenues toward creating primary bridges of communication do they engage the *logos* aspect of communication. Fields and Robbins envision messages crafted by speakers that "S.T.I.C.K.," which stands for the different processes of writing messages: (1) Study, (2) Think, (3) Illustrate, (4) Construct, and (5) Keep focused.[88] Within this framework there are some expected assumptions about preaching from the evangelical perspective. For instance, Fields and Robbins present the rationale for study: "The goal of study is to gain a greater understanding of Scripture so you can – a. Allow the text to speak for itself, untarnished by your own assumptions and preconceptions. b. Identify the timeless message that God has for his (sic) people. c. Consider what these timeless truths mean for your life and for the lives of your students."[89] This focus on the timelessness of a text's message, the text's pristine voice, and absence of any human hermeneutical element belies a great distance between evangelical homiletics and mainline denominational, university-based homiletics. But it is not unexpected. They advocate applying timeless messages to timeless forms of experience (ontological adolescence), which we have seen in both Davis and Sundene/Webster.

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[87] It also extends to their treatment of how room arrangement and delivery affect these elements in the final chapter.

[88] Robbins and Fields, 89.

[89] Robbins and Fields, 110. This kind of thinking about the nature of the biblical text in concert with their advice to consult traditional exegetical tools (based in human reason) lies somewhere between Donald McKim's descriptions of how "fundamentalist theology" and "neo-evangelical theology" use the bible. See Donald K. McKim and Donald K. McKim, *The Bible in Theology & Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). It also lies between John McClure's "scriptural code" categories of "translation" and "transition/traduction."

Unexpected, however, is their emphasis on the construction of a "talk" through

principles of inductive communication. They observe that "deductive communication

deals mainly in concepts; inductive communication deals mainly in the concrete. One

explains while the other explores…[I]n most cases, we'll best guide teenagers into new

truth through the doorway of concrete life. Our talk will be structured so we explore a

truth before we explain a truth."[90] What do they mean by "concrete life"? They are not

exactly clear, but they do indicate that an inductive pattern of communication "requires

frequent use of illustrations, stories, object lessons, images, sounds smells, textures, and

any other tool of concrete life that will help us bring teenagers to the threshold of new

commitment or life-change."[91] From this we can surmise that Fields and Robbins desire

to create common experiences within communication that are transformative for all

listeners. By this logic, "concretes" are grounded in assumptions that human experiences

are, in fact, universal experiences. John McClure identifies the assumptions behind

inductive communication in this way: "Because identifications can be made, preachers

and hearers are able to take the same inductive journey. Inductive preaching

communicates that preachers and hearers trust one another's experiences, abilities, and

vision. Rather than promoting authoritarian dependence on the preacher, inductive

preaching sponsors a sense of interdependence or even interchangeability."[92] Inductive

communication disregards the varieties of human experience that actually take place

among adolescents in favor of (1) an assumed common lived experience on the part of

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[90] Robbins and Fields, 163-164.

[91] Robbins and Fields, 164.

[92] McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching : A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*, 51.

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listeners or (2) creating a common listening experience for all listeners. So as Fields and

Robbins advocate using "concrete life" without nuance, they end up holding up

universal-ontological experiences as the "doorway" to truth.[93]

Forays into Narrative, Experience, and Imagination

Mark Miller's *Experiential Story-Telling: (Re)Discovering Narrative to*

Communicate God's Message has recently entered the youth ministry market with the

intent to bring about a narrative orientation for preaching to youth.[94] It is important to

also see his work in relief with mainline denominational, university based homiletic

theory. He explains an encounter with a friend in youth ministry who opines, "Nothing

works anymore. Everything I was taught about effectively communicating God's Word

doesn't work like it used to. Today's teens just don't learn in the same ways."[95] This

vignette opens Miller's first chapter and in much the same way that adolescents function

in other literature above, here they also provide the impetus toward new preaching

methods because they are chief among those who cannot or do not listen. Miller analyzes

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[93] As they go on to detail what they mean by inductive communication however, it is obvious that the distance between the youth ministry material and university-based and mainline homiletic material can be found in no larger relief than here. There is no mention of or allusion to Fred Craddock in this section, who pioneered and popularized principles of induction for preaching in the mainline, university-based camp or even of Haddon Robinson's understanding of induction through a more evangelical lens. See Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Sermons : How Twelve Preachers Apply the Principles of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1989).

[94] Mark Miller, *Experiential Storytelling : (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message* (El Cajon, CA: Zondervan, 2003). This book is also part of Zondervan's publishing partnership between Youth Specialties and "emerging church" leaders as a part of its "emergent ys" titles. The Youth Specialties partnership has since been dissolved, though Zondervan continues to publish Youth Specialties and titles from emerging church leaders separately. The relationship between youth ministry and emerging church leadership has often been quite strong. The lack of attention to ground that has had significant homiletic reflection not only reflects a chasm in the relationship between different homiletical understandings, but also in the relationship between practical theological disciplines.

[95] Miller, *Experiential Storytelling : (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*, 11.

his friend's comments and the situation of preaching, not as an isolated condition of contemporary adolescence (in fact, adolescents do not appear as a concern very much in the text), but in much the same terms as other so-called "emerging church" leaders concerned with modernity and postmodernity's epistemological and cultural shifts. Miller assesses the preaching situation with his own epiphany that "experience is the new king of the mountain. There are no passive participants."[96] For Miller, these changes prescribe "nothing less than a complete reconstruction of how we communicate."[97]

In order to engage in that reconstruction, Miller reproduces the logic of Jesus as exemplary storyteller as a model for contemporary preaching.[98] The motivation behind mimicking Jesus the storyteller is the perception that sermons are authoritative, closed, and directive while story invites open-ended, free-thinking interpretation from listeners.[99] He also unwittingly verbalizes some principles of the New Homiletic: "the story is no longer simply heard, but also experienced. With this experiential immersion, the 'hearer' can listen on several levels and receive what's communicated in a form that disarms any fears of conquest. Experience by nature has a collaborative feel. It engages more of our

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[96] Miller, *Experiential Storytelling : (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*, 15.

[97] Miller, *Experiential Storytelling : (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*, 25.

[98] Miller, *Experiential Storytelling : (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*, 39-41. For a critical perspective on this logic, see Charles L. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus : New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997), 178-180. Campbell believes that "when Jesus becomes primarily a model preacher, as he does in the contemporary emphasis on the parables," from which Miller also takes his cue, "the stance of preaching changes. The preacher becomes not one who points to Jesus Christ, but one who stands in the place of Jesus and 'preaches like Jesus preached.' This understanding of the place of Jesus in preaching is not only inconsistent with the content and function of the gospel narratives, but also with the preaching that we find in the rest of the New Testament" (180). Campbell's critique places the turn to create an experience under criticism as he believes the goal of preaching/worship to be to render the identity of Jesus Christ – a homiletical interpretation of the theology of Hans Frei. Since Miller's argument is largely based in popular perceptions of cultural and epistemological shifts and not in sophisticated theological understandings, Miller stands at the fringes of this kind of critique.

[99] Miller, *Experiential Storytelling : (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*, 41.

senses and gets individuals involved in the story."[100] Miller paradoxically argues for both

an authoritarian and communitarian model of preaching simultaneously. The appearance

of collaboration is merely a veneer since the listener remains a "receiver" and story works

as an instrument to "disarm" fears. As a result, instead of preaching deductively *to* or *at*

an assumed essentialized form of experience (Davis), Miller advocates a shift to preach

narrative experiences *from* or *toward* the same essentialized form of experience [101]

Miller advocates a few principles for constructing an experiential storytelling

sermon: (1) Weaving the sermon – this is the choice of single or multiple stories, physical

setting of the preaching event, and mood of the story;[102] (2)Engaging the senses; (3) Use

of symbols and subtle imagery; (4) Role-playing – this is the preacher/storyteller's choice

of who he/she will be as the story's narrator and who the audience should be; (5)

Communal experience and personal expression – here the preacher gives consideration to

how to involve the entire listening audience through dialogue, response, creative

expression, or as part of the "worship experience."[103] The goal of this kind of

communication for Miller is life transformation, rather than acceptance of facts.[104]

Sarah Arthur exhibits a similar storytelling orientation to youth ministry (rather

than preaching only), but through a more sophisticated, intentionally theological lens in

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[100] Miller, *Experiential Storytelling : (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*, 86.

[101] This is also a general critique of Fred Craddock's confidence in the openness of inductive preaching as well as others constitutive of the New Homiletic (Lowry, Rice, etc.). Craddock's work remains unanalyzed by Miller.

[102] This is markedly different from how Christine Smith explains "weaving the sermon" in her book Christine M. Smith, *Weaving the Sermon : Preaching in a Feminist Perspective*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1989).

[103] Ibid., 122-123.

[104] See Rose, 37-56. Miller seems to be unaware of the larger conversation of narrative and imagination in preaching, with its emphasis on transformation which precedes him by over thirty years.

her book *The God-Hungry Imagination: The Art of Storytelling for Postmodern Youth Ministry*.[105] Her understanding of the use of narrative is helpful not for its relation to homiletic theory (or lack thereof), but rather her use of theological method to describe adolescents and their religious needs/tendencies.

The impetus for her work, she says, comes from the desire for meaningful content in youth ministry along with findings from the research of Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton's project that diagnose teenagers with "'pervasive teen inarticulacy,' not only in how teens express their beliefs but 'how those beliefs connect to the rest of their lives.'"[106] She also cites Smith and Lundquist Denton's label on adolescents as "moralistic therapeutic deists," which Arthur condemns as "a colossal failure of the imagination regarding both the claims and demands of the gospel."[107] Her solution to young people being unable to articulate their faith and connect it to life is based in a reorientation to youth ministry that nurtures the relationship between imagination, story, and spiritual formation. This approach to ministry, of course, extends to preaching and worship.

Arthur's response consists of (1) "reclaiming the imagination's vital role in spiritual formation" and (2) "reclaiming the church as the living story" while the youth pastor and leaders function as "bards: poets charged with the task of keeping and

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[105] Sarah Arthur, *The God-Hungry Imagination : The Art of Storytelling for Postmodern Youth Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2007). Though her book does not center on preaching, I include it here because her orientation toward narrative for the trajectory of ministry as a whole echoes that of recent narrative homiletics, and more specifically, as I will show, postliberal streams of narrative homiletics. Arthur's work is perhaps the chief example of the breakdown of the neat dichotomy of "mainline" and "evangelical" in youth ministry literature. Her book is heavily marketed in the evangelical youth ministry market, yet she is grounded in the United Methodist tradition and a Duke Divinity School graduate.

[106] Arthur, 17-18. See Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching : The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*.

[107] Arthur, 27.

imparting the stories, language, values, and beliefs of a culture."[108] Each of these phrases

are incredibly rich with theological import, as well as her diagnosis that all people "wear

natural blinders that bias us toward a particular worldview, and this bias can (often

unintentionally) eclipse the authority of both scripture and the church for our lives and

ministries."[109] Arthur's diagnosis and response relies on theories of narrative whereby

humans live a storied existence with different narratives competing to become a master or

meta-narrative.[110] Although she does not refer to it, there is a significant body of work in

homiletics that operates with similar assumptions, notably postliberal homiletics and

testimonial homiletics.[111]

In order to function as the church in the world, ministry must consist of tasks and

activities that rightly story the world for Christians. As the resident "bard," the youth

minister's task is to help form a storied ministry along the lines of George Lindbeck's

notion of a cultural-linguistic approach to Christian enculturation.[112] This model creates

a strong affinity with the catechumenizing function of ministry. The "bard" functions as

a teacher of the church's culture, helping form young people's imaginations with the

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[108] Arthur, 29-31. Arthur's theological model is not far from Florence's working assumptions about youth and theology, above.

[109] Arthur, 32.

[110] John McClure helpfully parses out four functions of narrative in preaching in his article John S. McClure, "Narrative and Preaching : Sorting It All Out," *Journal for Preachers* 15, no. 1 (1991). Arthur's use of narrative would be classified as "narrative world view," whereby those who speak of narrative speak about its power to establish worldview (27).

[111] For postliberal homiletics, see Campbell; Willimon, *Peculiar Speech : Preaching to the Baptized*; Willimon, *The Intrusive Word : Preaching to the Unbaptized*. For testimonial homiletics, see Anna Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Rose.
[112] Arthur, 126ff. Arthur directly quotes George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine : Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

church's own distinctive stories, language, and images.[113] Using metaphor theory, Arthur

encourages youth workers to eschew dead theological metaphor. The formation of young

people happens through imagining new metaphors that concretizes the church's language

on their own terms.[114]

Arthur flatly depicts adolescents as bored with church, including its rationalistic

and linear orientation, as well as its dead theological language. She cites as problematic

"the astounding illiteracy and inarticulacy of the mainstream populace regarding

theological and biblical concepts. Ask any middle schooler in your youth group what the

word *idol* means, and she or he will probably say, 'It's, like, someone you look up to who

sings really good.' Meanwhile, relativism and pluralism now infuse so much of popular

culture that our young take it all for granted."[115] This statement continues to fill out the

homiletically constructed ontological adolescent. Young people lack a sophisticated

theological vocabulary and thus lack a valid faith. In addition, youth are essentialized

here as completely unable to sort through the range of religious ideas presented to them

in wider cultural arenas. They are passive in the face of cultural and religious options,

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[113] See also Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet : Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Walter Brueggemann, *Texts under Negotiation : The Bible and Postmodern Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Garrett Green, *Imagining God : Theology and the Religious Imagination*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989); Philip Kenneson, "Gathering: Worship, Imagination, and Formation" in Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004); Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens : Life in the Christian Colony*. Arthur does not emphasize the communitarian aspect as greatly as do Hauerwas/Willimon and Kenneson.

[114] Arthur, 132-137. Quoting Garrett Green, she says that "imagination is the ability to say what something is like," Green., cited in Arthur, 51. As such, metaphor is the vehicle by which something is explained in terms of another. See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[115] Arthur, 23. Arthur works with a post-Christendom model which the postliberal theological camp simultaneously celebrates and mourns. At the very least it opens up opportunities for new traditioning in the church's language.

wholly consuming the religious values offered in popular culture. This narrow construction necessitates the singular theological and homiletic solution Arthur articulates.

Her short statement from the imaginary middle school youth group member is significant. First, she posits "any" middle school student as likely to give similar responses to one another. Adolescents are categorized as ignorant concerning words with theological origins, such as *idol*. Popular culture has co-opted the church's language and replaced them with their own primary meanings (a reference to the popular television show *American Idol*). Young people find their primary reference point in popular culture. Second, adolescents communicate in a broken down version of the English language, showing a kind of easily stereotyped inarticulacy from the reference of more proper adult, white, and educated versions of English. The filler word "like" operates under the "valley girl" stereotype while the phrase "sings really good" clearly violates proper rules concerning the adjectival use of "good" versus the adverbial use of "well." In addition to being inarticulate in terms of proper English, Arthur adopts Smith and Lundquist Denton's description, suggesting that all adolescents are inarticulate about their faith and unformed in particular convictions that match their actions ("moral therapeutic deism").[116] Finally, while the entire American culture suffers from relativism and pluralism, it is "our young" who suffer the brunt force of the attack. Again, young people become either the most victimized or the chief of sinners. All of this fuels Arthur's hope in that the specialized "bard"/catechist can help begin to help young people learn, choose, and live faithfully into the Christian story.

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[116] A broad categorization that operates in the mode of ontological adolescence, even as it purports to rise from thorough ethnographic study.

The problems with Arthur's work resemble those in Anna Carter Florence's work. Arthur conceives of young people within a postliberal theological framework that depends on them being wholly unformed, deficient religious subjects in need of formation by the church's tradition in opposition to the formation offered by culture. Although the arch towards formation is an impulse not unworthy of our attention, it needs to be tempered by a more broad theological understanding, which I will outline in chapter four.

Conclusion

These authors find something missing in preaching's relationship with young people. Miller and Arthur's homiletic models are responsive to propositional homiletic models that seek to inform and engage the rational human being. But in dialogue with the communicational models of Davis, Webster/Sundene, and Fields/Robbins, who advocate clarity and proposition, evangelical youth ministry literature expresses differing, if not confused, positions on communicational design. These authors do not even agree on what to call this type of communication, but have an aversion to "preaching." This body of work is grounded in different foundations of what can redeem preaching to young people: rhetoric and communication theory (Davis, Webster/Sundene, Fields/Robbins), perceptions about epistemology (Miller), or cultural-linguistic theological commitments (Arthur).

Amidst the confusion in communicational approach, there are three constants among all the authors. First, across the board, all these authors identify adolescents clearly. Who are these young people and what do they need? They all answer that

adolescents are a precarious, lost, or unformed collection of spiritual vessels in need of filling. Second, they all find common ground in the simultaneous beauty of adolescents. That is, not only have they exhibited the danger of imbibing popular culture (or with less agency, popular cultural forces have co-opted them), they are also worthy of placing trust in as the hope of the future church.

In youth ministry literature, adolescents function as a double sign. Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard observe through recent American history "the bifurcated social identity of youth as a vicious, threatening sign of social decay and 'our best hope for the future.'"[117] The historically conditioned picture of adolescence is fundamental to the ontological adolescent assumed in this literature. Whereas the mainline denominational and university-based homiletic literature either ignores adolescents or stereotypes them as deficient listeners, youth ministry literature centers its focus on adolescents, doing so with the assumption that there is simultaneous danger and beauty in adolescents that preaching can address.

Third, none of these authors rely on homiletic theory to remedy the problem/hope of young people. This non-interaction (which occurs from both literature groups) exposes a problem in practical theology which will be addressed below. So, if youth ministry literature and homiletic literature fail to address adolescents adequately, how is it that we understand adolescents? Homiletics could be a potential site of knowledge for understanding and ministering to/with adolescents, but it does not yet frame adolescence sufficiently. There are, however, helpful frames for understanding adolescence outside the bodies of literature we have examined thus far.

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[117] Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard, *Generations of Youth : Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2.

Studies in the Social Sciences and Religion Apart from Homiletics

A tremendous volume of literature has emerged over the past twenty-five years concerning children and adolescents. Some of this literature has focused on religion, taking its methodological cues from research in the social sciences and education where the majority of this research has taken place. It is important to turn toward this literature for two main reasons: (1) research emerging out of the fields of childhood studies, childhood studies in religion, critical youth studies, and religious education concerning adolescents is framing critical understandings of adolescence in new ways, and (2) the nature of the literature examined here, unconcerned with homiletic theory and practice (which in itself lacks attention toward adolescents, as shown above), prompts an examination of how to "use" their findings for homiletics.[118]

Framing Adolescence: Childhood Studies and Childhood Studies in Religion

In order to avoid the trap of ontological adolescence when describing contemporary adolescence(s), it is increasingly helpful to take cues from the fields of research emerging over the past twenty-five years concerning children and adolescence. Since there is no clear line of demarcation between childhood and adolescence, much of the emerging literature purports to cover the range of childhood and adolescence.[119] First among these to emerge has been the field now known as "childhood studies." Philippe

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[118] As such, the second of these foci functions as a representative examination of homiletic method, specifically concerning the relationship of homiletics with practical theology and the academy at large.

[119] Whether they actually do attend to adolescence effectively is up for debate, but the place for that argument is not here. Regardless, the methods by which they address childhood and adolescence are at stake here and prove to be quite helpful.

Ariès' book *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* is generally

regarded as the first and most significant work to question modern presumptions of the

nature of childhood as fixed.[120] His thesis, which he supports with material history,

proposes that children in the middle ages through the fifteenth century were regarded as

"little adults" and only more recently transitioned into sentimentalized individuals,

segmented from adults. Although his thesis has since been brought under more critical

scrutiny, Ariès charted a new course for the study of children in the social sciences.

Since Ariès, scholars like Alan Prout and Allison James have articulated the

theoretical shifts within the field. They start with what they call "the dominant

framework surrounding the study of children and childhood," which "has been

development and three themes [which] predominate in relation to it: 'rationality,'

'naturalness' and 'universality.'"[121] Relatively unquestioned until the 1970's, the

dominant framework posited that children were to be understood from the perspective of

adults and within psychological frameworks. This perspective rendered a picture of

children as having the following characteristics: being less rational than adults, having a

natural simplicity, and that their nature was a universal feature regardless of any other

social factors.[122] This understanding materialized in various developmental models:

physical, psycho-social, cognitive. These models framed dominant understandings of the

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[120] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood : A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962).

[121] Alan Prout and Allison James, "A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems" in Allison James and Alan Prout, eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood : Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London ; Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press, 1997), 10.

[122] James and Prout, eds., 10.

nature of childhood and adolescence. Children within this framework are essentially less

than adults but function on a patterned, predictable evolution toward adulthood.

In contrast, James and Prout summarize the features of contemporary research in

childhood. This "emergent paradigm" in childhood studies displays the following key

features/commitments:

1. Childhood is understood as a social construction. As such it provides an interpretive frame for contextualizing the early years of human life. Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies.
2. Childhood is a variable of social analysis. It can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity. Comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single and universal phenomenon.
3. Children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concerns of adults.
4. Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes.
5. Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood. It allows a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research.
6. Childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present (see Giddens, 1976). That is to say, to proclaim a new paradigm of childhood sociology is also to engage in and respond to the process of reconstructing childhood in society.[123]

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[123] James and Prout, eds., 8. See also Peter Pufall and Richard Unsworth, "The Imperative and the Process for Rethinking Childhood" and Allison James, "Understanding Childhood from an Interdisciplinary Perspective: Problems and Potentials" in Peter B. Pufall and Richard P. Unsworth, eds., *Rethinking Childhood*, The Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

This new paradigm is embodied in a number of perspectives in the social sciences

including more recent historical studies, sociological studies, education and social policy

research, cultural studies, as well as studies centered on family life.[124]

Instead of an irrational, natural, universal childhood, these studies invite new

inquiries and methodological frameworks for studying childhood in contemporary life.

In particular, since children cannot be assumed as passive, childhood studies engages

children's agency, voice, and identity as organizing ideas for research. With different

ends, childhood studies engage children's worlds with the intent to discover voice, which

is composed of the "cluster of intentions, hopes, grievances, and expectations that

children guard as their own. This voice surfaces only when the adult has learned to ask

and get out of the way."[125] And "by agency," Pufall and Unsworth "refer to the fact that

children are much more self-determining actors than we generally think. They measure

issues against their own interests and values, they make up their own minds, they take

action as a function of their own wills – that is, if the more powerful class, the adults,

allows them to do so."[126] In terms of identity, Pufall and Unsworth also highlight two

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[124] In addition to the above, see Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing up in America*; N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes, *Growing up in America : Children in Historical Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Henry Jenkins, ed. *The Children's Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Mintz; Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Carolyn Fishel Sargent, eds., *Small Wars : The Cultural Politics of Childhood* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

[125] Pufall and Unsworth, "The Imperative and the Process for Rethinking Childhood" in Pufall and Unsworth, eds., 8.

[126] Pufall and Unsworth, eds., 9. Discussions of "agency" in regard to children/childhood are also explored in "Introduction: Children and Childhood in American Religions" in Don S. Browning and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Children and Childhood in American Religions*, The Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 7-8; Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Let the Children Come : Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective*, Families and Faith Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 137-160.

important questions of childhood studies, "What is a child?" and "When is a child?"[127]

For childhood studies, identity in children is more than simple biological age and growth (though it is certainly a marker) or narrow constructions of what a child should be doing physically/emotionally/socially at a certain age. Instead, childhood studies attend to the ways that children perform their identities in the world.

The work of those in childhood studies have helped the social sciences rethink an academic approach to children. Childhood studies has reframed childhood through research in critical histories, ethnography, cultural studies and their rootedness in the social construction of reality.[128] Until recently, however, the concern for children and these frameworks for inquiry have functioned mainly outside religious studies.

Only very recently have scholars of religious studies and theology sought to overcome Marcia J. Bunge's criticism that "despite the rising concern for and curiosity about children [read: childhood studies and public policy concerns], scholars of religion, theologians, and ethicists across religious lines have had little to say about children, and they have had little to contribute to the growing political and academic debates about children or our obligations to them."[129] A flurry of publishing activity has now occurred in religious studies and theology. It extends beyond religious education alone, which is now also rethinking its understandings of children.[130]

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[127] Pufall and Unsworth, eds., 12-19.

[128] See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality : A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

[129] Marcia Bunge, "The Child, Religion, and the Academy: Developing Robust Theological and Religious Understandings of Children and Childhood," *Journal of Religion* 86, no. 4 (2006): 551.

[130] Bunge, "The Child, Religion, and the Academy: Developing Robust Theological and Religious Understandings of Children and Childhood," 555-556.

In terms of approach, Bonnie Miller-McLemore and Don Browning outline two "prominent frames of interpretation on contemporary childhood" operating in childhood studies of religion that seek to understand "U.S. culture as it influences children."[131] The first of two hypotheses, "the family modernization hypothesis," proposes "that the spread of technical rationality (the use of efficient means to gain short-term satisfactions) injects various separations into society that affect the lives of children…In modern societies, the argument goes, norms governing the socialization of children, education, employment, sexuality, and life's purpose become increasingly oriented around market values, individual rights, self-actualization, and secularism."[132] The second, more widely used in childhood studies, is the "social constructionist hypothesis," which "argues that even though childhood has distinct biological parameters, societies and social groups construct the meaning and nature of childhood to a considerable extent around powerful economic, political, and religious ideas."[133] It is in this second hypothesis that childhood studies in religion forge a strong relationship with the foundational assumptions at work in the social sciences.

Underscoring the expansion of work on behalf of children in the theological academy, Christian ethicist John Wall presents a taxonomy of Christian ethics' approaches to childhood, articulating how concern for children has diversified in theological approach.[134] Wall traces one of the first approaches as "communitarian"

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[131] Bonnie Miller-McLemore and Don Browning, "Introduction: Chidren and Childhood in American Religions" in Browning and Miller-McLemore, 3.

[132] Browning and Miller-McLemore, 3.

[133] Browning and Miller-McLemore, 4.

ethics, popularized most prominently by Stanley Hauerwas, and "argues that children fare poorly in the contemporary world primarily because they lack strong families, traditions, and social narratives under which to develop civilized and meaningful social values. Children are not just individual or autonomous agents but need to be socialized into the larger values and virtues of coherent moral communities."[135] We have seen the reach of this approach in the work of both Anna Carter Florence and Sarah Arthur. While "communitarian" ethics emerged in the early 1980's, Wall describes the response of "liberationist" thinkers in the early 1990's who, "rather than opposing modernity and critiquing the contemporary human sciences of childhood [like the communitarians do], this approach learns a great deal from them. Methodologically, it shares what could be called a 'bottom-up' approach that starts in children's own actual lives, voices, agency, and experiences. Their reason to engage theologically with childhood is that, as Thatcher puts it, children 'are often the ones with no voice, the unconsulted and sometimes undeserving victims of oppression.'"[136] Because children are unable to advocate for themselves in the academy, this kind of liberationist concern provokes what David Jensen calls a type of "advocacy theology" on behalf of children.[137] Finally, Wall describes the most recent (mid-1990's) theological ethical approach to childhood, which he labels

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[134] John Wall, "Childhood Studies, Hermeneutics, and Theological Ethics," *Journal of Religion* 86, no. 4 (2006). Wall presents the strengths and weaknesses of each of the different approaches, which are important, but are tangential at this point. Here I simply want to name the different ways of approaching children/childhood in contemporary Christian theological ethics.

[135] Wall: 530.

[136] Wall: 530.

[137] Jensen, xiii. Jensen says that "an advocacy theology seeks to speak with those whose voices are often not heard. Children's voices often drown in the cacophony of commercialization and violence that characterized the (post)modern world. Attempting to hear them is fraught with peril: often we think we hear their voices when we really are hearing only ourselves and our intentions for children" (xiii).

"progressive familism."[138] While many of those Wall ascribes to this group articulate

strong foundations in liberationism and feminism,

> they also believe that the well-being of children is uniquely dependent on others
> and particularly on parents (hence 'familism'). Significantly, progressive
> familists are deeply engaged with the fields of developmental and evolutionary
> psychology, partly because these fields offer empirical insight into families, but
> also, and perhaps even more importantly, because they help describe how children
> become – rather than just already are – competent social agents. In other words,
> children's social agency is not just a given but also a developmental task falling
> first and foremost on families.[139]

While these three "schools" differ in the way they approach studying children and

articulate Christian ethics from their respective vantage points, of overarching importance

is the fact that significant and rigorous work is being done in the theological academy

concerning children. The categories of Wall's taxonomy extend beyond the confines of

Christian ethics. Childhood studies has branched out to areas within the theological

academy such as historical theology, systematic/constructive theology, biblical studies,

and practical theology who all reflect one or more of Wall's categories.[140] There remains

some ambivalence when reading these works, however, as to whether they are concerned

with adolescents or more with younger aged children. This ambivalence is evident in the

use of "children" to refer to those under the age of eighteen in childhood studies, while

the general public rarely includes those in the age range of thirteen to eighteen as

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[138] Wall: 531ff.

[139] Wall: 531.

[140] See, for instance Bunge, ed. *The Child in Christian Thought*; Donald Capps, "Curing Anxious Adolescents through Fatherlike Performance," *Interpretation* 55, no. 2 (2001); John T. Carroll, "Children in the Bible," *Interpretation* 55, no. 2 (2001); Dawn DeVries, "Toward a Theology of Childhood," *Interpretation* 55, no. 2 (2001); Kristin Herzog, *Children and Our Global Future : Theological and Social Challenges* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2005); Jensen; Mercer; Miller-McLemore; Evelyn L. Parker, "Hungry for Honor: Children in Violent Youth Gangs," *Interpretation* 55, no. 2 (2001).

children. This unreflective use of the terms "child" and "children" by childhood studies has led to an unintentional, but nonetheless problematic oversight about variations across age groups and a neglect of those thirteen and over who are no longer children in many ways, but not yet fully adult in others.[141]

Framing Adolescence: Critical Youth Studies and Religious Education Concerning Adolescents

The ambivalence toward adolescents in childhood studies and childhood studies in religion leaves a gap filled by two areas of study that rely on the trajectory outlined above. For adolescents, a parallel track to childhood studies and childhood studies in religion has arrived in the work in critical youth studies and some very recent writing in religious education.

Critical youth studies works with many of the same foundational methodological principles as childhood studies, but for many this research concentrates on the "teenage" years, approximately 13-19 years old (although, of course this limitation is not solidified). This focus on biological age provides a functional delimitation for study (also found in cultural institutions such as education), effectively eliminating any ambivalence found in childhood studies toward adolescents. The leading, shared foundational commitment is understanding adolescence as a social and cultural construction.   As with childhood studies, researchers operate through a number of disciplines that feed off of this understanding, particularly historical studies which seek to demonstrate adolescence as a historically contingent phenomenon.[142]

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[141] Bonnie Miller-McLemore, personal conversation, 15 February, 2011.

One of the chief aims of critical youth studies is to overcome common

(mis)conceptions of universal and essentialized versions of adolescence which have

hardened in the public imagination, or what has been termed in this study as "ontological

adolescence." Nancy Lesko uses much softer language, identifying four "confident

characterizations" concerning adolescents.[143] These characterizations identify ways in

which adolescents are largely understood in the public imagination while also exposing

how the characterizations circumscribe the power of description to adults. Lesko begins

with the characterization that "teenagers are 'at the threshold' and in 'transition to

adulthood.' These phrases suggest an evolutionary arrival in an enlightened state after a

lengthy period of backwardness… 'Coming of age' makes adolescence into a powerful

and uncontrollable force, like the arrival of spring that swells tree buds."[144] Popular

developmental models commonly frame adolescence this way and have influenced

cultural structures. Second, Lesko points to the characterization of youth as

uncontrollably captive, physically and emotionally, to the power of "raging hormones"

which "links the power to sexuality, and offers these facts as biological and beyond social

intervention."[145] As a result of the chemical changes of puberty, physical changes are

linked to emotional changes and lead to common depictions of teenagers as volatile.

Third, adolescents are commonly characterized as "peer-oriented" which "claim[s] that

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[142] There are a number of histories of adolescence in addition to the histories of childhood, which are commendable. See Austin and Willard, *Generations of Youth : Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*; Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 1st ed. (New York: Bard, 1999); Kett; Palladino; Glenn Wallach, *Obedient Sons : The Discourse of Youth and Generations in American Culture, 1630-1860* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

[143] Nancy Lesko, *Act Your Age! : A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*, Critical Social Thought (New York: Routledge/Falmer, 2001), 2.

[144] Lesko, 3.

[145] Lesko, 3.

teenagers are less individuated than adults…To demean peer pressure also has the effect of privileging an individualism that is historically associated with middle-class, white males and is largely alien to the experiences of many people of color and women."[146] Finally, Lesko demonstrates that age becomes a signifier for adolescence, such that when the age of a teenager is spoken/written, the age provokes "volumes of information and references: developing bodies, strange music, moody distancing, laughter alternating with sullenness, expectations of diffidence, passionate arguments, and talking endlessly on the phone…Age is a shorthand, a code that evokes what amounts to an 'epidemic of signification.'"[147]

Lesko goes on to briefly discuss how these characterizations pervade the discourse of a number of academic fields and popular culture, prompting new critical studies of, for, and with youth. Her work is representative among the field of critical youth studies which has been interdisciplinary and overlaps with various subfields including not only critical histories but also media studies, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, communication, and education.[148] Despite that proliferation across

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[146] Lesko, 4.

[147] Lesko, 4. This last observation is perhaps the most significant for the homiletic purposes of this study. The characterization translates into a helpful diagnostic for the homiletic literature analyzed above. Inasmuch as a numerical age functions as a signifier, so do the labels "teenage(r)," "adolescent," and "youth." Thus, one of the primary purposes of analyzing the homiletic literature above is to uncover how "teenage(r)," "adolescent," or "youth" function as a signifier and what their respective significations say about adolescents as listeners of preaching/religious subjects. They operate, more often than not, as indicators of difference, note the inability to listen/process sermons as adults do, and alert to the need for special (read: less sophisticated than adult) sermonic rhetoric and logic. They seem to at least have the potential to include Lesko's other "confident characterizations" within their realm of signification.

[148] Work has been quite expansive over a short period of time, producing a number of quality monogrpahs. See, for instance Charles R. Acland, *Youth, Murder, Spectacle : The Cultural Politics Of "Youth in Crisis"*, Cultural Studies (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995); Amy L. Best, *Fast Cars, Cool Rides : The Accelerating World of Youth and Their Cars* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Neil Campbell, ed. *American Youth Cultures* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); James E. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood : The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York: New York University

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disciplines, religious studies and religion is hardly a concern for many of the monographs that have appeared over the last fifteen years even though religion is a major social factor for many adolescents.[149]

A small number of Christian educators have appropriated this new framework for analyzing adolescence. These scholar-practitioners ask how critical approaches to adolescence can help theologians and ministry practitioners engage adolescents in renewed ways. In particular, their work is rooted in a social constructionist understanding of adolescence which also accounts for adolescent agency rather than leaning solely on developmental models.[150] In doing so, they critique youth ministry

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Press, 2000); James E. Côté and Anton Allahar, *Generation on Hold : Coming of Age in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Johan Fornäs and Göran Bolin, *Youth Culture in Late Modernity* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1995); Alan France, *Understanding Youth in Late Modernity* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2007); Ross Haenfler, *Straight Edge : Clean-Living Youth, Hardcore Punk, and Social Change* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance through Rituals : Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006); Jan Jagodzinski, *Youth Fantasies : The Perverse Landscape of the Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation : Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture*, 1st ed. (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2002); Hans Arthur Skott-Myhre, *Youth and Subculture as Creative Force : Creating New Spaces for Radical Youth Work* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Jennifer Andrea Vadeboncoeur and Lisa Patel Stevens, *Re/Constructing "The Adolescent" : Sign, Symbol, and Body*, Adolescent Cultures, School & Society, (New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Sharon R. Mazzarella, "Constructing Youth: Media, Youth, and the Politics of Representation" in Angharad N. Valdivia, ed. *A Companion to Media Studies*, Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies 6 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006); Susan Weiner, *Enfants Terribles : Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945-1968* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Angie Williams and Crispin Thurlow, *Talking Adolescence : Perspectives on Communication in the Teenage Years*, Language as Social Action, (New York: Peter Lang, 2005). See also the interdisciplinary work of Henry Giroux, who writes at the intersection of youth, politics, education, and media.

[149] A notable exception is Eileen Luhr, *Witnessing Suburbia : Christian Conservatives, "Family Values," And the Cultural Politics of Youth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

[150] David White and those among the authors of the *Youth Ministry Alternatives* series are guided by the impulses found in childhood studies. Many contemporary Christian educators, however, have not given up perspectives from developmental psychology, even as they tacitly assume some social constructivist views. Kenda Creasy Dean, for instance, uses a theological understanding of Erik Erikson (in the vein of her mentor, James Loder) to advocate for renewed practices of youth ministry. See Kenda Creasy Dean, *Practicing Passion : Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub., 2004); Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, *The Godbearing Life : The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998). See also Robert C. Dykstra, Allan Hugh Cole, and Donald Capps, *Losers, Loners, and Rebels : The Spiritual Struggles of Boys*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).

publishing's depiction of adolescents as passive religious subjects. For instance, in the foreword to The Pilgrim Press' "Youth Ministry Alternatives" books series, series editors David White and Faith Kirkham Hawkins acknowledge that

> for three decades the task of conceptualizing youth ministry has largely been left to independent commercial enterprises that have failed to recognize the importance of denomination, theology, ethnicity, class, and other cultural particularities for shaping Christian discipleship. In addition, youth ministry as it has evolved over these decades lacks significant critique of the shift in the social roles of young people in the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, in which youth are increasingly ghettoized as passive consumers rather than treated as agents of faith influencing the common good.[151]

This statement suggests significant influences from critical youth studies (with its roots in childhood studies) including the understanding that ideological commitments also influence approaches to research. David White articulates an ideological approach whereby he "explore[s] how the material conditions of postmodernity influence young people, especially in achieving their developmental tasks and finding a sense of Christian vocation in partnership with God."[152] White weaves together a materialist account of postmodernity that narrates the conditions of contemporary adolescence(s) in order to help adolescents and those who work with them faithfully discern their vocation.[153]

Evelyn L. Parker contributes an ethnographic approach, rooted in liberationist thought, particularly womanism, in the interest of "fostering a Christian spirituality in

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[151] David F. White and Faith Kirkham Hawkins, "Foreword" in Fred P. Edie, *Book, Bath, Table & Time : Christian Worship as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2007), vii.

[152] David F. White, "Illusions of Postmodern Youth Ministry," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 6, no. 1 (2007): 19. The language of development is not abandoned among these authors. Rather it is reframed contextually and theologically.

[153] See also David F. White, *Practicing Discernment with Youth : A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach*, Youth Ministry Alternatives (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2005). His book is derivative of many of the ideas in "Illusions" though it reaches toward a more popular audience.

African American adolescents whereby they live holy and hope-filled lives, guided by the Spirit of God, while engaging in the challenges of social justice."[154] Parker's ethnography incorporates the view that youth are religious agents lacking social capital (namely, the ability to write and publish), helping her produce a constructive theological scheme "from below." This scheme is intended to be instructive for those who minister to youth in African American communities. Parker also invites theological reflection from adult female theologians and adolescent girls, seeking to articulate more fully the nature of spirituality among North American adolescent girls in *The Sacred Selves of Adolescent Girls: Hard Stories of Race, Class, and Gender*.[155]

Similarly, Dori Grinenko Baker offers what she calls "girlfriend theology" which is "a method of religious education that helps adults be present…that teaches participants to see life theologically…to invite girls and women to tell true stories from their lives…Girlfriend theology is about girls and women creating spaces…so that we might discern the trace of a living, breathing divine presence who seeks our companionship as much today as on the fresh new dawn of creation."[156] Baker encourages a model of religious education that utilizes the stories of girls and women as a source of and for Christian practical theological reflection.

The recent reflection in Christian education takes great strides over older models which fix adolescents to passive roles and universal, static developmental tasks. They

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[154] Evelyn L. Parker, *Trouble Don't Last Always : Emancipatory Hope among African American Adolescents* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003), vii.

[155] Evelyn L. Parker, *The Sacred Selves of Adolescent Girls : Hard Stories of Race, Class, and Gender* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006).

[156] Dori Grinenko Baker, *Doing Girlfriend Theology : God-Talk with Young Women* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 2-3.

point toward ways to (1) think about adolescence in new, critical frames, (2) critique previous youth ministry approaches while prescribing contextual education and pastoral care of adolescents, and (3) collaborate with youth for theological reflection. Unfortunately, for all its benefit, homiletic reflection is absent. For example, although Fred Edie incorporates Gordon Lathrop's conception of Christian worship as a "source and resource" for youth ministry, Edie does not mention preaching.[157] This kind of absence compounds the practical theological divide already named: religious education fails to speak to homiletics, and vice versa. This problem is compounded when viewed along with the problems previously observed, namely that homiletics neglects youth and youth ministry literature neglects homiletic reflection. How is homiletics to proceed in light of this problem?

Homiletics and Adolescence: An Issue for Practical Theology

Tracing the literatures above portrays a significant gap in practical theological reflection, and particularly on the part of homiletics. Bonnie Miller-McLemore is right when she observes that "the subject matter of children, I argue, challenges the usual division between biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology. Its reintroduction into academic study requires fresh rubrics that cross over and work between these categories."[158] The disconnects among the literatures discussed above

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[157] Edie. See also Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things : A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). When Edie summons the portion of Lathrop's *ordo* having to do with the Bible, Edie relegates adolescent engagement with the Bible to performance of biblical texts along the lines of how Nicholas Lash conceives performing scriptures as script in Nicholas Lash, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM Press, 1986).

[158] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Children and Religion in the Public Square: "Too Dangerous and Too Safe, Too Difficult and Too Silly"," *Journal of Religion* 86, no. 3 (2006): 385.

prove Miller-McLemore's diagnosis; the theological disciplines continue their own internal fragmentation and even more, the constituent disciplines of practical theological reflection seem to operate solipsistically.

A bulk of the contemporary problem lies in the respectability of practical theological disciplines. Miller-McLemore believes

> thinking about children has been a bit like the housework of the theological school: no one wants to do it. Many men in the field of religion do not regard children as a credible subject because of their distance from domestic care, and many women have not taken up the topic because of their proximity to them and their sometimes onerous immersion in daily care. Like the teaching of children in congregations, the subject has been pushed off to the academic wings, surfacing mostly in religious education and pastoral care.[159]

If Miller-McLemore is right, then homiletics has a significant internal problem to overcome concerning young people. Homiletics continues to struggle for its own disciplinary integrity within the academy. To engage in homiletic reflection about young people clearly puts the homiletician at risk with respect to a career in the theological academy, particularly if he/she is not engaged simultaneously with religious education and pastoral care. But a homiletician engaged in the disciplines of religious education and/or pastoral care is also in danger of not being engaged in the "real work" of the theological academy.

J. Randall Nichols expresses the problem in this way: "homileticians tend to think of themselves as consumers rather than producers of theological construction – about sermons or anything else. We have a way of hiring other colleagues (who are the *real* theologians, you see) to provide the content of preaching; our task is too often seen as a

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[159] Miller-McLemore, "Children and Religion in the Public Square: "Too Dangerous and Too Safe, Too Difficult and Too Silly"," 396.

second-order one having to do with purveying that theological content in some way that has a reasonable chance of being heard by people in the pews."[160] Even more, Nichols sheds light on the "covert notion" among some theological faculties that preaching does not require serious study and teaching as a discipline in its own right.[161] To teach a suspect subject and focus it upon a traditionally suspect subject matter can be a recipe for a suspect academic career. As a result of these risks, adolescents remain a safe distance from homiletic concern, left to the treatment of youth ministry literature.

Acknowledging the problem in the theological academy, however, opens up a way forward for homiletics. This way forward hinges on a renewed understanding of the theological disciplines. The "theological encyclopedia" model suggests a relationship whereby theories from biblical studies, historical theology, or doctrinal theology are taken from those disciplines and applied to the situation of adolescents and preaching. This model has long since gone under criticism and effectively amounts to outsourcing homiletic understanding to those disciplines.[162] In the same way, even though religious education has appropriated frameworks for understanding contemporary adolescence(s) toward renewed practices, homiletics cannot simplistically import their work because, as seen, homiletic theories and practices are not within their scope.[163] While this option is

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[160] J. Randall Nichols, "What Is the Matter with the Teaching of Preaching," *Anglican Theological Review* 62, no. 3 (1980): 222-223.

[161] Nichols: 231.

[162] See Miller-McLemore's brief account in Miller-McLemore, "Children and Religion in the Public Square: "Too Dangerous and Too Safe, Too Difficult and Too Silly"," 396. Or for a more full account, see Edward Farley, *Theologia : The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

[163] See, for example, the ways that Dean and DeVries' articles on preaching and youth, above. The same also would apply for using childhood studies and critical youth studies, since their concern is predominantly not religion and certainly not homiletic theory and practice.

tempting, it would merely reinscribe the theory-application pattern and further prevent homiletics from operating as a discipline with its own integrity. Importing the frameworks of adolescence found in Christian education or pastoral care releases homiletics from its responsibility to adolescents.[164] In such a practical theological relationship, no engagement with young people is necessary, if there is any concern for them at all.

This understanding of how homiletics functions as practical theological discipline is insufficient. It allows homiletics to remain a lifetime borrower from the other theological disciplines, both so-called academic and practical. Homiletic concern for young people highlights a problem within practical theology and prompts a new relationship among the theological disciplines. Homiletics does not now come to the forefront of theological reflection as the sole producer of knowledge about adolescents and thus ignoring other disciplinary contributions (either the contributions of the traditional fourfold theological curriculum *or* of the subdisciplines of practical theological study[165]). Nor can it remain a lifetime borrower.

Rather, homiletics must proceed with a sense of being interconnected with the other theological disciplines and the wider academy. With an understanding of practical theology as interdependent, and homiletics as a producer of theological knowledge of use for all interested parties, homiletics can move forward to contribute a specifically homiletic reflection on adolescence that also articulates renewed homiletic theories and practices for, to, with, and by adolescents.

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[164] This is one of the main concerns for Troeger and Everding's work, above.

[165] Bonnie Miller-McLemore, personal conversation, 15 February, 2011.

In order to do that, homiletics must begin to overcome its detachment from the lives of adolescents. Probing the historical materials and contemporary literature only provides ways to understand how the situation has come to exist. Homiletics can initiate a homiletic discourse that honors the rich texture of adolescents' lives, not dependent on images informed by ontological adolescence. Through listening to adolescent engagement with preaching, a uniquely homiletic picture of adolescence emerges and homiletic dialogue is enriched by its engagement, resulting in the mutual flourishing of adolescents, communities of faith, and homiletics. This kind of listening can take shape in a way that specifically addresses the particular set of questions young people present. In order to fund the kind of practical theological project that can address those questions, I will now outline a theological and ethical corrective that renews public homiletic space for the adolescent-adult relationship and sets the stage for a project of listening to young people.

Chapter IV

Liberation and Formation: A Disposition for Youth and Adults

Chapter two narrated the gradual decrease in attention given to adolescents by

homiletics. This has resulted in contemporary homiletical representations of adolescents

that are either characterized by silence, ontological adolescence, or some type of

deficiency, all of which were explored in chapter three. The task of chapter four will be

to develop a kind of theological and ethical corrective for homiletics that can overcome

the silence and ontological adolescence found in contemporary literature while also

avoiding a default posture of adolescent deficiency. To do so, we must begin to generate

discourse that faithfully engages adolescents, taking account of the ways they act with

homiletic agency and, as a byproduct, construct a renewed public homiletic space. This

chapter proposes a way for homiletics to go about discerning the ways that youth can

inform preaching theories/practices, even as the exigency of certain kinds of formation

are apparent.

To begin this renewal of homiletic space, I propose *liberation* and *formation* as a

theological and ethical norm for homiletics in its relationship with youth. I will argue

that liberation and formation shape a normative theological and ethical *disposition*[1] for

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[1] I intentionally choose the word "disposition." Use of the term "disposition" is more closely akin to a
component of what Pierre Bourdieu calls a "habitus," which are "systems of durable, transposable
dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of
the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and
'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals
without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain
them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a
conductor." Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology ;
(Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72. Bourdieu further defines "disposition" as

homileticians. This disposition will help homileticians develop approaches to youth

grounded in listening to and learning from adolescents' communicative practices while

critically reflecting upon them. The goal of this chapter, then, is to outline a constructive

homiletic disposition that can foster the development of homiletical content and practices

for, to, by, and with adolescents.

On the one hand, the disposition of liberation and formation articulated here will

protect against homiletic nostalgia. Young people will not be encouraged to uncritically

appropriate, for instance, the image of the free and unfettered nineteenth century frontier

revival young preacher. On the other hand, a disposition of liberation and formation will

avoid encouraging a communicative identity in young people that imposes on youth what

Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman call "the bourgeois liberal concept of the

autonomous individual," which fails to account for the number of ways that young

people's communicative practices were and are constrained.[2]

In order to develop this disposition, I will examine the ways young people are

represented in broader cultural spheres, in the interest of revising the concept of

oppression among youth. I then turn to recent homiletical models that address oppression

of various types and assess their benefit for the situation of adolescents.   I will then

describe the contours of an approach that can effectively speak to the adult-adolescent

"particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of habitus (defined as a system of
dispositions). It expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words
such as structure; it also designates a way of being a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in
particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination" (214). It is the "result of an organizing
action," the structured action, and the character of a "way of being" that I attempt to describe in this
chapter, particularly concerning how adults live in homiletical relationship with young people. As a
disposition is a component of a habitus, I believe that the particular disposition I describe here fits into the
overall larger habitus of homiletics as it relates to the marginalized.

[2] Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory : A Reader*
(New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 6.

homiletical relationship. The model I propose is characterized by two poles: (1)

liberation, which provides an emancipatory theological and ethical norm for the

relationship, and (2) *formation*, which supplies an equally important context of

theologically-informed practices, not based in deficiency, for the relationship.

Revising the Concept of "Oppression" among Adolescents

My argument thus far has shown how young people have either been silenced in

relation to the literatures of preaching and Christian ministry, or depicted with

representations characteristic of ontological adolescence within them. Just as theological

perspectives that seek to overcome marginalization begin by framing the dynamics of that

marginalization, so too must we frame young people's marginalization. Recognizing that

the experiences of adolescents are different than those of other groups who experience

oppression (i.e., African Americans, Latin Americans, feminists, womanist, disabled,

etc.), this section will reframe the concept of oppression for young people.

In this case, postcolonial theory begins to revise the concept of oppression that

fits more appropriately for youth, supplies a grid for evaluating adolescents' relationship

with homiletics, and provides a preliminary theoretical foundation for the movement

toward an emancipatory pole of homiletic discourse and practice for youth.

At first glance, postcolonial theory might seem to be an odd fit for understanding

adolescents' relationship with preaching.[3] If, however, postcolonial theory focuses on

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[3] As Nancy Lesko observes, "modern conceptions of children and youth are not usually located in historical frameworks that include colonial relations." Lesko, 33.

"the process of production of knowledge about the Other," then there is generative ground on which a discussion of adolescents and homiletics can take shape.[4]

Nancy Lesko describes how "recapitulation theory," a core 19th century anthropological theory, "established a threefold parallelism across animals, savages, and children: children were like savages, savages were like animals, and animals were like children."[5] Though recapitulation theory has now faded, the theory remains sedimented in the North American cultural imaginary. Lesko summarizes the effects of recapitulation theory on modern conceptions of adolescents:

> First, the modern concepts of child and adolescent development have a color and gender. Second, recapitulation theory links ideas about developing children and adolescents to a paternalistic and exploitative colonial system, which endlessly reiterated the inadequacies of the natives and the need for Western rule. Finally, recapitulation theory's intimacy with colonialism suggests that knowledge will provide a continuing gloss of and cover for the exercise of subordinating power that speaks of immaturity, emotionality, conformity, and irrationality.[6]

Lesko narrates a historical discourse that intermingles nationalism, race theory (and racism), science, anthropology, gender, and much more, all connected to what it meant to young. Through that narration, she describes how "the adolescent was an object that could be discussed, diagnosed, scientized, differentiated, and familiarized."[7] As a result, the terms "child" and "adolescent" were and continue to be freighted with colonialist consequences.

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[4] Williams and Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory : A Reader*, 4, 8.

[5] Lesko, 33.

[6] Lesko, 35.

[7] Lesko, 46, 47.

One of these consequences was the proliferation of models of adolescence within developmental psychology. [8] The developmental frameworks that proliferated in the twentieth century often hinged on scientized depictions of adolescence. Lesko's description of the objectified adolescent has been embodied in psychological models that prescribe the proper physical, cognitive, emotional, psychological, and even spiritual functions within each stage of development.[9] In other words, they act as models that "codify knowledge" about "non-developed," "undeveloped," or "under-developed" adolescents.

Adolescent experience has become, in many ways, essentialized and normalized in the cultural imaginary, even as recent postmodern critiques have challenged how adolescents are conceived through developmental psychology. Cultural and educational theorist Henry Giroux observes:

> Needless to say, simplistic Hollywood portrayals of working-class youth as either potential muggers or dead from the neck up legitimates real futures that offer the horrifying images of the prison, mental hospital, or local fast food outlet. As youth are conceived in images of demonization, sexual deviance, and criminality, the only public sites that appear available to them are unskilled work, highly policed public spaces, or the brute reality of incarceration.[10]

As a result, there appears to be some similarities between developmental models as colonialist discipline and mass media images, market, education, and differentiation of

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[8] I have not approached developmental theories to this point, partly because of its entanglement in colonialist and structuralist foundations. This does not mean, however, that theories like those popularized in Erik Erikson's work (or any of the developmental literature) is unimportant or unworthy of study, or that it does not provide frameworks which can help in the church's ministry to youth. It does necessitate, however, a view embodied in the work of "critical psychology," which attempts to account for the ways that psychology's assumptions, methods, and findings are culturally and ideologically driven.

[9] See, for instance, the textbook by Rolf Eduard Helmut Muuss, Eli Velder, and Harriet Porton, *Theories of Adolescence*, 6th ed., The Mcgraw-Hill Series in Developmental Psychology (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996).

[10] Henry A. Giroux, "Teenage Sexuality, Body Politics, and the Pedagogy of Display," in Jonathon S. Epstein, ed. *Youth Culture : Identity in a Postmodern World* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), 31.

civic space according to age. Both have promoted a narrow range of possibilities for the activity of youth both in the cultural imaginary and real public spaces. Giroux's exploration of the link between portrayals of youth in the media and public life, quoted above, draws connections between media representations and the futures of young people.

More recently, Giroux has identified two tracks of representation for youth in the United States where "global corporations and the punishing state are now the dominant story tellers and influence in children's lives, shaping their futures according to the interests of the market."[11] Those who are unable to excel in the "pedagogy of commodification" (or more simply put, unable to spend money) are rendered "disposable" and often suffer under the effects of the "youth crime complex."[12] The complex network of corporations, media, government, health care industry, and educational institutions come together to offer representations (commodification or disposability) of young people that narrate their lives in limited and harmful ways.

In order to further describe the limitations of self-conception among adolescents and particularly for homiletics as a *discursive* practice, it is helpful to briefly revisit how post-colonial theory has considered Gayatri Spivak's influential question, "Can the subaltern speak?" The responses to this question bear fruit for exploring what it means for adolescents to have voice as preachers and/or participants in the shaping of homiletic discourse.

Spivak believes that the subaltern is so entangled in the pull of colonial discourse(s) that she is unable to recognize how her speech is conditioned and thus

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[11] Giroux, 28.

[12] Giroux, 28. Giroux also points to how these points of departure are largely racialized.

unable to have some sense of authentic voice. [13] Spivak says resolutely, "the subaltern cannot speak…Representation has not withered away."[14] Even in her own speech, the subaltern is always represented by others. On the other hand, Benita Parry contests Spivak's stance by suggesting that colonial forces are never able to fully control the subaltern's speech.[15] For Parry, some sense of authentic voice is always available. The extremes that Spivak and Parry present should be avoided; the disagreement, however, provides a theoretical spectrum upon which to posit the boundaries of the subaltern's ability to speak with agency and voice.

In a sense, the issues of self-representation have already been at work in chapters one and two. Post-colonial theory helps bring those issues into view more clearly. Did young people in early America speak and endorse preaching with their own "authentic" voices or were they entangled in hegemonic ideas (religious, political, economic, social, familial) that anticipated their limited, controlled responses?[16] The truth is likely somewhere in between. Adolescents' religious speech practices likely indicate their entanglement in larger cultural hegemonies. But this does not preclude attempts at resistance to those hegemonies that rule adolescent speech practices with "absolute power." The model proposed below will seek to discern the ways that young people's contemporary speech proposes resistance or stands in need of formation.

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[13] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" reprinted in Williams and Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory : A Reader*, 78.

[14] Williams and Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory : A Reader*, 104.

[15] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2nd ed., The New Critical Idiom (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 196.

[16] Or, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, were young people engaging in "regulated improvisation"? Bourdieu, 78-79.

As outlined in chapter three, contemporary homiletic discourse often carries with it a highly differentiated, even combative, rhetoric toward adolescents. Post-colonial theory paints a more textured picture of the sources and effects of this kind of language. Adolescents have been regarded more as "becoming" rather than "being."[17] As a result, they are always on the way toward homiletic sophistication, but never able to arrive. They do not possess inherent homiletic wisdom, but are timekeepers (Craddock) or in need of specific schemes of preaching (Wilson). They are generally regarded as passive recipients of preaching, rather than active listeners or religious communicators. According to Henry Mitchell and Sarah Arthur, adolescents speak in degenerate forms of the English language that preachers must engage through a type of cross-cultural analysis (perhaps even missiological in nature) and then subsequently manipulate in order to communicate effectively. Their "subaltern" speech is suspect. And as non-developed, un-developed, or under-developed bodies, adolescents are prime sites to be "colonized" by adult homiletic dispositions, content, and practices. Indeed, as Anna Carter Florence notes, youth "know the rules for sermons (no talking, fidgeting, pinching, fussing)."[18] As such, youth can and do become "docile bodies," disciplined to exercise a limited form of homiletic agency while they take up space in pews.[19] It is not shocking that in anecdotal

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[17] Nancy Lesko, "Denaturalizing Adolescence: The Politics of Contemporary Representations," *Youth & Society* 28, no. 2 (1996).

[18] Florence, "A Prodigal Preaching Story and Bored-to-Death Youth," 238. And as pointed out in chapter two, Anna Carter Florence rehearses the model that young people do not speak the language of the church, its "mother tongue." In doing so, she reinforces a colonial narrative whereby the church's sophisticated and "true" language is not spoken by the exotic natives who do not know "the *art of listening*, of entering the world of a sermon." Florence, "A Prodigal Preaching Story and Bored-to-Death Youth," 238. The notion of listening as an "art" should not be taken lightly as its language distinguishes between "high" and "low" cultures. See Kathryn Tanner's discussion of the history of "culture" in Tanner, 3-24.

[19] The term "docile bodies" comes from the work of Michel Foucault. See especially Michel Foucault, "Docile Bodies" in Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, eds., *The Foucault Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 179-187. Below, and in chapters five and six I will explore and assess at length

evidence, many youth are portrayed as "bored" with preaching since they have been disciplined to engage preaching in such limited ways.[20]

In post-colonial theory we find a beneficial matrix for understanding how young people's self-conception is constrained. There are limits, however, to the usefulness of post-colonial theory. While post-colonial criticism provides a critique of power relations and cultural manifestations as they relate to colonialist renderings of adolescence, it does not necessarily prescribe solutions for homiletics.[21] It does help us to be more precise about the specific loci of adolescent marginalization. Instead of using the term "oppression," which serves as a way of marking some of the more severe experiences of other people and groups, we can focus more specifically on the ways youth are represented and are unable to represent themselves. "Oppression" is thus revised to mean the systematic limiting of the possibilities of self-conception among youth. This includes, but is certainly not limited to: limitations of action, embodiment, ritual agency, and occupation of space(s). Most important to this study is paying close attention to the ways young people's homiletic agency and action is limited – both as listeners *and* speakers – and later, articulating ways to overcome those limitations.

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the ways that young people press back on preaching/homiletics through what Michel de Certeau calls "tactics."

[20] The phenomenon of boredom in relation to youth and preaching provides an opening for further research.

[21] In my estimation, there are at least three limitations to the use of post-colonial theory in this case: (1) Post-colonial criticism exposes power but does not prescribe an ethic for homiletics. Ania Loomba rightly points out that "colonialism…reshapes, often violently, physical territories, social terrains as well as human identities." Loomba, 155. (2) Post-colonial criticism maintains a center-margin relationship. Since adolescents will not in the foreseeable future speak or write their ways into positions of homiletic authority, they will always play the margin to preaching's consolidated centers of power, even when there is evidence of hybridity. (3) The problem of subaltern speech. While post-colonial criticism opens up a necessary question, "Can the subaltern speak?", it does not provide an adequate response to (a) interpretations of that speech and as a result, (b) incorporating the subaltern's speech (in this case, young people's religious speech practices) into the life of the church and into homiletic discourse.

In light of post-colonialist analysis of these representations, it is no surprise that young people look and feel out of place in relation to the contemporary American pulpit (both as listeners and speakers). If, however, preaching can act a site of youthful public, civic, and ecclesial engagement, then the pulpit can also be a site for rehabilitation of both the ecclesial and cultural imaginary towards adolescents. With a language of critique and possibility, homileticians and preachers (Giroux would include them as "cultural workers"[22]), along with youth, can work together to create alternative representations while exposing false and harmful ones *through youth preaching*. We now turn to the ways in which recent homiletic theory has tried to correct the problems of various types of oppression with an eye toward their usefulness for the problem described here.

Recent Models for Preaching Which Offer Correction

In light of the inadequacy of post-colonial theory to offer a fully-developed homiletic solution for the problems faced particularly by adolescents, it is imperative to review and assess the ways that recent homiletic models have attempted to intervene in various so-called oppressive situations. What support can be found, and what differentiations must be made so that a theological and ethical disposition toward adolescents can be formulated in response to the ways adolescents face limited self-conception?

The most recent generation of scholarship has programmatically explored various sources of theology and ethics in order to more properly define preaching practice and homiletic theory vis-à-vis the postmodern challenges of plurality, difference, marginality,

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[22] Giroux in Epstein, ed., 51-52.

and otherness. They have offered models for understanding the task of homiletics in the

contemporary situation as one of working toward various types of solidarity and/or voice.

Among these homiletic models (and the theological and ethical components that

constitute them), seeds for a new disposition toward adolescents can be found.

Conversation

Lucy Rose and Ronald Allen propose, in slightly different keys, the metaphor of

"conversation" as an image of preaching that rightly responds to plurality within

congregations.[23] Rose suggests a "form of preaching [which] aims to gather the

community of faith around the Word where the central conversations of the people of

God are fostered and refocused week after week."[24] For Rose, this kind of conversation

is non-hierarchical on the part of the preacher whereby "the preacher is not the one-in-

the-know but an equal colleague in matters of living and believing. Instead of impeding

these conversations with a final or single answer, the preacher fosters them by explicitly

acknowledging a variety of points of view, learning processes, interpretations, and life

experiences."[25] This kind of preaching nurtures plurality within the congregation's

preaching life as all of its members are "gathered" around each other, biblical texts, and

the received resources of faith. Rose characterizes conversational preaching with

> an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect, as well as the willingness of the
> participants to acknowledge the particularity of their experiences based on their
> historical and social locations. My hope is that the image of homiletics as a

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[23] John McClure's *Roundtable Pulpit* can also be grouped with Rose and Allen. Since his more recent
work will be described below, and *Roundtable Pulpit* differs in some substantial ways from their work, I
will not address it here. For McClure's own exploration of these differences, see McClure, *Other-Wise
Preaching : A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*, 59-63.

[24] Rose, 93.

[25] Rose, 96.

conversation will further efforts in the field of homiletics to identify and respect a broad range of differences and to make room for a variety of homiletical theories reflecting a variety of experiences, theologies, and ecclesiologies.[26]

Rose seeks an integration of feminist inclinations of conversation and relationality alongside David Tracy's hermeneutic of conversation as outlined in his book *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*.[27]

Ronald Allen is more explicitly focused on David Tracy's conversational model of interpretation. He identifies "preaching as theological interpretation through conversation."[28] Allen consolidates more relational authority in the person of the preacher because, he believes, "the church ordains the pastor to help make sure that certain voices are represented in the conversation and to help the church think its way through the pluralism of voices to theological conclusion."[29] This understanding of preaching "is mutual exploration of ideas, feelings, and behaviors with the goal of coming to as promising an understanding as is possible at a given moment. In the church, the conversation of preaching aims for an adequate interpretation of the significance of the gospel for the life of the ecclesial community and the world."[30]

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[26] Rose, 9.

[27] David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity : Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). Rose believes her version of conversation is "more informal and personal than Tracy's" (9). Rose's language here also typifies the kind of "slippage" between homiletic theory and practice argued in the present work. By this I mean that Rose is simultaneously arguing for a particular mode of operation in homiletic discourse and preaching practice. This mode of operation casts the metaphor of "conversation" as a controlling metaphor which serves to open up theory and practice beyond dominant voices. This way of simultaneously talking about theory and practice is also present in the figures I highlight below.

[28] Ronald J. Allen, *Interpreting the Gospel : An Introduction to Preaching* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1998), 66ff.

[29] Allen, 67.

[30] Allen, 67.

Allen's ethical disposition is a byproduct of this homiletical appropriation of/grounding in Tracy's theological hermeneutic. For Allen (via Tracy), preaching pursues the pertinent questions of the faith community's texts, with mutual respect for all the partners as "a complex phenomenon comprised of three elements: text, interpreters, and their interaction grounded in questioning itself."[31] The classic text(s) and its question(s) drive the process of interpretation through conversation. All partners in the conversation are valued as potential dialogue partners on the way toward discovering truth.[32]

Testimony

In describing the theory and practice of "testimony" as a model for preaching, Anna Carter Florence suggests that testimony "invites us…to rethink our ideas about freedom, power, and difference."[33] Florence attempts to retrieve a women's preaching tradition grounded through a multi-layered approach that includes historical narratives, hermeneutic theory, and feminist theology, and, as an indirect consequence, strives to answer the larger question raised by Spivak: "Can the subaltern speak?"

Appropriating Paul Ricoeur's theory of testimony, Florence describes the power of "testimonial authority, [which] by definition, cannot be restricted to a select few. It is open and available to anyone willing to pattern herself after the testimony of Christ.

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[31] Tracy, 28. See also Tracy's discussion of the conditions of conversation in chapter one.

[32] It is important to note, however, as John McClure points out, that "Conversation does not necessarily imply collaboration. We cannot assume that we are working together when we are having a conversation. Conversations can be dominated by certain parties and used to reinforce divisions or hierarchical power relations within congregations." John S. McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit : Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 50.

[33] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, xxii.

Testimonial authority also compels listeners to focus on what the witness says and does, rather than her right to say it; the focus, in other words, shifts to the truth toward which she points."[34] Testimony is an act of interpretation by those who have had religious experience, and built upon the credibility of the witness. In this sense, Florence accesses a hermeneutical lens that opens preaching up to those on the margins of authority structures for preaching.

Florence also incorporates ideas from feminist theologians Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Rebecca Chopp. In service of the accessibility of testimony as a working model for preaching, Florence uses Fulkerson's idea of "graf(ph)ting" as a component of women's (or marginal peoples') preaching. Florence explains "graf(ph)ting" in this way: "What we do, either quietly or publicly, is exercise our subjectivity: we take liberties with the text by making liberty with the text. We deliberately or unconsciously shift the way we interpret it. We redirect the flow of meaning until it is no longer oppressive or corrupt, either to us or others. And in so doing, we find new paths – new ways of reading and interpreting – that lead to value and wholeness."[35] "Graf(ph)ting," then, is a creative interpretive practice exercised by those who find traditional interpretations limiting or oppressive.

From Chopp, Florence adopts a distinctive theological semiotics. According to Chopp, the Word is "perfectly open sign."[36] By this, Florence understands the preached Word to be "a Word of power. It is a Word that creates and sustains all other words. It is

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[34] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 67.

[35] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 85. See also Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject : Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

[36] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 95. See also Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Power to Speak : Feminism, Language, God* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

Word that opens up many voices, any of which can push and challenge and transform the present order. This Word is always open to new meaning; it is a perfectly open sign; it is God. It is also a bet against all odds that good news can still be proclaimed, even from the margins. It is a wager that women can speak of freedom."[37] The "perfectly open sign" resists the closure of interpretation and thus subverts oppressive limitations on interpretive power. Florence's work offers a tremendous integration of theological resources in service of an ethic of preaching subject to the liberative power of testimony.

Other-wise Preaching

Another model, that of "other-wise homiletics," is proposed by John McClure. McClure opts for the "ethics as first philosophy" of Emmanuel Levinas as the impulse for a homiletic disposition in light of how the postmodern situation affects preaching. Levinas has enjoyed significant support in theological writing over the past generation and rightly so. Christian theologians who integrate Levinas' work into their own recognize a phenomenological account of being that, because of the infinity of the other, cannot support totalities (or the impulse toward sameness). For Levinas, ethics is an integral part of the account of what it means to be human and in relation to another human being.

For McClure, as preaching becomes "other-wise," "we will search for a form of preaching that is constantly interrupted by the proximity of the other, by an obligation to the other, and by what Levinas calls the 'glory of the Infinite' given in the face of the other."[38] In this short sentence, McClure captures several key ideas from Levinas: (1) the

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[37] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 95.

interruption of the freedom of the self by the real body of another person, (2) a real sense of responsibility or obligation to that other person, and (3) the nature of the other as an infinite being, fully exterior to the self and always transcendent. The kind of homiletic work funded by Levinas continually undergoes deconstruction as a result of both its proximity and openness to the face of the other. The result is a homiletic model that McClure has elsewhere called one of "hospitality" or preacher as simultaneously "host" and "guest."[39]

Gleaning from Recent Homiletic Models

There is much to learn from these most recent models. All propose ways of approaching self and other with ways that honor the distinctive plurivocal nature of ecclesial gatherings for worship.   However, what can be gleaned for a theological and ethical disposition for homiletics as these models specifically relate to adolescents?

Rose's account is compelling because it presents an open space for interpretation and preaching. Hierarchical power gives way to more relational solidarity in the church's week to week preaching. This insight, which Rose adapts from various feminist sources, is an important corrective which can be instructive by seeing adolescents in a relationship of solidarity.[40]

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[38] McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching : A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*, 9.

[39] Which Levinas also says is one of the goals of his work: "This book will present subjectivity as welcoming the Other, as hospitality; in it the idea of infinity is consummated." Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity : An Essay on Exteriority*, Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Texts ; (The Hague ; Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 27. See also McClure's essay "Preacher as Host and Guest" in Robert Stephen Reid, ed. *Slow of Speech and Unclean Lips: Contemporary Images of Preaching Identity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 119-143.

Allen's version of conversation focuses more on the hard work of the sermon preparation process within congregational life (rather than a congregational ethos, as with Rose), and his more recent work seeks to elide the conversational hermeneutics of Tracy with the ethic of Levinas.[41] With Allen, adolescents can become a part of those incorporated into the sermon-writing process and in particular, as part of the (Christian) tradition of interpretation Allen describes as the preaching process.

Florence's model puts forth several encouraging ideas for a homiletic disposition toward adolescents. Her historical framework provides a model for adolescents to claim their own sort of historical narrative of preaching, which I have attempted to do earlier. Claiming historical voices as a precedent for young people's homiletic voice is a powerful step.[42]

Finally, McClure's (and now Allen's) use of Levinas adds a further layer of depth to the ethics of preaching. Indeed it offers a type of remedy to the problem of ontological adolescence as outlined earlier. In proximity to the "face" of adolescents, homiletics can no longer offer static, essentialist renderings of young people. Nor can homiletics take a

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[40] See chapter one in particular for Rose's appropriation of feminist theory. It is important to point out, however, that Rose (and Florence) as an Anglo woman assumes a measure of voice and the potential for speaking that adolescents may not possess.

[41] See Ronald J. Allen, "Preaching and the Other," *Worship* 76, no. 3 (2002); Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching and the Other : The Other, Deconstruction, Social Location, Transgression, and Pluralism : Themes for the Pulpit in a Postmodern Setting* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2009). It is unclear, however, how much credence Allen gives to Tracy's emphasis on the "classic text" as powerful agent who provides the questions for the conversation. Allen often advocates a conversational model characterized by mutual critical correlation, which while allowing "others" into the conversation, ultimately centers on biblical texts/traditions in the sermon preparation process (interpretation) rather than fully exploring an ethic of preaching.

[42] Her use of Ricouer, and Fulkerson, however, when applied to young people, still maintains an unhelpful center-margin dynamic. Whether it is Ricouer (and Brueggemann's) movement between testimony-counter-testimony or Fulkerson's graf(ph)ting, those dynamics reinforce young-old/youth-adult binary oppositions that continue the privileging of adult voices. Certainly there is a way to think and act past this toward a model where solidarity, responsibility toward one another, asymmetrical movements in homiletical power, and mutual critique all work together.

colonialist stance toward adolescents, since those movements toward sameness (totalities) are recognized as oppressive, murderous actions against them. Hardened stereotypes of young people in preaching violate the infinite found in the particularity of each young person.

Additionally, a homiletic informed by Levinas ensures listening to, and responsibility for, the one who is other. Levinas writes,

> The relationship of language implies transcendence, radical separation, the strangeness of the interlocutors, the revelation of the other to me. In other words, language is spoken where community between the terms of the relationship is wanting, where the common plane is wanting or is yet to be constituted. It takes place in this transcendence. Discourse is thus the experience of something absolutely foreign, a pure 'knowledge' or 'experience,' a traumatism of astonishment. The absolutely foreign alone can instruct us.[43]

If homiletics as discourse and practice is to reach beyond itself (which, Levinas would say, is a condition of being in the world), then it must listen to the absolutely foreign and expect (1) to learn from her and (2) to exhibit the utmost sensibility of care toward her. This culminates in the notion of asymmetry which "is not conditional upon a reciprocal agreement with the other that might lead me to voluntarily undertake such a commitment, to for you if you will be for me – hence, his references to responsibility for the other as a form of 'persecution' in which I have been singled out as responsible prior to any 'commitment' I might voluntarily undertake."[44] McClure later draws limits to what Hendley calls "conversational deference," through the image of the preacher as both

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[43] Lévinas, 73.

[44] Steve Hendley, *From Communicative Action to the Face of the Other : Levinas and Habermas on Language, Obligation, and Community* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000), 20. The notion of asymmetry is also explored in McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit : Where Leadership and Preaching Meet*, 53-55.

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"guest" and "host," explaining how that deference is disrupted because of the preacher's responsibility to limit others' voices and exercise more conversational power.[45]

I have shown that the theological and ethical models most recently suggested in homiletics have contributed to how preaching operates in the postmodern situation of plurality, difference, and otherness. Even so, these models all assume a certain kind of speaker and listener who at least has the potential for full participation in a congregation's homiletic processes. The listeners and speakers described by Rose, Allen, Florence, and McClure are all able to enter homiletic conversations and become active participants despite the limitations imposed by various "–isms." They all potentially incorporate young people into conversations about biblical interpretation, and teach them what preaching is/does. What they do not do, however, is raise young people to the level of preacher.

In the models described above, young people still do not find full incorporation into the homiletic models explored above as *speakers*, due to the ways that confluence of factors I have already described (lack of possibilities of self-conception, commodification, and the problematic situation of subaltern speech) have solidified in

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[45] See John S. McClure, "Preacher as Guest and Host" in Reid, ed., 119-143. This limitation of "conversational deference" will also be important as we explore the pole of formation, below. McClure's work in this essay and in *The Roundtable Pulpit* help overcome Anselm Min's critiques of a Levinasian-based theology and ethics in Anselm Kyongsuk Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World : A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism* (New York; London: T&T Clark International, 2004). Min problematizes "an internal contradiction between Levinas's intention, the defense of the other in her ethical transcendence, and his philosophical procedure, the denial of all historical mediation, which ironically reduces the human other to ahistorical, angelic existence elevated above all contingencies of history, above all vulnerabilities, and thus neither capable of issuing the categorical imperative 'Thou shalt not kill!' to devouring egos, nor indeed needing protection against such murder in the first place" (12-13). And also that "we murder the other not only by reducing the other to an object of violence in history but also by elevating and etherealizing the other beyond all history in thought" (14). This is also addressed in Wendy Farley, *Eros for the Other : Retaining Truth in a Pluralistic World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

even the most generous of homiletic formulations.[46] The above models also assume that

speakers and listeners in the postmodern situation, in many ways, have the resources

(both internal and external) as speakers and listeners to participate in this homiletic work.

Even if young people did have the capability for homiletic self-determination and

representation, there is often still a need for formation which is not always apparent

among adults. In the spaces where the lack of homiletic resourcing is apparent (and

again, this is not pre-determined by dependence on rigid understandings of

developmental models but rather discovered through rigorous engagement), adults are

tempted to respond in two ways. The first is through indiscriminate approval, or

redistribution of homiletic authority in the hopes of honoring the attempts of young

people to come to voice through preaching. The second is through strictly disciplining

young people into acceptable models of speaking/listening.   Neither of these options is

desirable. Instead, we will want to temper these impulses by a more balanced posture.

The best parts of these models still need to be integrated into a more adequate theological

and ethical disposition that attends to the particular situation of adolescents and carefully

attends to young people as preachers. In order to offer a more appropriate homiletical

model for the particular set of problems that adolescence presents, I propose a model

characterized by both liberation and formation.

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[46] For instance, even McClure's "guest/host" model, which might do the most to alleviate the difficulties young people face, and most closely approximates what I describe below, does not present specific guidelines for engaging the particular problems adolescence presents for homiletics. Most notably, we might be left wondering how preacher and young person know when to move in and out of roles as guest and host, and when/how young people are allowed to be host.

Liberation and Formation

In response to the need for a model that attends specifically to adolescents, I propose a model that moves between the poles of liberation and formation in the homiletic interaction between adults and adolescents. Rather than beginning with the assumed need for the formation of deficient adolescents as the thesis, we will instead use liberation as the beginning point. In this way, we will see how theologies of liberation benefit both young people and homiletic theories/practices without demanding culturally privileged competencies of the adult as seen in the post-colonial analysis above. The subsequent movement to formation serves to temper, or balance, the liberative movement, so as not to default to the picture of the autonomous bourgeois individual. This moment will seek to understand, inasmuch as we recognize the liberative potential in adolescent homiletic speech, how adolescents are still in need of formation and what that process of formation might look like. This approach, as we will see in chapters five and six, will not be so much a moment, but rather a reinvigorated, mutually informed public space of young people, congregations, seminaries, and preaching theories/practices characterized by a specific set of listening practices.

What resources are available for imagining the kind of interaction in which this kind of relationship can take place? In describing a "critical homiletics" based on the work of Jürgen Habermas, John McClure hints at a possible source for theological and ethical homiletic models.[47] In comparison to McClure's focus on Levinas, the potential for a "critical homiletics" based on Habermas' broad work remains relatively undeveloped. A model of homiletic interaction based in part on Habermas, and more recent appropriations of his work, in conjunction with the ethical impulses in

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[47] McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching : A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*, 102-111.

contemporary homiletics explored above, can revise homiletics as a public sphere for young people.

In order to understand the character of the interaction between youth and adults, we begin with the nature of the communicative process. Habermas' belief that the public sphere is best renewed through "the critical exercise of reason" [48] serves as a useful point of departure in developing an environment for the adult-adolescent homiletic interaction.[49] Within the public sphere, Habermas believes that the process of communicative action works as a discursive process of reason-giving until a course of action is reached.[50] Here we see the dynamics of a kind of interactive process that begins to give shape to the adult-adolescent homiletic relationship. When adults and adolescents listen to one another about preaching, working to understand one another and learn from one another about preaching within a community, this functions as a type of reason-giving oriented toward renewed homiletic theories/practices.

This communicative process of reason-giving according to Habermas, or what we might call the public sphere of homiletic interaction, is initially guided by a few conditions:

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[48] Paul Lakeland, *Theology and Critical Theory : The Discourse of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 43.

[49] Parker Palmer also gives several dimensions of what happens in a best-case version of the public sphere that approximate what I am describing: "Strangers meet on common ground…Fear of the stranger is faced and dealt with…Scarce resources are shared and abundance is generated…Conflict occurs and is resolved…Life is given color, texture, drama, a festive air…People are drawn out of themselves…Mutual responsibility becomes evident, and mutual aid possible…Opinions become audible and more accountable…Vision is projected and projects are attempted…People are empowered and protected against power." See Parker J. Palmer, *The Company of Strangers : Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 45-51.

[50] Habermas calls this "reaching agreement." See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans., Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 286-287.

(3.1)	Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.

(3.2)	a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.
b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.
c. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs.

(3.3)	No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2).[51]

In this way, communicative action leads to lively and wide discussion among participants.

Habermas' version of interaction, however, needs some revision to be of use for our purposes. In reality, not all parties in an interaction enjoy equality, nor is the public sphere a monolithic entity.[52] Nancy Fraser contends that Habermas' conception of the public sphere is limited and limiting, treating inequalities as if they did not exist and failing to account for the reality of "subaltern counterpublics," which are "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."[53] This is an important distinction, especially in this case, where young people might compose a subaltern counterpublic, but are not formally organized as such in contemporary settings. In some sense, adults will actually need to organize such an adolescent homiletic counterpublic and bring it to the surface.[54]

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[51] Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 89.

[52] Fraser, 77-79.

[53] Fraser, 81.

[54] See, for example, the gathering of resources in chapter six of this dissertation, or a group such as the Academy of Preachers, which seeks to encourage young preachers. In the past, this kind of counterpublic might be described as the groups that authorized the published sermons of preachers in Puritan New England. As such, these counterpublics are not always oppositional, but do articulate identities, interests, and needs within their communicative practices, as we will see.

Amidst this kind of differentiated public sphere where homiletic interaction takes place, we will seek to make "arrangements that permit contestation among a plurality of competing publics [rather] than by a single, comprehensive public sphere."[55] Instead of radical plurality allowing the free expression of all voices in the homiletic interaction, or some forced sense of equality (both of which are counterfactual according to Fraser), the public sphere is stratified with adults and young people, with both open to the possibilities of a kind of non-adversarial contestation.   This mutual contestation takes shape through the poles of liberation and formation below.

The principles guiding homiletic interaction described above assume that speakers are pursuing communication that strives toward truth, rightness/appropriateness, and truthfulness.[56] And these claims are grounded in an understanding that speakers are engaging one another with earnest attempts to enter into relationships that value intersubjectivity. This assumption about the nature of communicative action – that those who engage in it are entering into relationship with one another – is a vital constituent of Habermas' communicative ethic. It is a value that we have seen in the contemporary

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[55] Fraser, 82.

[56] Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 2-3.

homiletic theories above,[57] and could condition the interactions between adults and

adolescents.[58]

We also need to carefully define what we mean by "competence." Sharon Welch

questions the basis for Habermas' understanding of competence/rationality. She

highlights how "the insights of oral cultures [in Habermas' *Theory of Communicative*

Action, vols. 1 and 2] are, however, summarily dismissed. He dismisses the Zande tribe

for its cognitive inadequacy, its closed world view and lack of means of testing validity

claims that enable change and modification."[59] We will not want to summarily dismiss

the competencies young people display as "irrational," if indeed they prove to be

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[57] Here I would also add the constructive theological work of those who base their work on Levinas, such as Wendy and Ed Farley. I also include others whose work approximates similar themes, such as hospitality, Patrick R. Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger : A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).; resurrection listening, Rachel Muers, *Keeping God's Silence : Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004).; embrace, Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace : A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).; and submission/vulnerability, Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions : Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

[58] This relational and intersubjective turn also provides an avenue for Habermas to talk about the development of the self, identity, and autonomy through the lens of language use. If communicative action is dependent upon entering relationship with another person, then "discursive relations are central to demarcating and developing autonomy…[B]ecause autonomy requires participation in linguistic interaction, it also implies reciprocal recognitions of the identities of speakers, if only as a condition of language which depends on the intelligibility of linguistic subjects such as 'I' and 'you.'…Autonomy thus implies and requires equality in the sense of a reciprocal recognition of speaking subjects." Mark E. Warren, "The Self in Discursive Democracy," in Stephen K. White, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 174. Warren critiques Habermas' neglect of the affective dimension of human existence and communication (181ff). His critique is an important one which recognizes a major flaw in Habermas' attention to how humans communicate. It is also a critique that should be incorporated into a revised version of the nature of rationality, particularly for a homiletic model built on Habermas' communicative ethics. The reason-giving self in linguistic interaction develops, as such, a communicative identity or sense of self in communicative relationship with others. This idea will be particularly important as we move to formulating a method of analyzing the "homiletic identity" of adolescents in chapters five and six.

[59] Sharon D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 132. It is also important to point out that Habermas is not interested in religious discourse either, though this may be changing in his more recent work.

different from adults. But we will also need to be discerning about the sufficiency of those competencies for homiletic reasoning in this contested homiletic public sphere.

To this point, we have described the principles that govern the kind of homiletic interaction most appropriate for the adult-adolescent homiletic relationship, but what kind of structural conditions prevail that impinge upon and condition the public sphere of homiletic interaction? Here Habermas' distinction between "lifeworld" and "system" help describe those structural conditions. By lifeworld, Habermas means

> the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social, or subjective), and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements.[60]

The lifeworld is constituted by those elements commonly known as "culture" and "language," and generally makes up the social and cultural elements of society.[61] It is out of these that communicative action originates and "social integration and communication" take place.[62] On the other hand, "in the 'systems' of state bureaucracy and economy, power and money are the dominant means of integration and communication."[63] In Habermas' estimation, whereas state bureaucracy and economy once served the lifeworld in an integrated capacity, now not only have they become differentiated from the lifeworld, but the systems now act in such a way that they actually colonize (organize) the lifeworld.

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[60] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans., Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 126.

[61] See figure 20 inHabermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, 127.

[62] Rainer Forst, "Justice, Reason, and Critique: Basic Concepts of Critical Theory" in David M. Rasmussen, ed. *Handbook of Critical Theory* (Oxford ; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 142.

[63] Rasmussen, ed., 142.

It is in this colonization of the lifeworld by the system that we should pay special attention to the conditions of the adult-adolescent interaction. For the adult-adolescent homiletic interaction to maintain liberative and formative possibilities, adults must be careful that system-like inclinations do not encroach upon their engagement with young people.[64] This is not to say that adults and adolescents approach each other "*as if* they were social peers in specially designated discursive arenas, when these discursive arenas are situated in a larger societal context that is pervaded by structural relations of dominance and subordination."[65] But if the lifeworld of young people has been colonized, then the homiletic interaction can function as a rehabilitative microcosm of the public sphere in which the task of restoring the lifeworld of adolescents takes shape.

Guided by these principles, homiletic communities are encouraged to engage in conversations about adequate homiletic theories/practices and test them out with the goal of transforming public homiletic spaces into an "ever-widening arena" enriched by competing claims.[66] The interaction, characterized by a continual movement between liberation and formation, will have a feel of mutual critique[67] through communicative practices aimed at refining the public space of homiletic theories/practices (synthesis). This kind of ethic includes adolescents as participants with valued (if different)

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[64] I have drawn out the ways that the lifeworlds of young people are colonized, above. According to Habermas, "the imperatives of autonomous subsystems make their way into the lifeworld from the outside – like colonial masters coming into a tribal society – and force a process of assimilation upon it…[T]his analysis would have to explain the cultural impoverishment and fragmentation of everyday consciousness." Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, 355. The interaction must be careful not to make the adult the master who forces assimilation.

[65] Fraser, 79.

[66] Fraser, 82.

[67] See Welch for this term. Alternatively, Fraser calls this accountability: "what institutional arrangements best ensure the accountability of democratic decision-making bodies (strong publics) to their (external, weak or, given the possibility of hybrid cases, weaker) publics?" Fraser, 91.

rationalities, both as speakers and as reflective listeners. This ethic also exposes the

liberative potential in their practices as well as the places where further formation would

be beneficial. Adults and adolescents engage in a dynamic process of homiletic give-

and-take, listening and speaking, with the result of refined homiletic theories/practices

and an ecclesial public sphere that values adolescents in a way that it has not done on a

large scale in the contemporary milieu.

Liberation: The Preliminary Pole

If the adult-adolescent relationship in homiletic communities is to move from

silence and ontological adolescence to a more theologically and ethically grounded

relationship of solidarity and mutual critique, then homileticians and communities in

which the issue of preaching and youth are important must first dispose themselves

toward communicative practices that are liberative. This section will describe how

liberation theology provides a theological and ethical foundation for a renewed homiletic

relationship between adults and adolescents.

It is important to first frame the goals of homiletic liberation for adolescents.

James Henry Harris states that

> in order for an individual or a society to be liberated and, ultimately, transformed,
> that individual or group needs first to understand that liberation means that his or
> her thoughts and actions are not simply a reflection of the thoughts of others, but
> rather of the ability to think and do for oneself.[68]

This is typical of a first-wave liberation theology perspective. While the move to identify

false-consciousness among those in need of liberation is valuable, Harris' goal of

autonomous individuality is not our goal. Rather, the kind of liberation we seek will

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[68] James H. Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, Fortress Resources for Preaching (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 9.

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always reach toward mutual critique within the differentiated public sphere of homiletic interaction.

From another angle, Gustavo Gutiérrez reinterprets the phrase "preferential option for the poor" for multiple contexts, when he states that

> the poverty to which we allude here encompasses economic, social, and political dimensions, but it is undoubtedly more than all that…What then does being poor mean? I believe that a good definition does not exist; but we can approximate it if we say that the poor are the non-persons, the 'in-significant ones,' the ones that don't count either for the rest of society, and – far too frequently – for the Christian churches."[69]

In contemporary homiletic discourse, we have seen that adolescents are all too often non-persons or only attributed a specific denigrated homiletic identity, rather than seeing the ways in which they attest to significant forms of homiletic identity. In this case, even though (especially suburban, Anglo-American) churches allocate significant resources towards young people, they still function as the *homiletic* poor. The liberative pole seeks to recognize the ways that young people can and do bring significant homiletic resources to the homiletic economy, and in so doing, rectify the representations discussed in chapter three.

In speaking of the preferential option for the poor, Gutiérrez continues by using the image of the interaction between Jesus and the hemorrhaging woman:

> Such then is the preferential option: the dismantling of anonymity to give people a name and a face. In general Jesus has opted for the poor, but also, concretely, he has opted for people like the hemorrhagic woman…When I affirm that Jesus favors the poor I know this woman is included, but one must value her as a person, make her assume an identity, she who thought of herself as worthless. To love is always to bring someone out of anonymity. Love helps give identity to others. When we speak of preferential love, and the love of God, preferably for

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[69] Gustavo Gutierrez, "Renewing the Option for the Poor," in David B. Batstone and others, eds., *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), 71-72.

the poor, we are speaking of giving the loved ones an identity, of making them feel like people.[70]

The foundation for liberation is grounded in identifying God's love for the marginalized, as demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ, and seeks to live in ways that eliminate oppression, namely by rehabilitating the conditions for constructing identity. In order to understand more fully the specific contours of how liberation theology sets the tone for this first moment, we must consider how the possibilities of self-conception among young people might be opened.

Liberation of Youth from Harmful Representations and Cultural Practices

An ethic of liberation confronts the conditions that make the homiletic identity of youth one of anonymity (known here as silence or ontological adolescence) or render them as colonized bodies, so that those with privileged homiletic power and young people can occupy homiletic communities together in solidarity.[71] Those with privilege in homiletic communities have the responsibility to speak *with*, and then, as needed *for* adolescents in ways that strive toward liberation from harmful representations and oppressive cultural systems. If homiletic communities are committed to solidarity with young people and helping relieve how we have revised the notion of oppression, they will find themselves interested in protecting and empowering those with "vulnerable identities."[72] Exploring Jürgen Habermas' view of justice, care, and solidarity, Steve

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[70] Gutierrez, Batstone and others, eds., 75.

[71] I do not presuppose that adolescents have no homiletic power. That would deny the historical material and overlook what we will see particularly in the analysis of chapter five. Much like Foucault, I believe that power is diffuse such that all people have power, though it is allocated and present in different forms.

[72] Hendley, 41. Hendley takes this term from Habermas' understanding of selves formed in communicative networks. Habermas will be an important figure in the discussion below.

Hendley writes, "The protection of a socially vulnerable identity requires both justice, in its liberal version as equal respect for the rights of the individual as an autonomous subject, and solidarity with one another as the necessary conditions for the preservation of the social network or life-world upon which the identity of the individual depends."[73] We have seen that young people in contemporary homiletic discourse are vulnerable in terms of a homiletic identity. As those in homiletic communities begin to listen, they begin to liberate adolescents' homiletic identities from obscurity or silence. But there are other forms of representation and social networks that threaten the "vulnerable identities" of young people. If homiletic communities are to engage in practices that liberate adolescents, then they must work toward emancipation from, and transformation of, these identities as well.

Homileticians and communities welcoming liberative preaching, recognizing their solidarity with adolescents, and realizing their need to act on behalf of "vulnerable identities," can respond in ways that are transformative. Seminaries and congregations can begin to fashion themselves as "local support institutions" that are no longer complicit in broader cultural representations.[74] This can happen in three inter-related movements: (1) fashioning homiletic discourse and preaching that identifies representations that constrain the possibilities of self-conception while working toward the transformation of the systems allows those representations to thrive; (2) offering new representations of young people for both the homiletic and cultural imaginary; and (3)

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[73] Hendley, 41.

[74] For the term "local support institution," see Giroux in Epstein, ed., 30.

reimagining homiletic communities (seminaries and congregations) as the kind of public

spaces that empower young people in ways that other public spaces do not.

(1) First, homiletic communities can identify representations of young people that

are limited and limiting, and work toward the transformation of social/cultural/religious

systems that promulgate them. If images of young people are produced by domineering

cultural systems with far-reaching negative consequences, then homiletic communities

can work to undo both the representations and the conditions that make them possible.

Charles Campbell's ethic of preaching, for instance, suggests a way that ecclesial

communities can do this through preaching. Campbell describes preaching that

> exposes the powers of death. The preacher names the powers and unveils their
> reality. Like the cross of Jesus, this unveiling of the powers, which uncovers their
> false claims and deadly lies, marks the beginning of human freedom from the
> bondage of death. This exposing takes away the 'mirrors' by which the powers
> delude us into thinking they are the divine, life-giving regents of the world. The
> powers are exposed as emperors without any clothes, a disarming humiliation for
> those who rely so heavily on their pretensions of dignity and control.[75]

If indeed "the complex machinery of pedagogy, media, and politics is now largely

mobilized to demean and punish rather than protect and nurture children," then homiletic

communities are responsible for exposing these representations with theological acumen

and social responsibility.[76] Preachers and congregations can ask, "What types of

representations of adolescents exist within homiletical and congregational culture? How

do they shape our perceptions, action, and ministry with youth?" In doing this kind of

work, homiletic communities expose the representations at work in their midst, and the

ways they are complicit in upholding them. This kind of exposing also moves homiletic

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[75] Charles L. Campbell, *The Word before the Powers : An Ethic of Preaching*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 106.

[76] Giroux, 28.

communities' critique of adolescents forward (while standing in solidarity with them) as they hold young people responsible for their actions in light of the powers being unmasked.

(2) Second, homiletic communities can offer up new representations of young people – representations that disentangle them from the "complex machinery" and present positive images that "protect and nurture." Campbell pairs identifying oppressive representations with offering new representations for homiletic and cultural imaginaries:

> Simply exposing the principalities and powers and unveiling their ways of death in the world is not sufficient for preachers. If preachers stopped with exposing, they would deny the good news of the gospel that the new creation has, in fact, broken into the world in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and will be brought to completion in the fullness of time. If all preachers do is expose the principalities and powers, congregations might be left in despair, overwhelmed by the enormity of the powers' work, without the hope that is essential to sustain the life of resistance.[77]

This kind of envisioning looks at adolescents in the homiletic community and beyond as more than consumers or part of the disposable class (using Giroux's terms). By engaging in the difficult work of making new representations, homiletic communities also hope to avoid what Sharon Welch calls "cultured despair." This term signifies "a despair cushioned by privilege and grounded in privilege. It is easier to give up on long-term social change when one is comfortable in the present…When the good life is present or within reach, it is tempting to despair of its ever being in reach for others."[78] New homiletic imagery presents representations that are life-giving and that grant youth possibilities for self-conception beyond commodification and disposabililty. Envisioning

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[77] Campbell, *The Word before the Powers : An Ethic of Preaching*, 119-120.

[78] Welch, 15.

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new representations in homiletic communities fuels the work of working toward renewed material futures for those with vulnerable identities.

(3) In challenging representations and offering up new ones, homiletic communities begin to present a new kind of public religious space which can prove to be liberative for young people. The pulpit and homiletic discourses can offer languages of critique and possibility in regard to adolescent representations. Giroux points toward a number of non-religious advocates who do imagine their work as this kind of public space. "The point," he says,

> is that art, education and cultural work need to reinvent spaces for ethical, political, and pedagogical practices through which diverse cultural workers might create alliances and produce social practices and policies that rewrite the importance of what it means to treat youth with dignity. Unlike cultural workers such as Calvin Klein and [filmmaker] Larry Clark, who offer children either the cheap satisfactions of stylized bodies and commodified pleasures, or the sensationalism of decadent sexuality, progressive educators and other cultural workers need to challenge such limited representations of youth through an 'integrative critical language in which values, ethics, and social responsibility can be discussed in terms' of how youth are constructed within such images.[79]

As previously noted, we can include homiletic communities among those whom Giroux deems "cultural workers" who are capable of re-invigorating public spaces that treat youth with dignity. Striving to make an impact on the larger cultural imaginary by creating public spaces in which re-imagination can occur, Giroux offers a challenge to seminaries and congregations to do this hard work in a way that impacts entire communities, if not the larger public arena.[80]

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[79] Giroux in Epstein, ed., 51-52.

[80] Giroux believes that education (in the vein of John Dewey) is a way to ensure a more democratic future. Similarly, I believe that critical homiletic communities that work toward solidarity and mutual critique with adolescents can work towards transformation of other spheres of public life when they move between the poles of liberation and formation.

Liberation of Privileged Homiletic Knowledge

As a type of public space complicit in harmful representations, academic homiletic discourse stands alongside seminaries and congregations as an area in need of liberation, and one of great concern for this project. Liberation, as a process of recognizing the worth and identity of the marginalized, also means accepting the homiletic wisdom of adolescents on their own terms. This commitment means de-centering privileged homiletic rationalities/competencies and taking the position of a listener/learner in homiletic dialogue who receives insight. Within the liberative pole, those with privileged control over homiletic discourse recognize that the values, categories, terms, and modes of thinking at work in contemporary homiletics are not superlative and final, but incomplete. The homiletic knowledge dispersed in the contemporary scene is largely controlled by a specific type of literature disseminated through formal theological education. That knowledge is immersed in academic rationalities (largely set by elite white males) that have been recognized as more and more tentative in recent years. The more recent influx of pluralistic accounts of homiletic knowledge (i.e. feminist, Latino/a, African American, GLBTQ, etc.) have called into question the certainty of prevalent rationalities.

Yet even as the emerging accounts of homiletic knowledge value difference along the lines of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, they leave little room to be informed by adolescents. Within the liberative pole, homileticians and preachers reflect on these types of questions: What are the definitions of homiletic competencies and rationalities in my homiletic community? How are homiletic competencies produced and acquired? How are they mediated and controlled?

This de-centering of privileged homiletic knowledge has some implications. Scholars must reassess the boundaries of homiletic research and what counts as valid forms of knowledge. For instance, while homiletic theories built on philosophy and academic theology have much to offer, their origination in the academy does not automatically grant them superior status as homiletic knowledge.

Henry Giroux suggests that it is possible to peel back layers of hegemony within educational institutions and discover "fugitive forms of knowledge."[81] In order to do this, Giroux invites committed parties to begin "questioning the very conditions under which knowledge, values, and social identities are produced, appropriated, and often challenged."[82] Giroux understands the link between power and knowledge at work in cultural practices. Moreover, Giroux (a concerned educational theorist) observes that "critical pedagogical practices also allow students to produce and appropriate space for the production of fugitive knowledge forms, those forms of knowledge that often exist either outside the mainstream curriculum or are seen as unworthy of serious attention."[83] When scholars of preaching seek to transform (and be transformed by) alternate definitions of homiletic rationality, they will position themselves as listeners and begin to identify "fugitive forms of knowledge" at work within homiletic communities, particularly those operating among adolescents. This process can de-center assumptions about homiletic competency and rationality, thereby allowing serious public space for

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[81] Henry A. Giroux, *Fugitive Cultures : Race, Violence, and Youth* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 19.

[82] Giroux, *Fugitive Cultures : Race, Violence, and Youth*, 19.

[83] Giroux, *Fugitive Cultures : Race, Violence, and Youth*, 19-20. It is worth noting here that Giroux is, at least in part, an intellectual heir to Paulo Freire.

adolescent critique of entrenched homiletic theories/practices, and reach toward solidarity and more communal forms of homiletic practice.

The kind of public homiletic space of which I will provide an example in chapters five and six is a first step toward giving an example of how participants in homiletic communities can speak to one another in solidarity about homiletic theories and practices. This can prove to be liberative for both youth and adults, and transformative of the public spaces of congregations, seminaries, and academic homiletics.

Youth Activism as an Example of the Liberative Pole at Work Outside Homiletics

Recent examples of activism among youth have proven to be a ground upon which liberative activity takes place and through which adults can listen, come to new understandings, and be transformed. One such example is representative of "musical activism…when activists that identify with a genre of music use that musical genre as a rallying point for their cause."[84] In 2004, the organization Punk Voter presented concerts under the moniker "Rock Against Bush" in order to inform and mobilize young voters for the 2004 presidential election. Punk Voter's online component encouraged voter registration and provided information for young people on political issues surrounding the presidential election.[85] The effects of this type of activism includes expanded civic engagement among young people, young people conversing with adults around political/civic issues – particularly those that affect young people, and (at least intended) an expanded presence of young people in the demographics of the electorate.

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[84] Leonisa Ardizzone, *Gettin' My Word Out : Voices of Urban Youth Activists* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 72.

[85] Ardizzone, 72.

Melvin Delgado and Lee Staples present a case study of how "Youth First in Jackson Square" articulated a clear vision of youth needs during a revitalization/development project in the Hyde/Jackson Square neighborhood in Boston during the late 1990's-early 2000's.[86] Through organizing campaigns, attending community meetings, careful study, conversation with adult leaders, and protest marches, the young people expressed their ideas and were heard in significant ways. Delgado and Staples observe that the "presence [of the young people] represents the power this community and its youth hold. Needless to say, the young people of the Hyde Square Task Force have won the battle. They have accomplished what many adults could not, and they established themselves as visible leaders in the community. They will continue their work to achieve the goal of bringing more resources to their community, and they will carry on the fight to make their voices heard."[87] In response to community needs, these young people raised their voices, eschewing forces that would render them and their community into patterns of commodification or disposability.

These are only two examples of many forms of youth activism.[88] The kind of preaching by youth that we will consider in chapter six is also a form of activism where liberation takes place. When young people assume preaching roles in ecclesial settings, the kinds of liberation we have explored above can emerge. Although we can expect that such preaching will contain traces of hegemonic influences, forms of "fugitive

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[86] Melvin Delgado and Lee Staples, *Youth-Led Community Organizing : Theory and Action* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 175-193.

[87] Delgado and Staples, 186-187.

[88] For a broad-ranging compilation of examples, see Lonnie R. Sherrod, *Youth Activism : An International Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006). For more on youth activism, see Hava Rachel Gordon, *We Fight to Win : Inequality and the Politics of Youth Activism*, The Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

knowledge" will also be present. In freeing this "adults-only" space, adults listen to young people preach and take them seriously – not as trivial, as "cute," or viewing young people as capable of significant preaching only in their adult futures. Subsequently, adults enter into dialogue with young people about that preaching, and look for the ways that together we might formulate significant ethical and religious resources for transforming representations, de-colonizing the lifeworld, suggesting new theories/practices of preaching, as well as rethinking what it means to be people of faith. With this expectation in mind, chapter five will formulate a method of listening in order to uncover what might be liberative in youth preaching and chapter six will engage in an analysis that attends to youth preaching as offering liberative possibilities.

Formation: Complementary Pole

One of the glaring questions in the wake of the homiletic model proposed above is about the nature of mutual critique, particularly in the adult-adolescent relationship. What might this look like and how does it take a particular form? We know that not every communicative practice by adolescents will be grounded in liberation. In fact, many will be "colonized" by pedagogies of commodification and/or disposability. As such, how are "homiletic competencies" evaluated in the communicative exchange between adults and adolescents in homiletic communities? It is perhaps all too easy for adults to be dismissive of adolescent homiletic insight or too easily move toward an authoritative posture. On the other hand, it might be equally tempting to be open to adolescents without exercising critical homiletic sensibilities, in the interest of validating adolescents (as per "the bourgeois liberal concept of the autonomous individual"). In

order to avoid the dangers either extremes of these options present, I propose formation as the other side of the disposition. The disposition of liberation and formation is situated in such a way as to mediate between these two temptations, paving the way for a constructive mutual critique in homiletic communities. Formation, properly conceived, serves to add depth and complexity to the spaces in the homiletic identities of young people where colonization of the lifeworld goes unrecognized and/or liberative practices are not already occurring. In other words, after speaking *with* and *for* youth, and listening for "fugitive forms of knowledge" among youth, in what ways can adults speak *to* youth in order to further raise youth consciousness?

Inasmuch as homiletic communities work toward recognizing the "being" of adolescents, they are also obligated to recognize the "becoming" of adolescents. This project has not used the categories of adolescence found in developmental psychological models in order to focus on the liberation of their "being" rather than the formation of their "becoming." That does not mean, however, that adolescents are not engaged in significant processes of development in a wide array of arenas: physical, social, psychological, religious, and emotional. And as young people go through these processes of change (and they do, but perhaps not in the uniform and rigid ways that developmental psychology and its religious derivatives articulate), faith communities are responsible for helping them manage change in ways that make creative use of the best resources found within their local traditions. Homiletics that embodies the formation side of the disposition should be open to adolescents as listeners and communicators, yet recognize

the spaces where adolescents can be helped to "interpret lived situations in light of Gospel."[89]

One of the hallmarks of Christian faith is formation of varied kinds, and particularly for the young (which we will explore below). There are temptations, however, to articulate formation in ways that are reminiscent of the kind of colonialist impulses described above. Valerie Walkerdine notes the subtle ways that pedagogical practices, overly dependent upon developmental psychology, "are normalizing in that they constitute a mode of observation and surveillance and production of children…It is important to point out that the processes of normalization are not the product of some repressive superpower hell-bent on keeping people in their place. That is, disciplinary power does not function through overt repression but through the covert reproduction of ourselves."[90] Walkerdine's healthy suspicion of appropriations of developmental psychology as a definitive, ideologically-neutral interpretive key for assessing and directing the development of children is helpful. Attempts at Christian formation should avoid "covert reproduction of ourselves." As scholars, teachers, and congregations live more fully into the liberative pole of the approach, adolescents, freed from oppressive representations, are better able to work in solidarity with others on their own developmental processes.

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[89] Edward Farley, *Practicing Gospel : Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

[90] Valerie Walkerdine, "Developmental Psychology and the Child-Centered Pedagogy" in Julian Henriques and others, eds., *Changing the Subject : Psychology, Social Regulation, and Subjectivity* (London ; New York: Methuen, 1984), 195-196.

When homiletic communities engage in the formation pole of the disposition, they do so intent on helping shape two forms of identity among young people: (1) Christian identity and (2) homiletic identity.

Formation of Homiletic and Christian Identities

As homiletic communities attend to the speaking and listening practices of adolescents, they will find ways that those practices might liberate entrenched ideas about what it means to be Christian as well as expose homiletic theories and practices as oppressive, privileged forms of knowledge. But they will also find latent theories and practices of what it means to be a person of faith, as well as what it means to preach and listen to sermons as one in need of formation. Conceding that young people have something to contribute to homiletic communities does not automatically and uncritically validate all their contributions. Homiletic communities must discern together if the theories and practices that emerge through careful listening are appropriate or if they are in need of further formation.

If, as Giroux points out, young people are subject to pedagogies of commodification or disposability, then they are just as likely to have internalized those pedagogies. Their operative theories, practices, and content are subsequently just as likely to be mired in false consciousness, contradictions, or injustice. In this case, the homiletic community has a responsibility to help young people critically reflect on their faith and homiletic practices, engaging them in the kind of formation that helps the entire homiletic community develop more appropriate sensibilities.

Thomas Groome states that "there is a maintaining, conserving, and transmitting of our Christian tradition that is part of the task of Christian religious education. For that, 'intentional socialization' is essential. But there is also a creating, liberating, and transforming activity that must take place as we come to appropriate the tradition and become creative members of the community to which it gives rise."[91] Groome's idea applied to this situation means that as homiletic communities engage in mutual critique between adults and youth, passing on traditions that are integral to the Christian tradition as a local community understands them is a sine qua non. Identity formation, however, is always in service of transforming the homiletic community (or in other words, always tempered by the liberative moment of the approach), helping young people become "creative members of the community," not "docile bodies" or replications of particular members of the community. This goal should be the greatest hope of homiletic communities as they seek to help form identities among young people.

The list of those things that might be in need of formation could be extensive. Pedagogies of commodification can incite young people toward the ethereal and vapid at the expense of venerable long-lasting traditions that have served to sustain faith communities. In addition, traditional forms of theological and homiletical reasoning have long made the work of homiletic communities intelligible, both within the homiletic community and in its relation to wider publics. Young people may need to be formed in these forms of reasoning in ways they have not understood *critically*.[92] This is not just a task relegated to young people who will later choose forms of theological education as a

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[91] Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education : Sharing Our Story and Vision*, 1st Jossey-Bass ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 124-125.

[92] By critically, I mean that they may have internalized and reacted to them (either positively or negatively) without sufficient analysis about why a homiletic community reasons in such a way.

way to understand their homiletic communities, but for all young people engaged in the homiletic community. Homiletic communities should attend to formation not only in terms of traditions and reasoning, but also through body, voice, space, and other material aspects such as dress, furniture, and technology use. Pedagogies of commodification and disposabililty can treat the body, voice, and space as well as other materials in ways that dishonor their inherent worth as created by or in the image of God. Homiletic communities interested in the homiletic identities of young people would do well to help them think about bodies and materials beyond the lessons of commodification and toward more theologically appropriate forms. This short list is, in many ways, abstract. Chapters five and six will formulate concrete ways to think about and enact this kind of formation by looking at real sermons from young people.

Two Arenas of Formative Activity

As stated above, homiletic communities interested in formation are seeking to add depth and complexity so that, as young people's homiletic wisdom is liberated, it can also be formed in step with the gospel and with faithful preaching. As a result, those with privilege within homiletic communities offer formative activity on behalf of the church within two different arenas:

(1) Providing narrative complexity

Undoubtedly one of the primary functions of preaching in the first five centuries of the church was catechesis. Through preaching, local priests and bishops passed on the mysteries of the faith in preparation for, and in response to, the initiatory baptism that would take place. Local homiletic traditions arose that gave contextual interpretations of

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the faith including explaining the meaning of baptism and other rites, handed over the content and meaning of the creed, engaged in moral suasion, built community, exegeted the Scriptures, and mediated between faith and culture. This kind of preaching served to gather those new to the faith (regardless of age) and help them live into a catholic, yet contextual Christian identity. Craig Satterlee contends that catechetical/mystagogical preaching is especially suited for the formation of Christians in a pluralistic religious and social marketplace.[93] It is a fitting genre of preaching when thinking about the relationship between adults and adolescents.

The catechetical function of preaching is rarely given much attention in the contemporary U.S. context. The early mystagogical catechesis is mined for reclamation of liturgical forms rather than for preaching wisdom. The situation is doubly complex in regard to adolescents. Christian education, rather than preaching, has largely assumed the function of catechesis among traditions diverse in baptismal understanding and practice. And, as seen in the development of a historical perspective earlier, Christian religious education has taken over homiletics' voice concerning adolescents. As such, homiletics has abdicated (as of the late 19th and early 20th centuries) some of the fundamental qualities that had been integral features through its history.

In light of this situation, formation funds reclamation of the catechetical nature of preaching, particularly as adolescents are concerned. Adolescents should be able to find in the pulpit intentionally structured rhetoric that helps form them as individuals who are able to "interpret lived situations in light of Gospel" through assimilating the Christian

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[93] Craig Alan Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002).

narrative into their lives. Local communities have an obligation to responsibly pass on the contours of the Christian faith in context.

This does not mean, however, that a catechetical homiletic stance toward adolescents is merely what Thomas Groome calls "socialization."[94] Groome highlights that socialization is an insufficient term because it (1) denies that Christians are part of more than one social grouping than just the church (i.e. creates an us vs. them mentality), (2) focuses on maintenance of the Christian community when reform and transformation are part of its calling, and (3) it overestimates the power of socialization to "sponsor them toward Christian faith lived with human freedom in response to the Kingdom of God."[95]

In many ways, Groome's response to socialization in religious education (written in 1980) anticipates responses to what would later become articulated in homiletics as expressions of the cultural-linguistic or postliberal versions of theology. [96] Preaching and religious education in these modes operate with much the same function: bringing people into the narrative framework of the church or enculturation into the church's own specific culture or grammar. We previously saw these versions at work with respect to youth in the work of Anna Carter Florence and Sarah Arthur. While these versions of preaching provide a powerful account of the function of so-called Christian narratives/cultures that are of some use, socialization and cultural-linguistic/postliberal models of preaching fail

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[94] Groome, 109-127. Groome points to Bushnell as the pioneer of socialization under Bushnell's preferred term "nurture" (116-17).

[95] Groome, 124-125.

[96] See Campbell, *Preaching Jesus : New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology*; Willimon, *Peculiar Speech : Preaching to the Baptized*; Willimon, *The Intrusive Word : Preaching to the Unbaptized*.

to recognize and respond to the narrative complexity that exists between church and world.[97]

Catechetical preaching, however, does not automatically default to the narrow narratizing claims of cultural-linguistic/postliberal models. Instead, catechetical preaching focuses on formation of young people through the three dimensions Groome raises. First, it helps young people discern ways of simultaneously being part of the social fabric of the church *and* wider culture. Second, this kind of preaching practice invites young people into the full life of the community for its ongoing reformation and transformation *in the present*, not delayed until they are able to fulfill institutional ecclesial roles (as important as those are). Third, this kind of preaching helps give contextual appropriations of Christian faith that is characterized by response to the good news of the Kingdom of God.

This kind of formation toward Christian identity certainly includes not only passing on the content of the faith but moreover the encouragement to embody a habitus of *theologia*, as Edward Farley describes it, a sapiential wisdom or reflective way of living the Christian faith.[98] This reflective way of living promotes discernment between the various narratives available to young people, not as a simple either-or choice.

While modeling a particular way of thinking and acting, catechetical preaching is also an act of speaking for/to/with adolescents that offers up representations of young people within the narrative tradition of the church. Tertullian, for instance, offers Christians the image of the fish for neophytes: "But we, little fishes, after the example of

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[97] Again, for the specific shortcomings of postliberal theology as they relate to the concerns of this project, I refer to Tanner.

[98] Farley, *Theologia : The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*.

our ΙΧΘΥΣ Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water; so that most monstrous creature, who had no right to teach even sound doctrine, knew full well how to kill the little fishes, by taking them away from the water!"[99] Catechetical preaching for/to/with adolescents offers narrative complexity while sponsoring contextually appropriate representations of young people.

(2) Engaging in processes of conscientization and empowerment

As narrative complexity gives depth and dimension to young people, formation also takes the shape of what Paulo Freire calls "conscientization." According to Daniel Schipani, who follows Freire's thought toward Christian education practices, "conscientization is a process of cultural action in which women and men are awakened to their sociocultural reality, move beyond the constraints and alienations to which they are subjected, and affirm themselves as conscious subjects and co-creators of their historical future."[100] In this we see a two-step process of reflection and action, which we will divide into (1) conscientization and (2) empowerment. First, homiletic communities are responsible for formation that brings to consciousness the ways that adolescents are being led into representations of commodification and disposability, and the myriad ways that colonization of the lifeworld of adolescents is taking place (we also named this as a function of the liberation, above). This involves discernment about the social, cultural, and economic forces at work within communities and subsequently equipping young people – through preaching practices – to recognize how those forces are at work to oppress them.

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[99] Tertullian, *On Baptism*, I.

[100] Daniel S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988), 13.

Second, the church continues the formative work begun in conscientization through actions of empowerment. Schipani observes of Freire that "he believes that modern society does not encourage authentic freedom and does not promote the development of critical consciousness. Further, he claims that people must liberate themselves in order to fulfill their human potential in light of the ontological vocation as history makers."[101] Applied to the present subject, Freire believes that formative practices do not stop with consciousness-raising (reflection), but also necessarily includes empowering others (action). Rather than ontological adolescence and silence, or commodification and disposability, Freire provides "ontological vocation as history makers" as an alternative mode of action.

Freire articulates the foundations of an education that is liberative for the oppressed. He believes "revolutionary praxis is a unity, and the leaders cannot treat the oppressed as their possession. Manipulation, sloganizing, 'depositing,' regimentation, and prescription cannot be components of revolutionary praxis, precisely because they are components of the praxis of domination."[102] Freire's description approximates the kind of relationship needed for the pole of formation. Those with homiletic privilege cannot treat adolescents as their possession, nor can they resort to the practices which Freire describes as constitutive of "the praxis of domination." Adults who engage in homiletic relationships with adolescents do so not to dominate, to validate homiletical norms, or exercise power over, but rather are interested in exercising "power with" adolescents. This kind of "power with" in homiletic communities is interested in the

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[101] Schipani, 15.

[102] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans., Myra Bergman Ramos ([New York]: Herder and Herder, 1972), 121.

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formation of adolescent identities that are critically reflective participants in homiletic communities (and beyond).

With these arenas of formation in mind, homiletic communities must articulate a strategy for how formation takes place.

Shared Praxis as a Model for Formation

In order to give more specificity to the tasks of formation of identifying narrative complexity, engaging in conscientization, and working toward empowerment, homiletic communities can move toward formation in a way similar to what Thomas Groome calls "shared Christian praxis."[103]

Groome's model of shared Christian praxis shares affinities with what we have explored through the liberative model above, as well as the kind of pedagogy described by Paulo Freire and Daniel Schipani. Groome believes that "Christian religious education by shared praxis can be described as a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith."[104] This process integrates the three arenas of formation we have outlined into a pedagogical process. For Groome, the practice consists of five components and five corresponding movements. Groome summarizes them as such:

1. The participants are invited to name their own activity concerning the topic for attention (present action).
2. They are invited to reflect on why they do what they do, and what the likely or intended consequences of their actions are (critical reflection).

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[103] Groome, 184-231.

[104] Groome, 184.

3. The educator makes present to the group the Christian community Story concerning the topic at hand and the faith response it invites (Story and its Vision).
4. The participants are invited to appropriate the Story to their lives in a dialectic with their own stories (dialectic between Story and stories).
5. There is an opportunity to choose a personal faith response for the future (dialectic between Vision and visions).[105]

The process is fairly straightforward. Participants engage in a dialogue about a particular topic or course of action within human life. They reflect on the reasoning and consequences for that action. The educator intervenes to provide a recollection of "the whole faith tradition of our people however that is expressed or embodied" (Story) and "a comprehensive representation of the lived response which the Christian Story invites and of the promise God makes in that Story."[106] This, moment however, does not provide the final answer. Instead, participants reflect on how their experiences might appropriate the vision expressed by the educator (with room for acceptance, critique, amendment, and/or rejection). Finally, the participants choose how they will respond in light of the preceding moments.

This is easily adapted to the formation of youth within homiletic communities, whether considering faith practices advocated through preaching or homiletic practices. Here adults invite adolescents as homiletic participants into a dialogue about ideas and practices associated with preaching. This dialogue can include, but is not limited to: the meaning of preaching, the role of the preacher, the nature and claims of the message, the role of scripture, the goals and purposes of sermons, and sermon design. Then together they critically reflect on those practices, listen to the normative stories and their invited

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[105] Groome, 207-208.

[106] Groome, 192-193.

responses, think about the stories and visions in relation to present experience, and voice

a course of action for the future.

   At this juncture, an example of the way this process of formation of Christian

and homiletic identities is warranted. Evelyn L. Parker summarizes the thoughts of a

seventeen-year-old African American woman:

> A lot of black teens are just angry. There is so much complication and pain in
> their lives that they are angry. They are helpless to address things that give them
> pain, so they carry all the anger inside. It comes out in a variety of ways.
> Sometimes, gestures such as neck swiveling and finger snapping express this
> anger. At other times, anger is expressed in playing the dozens or signifying. At
> worst, it results in fighting or gun violence. All are expressions of the rage they
> feel deep within.[107]

Parker identifies the tension between "commodification" and "disposability" in the lives

of young African Americans and raises "questions regarding the influence of rage on

black adolescent spirituality and the challenge for the church" (conscientization).[108]

Instead of negative responses to rage that further the "disposability" factor and endanger

the futures of the black community, Parker proposes "the idea of holy indignation as an

aspect of African American adolescent spirituality. Holy indignation is the freedom to

express anger against injustice in the sacred space of the Christian church and also in the

public square of North American society."[109] Furthermore, Parker offers a resource of

the wider Christian tradition for formation (narrative complexity) when she describes

holy indignation as

> the congregation's act of sanctification and sanction upon those youth who desire
> to transform systems of domination and oppressive power structures. As

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[107] Parker, *Trouble Don't Last Always : Emancipatory Hope among African American Adolescents*, 125.

[108] Parker, *Trouble Don't Last Always : Emancipatory Hope among African American Adolescents*, 125.

[109] Parker, *Trouble Don't Last Always : Emancipatory Hope among African American Adolescents*, 125-126.

members of the household of faith, African American adolescents have the right to stand within the congregation, even in the midst of the sanctuary, and express their rage. The congregation of all ages has the responsibility to nurture adolescents' rage, to help teens hone this anger into a fine-tuned rational emotion that promotes wholeness and human flourishing for themselves, their families, and local and global communities [empowerment].[110]

Parker consolidates the drive to formation with the need for congregational practice. Though she raises the biblical prophetic traditions of Jeremiah and Micah as examples of properly channeled anger, Parker neglects the power of the prophetic homiletic traditions within the African American church. African American preaching traditions hold the potential to be a powerful resource for both Christian identity formation and homiletic identity formation in response to violent forms of rage. This tradition could be added as a resource for the third step outlined in Groome's process (Story and its Vision). By broadening the shared Story to include this homiletical tradition, the stories of young African Americans who experience the commodification-disposability predicament are equipped with the resources of a formative tradition that helps them on the path to resistance and flourishing (carried out in Groome's fourth and fifth steps).

In the same way that young people are invited into pulpits in the interest of liberation, they are also invited into pulpits in the interest of formation. When young people preach and adults engage them in feedback, they become involved in the kind of processes that are formative of both their Christian and homiletic identities. Through the kind of listening and feedback I advocate in chapter five, and carry out in chapter six, young people are provided with the resources of traditions that can bring them along to greater maturity as Christians and as preachers. The kind of formation I describe, however, is not a process limited to a kind of unidirectional educational model where

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[110] Parker, *Trouble Don't Last Always : Emancipatory Hope among African American Adolescents*, 144.

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young people receive knowledge of homiletic and Christian traditions from all-knowing teachers.[111] Instead, by preaching and engaging with adults about that preaching, young people's agency is more fully exercised, not just as those who reflect on biblical texts or on sermons (i.e. collaborative models), but as voiced preachers who exercise critical engagement with Christian and homiletic traditions as they understand them. Adults then enter into feedback *first as listeners*, and then subsequently as those who help young people in identifying formative resources/tasks, while simultaneously holding out the likelihood that they will receive the benefit of formation as well.[112]

Conclusion

This chapter has proposed a theologically and ethically grounded norm for renewing the relationship between adults and adolescents in homiletic communities. Through a theological and ethical vision of liberation and formation which uses post-colonial analysis to revise the concept of oppression, an exploration of recent proposals for the ethics of preaching, and the introduction of homiletic versions of communicative action and shared Christian praxis, I have articulated a foundation for renewing research and practice in homiletic communities. With that foundation laid, chapter five will move toward a method of analyzing adolescent homiletic speech that invites engagement within the model of liberation and formation, while chapter six will initiate the process of closely listening to adolescents with the hopes of enlarging public homiletic space.

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[111] Like Freire's "deposit" model of education. Nor is this limited to the space/context of a classroom.

[112] This is the benefit and best hope of apprenticeship models of preaching pedagogy, prominent in African American and Latino/a traditions.

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Chapter V

A Method of Analyzing Adolescent Religious Speech

The disposition articulated in chapter four encourages on-the-ground homiletic research designed to listen to adolescents about preaching. To this point, I have suggested that those with homiletic privilege have been doing the bulk of the speaking without attending to the ways that adolescents are speaking back to homiletics and/or are in need of formation. The need to listen to adolescents shaped by the disposition of liberation and formation suggests that scholars of preaching devise ways of critical, reflective listening to young people. This chapter proposes a form of interpretive and evaluative listening by fashioning a method of rhetorical analysis that will be instantiated in chapter six by analyzing adolescents' sermons.

The Criteria of a Method of Rhetorical Analysis

The rhetorical analysis of adolescents' sermons proposed here shares John McClure's "conviction that the rhetorical study of preaching can provide some important clues about the role of preaching in congregational life."[1] It is necessary to unpack the importance of a specifically *rhetorical* analysis prior to articulating the method.

First, and perhaps most importantly, it is essential to understand what is meant by the use of the word *rhetorical* and why rhetorical analysis is a beneficial mode of examining adolescents' sermons. A simple definition is proposed by Foss, Foss, and

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[1] John S. McClure, *The Four Codes of Preaching : Rhetorical Strategies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), xii.

Trapp when they define rhetoric as "action humans perform when they use symbols for the purpose of communicating with one another."[2] This definition is almost too broad to be of use. Chaim Perelman defines rhetoric as a process of argumentation with an audience where "the object of the theory of argumentation is the study of the discursive techniques allowing us to induce or to increase the mind's adherence to the theses presented for its assent."[3] For Perelman, the study and employment of rhetoric serves to help speakers better make arguments for certain ideas or courses of actions within the context of their audiences. While Perelman focuses on the means of argumentation, Kenneth Burke proposes that rhetoric is "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents," and elsewhere that rhetoric "is an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols."[4] Burke sees rhetoric as an intrinsic function of human communication and therefore the study of and employment of rhetoric hinges on ascertaining motives and discovering what communicative processes lead to cooperation.

These definitions hold in common the strategic use of symbols for the purposes of communication, which often holds the intention of persuasion (broadly defined). While the role of using the instruments of rhetoric in the sermon-writing process has been a subject of much discussion in the past generation, there seems to be little debate that

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[2] Sonja K. Foss, Karen A. Foss, and Robert Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, 2nd ed. (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1991), 14.

[3] Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame, [Ind.]: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 4.

[4] Burke, 41, 43.

sermons do, in fact, function within the broad genre of rhetorical acts.[5] As rhetorical

acts, the rhetorical tradition can be a helpful mode for analyzing a broad range of

rhetorical artifacts, including adolescents' sermons and other religious speech.

   Rhetorical analysis also supplies diverse tools that seek to explain how particular

artifacts function as rhetorical acts. Sonja Foss describes rhetorical criticism as "a

qualitative research method that is designed for the systematic investigation and

explanation of symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical

processes. This definition includes three primary dimensions: (1) systematic analysis as

the act of criticism; (2) acts and artifacts as the objects of analysis in criticism and (3)

understanding rhetorical processes as the purpose of criticism."[6] As we piece together a

coherent method from specific forms of rhetorical analysis we will need to keep these

dimensions of the definition in mind.

   Rhetorical analysis is beneficial in the case of adolescents because it accounts for

the ways that young people are functioning as rhetorical actors in given situations. In the

instances analyzed in chapter five and beyond, adolescents are using words to accomplish

social action or perform specific tasks. As such, methods of rhetorical criticism provide

multi-faceted interpretive schemes for understanding adolescents preachers as rhetors –

symbol-wielding actors attempting to "gain adherence," "form attitudes," or "induce

action," in their homiletic and faith communities.

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[5] See, for example Hogan and Reid; Craig A. Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons That Connect : Effective Communication through Identification* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992); Reid, ed; Fred B. Craddock, "Is There Still Room for Rhetoric?" in Martha J. Simmons, ed. *Preaching on the Brink : The Future of Homiletics : In Honor of Henry H. Mitchell* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 66-74; Wilson, ed. *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*, 343ff.

[6] Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 3rd ed. (Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2004), 6.

Rhetorical analysis is also beneficial because it is inherently connected to the

disposition outlined in chapter four. Since the disposition I advocate, and in particular

the emphasis I place on the approach as a communicative process, approaches the

communicative action of adolescents as action that is a process of reason-giving,

rhetorical analysis naturally coincides with attempts to make sense of the processes by

which communicative action takes place. Foss, Foss, and Trapp suggest that "adoption of

a rhetorical perspective involves an interest in the analysis of the symbolic processes."[7]

In discussing the relationship between rhetoric and social change, Barbara Biesecker

points out that

> Jürgen Habermas's universal pragmatics is hailed by many social and (most
> notably given the focus of this particular study) rhetorical theorists and critics as
> the most promising theorization of the relation of structure and subject to have
> come down the philosophical pike since the linguistic turn precisely because it
> takes practical argument as fundamental to the transformation of social relations.
> Seeking to avoid the theoretical excesses and, thus, political pitfalls that he
> understands are part and parcel of thoroughly contextual or discursive approaches
> to contemporary collective life and social change, namely infinite regress and
> relativism, Habermas proposes a procedural concept of communicative action out
> of which a collective rational will may emerge.[8]

While Biesecker ultimately appropriates a rhetorical model of social change that depends

on Kenneth Burke, she correctly summarizes the impact Habermas has on theories of

rhetoric as they coincide with theories of social change. The kind of rhetorical analysis

advocated in this chapter does so with a foundational assumption that social change, and

the kind advocated in chapter four, can and does happen through rhetoric. Because

rhetoric helps effect social change, and does so intentionally, it is worthy of the type of

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[7] Foss, Foss, and Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, 17. If this is the case, then it is right to
include Habermas as a more recent branch of the rhetorical tradition, as Foss, et. al do, even as Habermas is
concerned more with communicative action primarily as a prescriptive task over a descriptive/analytical
one. See Foss, Foss, and Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, 241-272.

[8] Barbara A. Biesecker, *Addressing Postmodernity : Kenneth Burke, Rhetoric, and a Theory of Social
Change*, Studies in Rhetoric and Communication (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 7-8.

analysis I argue for here. More precisely, an intentional project of listening to and analyzing adolescents' speech practices, which have traditionally been held at arm's-length in homiletic communities, holds the potential to facilitate change within homiletic and faith communities.

A method of rhetorical analysis that analyzes young people's sermons through a disposition grounded in the theological and ethical norm of liberation and formation must not only be interested in rhetoric as rhetoric. It must also be attentive to rhetoric as a component constituent of theological activity. This means that not only is the impetus for analyzing these sermons funded by the theological disposition, but it also seeks to discern the theological inner-workings, or operative theology, of these sermons. Preaching is not a rhetorical act somehow devoid of or divorced from theology. As a rhetorical act, it takes shape within (and reacts to) distinct theological contexts, families, and interpretive traditions. Preaching tries to make theological sense out of context and thus any attempt to understand young people's sermons must also attend to the ways that those theological formulations operate.

Furthermore, the kind of method developed in this chapter will also be both portable and durable. In hoping for portability, the method needs to be able to meet the tests of different contexts. The method for rhetorical analysis developed here should be able to apply to a large variety of speech forms within the broad range of religious communication. Though in chapter six I will exclusively treat sermons preached by young people, I envision the method to be applicable to genres such as testimonies (spoken and written), spoken word, poetry, music, drama, reflections on preaching,

listening practices, and beyond. A beneficial aspect of rhetorical analysis is that modes of criticism are applicable to different types of artifacts.

The need for portability also justifies reaching beyond the categories typically used for homiletic analysis. The method here does not use analytical methods that emerge from the homiletics classroom's sermon grading rubric. Grading the sermons or seeking to judge them in comparison with some type of homiletic standard (or against each other) is not the goal. Rather, the method developed here should be flexible enough to apply to a broad range of communicative practices.

In terms of durability, the method should be relevant beyond the immediate time frame in which it is developed and used. Despite the rapid changes in communicative practices, particularly among young people, these shifting types of speech practices will always be rhetorical, in the sense that they are attempting to use words/symbols in the hopes of effecting change in the world. The kinds of analytical tools used here should be able to stand up to those kinds of communicative changes through time. This justification for a rhetorical method of analysis leans on the intersection of rhetoric and theology. The justification is compounded even more, however, when considering the importance of representations.

Communication of Social Identities

One of the major foci in the liberation-formation disposition is identifying the representations of adolescents at work in a homiletic community, as well as the ways that self-representation is constrained. As such, rhetorical analysis should take a prominent role in the method because it helps identify the representations of adolescent identity at

work in religious speech. Recent studies in communication and rhetoric suggest that identities are performed, rather than merely possessed. Representations of adolescents are thus rhetorically and communicatively performed. Donal Carbaugh, for instance, "draw[s] attention to the communication of identity. This suggests shifting attention to an alternate site of identity…largely contingent upon the scene in which one is acting, and the way that scene is set, cast, and communicationally improvised."[9] Carbaugh wants to shift attention away from three idioms of identity at work in wider cultural accounts of identity. First, Carbaugh highlights biological identity, which places identity in "one's sexual composition, or racial composition, or ethnic composition, or basing such claims upon one's permanent, or ascribed, biological make-up."[10] The recent questions at play in various communities surrounding then presidential candidate Barack Obama or professional golfer Tiger Woods' degree of "blackness" are indicative of the impact of this rendering of identity. The second popular idiom is that of psychology, which "has taken as its starting point the psychological composition of human individuals. On this basis, the question, "Who am I?," is responded to by reference to an individual's human psychological traits. For example, a person might claim to be, like Woody Allen, a bit neurotic, depressed, or obsessive."[11] Third, Carbaugh describes the idiom of cultural and social identity which "is the basis for claims being made about people as members of groups. As such, people are assigned particular qualities or features because they are group members, or because they hold a particular social

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[9] Donal A. Carbaugh, *Situating Selves : The Communication of Social Identities in American Scenes*, Suny Series, Human Communication Processes (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 23.

[10] Carbaugh, 19-20.

[11] Carbaugh, 20.

position. Each person is identified as a bearer of that group's habits or customs or position of living."[12] For instance, a person might wear a t-shirt bearing the logo of the North Carolina State University Wolfpack, identifying them as a "fan" of that team, or a robe and stole, identifying them as "clergy." These three idioms often overlap or form hybrid accounts of identity. Carbaugh critiques these accounts of identity because they are generally regarded as internal to the self – either possessed or acquired.

Contrary to these passive accounts of identity, Carbaugh proposes that identities are communicative. He says that

> the basic site of identity, in this view, could be formulated in this way: What exactly one is being, or saying, or doing, by being such a person as a worker, or a woman, or a man, or an environmentalist, or a German, is largely contingent upon the scene in which one is acting, and the way that scene is set, cast, and communicatively improvised. Focusing on this performative mode of identity, or selves, as in social interactions in actual scenes, in a particular somewhere and not just an abstract anywhere, leads me…to add a fourth 'cultural pragmatic idiom' to the [idioms] above.[13]

Social interaction, and the scenes in which those interactions take place, are constitutive for Carbaugh. This approach leads Carbaugh to the following statement as a framing device for communicative identities: "[I, We, You, They] [know, show, constitute] who [I, we, you, they] [am, are] in part, by the way [I, we, you, they] [symbolize, perform, participate] in situated social scenes."[14] He places this understanding to the test through different social scenes: a fan at college basketball games, differentiation of roles in the workplace, the married self, the gendered self, and political identities, among others. Dan Handelmann explores this concept in terms of ritual. By the process of "autopoiesis" or

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[12] Carbaugh, 21-22.

[13] Carbaugh, 23.

[14] Carbaugh, 33.

self-organization, "a ritual produces the persons that will produce the ritual as that ritual produces them."[15] The self is organized and re-organized by participation in ritual, even as the ritual is (re-)organized by one's participation.

Similarly, Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek approach "whiteness" or what it means to be white through a rhetorical/communicative lens. For Nakayama and Krizek, "we should not search for what whiteness really means; instead, we should seek out its rhetorical character. The politics of this rhetorical character depends largely upon rhetorical considerations…[W]e seek an understanding of the ways that this rhetorical construction makes itself visible and invisible, eluding analysis yet exerting influence over everyday life."[16] In other words, the identity of "whiteness" has a particular rhetorical performance that operates as the center and "thus, the experiences and communication patterns of whites are taken as the norm from with Others are marked."[17] With a more critical objective of exposing the way rhetorical identities marginalize some and normalize/empower others, Nakayama and Krizek adopt the same approach as Carbaugh.

This perspective helps to cast light on the way we will approach adolescents' homiletic speech practices. If young people and their religious speech practices are to be the object of rhetorical criticism, and we want to discern the dynamics of their self-representation, then it is imperative to attend to the ways that they are performing two

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[15] Don Handelman, "Introduction: Why Ritual in its Own Right?" in Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist, *Ritual in Its Own Right : Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, Pbk. ed. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 11.

[16] Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness as a Strategic Rhetoric," in Thomas K. Nakayama and Judith N. Martin, eds., *Whiteness : The Communication of Social Identity* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999), 91.

[17] Nakayama and Martin, eds., 91.

major types of identities: homiletic identity and Christian identity.[18] A method of

rhetorical analysis will help us to interpret the homiletic and Christian identities

adolescents perform which can subsequently be evaluated through the lens of liberation-

formation.

Homiletic Identity in Contemporary Homiletics

Homiletic identity has become an important category for contemporary homiletic

discourse. Recent discussions around this topic have centered on "images of the

preacher." Homiletic identity, or the image of the preacher, is indicative of a number of

key homiletic ideas: ethics of preaching, theology of preaching, relationship to the

congregation, relationship to the Word, authority of the preacher, voice, etc. Robert Reid

identifies these identities as

> the imaginative figure of thought which best captures what they believe they are
> 'up to' in preaching. This kind of reflection can speak to preachers and students
> of preaching who struggle in the effort to realize some of the assumptions they
> bring into the pulpit when they preach…While the concept of agency may be new
> language for some readers, the question about the relationship between the human
> and the divine in preaching is not….There are a variety of perspectives that
> explore how a preacher views scripture, revelation, and his or her own identity in
> preaching. Each perspective implies something about how that preacher would
> view agency – the relationship between the work of God, the work of the
> preacher, and what can occur efficaciously as a result of the act of preaching.[19]

Reid's edited volume juxtaposes eight varying images of the preacher as completing the

phrase "preacher as": messenger of hope, lover, God's mystery steward, ridiculous

person, fisher, host and guest, one "out of your mind," and one entrusted. These images

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[18] Undoubtedly, these identities, and their rhetorical performance by young people are also shaped by
factors of race and class, as Giroux suggests in almost all of his analyses. While we will pay attention to
factors of race and class and how they condition these kinds of identities, they will not be the *primary*
factors in defining homiletic and Christian identities.

[19] Reid, ed., 2-3.

supplement Thomas Long's list: the herald, the pastor, the storyteller/poet, and the witness.[20] Whether these disparate images emerge from biblical texts, biblical theology, systematic theology, philosophical theology, or other realms, they have much to offer the preacher seeking to evaluate his/her own homiletic identity.

The discussion about the image of the preacher, or homiletic identity, has been helpful from a certain standpoint. Pedagogically, these metaphors give preaching students language to help them explore how they view themselves as homiletic agents. From the standpoint of academic homiletics, the discussion of images is indicative of generative conversations about the nature of preaching in a postmodern era. As the homiletic scene has changed in the wake of pluralism and questions about the authority of the preacher, the development of relevant images has been important work.

What they do not do, however, is account for the ways that homiletic identity emerges through performance within communicative scenes. They are prescriptive, rather than descriptive. And while the group of authors who offer these images would be charitable enough to recognize that these images do not represent all the available images, they nevertheless do not begin with actual sermons. Theory precedes practice. To be clear, this is not in any sense a criticism of their work. There is another way to go about discerning homiletic identity, however. For the purposes of the method described within this chapter, and within the framework described by theories of communicative identity, homiletic identity should emerge from actual speech acts. We can expect to see in adolescents' sermons the emergence of distinct homiletic identities. These latent homiletic identities may be useful as critique in homiletic communities, uncritically

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[20] Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

mimetic in character, and/or prove themselves to be mired in false consciousness and thus in need of significant formation. We turn now more specifically to a constructive method of rhetorical criticism useful for analyzing adolescents' religious speech.

A Constructive Method of Rhetorical Criticism

Sonja Foss outlines the broader process of rhetorical criticism as unfolding this way: "(1) selecting an artifact; (2) analyzing the artifact; (3) formulating a research question; and (4) writing the essay."[21] This process in some sense has already been addressed. Adolescents' sermons will be the artifacts analyzed and the question has already been formulated: "How do adolescents perform homiletic and Christian identities through sermons?" In order to analyze the artifact and write up the findings (items 2 and 4), a more detailed method must first be described. Analysis requires applying the specific procedures of different forms of criticism. Because the research question has already been formulated, the types of criticism I propose are specifically designed to target the questions that have been addressed above. Below is the method by which I propose adolescents' sermons should be analyzed. In outlining these methods of criticism, I will address the following: (1) what the method hopes to accomplish and (2) how the method operates as an analytical tool.

Discerning Homiletic Identity through Role Criticism and Cluster Criticism

Homiletic identity, as a communicative practice, is mediated through what Hart and Daughton call "rhetorical role, a regularized set of verbal strategies resulting in a

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[21] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 12.

distinctive personal image."[22] In this section, I will outline the criteria by which a picture of the homiletic identity of adolescents, or their rhetorical role, will be constructed.

Preliminary Sources of Rhetorical Role

Hart and Daughton outline three preliminary sources from which a person produces "rhetorical personae, that complex of verbal features that makes one person sound different from another."[23] While they do not recognize the ways that these sources are intertwined, they are, nonetheless, helpful in constructing some pre-understanding of a speaker's role. The first of these sources is a personal rhetorical history, which is determined by a combination of socialized features that *might* typify the ways one speaks (geography, class, education, etc.). Here we are searching for the factors that constitute the context from which adolescents speak which help determine, in part, what we might expect these preachers to talk about. In terms of establishing a rhetorical history of adolescents, this calls for identifying the basic components of the situations in which their homiletic identities might be formed.

Second is identifying ideological influences. Adolescents may take ideological cues from their ecclesial contexts. Here Hart and Daughton suggest looking at educational history, generational characteristics, philosophical leanings, and social groupings. While these are more indicative of adult rhetorical situations, they also may be suggestive for adolescents, particularly around self-selected social groupings or "subcultures." For instance, Ross Haenfler's description of "straight edge" subculture

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[22] Roderick P. Hart and Suzanne M. Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, 2005).

[23] Hart and Daughton, 212.

has a highly differentiated ideology than what Bakari Kitwana describes of "wigger" subculture.[24] We should expect highly different homiletic identities from preachers who self-identify with these, or any other subculture. Inasmuch as these kinds of ideological influences can be determined, they should be recorded to help present some of the factors that help determine a rhetorical role.

Finally, Hart and Daughton suggest that institutional affiliations contribute to the emergence of rhetorical role. In analyzing speech acts of religious communication among adolescents, it is important to discern (again, as much as possible) if they take place in ecclesial environments that are commonly characterized (or self-described) as conservative, liberal, moderate, or with other markers. In those terms, does the speaker's role seem to support or argue against the predominant ideology? And how does that seem to build a role for the speaker?

Credibility Devices

Another dimension of establishing a speaker's role is the use of credibility devices. What makes a speaker worthy of the audience's attention and how does the speaker speak in ways that indicate that he/she is a competent speaker? In determining how an adolescent speaker attempts to establish credibility, we are also looking for how a speaker makes appeals to authority. In what does the speaker locate his/her authority to speak? In order to determine this, Hart and Daughton propose seven dimensions of credibility:

   (1) Power – Rhetor can provide significant rewards and punishments (either material or psychological) for audience.

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[24] For more on these subcultures, see Haenfler; Bakari Kitwana, *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop : Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2005).

(2) Competence – Rhetor has knowledge and experience the audience does not have.
(3) Trustworthiness – Rhetor can be relied on beyond this one moment in time
(4) Good will – Rhetor had the best interest of the audience in mind.
(5) Idealism – Rhetor possesses qualities to which the audience aspires.
(6) Similarity – Rhetor is seen as resembling the audience in some ways.
(7) Dynamism – Rhetor presents credibility through bodily and vocal activity.[25]

When analyzing adolescents' sermons, as those who do not preach regularly in week-to-week settings (more often than not), there will be verbal and non-verbal cues by which the speaker will indicate that he/she is worthy of the audience's attention. This may be particularly acute among a group with little social/symbolic/homiletic capital.

Another category should be added to these: material. Within this category, the critic looks for the speakers' use of materials beyond voice and body. In other words, the critic will look for how the preacher dresses, how the preacher makes use of a pulpit or preaching space, and what other items accompany the preacher in order to establish credibility. In terms of homiletic identity, adolescents will obviously not rely on discrete forms of homiletic knowledge gained through seminary training or many years of focused mentorship. Appeals to credibility will often be different from those we might expect from adult preachers. Careful attention to these credibility markers in sermons will indicate something about how young people understand and appropriate authority in the pulpit.

Self-References

In determining the preacher's self-conception, it is also useful to track his/her self-references. Hart and Daughton advocate "look[ing] with special care at I-statements since they make special claims on the audience's attention…A useful critical procedure is

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[25] Hart and Daughton, 223-224.

to extract from a text any phrase or clause containing an 'I' and then to lay out these statements one after another (paraphrased, if necessary)."[26] By examining these "I-statements," the critic can show how the preacher creates a nexus for self-identity through expressing emotion, directing action, sharing personal experiences, and expressing the importance of self-involvement/self-revelation in preaching. Conversely, a preacher who makes no I-statements suggests something about limiting the role of self-expression in preaching.

The issue of the self in preaching is, of course, a live issue for contemporary homiletics. Is the preacher's own experience important or do preachers function, in Karl Barth's words, as those "who simply have the role of announcing what God himself wants to say" and where preaching is "the involuntary lip movement of one who is reading with great care, attention, and surprise, more following the letters than reading in the usual sense, all eyes, totally claimed, aware that 'I have not written the text.'"?[27] Barth's issue is a theological one, challenged by contemporary theological accounts of homiletics (i.e. feminist, racial/ethnic accounts which appeal to the theological importance of personal experience). J. Randall Nichols, on the other hand, raises the issue of pastoral integrity when he contrasts "self-disclosure" with "self-display."[28] While self-disclosure is an appropriate use of the self that "risk[s] a certain vulnerability in order to reach a purpose that has fundamentally to do with their [the listeners'] well-

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[26] Hart and Daughton, 226.

[27] Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1991), 46, 76.

[28] J. Randall Nichols, *The Restoring Word : Preaching as Pastoral Communication*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 121ff.

being."[29] Self-display, on the other hand is narcissistic use of the self. Finally, David

Buttrick is concerned with use of the self in preaching because it violates the

communicative function of sermons. Personal references, stories, and illustrations "split

consciousness," directing the attention of the sermon towards the preacher, rather toward

the listeners as a communicative group.[30] While adolescents are most likely not aware of

these issues as they are raised by these homileticians, they are likely to use self-

references for particular theological, pastoral, or communicative purposes that can

converse with those academic accounts from a distinct point of view. Through analyzing

those kinds of I-statements used by adolescents in sermons, we should be able to further

the conversation about the use of self in preaching.

Cluster Criticism and Homiletic Identity

A final element in the analytical matrix for discerning homiletic identity calls for

appropriating cluster criticism. Cluster criticism provides an additional form of rhetorical

criticism that investigates the way adolescents' sermons "are revealing the worldview or

what [Kenneth] Burke calls the terministic screens of the rhetors who created them. The

terms we select to describe the world constitute a kind of screen that directs attention to

particular aspects of reality rather than others. Our particular vocabularies constitute a

reflection, selection, and deflection of reality."[31] In sermons, adolescents, like any other

group, constitute a particular frame of reality as they see it. This includes the arena of

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[29] Nichols, *The Restoring Word : Preaching as Pastoral Communication*, 121.

[30] Buttrick, 141-143.

[31] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 71.

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homiletic identity. Subsequently this raises the question of how particular vocabulary

choices made by young preachers describe their self-understanding as participants in

homiletic communities. Cluster criticism helps in that "the meanings that key symbols

have for a rhetor are discovered by charting the symbols that cluster around those key

symbols in an artifact."[32] By investigating key symbols, we can expect to see (1) the

meanings that young people invest in homiletic identity and (2) how those meanings are

constructed rhetorically.

Foss provides three basic steps for cluster criticism: "(1) identifying key terms,

(2) charting the terms that cluster around the key terms, and (3) discovering an

explanation for the artifact."[33] She advocates choosing terms in an artifact by their

"frequency" or "intensity," and no more than five or six terms. Since the research

question centers on homiletic identity, then the terms up for analysis in adolescent

sermons are fairly straightforward but may not appear with any uniformity between

preachers nor with either frequency or intensity. The terms we are after arise from each

preacher's own language about the nature and task(s) of preaching. After locating the

occurrences of these terms, the words and phrases that cluster around them are charted.

Foss suggests that what we are looking for in these clusters are relationships. She says

that "terms may cluster around the key terms in various ways. They simply may appear

in close proximity to the term, or a conjunction such as "and" may connect a term to a

key term. A rhetor also may develop a cause-and-effect relationship between the key

term and another term, suggesting that one depends on the other or that one is the cause

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[32] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 71.

[33] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 72.

of the other."[34] By examining the cluster terms and the ways they form relationship to the key terms, a more textured picture of how the preacher understands her/his homiletic identity should begin to emerge.

This first step in analysis is one of intentional listening and reflective analysis. By listening to these sermons and carefully analyzing them, we hope to point to how adolescents conceive of themselves as homiletic agents. That is to say, by preaching, they are establishing a homiletic identity in the midst of a homiletic community. The critic should be able to a analyze sermon rigorously, yet unencumbered by endless steps in the process. Figure 4.1 shows a sample worksheet of how the analysis might proceed on paper.

After this moment in analysis, the critic should be working to formulate a hypothesis centering on the preacher's homiletic identity. A statement such as "The preacher sees himself/herself as…" or "The preacher seems to identify preaching's role/function as…" or "The preacher develops the image of x in order to describe his/her understanding of homiletic identity. An additional modifier might expand the particularity by making a statement such as "The preacher seems to identify preaching and his/her age in a relationship that…" Statements like this begin the process of interpreting the nature of homiletic identity among adolescents. Formulating these kinds of statements is explanatory and interpretive, rather than evaluative. It is important to note that this process is only the first moment in the process. This part of the analysis is performed without yet placing the emerging identity through the evaluative emphases on liberation-formation.

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[34] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 73.

Discerning Christian Identity through Pentadic and Metaphor Criticisms

Homiletic identity is not the only kind of identity that is mediated through young

people's speech. Christian identity is also performed through religious speech. When

young people preach (as with all sermons), they advocate a specific kind of Christian

identity for themselves and for their listeners. Can the Christian identity they espouse

open up possibilities for the homiletic community that it has not considered? Or,

conversely, does it need to go through additional formation to be adequate for the

homiletic community? The kind of claims adolescents make about Christian identity

cannot be properly evaluated until they are interpreted. Rhetorical criticism provides

interpretive devices for rhetorical situations and specifically for our purposes here, the

kind of interpretive devices that can frame the Christian identity performed by

adolescents in their religious speech. In the interest of discerning this identity, I propose

using two forms of rhetorical criticism that help answer the question "What does it mean

to identify oneself as a Christian and promote that identification in others?" In order to

see how adolescents' religious speech answers this question, I propose using a mixture of

(1) Kenneth Burke's pentadic criticism and (2) metaphor criticism.

Pentadic/Dramatistic Criticism

Kenneth Burke's pentadic criticism, or dramatism, operates under the premise that

humans develop and present messages in much the same way that a play is
presented. We use rhetoric to constitute and present a particular view of our
situation, just as a play creates and presents a certain world or situation inhabited
by characters in the play. Through rhetoric, we size up a situation and name its
structure and outstanding ingredients. How we describe a situation indicates how

we are perceiving it, the choices we see available to us, and the action we are likely to take in that situation.[35]

Burke's pursuit of motives through rhetoric emerges here by discerning a rhetor's attempts to communicate a course of action. In order to identify the dramatic structure and elements of an artifact, pentadic criticism analyzes a rhetor's use of five basic elements of drama: agent, act, agency, scene, and purpose.[36] These terms are defined as follows:

1. Agent: the group or individual who is the main character or protagonist. This could be the rhetor or another person or group.
2. Act: the action taken by the agent
3. Agency: the means by which the action is taken by the agent
4. Scene: the stage set by the speaker which describes the conditions, influence, and/or causes of the rhetorical situation
5. Purpose: what the agent hopes or intends to accomplish by performing the act and the agent's feelings or intentions[37]

The rhetorical critic analyzes the artifact, identifying these elements and subsequently looks for the ways they interact. In order to do this, the elements of the pentad are placed in ratios in order to answer these questions: "(1) Which factor dominates the discourse generally? And (2) When two factors are discussed simultaneously, which predominates and why?"[38] Placing the pentadic elements in ratios and then assessing the dominant term(s) and relationships builds a more complex picture of the dramatic framework latent in the artifact. For instance, Foss begins a ratio pairing "by putting together scene and act

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[35] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 384.

[36] Alternatively, we could also use narrative criticism, which Foss explores in Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 333-382. Also helpful in identifying "theological worldview" is the structuralist theological narrative that John McClure calls the "theosymbolic code" detailed in McClure, *The Four Codes of Preaching : Rhetorical Strategies*. All assume the dominance of a rhetorically-communicated worldview, but Burke's pentad is slightly less complicated than the two alternatives mentioned above. In the interest of portability for the method, I opt for Burke's dramatism.

[37] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 386.

[38] Hart and Daughton, 277.

in a scene-act ratio. This ratio involves asking whether the nature of the scene, as described by the rhetor, affects the nature of the act the rhetor describes…An act-scene ratio, in contrast, would explore whether the nature of the act dominates – whether the act, as it is described, directs, determines, or shapes the nature of the scene."[39] If an element is dominant in relation to another, at this point it is simply noted, remembering that this stage is interpretive rather than evaluative. Hart and Daughton suggest that through examining these ratios, the dominant terms prove to "feature" the dominant element and its characteristics while the lesser element in the ratio is "muted."[40] Additionally, each privileged term may serve either a "eulogistic," laudatory purpose or a "dyslogistic," uncomplimentary purpose.[41] The ways that the pentads function in these terms should also be noted.

In terms of discerning Christian identity in adolescents' religious speech, pentadic or dramatistic criticism identifies the *dramatic* structure of identity within rhetorical acts. This kind of rhetorical criticism helps identify the rhetor's self-understanding within the Christian drama by identifying the role(s) he/she envisions. A few summary sentences should be written to explain what the critic sees through this analysis. For instance, is the speaker also the agent or does he/she have another role? Why is this so? Identifying these elements and their ratios also exposes the ways that the speaker construes relationships between contexts, motivations, actions, and traditional theological symbols (e.g. God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, church, scripture, etc.). As such, the dramatistic picture within a rhetorical act is not simply a flat narrative rendering, but provides a contoured

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[39] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 387.

[40] See Fig. 12.1 in Hart and Daughton, 279-280.

[41] Ibid.

picture of the way(s) a speaker negotiates, champions, or silences the pentadic elements

in regard to Christian identity. Fig. 4.2 shows the workflow of pentadic/dramatistic

criticism for discerning Christian identity in adolescent religious speech. In order to see

Christian identity from another vantage point, we should move beyond one framing

device.

Metaphor Criticism

Metaphor criticism supplies another way to frame Christian identity among young

people's rhetorical acts. For metaphor criticism in this case, the critic seeks to identify

the dominant metaphors the speaker uses to describe Christian identity. It is commonly

recognized that rather than 'mere ornamentation,' metaphor works as an integral way that

communicators frame reality.[42] As Lakoff and Johnson note, metaphor functions simply:

"The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms

of another."[43] Metaphors attempt to capture the understanding and experience of a

concept or phenomenon and put it into terms that relate it in terms of another system of

understanding or experience. Lakoff and Johnson articulate this as the impact of

metaphors for action:

> Though questions of truth do arise for new metaphors, the more important
> questions are those of appropriate action. In most cases, what is at issue is not the
> truth or falsity of a metaphor but the perceptions and inferences that follow from
> it and the actions that are sanctioned by it. In all aspects of life, not just in politics
> or in love, we define our reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on
> the basis of the metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments,

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[42] See Lakoff and Johnson; Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1985).

[43] Lakoff and Johnson, 5.

and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience, consciously and unconsciously, by means of metaphor.[44]

For instance, Lakoff and Johnson use the sentence "You're wasting my time" as an example of a metaphor that suggests the concept "time is money." Rather than a simple concept of measuring the length of a moment, time here is used as a commodity.[45] This metaphor reflects and structures the way that time functions certainly in North American culture if not in many parts of the globe today. If this is true, then the metaphors that young people use to describe Christian identity impact the nature of Christian action as they see it. Much like the pentadic analysis analyzes a dramatic structure for Christian identity and charts a narratival path for expected action, analyzing metaphors helps to identify the ways that young people construct a conceptual system for Christian identity built out of key words and phrases.

Metaphor criticism proceeds by identifying metaphors, then by examining the ways metaphor functions within a particular rhetorical artifact. Since metaphors are built upon concepts, called tenors, and are expressed in terms called vehicles, metaphor criticism looks at the way vehicles express tenors. Philip Wheelwright defines vehicle and tenor as "the one for the imagery or concrete situation described [vehicle], the other for the significance that this suggests to the responsive imagination [tenor]."[46] In this case, we will be looking at metaphors that express the tenor of Christian faith or Christian identity. As Foss suggests, the tenor may only be implied, but the vehicle will always be

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[44] Lakoff and Johnson, 158.

[45] Lakoff and Johnson, 7ff.

[46] Philip Ellis Wheelwright, *Metaphor & Reality* (Bloomington,: Indiana University Press, 1962), 55.

present.[47] For example, one young preacher says about the life of faith (tenor), "God however, does not give me a scroll – not for my sermon and not for my future. Instead, God has given me a pen and a blank piece of paper [vehicle]. But He hasn't left me alone to write it myself (49-51)."[48] The preacher proceeds to build a theological system about the life of faith through this metaphor, both implicitly and explicitly.

Finding the "entailments," or logical implications of the metaphor is a necessary next step, and in this case attempts to identify the theological system implied in the way the preacher employs the metaphor. In this case, the metaphor used for Christian identity (tenor) is "faith is a composition" (vehicle) and the entailments are all the implications (again, implicit or explicit) about theological anthropology, theology, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, etc. The critic draws out the way that the metaphors used by adolescents construct conceptual systems of Christian identity.

Metaphor criticism looks for the metaphors used in a manner of intensity in a rhetorical artifact and attempts to explain their use. Combined with pentadic/dramatistic analysis, a rich picture of Christian identity begins to emerge. Figure 4.2 shows the workflow of this part of the analysis. Later, in the evaluative stage, the pentadic and metaphor analyses will be placed into the evaluative framework of liberation-formation in order to appraise their viability for the homiletic community.

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[47] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 303.

[48] Numbers in parentheses refer to line numbers in the sermon transcript.clutch100, "Redeemer Lutheran Youth Sermon" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPunXsiuaMs.

Foregrounding Theological and Homiletical Commitments

Before that evaluation can take place, however, the critic must turn the analysis inward. Prior to evaluating whether the identities found in these sermons are liberative or in need of formation, it is imperative that the critic foreground his/her theological and homiletical commitments. Evaluative judgments about the sufficiency of theological and homiletical commitments always take place within a contextual framework. As homiletic scholars reproduce this kind of analysis, they should account for the ways that their own understandings of theology and homiletics affect what they consider liberative and formative. In this way, the homiletic communities they represent can root the norms for formation and liberation in particular traditions/communities and encourage further research to be contextually appropriate. Accounting for one's theological and homiletical commitments as part of a homiletic community means providing preliminary answers to the following questions: What does Christian identity look like in this community? What does homiletic identity look like for this community? These preliminary answers provide the background, or pre-understanding, for the evaluation of adolescents' religious speech. In order to provide an example of the way this would work, I will foreground my own commitments in such a way that that account can provide a background for my evaluations in the following chapter.

Theological Commitments[49]

I organize my understanding of my theological commitments in much the same way that Ronald Allen voices his when he says "my approach to theology and preaching is Reformed as refracted through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), while also in conversation with process theology and with my social location as a middle-class, privileged male of European descent who is influenced by liturgical theological developments from the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church."[50] Here Allen brings to bear three main categories: (1) historic traditions, (2) contemporary theological families, and (3) social location. While these categories do not tell the whole story, of course, most homiletic communities will be able to articulate their own self-understanding through these lenses. As a result they will serve as the foundation of the way I articulate my own theological commitments in the interest of rhetorical analysis for the purposes of liberation-formation.

Like Allen, I am also an heir to the Reformed tradition, specifically the tradition known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Unlike other parts of the Reformed tradition, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) [referred to as Disciples, following] is non-creedal. Disciples do, however, have guiding statements for their theology. The

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[49] There are a few works which encourage homiletic communities to assess their theological commitments in order to gain a better self-understanding and, consequently, preach/listen to preaching in ways that bring those systematic analyses to bear. See, for instance, Ronald J. Allen, *Thinking Theologically : The Preacher as Theologian*, Elements of Preaching (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Burton Z. Cooper and John S. McClure, *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003); McKim and McKim. McKim and Allen work with historic traditions and contemporary theological families as primary interpretive schemes for theology and preaching, while Cooper and McClure offer a theological inventory organized around important theological questions. Both are helpful, but here I opt for McKim and Allen's approaches since such a small sample of sermons likely will not address all or the same issues Cooper and McClure identify.

[50] Allen, *Thinking Theologically : The Preacher as Theologian*, 9.

Preamble to the *Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* makes the following confession:

> As members of the Christian Church,
> We confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world.
> In Christ's name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to all people.
> We rejoice in God, maker of heaven and earth, and in God's covenant of love which binds us to God and to one another.
> Through baptism into Christ we enter into newness of life and are made one with the whole people of God.
> In the communion of the Holy Spirit we are joined together in discipleship and in obedience to Christ.
> At the Table of the Lord we celebrate with thanksgiving the saving acts and presence of Christ.
> Within the universal church we receive the gift of ministry
> and the light of scripture.
> In the bonds of Christian faith we yield ourselves to God that we may serve the One whose kingdom has no end.
> Blessing, glory, and honor be to God forever. Amen.[51]

This confession organizes Disciples' faith around traditional topics of theology: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, the church, human beings, the world, ministry, the scriptures, worship, sacraments, and eschatology. The Preamble is theologically broad, yet contains essential elements that have characterized Disciples' theology and practice throughout its history.

Mark Toulouse identifies four foundational principles which have pervaded the Disciples' theological tradition. First, Toulouse tracks the "interpretation principle" which champions individuals' freedom to interpret the scriptures without the influence of traditional institutional authority and according to individuals' own conscience. Disciples continue to lay heavy emphasis on biblical authority and pious interpretation of biblical texts.

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[51] "The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)",
http://www.disciples.org/AboutTheDisciples/TheDesignoftheChristianChurch/tabid/228/Default.aspx
(accessed February 23, 2010).

Related to the first, the second principle is that of "restoration" whereby the early founders of this American-born movement "assumed that all matters necessary to right doctrine and faith could be found in the scripture."[52] Human accretions to the church's tradition were fundamentally characterized by non-essential opinions. As such, an interest in the restoration and reformation of the church manifested in, at its best, a "recognition that God reigns in the church. Early Disciples women and men sought a church unaffected by either human self-interest or self-righteousness."[53]

Out of Disciples' commitments to interpretation and restoration flowed the third principle, what Toulouse calls "the ecumenical principle." Disciples have always thought, in the words of Thomas Campbell, "that the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else as none else can be truly and properly called christians (sic).[54] As a result of this ecclesiological commitment (born out of interpretation of scripture and an interest in restoration), Disciples have been committed to ecumenical activity.

Finally, Toulouse highlights the fourth principle: "the eschatological principle." By this, Toulouse appropriates early founders' confidence that

> in and through Christ, God has been working out divine purposes in history. Christians stand in the midst of a time that is being redeemed…The eschatological perspective requires of Christians a special orientation toward the mercy and

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[52] Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship : The Shaping of Contemporary Disciples Identity*, Rev. and expanded. ed. (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1997), 56-57.

[53] Toulouse, 58.

[54] Thomas Campbell, "Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington", Brown and Sample http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/da/DA-1ST.HTM#Page3.

justice found at the center of the kingdom of God. No wonder [Alexander] Campbell and other Disciples spent so much time thinking and writing about baptism and the Lord's supper. These two central sacraments of the church collapse God's time into our time and bring Christians to a firsthand encounter with God's grace in the here and now.[55]

At the heart of Disciples' life together, a high regard for baptism and the Lord's Supper are closely tied to confidence in God's ongoing redemptive activity through Christ in the world. This impels Disciples to a life oriented toward the mercy and justice experienced in those sacraments.

While the confession contained in the Preamble and Toulouse's four principles are suggestive rather than exhaustive, they do articulate, in general terms, the historic commitments of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These commitments are fundamental, but also work in conjunction with the contemporary theological families I also find meaningful. I identify primarily with three theological families: (1) theologies of "communal praxis," (2) practical theology, and (3) theologies of otherness.

Terrence Tilley identifies theologies of "communal praxis" as "positions…united by a shared central and distinctive conviction or theme; that the clue to resolving the question is neither theory or narrative, but the turn to shared practice or praxis."[56] Among these theological positions, Tilley includes the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez, Sharon Welch's communities of resistance and solidarity, and James W. McClendon's "practical faith in a pluralistic context."[57] I identify most strongly with the first two of these, as Gutierrez and Welch are concerned with how communities live in

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[55] Toulouse, 128.

[56] Terrence W. Tilley, ed. *Postmodern Theologies : The Challenge of Religious Diversity* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 117.

[57] Tilley, ed., 142ff.

response to oppression, structural and systemic forms of injustice, and domination. Even as I find myself in positions which afford me privilege and power, I consider myself allied with their concerns.

Second, and certainly related to the positions above, I consider my approach to theological reflection as that of a practical theologian. This label is as much about theological method as it is about the content of theological formulations. Dale Andrews states that "practical theology is often understood through what it does. Practical theology holds in deliberation theological revelation, theoretical science, and the practice of ministry. Therein exists a critical relationship between theology, theory, and practice."[58] While the above theologies of "communal praxis" are concerned primarily with large scales of Christian responses to social problems, and many definitions of practical theology concur, I use the term practical theology here as reflection on discrete practices of Christian ministry. That is to say, the primary site for my own theological reflection is through the lens of the practices of preaching and worship in Christian congregations.

The third and final contemporary theological family that shapes my theological commitment is what Ronald Allen calls "theologies of otherness."[59] Built on a number of different of sources, theologies of otherness generally "regard one of God's fundamental purposes as seeking a world in which all others (and oneself) can live in ways that honor the integrity of each. God seeks a world of respectful relationships facilitating encounters

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[58] Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches : Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 1. The literature in this area is as varied as it is numerous. For examples, see

[59] Allen, *Thinking Theologically : The Preacher as Theologian*, 62.

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that generate support for others."[60] This shared conviction, along with the other commitments above, informs the general arc of my theology.

Finally, I must acknowledge how my social location may affect my theological commitments. Since all theology emerges from a place, my own theological commitments are situated around my social location. I am a male, middle-class, highly educated, heterosexual, Euro-American. My living experiences have primarily been in southeastern, suburban areas of the United States. This social location grants a certain amount of privilege. As a result, my theological processes do not emerge from a place of oppression, though with the theological commitments I articulate above, I consider myself to be in solidarity with, and an advocate for, those who are.

These three major foci (historical tradition, contemporary theological family, and social location) converge to form the basis of my theological commitments. While these foci are not explored at length, they are sufficient enough to suggest the kind of inventory a homiletic community might take when analyzing young people's religious speech and evaluating it in the modes of liberation-formation. Together these commitments form a foundation for evaluating adolescents' identities and the example I provide here will serve as an evaluative basis for the sermons I analyze in chapter five.

Homiletical Commitments

Finally, it is also important to take inventory of a homiletic community's homiletical commitments. Acknowledging homiletical commitments foregrounds the ways that homiletic communities normalize homiletic theories and practices. Only in

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[60] Allen, *Thinking Theologically : The Preacher as Theologian*, 62.

light of those foregrounded commitments can adolescents' homiletic practices be evaluated as potentially liberative or in need of formation. While homiletic commitments are certainly informed by theological commitments, as outlined above, they are not necessarily defined by the relationship between theology and preaching.

For instance, my homiletical commitments are shaped by what could be called postmodern responses to the New Homiletic. As should be apparent from the preceding discussion, I take my homiletical cues from the movement to the listener, which finds its impulse in the New Homiletic, and has been deepened more recently by postmodern philosophy and theology. My own homiletic identity, in terms of an image, is not invested with the type of authority found in the images of "herald" (pre-New Homiletic) or the need to facilitate an experience through narrative plots or "storytelling" (e.g. Craddock, Lowry). Rather, I identify with Ronald Allen's image of preaching as "theological interpretation through conversation" imbued with a liberative, other-directed ethical impulse.

This moment in the interpretive process helps identify the critic's pre-understandings about theological and homiletic identity. With that knowledge, the critic can be aware of how those commitments will affect the evaluation of adolescents' communication. This part of the process is not necessarily burdensome and reflects a practical theological commitment to revisit the ways that one's own theories interact with interpretation and evaluation of practice. Figure 4.3 provides a worksheet that helps organize the assessment of theological and homiletic commitments. Having completed the rhetorical analysis and foregrounding the critic's own commitments, it is now appropriate to assess the artifacts through the lens of liberation-formation.

Evaluation in the Liberation-Formation Disposition

In order to evaluate adolescents' religious speech, it is a necessary hermeneutical step to first have taken account of theological and homiletical commitments. After having interpreted artifacts through the rhetorical analyses outlined above, the critic has an opportunity to filter those interpretations through the norms of liberation-formation. The homiletic community, when it embodies the theological and ethical disposition of listening outlined in chapter four, should expect to find places where its own theological and homiletical identities are in need of liberation. It should also expect to find places where adolescents' theological and homiletical identities are in need of formation, in the vein of the "shared Christian praxis" model outline in chapter three.

For example, if an adolescent's sermon "transgresses" the confession found in the Preamble or the four principles Toulouse identifies, then there will be a moment where I must decide if that theological transgression can be beneficial or is in need of further formation. Does the transgression help further or correct the narrative arc of the historic tradition and contemporary theological families with which I identify? Or, does the narrative arc provide helpful boundaries which suggest the transgression be reigned in for formation?

Similarly, preaching that has an authoritarian feel to it likely will challenge my own homiletic identity and I will, in response, feel compelled to offer that up as an area for formation.[61] On the other hand, there may be preaching that opens up the interpretive

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[61] NB: the difference between *authoritarian* and *authoritative* is a helpful distinction and one that should be preserved. See the discussion in John S. McClure, *Preaching Words : 144 Key Terms in Homiletics*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 7-8.

"conversation" of preaching beyond the boundaries with which I am most comfortable. In that case, adolescent preaching could be seen as liberative.

Again, the particular commitments will vary from community to community. Of utmost importance is that homiletic communities begin to embody the disposition, or habitus that I describe in chapter three and subsequently move to the interpretive and evaluative practices I describe here. Careful listening and interpretation should lead to respectful, critical evaluation of adolescents' religious speech. This kind of evaluative process makes use of the rhetorical analyses for the purposes of refining a homiletic community's identity as well as its theories and practices of preaching.

The process of interpretation and evaluation could (and hopefully will) take shape in a number of different ways besides the academic form presented here. For example, in order to integrate Christian education and homiletics more fully, a homiletic community might develop an interactive strategy of teaching and preaching whereby preaching, listening, interpretation, and evaluation lead to a curriculum of Christian education where both the liberative and formative elements are integrated into the content of learning together. Or, homiletic communities might find places in their calendars for "seasons of preaching" that embody the ethic of listening, opening their pulpits to young people beyond limited "youth Sundays" with intergenerational feedback groups designed to evaluate young people's preaching for the purposes of liberation-formation.

In order to more fully instantiate the process of interpretation and evaluation, I will now place the method I have developed into practice.

Chapter VI

Analyzing Adolescents' Religious Speech

Preliminary Remarks on the Analysis

Having established a method for analyzing the religious speech of adolescents, and sermons in particular in the previous chapter, this chapter will demonstrate the method by looking at thirteen sermons from high school students. My goal, as stated earlier, is to develop and demonstrate a portable form of rhetorical analysis that the reader can use to institute a process of careful listening, interpretation, and evaluation through the norms of liberation and formation. This, of course, could occur in a variety of situations or programs, as noted at the end of chapter five. The focus here, however, is on preaching.

The thirteen sermons examined were acquired from the internet service YouTube (http://www.youtube.com), which allows any group or individual to upload digital video content after signing up for a free account. YouTube was chosen because it contained the greatest number of sermons by young people in one public location. The internet was chosen over an ethnographic approach also because of the large number of sermons available in one resource, which saved a great deal of time. Since preaching by youth does not take place frequently in most congregations, a diverse ethnographic study would be difficult to achieve. In the past, using video recorded sermons which were uploaded to the internet might have limited the range of available sermons to individuals and congregations because of the need for expensive video recording and editing equipment.

While that remains true in some cases, and some of the videos available are of professional quality, current video recording technology is much more affordable and accessible now, as are the means to transfer that content to the internet.

Concerning how the sermons used here were chosen, initial searches on YouTube were performed by entering search phrases such as "youth preacher(s)," "young preacher(s)," and "youth sermon(s)." Results from these searches yielded videos by virtue of "tags," which are words chosen by the individual uploading the video that index and categorize the sermon. As a result of the "tags," similar or related videos on the website are recommended to the viewer. This became a resource by which additional sermons were located. Since there are an overwhelming number of sermons from young people available on YouTube, a few key criteria were employed in order to limit the field of sermons and yet simultaneously establish a diverse group of preachers.

In order to limit the field, sermons were chosen from young preachers who preached in multi-generational settings, mostly for weekly worship gatherings.[1] This is true for every sermon but one (Sam Nguyen), who preached in a youth-only setting. This particular sermon was selected so that there would be Asian American representation in the study (without the need to employ a translator for sermons not in English). Only preachers who were identified as "youth" or "student" were chosen (either by self-identification, by the accompanying details on the web page, or by someone else in the video) and, when apparent, identified as high school students. A number of preachers

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[1] There is presently a group called the Academy of Preachers, which is funded by a grant from the Lily Endowment and seeks to encourage young preachers (ages 16-30) as they begin to preach. This group, with which I have had extended contact, has its own YouTube "channel" through which they post sermons preached at their National Festival of Young Preachers. I chose not to use these sermons, though numerous, (1) because they were dislocated from congregational contexts and intended more for audiences comprised of preachers and (2) because of my contact with a number of the preachers through the Lilly Endowment funded National Festival of Young Preachers, as well as their annual "preaching camp."

identified as "young adult" or "college student," but in order to obtain a more uniform sample in terms of age, these were eliminated. Only sermons that were complete from beginning to end were selected.[2] Length was not a part of the criteria and, in fact, the sermons vary greatly in length from four or five minutes to well over twenty minutes. In addition, only recordings that were of sufficient quality to be transcribed with relative ease were chosen.[3]

In order to attain a diverse collection of sermons, an almost equal number of sermons by male (seven) and female (six) preachers were chosen.[4] Eight come from preachers of European American descent (though all of these preached sermons less than ten minutes long), three from African American preachers, one Latina preacher (who preaches in Spanish and uses a translator), and one Asian American preacher. Denominational diversity was also a factor in selection. Denominations represented are as follows: Vietnamese Assembly of God, Episcopal (4), Missionary Baptist, Baptist (3 – unidentified in terms of specific type of Baptist), Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostal Holiness, Presbyterian Church (USA), and Lutheran (presumably Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). At the time of selection, there appeared to be no Roman Catholic or Orthodox sermons available. Other denominations were available (both so-called Mainline and Evangelical), but may not have met the other criteria.

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[2] A surprising number of sermons available from young people on YouTube are only available as clips, or edited to two or three minutes, and serve as advertisements – either for their services as a supply preacher or for the viewer to purchase the sermon in its entirety. This is a fascinating phenomenon, but one that is beyond the scope of the present project.

[3] See the Appendix for full transcriptions of the sermons.

[4] See Fig. 5.1 for a chart of preachers with name, ethnicity, gender, and denomination of the preachers selected. There are certainly more male preachers available on YouTube than female preachers. Whether this is an indication of the ratio of male to female young preachers actually preaching or an indication about the nature of digital media, gender, and preaching agency is also a fascinating question, but beyond the scope of the present project.

One other caveat is necessary before transitioning into my demonstration of the method. The idea of integrating preaching into a media outlet like YouTube generates considerably more questions for the academic study of preaching. Any sermon found on YouTube shows the number of times the sermon has been viewed, hosts a space for other users to comment on the sermon, decontextualizes the sermon from its original performance, and acquires other accoutrement indicative of the internet (titles, usage statistics, advertisements, suggestions for other videos, a specific URL address, etc.). Furthermore, the intent for publishing the sermon, and by whom, significantly changes the questions surrounding the agency and authority of the preacher as well as the purpose(s) for preaching. In short, the internet sermon takes on a digital life of its own apart from the time and space in which it was first preached. All of these factors and the new digital lives for these sermons construct a different atmosphere for receiving these sermons.[5] Rather than seeing decontextualization, digital accoutrement, etc. as *limitations* of this particular data pool, we might instead see this format, along with its accompanying cultural artifacts, as a new type of homiletic space with unique potentiality for constituting what I have been calling "homiletic communities," albeit with different modes of interaction and with differing definitions of relationality and space.

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[5] I do not address the preaching of young people on YouTube as a phenomenon unto itself. While these are important questions that warrant significant attention, they are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Other than information on the web page that may have helped identify a particular preacher by name, age, race/ethnicity, or denomination, I do not address the ways that digital media may affect these sermons (or vice versa). Ronald L. Grimes' recent work on ritual and media places begins to discuss some of the trajectories this new space for ritual and religious practice takes in Ronald L. Grimes, *Rite out of Place : Ritual, Media, and the Arts* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Homiletic Identity

Remembering that the first movement in analyzing these sermons is an exploration of how these preachers perform (or self-organize) homiletic identity, this section will highlight some of the ways that the preachers articulate homiletic identity.[6]

Preliminary Sources of Rhetorical Role

Of the three categories constituting preliminary rhetorical role, institutional affiliations are the most heavily identifiable within these sermons. Overwhelmingly, these preachers identify as "students." This is chosen over other options such as the son/daughter of X, a member of a specific subculture, or perhaps an employee. For Matthew Sistrunk, his status as a student provides the opening for the introduction to his sermon: "I am a senior at Decatur High School. And actually as a graduating senior I've been assigned a good number of books to read" (13-14). Katie places the sermon-writing process within her life as a busy high school student: "So to start off, I wrote this on the bus ride back from my basketball game on Wednesday, so my intro. is a bit lacking" (11-12).[7] Similarly, Christine M. also uses the end of school as a way of commenting on the sermon-writing process: "first off, let me just say that ever since AP exams were finished for us seniors way back in May, um, we've been done. And I mean totally done. I haven't written anything or been particularly creative or insightful since then, so you'll have to forgive me if this sermon is a bit boring or unrefined" (14-17). Emily Baird, like most of the others, uses her status as a student as a primary identifier for herself and a

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[6] When quoting from these sermons, numbers in parentheses indicate the line number(s) from the transcribed sermon.

[7] I will discuss the use of negative references to the sermon below.

way to introduce herself to the congregation: "My name is Emily, also known as Mustang Sally by my peers at Memorial High School. Yes, that's right, I'm the mascot. I think it's perfect for my personality" (16-17). Emily's identifier also serves as a way of entering into her sermon content.

Of the thirteen sermons, six do not mention school or their status as a student, though they do use other strong institutional affiliations to build their homiletic identity. When the identifier of student is used, however, it is used to build the preacher's homiletic identity. It is used as an important device to identify oneself to the congregation (always early in the sermon), for the development of content within the sermon, for the form of the sermon (i.e. as part of an introduction), or as a complex device to accomplish a combination of these tasks. This kind of homiletic identity also manages expectations for the listening audience. As a high school student, the preacher's rhetorical persona and the congregation's expectations of that persona will necessarily be different from that of a bishop or denominational leader, for example. This does not mean that these preachers portray themselves as incompetent to preach, as will be seen below. But the use of the self as student does establish boundaries for what the preacher will be able to speak about authoritatively. For instance, the preacher who establishes the rhetorical role of "high school student" will likely not talk about their experiences as a parent or seminary student. If they did, this would violate the expectations they have established through rhetorical role.

Other institutional affiliations are present. Jane Doe and Trevor, who preach back-to-back sermons, establish rhetorical personae through using language common to the Episcopal church, and specifically All Saints Episcopal church. Jane Doe says, "Fast

relief is a fundraiser in which we fast for 30 hours to help raise money for Episcopal

relief and development. It was an amazing experience. Then I attended the diocesan

senior high dance bishop's ball" (19-21).   Trevor exhibits knowledge of the sacraments

and the congregation's clergy: "Shannon Ferguson came to the hospital and performed

the sacrament of unction" (44). Minister Keith Johnson establishes a rhetorical persona

as one who is able to comment on the state of the Pentecostal Holiness church at large:

"There's so many people, even though they realize they're not holiness, they're

professing to be holiness because, because it brings on some type of – there's an

attraction behind that name holiness" (92-94). These uses of institutional affiliation

establish the preacher as an "insider" and, as such, one who can speak to insiders about

the state of, or experiences within, the institution.

Sometimes religious institutional rhetorical roles are combined with that of

"student." Katie states, "My name is Katie Whiteman and I'm a junior at Bettendorf

[high school] and I've been going to Redeemer since I was about 7 years old" (15-16).

This compound institutional affiliation establishes two rhetorical roles at once, with the

second serving to identify her as someone who has attended Redeemer (Lutheran) since

she was a child. As a longtime member of that community, Katie is able to establish

herself with a homiletic/rhetorical persona that is trustworthy and familiar.

The preachers' ideological influences are more limited. They reveal a small

amount of rhetoric about social groupings, but are mostly confined to the categories of

class and knowledge of political/social issues. In terms of social groupings, Sam

identifies a stratified school population and that faith might play a role in that

stratification when he says, "You might be the outcast in the school. Everyone knows

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about those, right? People, people who sort of sit by themselves. You might be the outcast in the school. I'm just warning you right now, you could be that person" (107-109). While Sam clearly does not identify as one of these outcasts, he does recognize that there are individuals who are known by a lack of people with whom they sit. Similarly, Christine M. also identifies an in-crowd ideology present in her community as she describes her guilt by saying, "I feel bad when a bunch of friends and I are hanging out and I don't take the time to call and invite another friend who doesn't often get invited to things" (48-50). Emily identifies her own journey through the social groupings present in her school community. Pointing out that she has an outgoing personality and serves as her high school's mascot, she recalls that this was not always the case: "In middle school though, I would have loved to have a mascot suit to hide in. I was kind of self-conscious, I felt overweight and nerdy. I also felt like all the other girls were more fashionable and more attractive. In fact my idea of fashion was wearing overalls every single day. In fact I even got hung up by my overalls one day. It was pretty bad. Also I had the red hair, freckles, braces – it was just not a pretty picture" (20-24). Emily's use and connection of the words "overweight," "nerdy," "fashionable," "more attractive," and the descriptors "red hair, freckles, braces" are culturally loaded terms that help establish Emily's former place within her community's social groupings. Her more recent loss of weight and increasingly outgoing personality have now placed her in a different social grouping, even to the point of being voted the homecoming queen. These preachers' rhetorical cues about social groupings identify them as knowledgeable about their own identity as it relates to part of an overall homiletic identity, namely being able to speak

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authoritatively on situations that occur in the Christian life, and especially the Christian lives of youth.

In terms of class, the preachers that do establish rhetorical markers around class do so in ways that identify them as middle class. Alex D. comments on the historical distance between the time of Jesus and contemporary times by reminding listeners that "They didn't have anti-perspirants back then, so he would have probably carried a rather foul odor" (27). This comment suggests middle class expectations about hygiene. Likewise, Jessi's opening story contrasts professionals with an alcoholic, drug-addicted beggar (8-17). Many of the rhetorical markers around class have to do with free time, discretionary spending, and/or the importance of the nuclear family. Christine M. says, "I feel bad if I'm out every night of the week and haven't seen my family in ages. I feel bad if I always show up late just because I try to do one more thing before I hop in the car" (51-53). Katie lists her activities, which cost considerable amounts of money: "I've been taking piano lessons since I was ten and art lessons since I was seven" (19-20). In addition, she voices the assumption that she will go to college. Matthew recounts a time when he "went into Borders this past Spring break looking for books to fill my time and so I had free time and I actually noticed that there were crates near the front of the store with books marked down to 3.99 a piece" (28-30). Not only does Matthew have free time, but he also displays a discerning knowledge of what constitutes a bargain price for discretionary income. Jane Doe participates in a church-sponsored program where she raises money by choosing to fast for thirty hours. As Emily narrates some of her life, she recounts, "I also was angry because I couldn't do the things I wanted to do anymore. I couldn't play sports anymore. I had to sit on the sidelines. I had to get blood drawn all

the time for tests and I had to take really bad tasting medicine" (45-47). These comments suggest Emily's status as middle class through her choice to play sports and her access to health care and medicine in such a way that she had tests performed "all the time."

Political and social issues also help define a rhetorical context in which these preachers form their homiletic identities. Matthew knows that "the car companies are suffering, this economy, the stock market is suffering, the divorce rates is on the rise because of this, and children are suffering. The internet has provided new ways for bullies to harass people and youth through cyberspace. Civil wars are going on around the world and nations are also suffering" (99-101). Chloe outlines the challenges facing the young people in her community:

> [We have] no choice in having a momma or a daddy that are strung out on drugs, alcohol, or gambling so bad that they can't even take care of us. We have no control or no choice having a momma or a daddy that chooses the street life over parent life. We have no control over parents who choose not to spend time with us and love us the way a parent should. We have no control over having a father who wants nothing to do with the children he helped to make. We have no choice in having a father who thinks it's alright to have sex with his son or daughter. (80-86)

Jane Doe displays a particular political knowledge when she admits that she "first started coming to All Saints because of Desmond Tutu. My mother heard from her union that he was speaking" (9-10). Trevor also talks about his knowledge of issues about immigration and health care (55-70). Minister Keith Johnson, in talking about his opposition to gay ministers, recognizes the interaction of a contentious social and religious issue (73-82).

Rhetorical history proves to be a more difficult category to analyze. This is not simply because of the digital nature of these sermons. Admittedly, these sermons are dislocated from their original contexts, which would help establish a longer rhetorical history (particularly over long periods of time within each congregation). This task is

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even more difficult in the contemporary homiletic atmosphere because it is virtually impossible to say that a particular homiletic style is congruent with "a particular locale (say, the Midwest)…a particular style of speech (directness)…[or] a particular group of people (the middle class)."[8] In other words, it is not always appropriate to point to a region or group of people and assume that they will preach in ways that approximate homiletic stereotypes that may have once been largely true in the history of preaching in North America. For example, it may be unexpected that Matthew Sistrunk, an African American in Georgia, does not exhibit the cadences, rhythms, and rhetorical flourish found among many southern African American preachers. But this does not help isolate his rhetorical persona or build a narrative of his rhetorical history.

On the other hand, however, we can say that to some extent denominational identity – whether expressed in the sermon or not – has a controlling interest in the preacher's rhetorical history. Matthew does preach in a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and in a way that one might expect in a large percentage of the (particularly Euro-American) congregations of the Presbyterian Church (USA). And even more, he may exhibit many of the characteristics of the preacher who preaches regularly in that congregation. We simply do not and cannot know that information from this isolated sermon. All of this is to say that none of these sermons achieve what we might call "homiletic dissonance" in the contexts in which they are preached, even with the assumptions we can make from the general surface knowledge obtained about the original contexts. The preacher desires a hearing in the congregation in which he/she is preaching. But we dare not assume that these preachers preach in a certain way by virtue of their gender, ethnic/racial identity, or denomination alone. There simply is not enough

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[8] Hart and Daughton, 213.

information to conduct a complete rhetorical history and, even more importantly, not an environment by which we can establish solid expectations of what we would expect from a preacher by virtue of his/her rhetorical history. Rhetorical history is a more complex picture than we can paint with the details at hand. This remains, however, an important element within the portable form of rhetorical analysis and when possible, research should include thick descriptions of the rhetorical history of those with whom the researcher is interacting. More insight into the speaker's geography, class, education level, and other contextual factors which *might* be suggestive of the context from which youth speak can only serve to give a richer account of the conditions for speaking.

Credibility Devices

These young preachers create credible homiletic identities by a variety of rhetorical methods. Perhaps the most significant of these is through the category of "competence." The ways that some of these preachers establish credibility is fairly typical of many preachers: giving background knowledge for the biblical text under consideration. For instance, Alex D. counters a perceived faulty assumption by saying, "And lest we should think that Jesus was being conceited by expecting these things, it is important to remember the time in which he lived. He was probably walking around all day in sandals, so his feet would have been covered in dirt and grime" (24-26).[9] Similarly, Joshua LaPerriere narrates the story of David and Goliath by commenting on the fundamentals of swords, using a prop: "Now a man's sword is generally proportional to his body. Kind of like this one is proportional to me…Now, I'm like about 5 feet tall, or so, and Goliath is 10 feet tall so twice the size of this sword" (25-28). Jessi even

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[9] This is also an example of a "contrapuntal," which is explored in Buttrick.

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develops a type of dramatic delay by giving information about a biblical character, but waiting to name him specifically (46-58). Their special knowledge about the background of the biblical story on which they are preaching helps to establish them as authorities on the texts which enables them to perform their duties as preacher for their respective congregations.

Others, like Chloe, establish competence by narrating the results of spiritual practices, like her family's prayers (107-132); or by expressing knowledge of martyrdom in the early church like Matthew Sistrunk (108-115); or even more dramatically, by stating God's direct activity in the sermon writing process as with Minister Keith Johnson, who passes on what God has told him (multiple instances).

Another rhetorical phenomenon combines the categories of "competence," "good will," "trustworthiness," and "dynamism" in a negative fashion by constructing a diminished view of the preacher's preparation, sermon writing skill, and/or pulpit presence. Sam Nguyen prays before his sermon that he would not stutter, then does: "Ok, and Mark 16.15, ok…yeah, if you could all turn at all…up…to me…with me. Like I said, stuttering my words" (19-21). As stated above, Katie identifies her sermon by saying, "I wrote this on the bus ride back from my basketball game on Wednesday, so my intro. is a bit lacking. But everyone bear with me and Andy, don't fall asleep this time" (11-13). Christine M. also portrays her sermon as potentially faulty as of first importance for her hearers when she says, "first off, let me just say that ever since AP exams were finished for us seniors way back in May, um, we've been done. And I mean totally done. I haven't written anything or been particularly creative or insightful since then, so you'll have to forgive me if this sermon is a bit boring or unrefined. I'm a bit off stride with

that whole doing work thing" (14-18). It is uncertain exactly what these preachers hope

to accomplish by using this rhetorical convention, but there are a few possibilities: (1) the

device functions to win a sympathetic hearing as the preacher acknowledges that she is

not performing a rhetorical role within the regular rhetorical roles she performs (perhaps

as a way to acknowledge anxiety about taking up this role), (2) the device functions as a

type of false humility, (3) the device functions as a way to differentiate the young

preacher's particular style of preaching from that which is experienced within the

congregation on a regular basis and signals the preacher's awareness of the

congregation's expectations (and thus a preparatory device for transgression of rhetorical

conventions), and/or (4) the device functions as a way for the preacher to establish this

homiletic instance as one that is authentic.[10] Whatever its more discrete function might

be, these rhetorical disclaimers appear at the beginning of the sermons, before the

preacher enters into major sections of preaching, and contributes to an overall sense of

how listeners should perceive the preacher.

These preachers also use a variety of materials to establish credibility. All the

preachers use the physical devices of a pulpit/lectern and some type of written materials

containing either notes or a manuscript. Many use voice amplification through pulpit

microphones, seemingly dependent upon the regular practices of their respective

congregations. Trevor and Jane Doe use Caucasian flesh-colored headset microphones.

Joshua and Alex Beals both use PowerPoint presentations along with their preaching.

Alex D. is the only preacher who wears a clerical garment, choosing an alb for his

preaching attire. Sam Nguyen piles books and papers up high on the pulpit which sets a

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[10] For this final possibility, see Ted A. Smith, *The New Measures : A Theological History of Democratic Practice* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

material contrast of authority to his self-deprecating words about his stuttering. He also

brings up volunteers to demonstrate his "Christmas" sign, which signifies authority and

credibility. Sam is not the only one who uses a prop. When illustrating the story about

David and Goliath, Joshua holds up a plastic sword to demonstrate his knowledge about

swords. The most conspicuous material credibility device is Jessi's use of a translator.

In what seems to be a bi-lingual congregation, Jessi preaches in Spanish while an older

male (perhaps the pastor) translates Jessi's words into English.   While Jessi's preaching

voice and mannerisms are subdued and she stays within the pulpit space, her translator is

mobile and animated as he translates Jessi's sermon. As a result, Jessi's sermon inhabits

two distinct states of embodiment and she is able to communicate with a broader

audience.

Self-References

The key question in terms of self-references at this point is not necessarily what

these young preachers are saying about themselves, but rather if they are talking about

themselves at all and, if so, then how those self-references function. Out of the thirteen

sermons analyzed, ten of the preachers talk about themselves in what I will call

"substantive" ways. By this I mean that the preachers refer to themselves and use their

personal stories in highly developed ways within the sermon. Entire units of thought

within the sermons are dependent upon the preachers' use of self (or, in some cases, the

entire sermon). Two of the preachers (Joshua LaPerriere and Alex Beals) refer to

themselves in what I will call "minimal" ways. By this I mean that the preachers do refer

to themselves, but their developing homiletic identities have negligible impact upon the

sermon as a whole. Only one preacher, Jessi, does not talk about herself, other than very brief moments where she includes herself with the congregation – and always in the first person plural. She engages in what I will call "negligible" use of self-references. Beyond directing action twice in the sermon and her opening and closing prayers, she exhibits an extremely limited role for herself.

Despite how we might categorize the ways these preachers incorporate themselves into their sermons, all of them make theological claims in regard to homiletic identity by the ways that they do so. For those in the substantive category, they all seem to engage the self as a significant site of theological and homiletic reflection and thus a natural partner to the sermon. For those in the minimal category, the self is a part of theological and homiletic reflection, but not in ways that are only tangentially related to the theological conceptualization of the sermon. Personal stories and use of the self are present, but not for any significant purpose. For the negligible category, as is true for Jessi, the self is only present (if at all) to direct the action of the sermon; the authority of theological concepts or the authority of the Bible function in such a way that the self is an insignificant source of theological and homiletic reflection. The predominance of the substantive category will be an important category for the evaluative process, below.

Clusters

In terms of rhetorical clusters, some significant traditional homiletic categories emerge which serve to help form a picture of these preachers' unique homiletic identities. First, however, an admission is needed. At the outset of finding and listening to these sermons, I expected to find that these preachers would often refer to their age in direct

relationship to their homiletic identity. I assumed that many of these preachers would

feel compelled to offer an apology for their role as preachers – that their relatively young

age did not in any way diminish their authority or competence. Much to my surprise,

only one of the thirteen preachers (Chloe) makes a case for her identity as a young

preacher. Her defense is pronounced as she identifies herself in the following ways: "I

come before you with no titles. Not Reverend Chloe, no Preacher Chloe, not Evangelist

Chloe, just Chloe. A vessel. A young vessel, a chosen instrument of God being used as a

messenger for Christ. That's it" (9-11). She is more pointed when she says in relation to

King Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34 that

> Now I'm sure that there was (sic) a lot of gossipers or haters or some church folk
> who were questiononing how an eight year old boy could rule over a nation. And
> right now I bet there are someone (sic) sitting here saying that I am too young to
> get behind this pulpit and give a message. But the people who were bothered by
> this and asked these type of questions were not only questioning Josiah, but
> questioning God. God does not need our help or guidance or our permission on a
> decision he is going to make or who he chooses to use. (37-43)

Chloe articulates both a highly developed biblical typology and theology about God's call

which she uses to defend her preaching. This, however, is not typical of the preachers,

contrary to what I had expected.[11]

As stated above, while I expected to see much more of this kind of typological

argument as a cluster among these preachers, Chloe was the only example among these

sermons. Related, however, were a number of clusters about the honor it brought some

of the preachers to be preaching and the use of language of gratitude about preaching

somewhere during the sermon. Emily Baird opens her sermon by saying, "We're very

thankful to be here with you this morning. It's an honor to be involved in the weekend in

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[11] This may be (consciously or unconsciously) because the preachers make use of other types of credibility
devices within the rhetoric of their sermons or because they feel confident enough in their settings so that
such a defense is not necessary.

such a huge way" (8-9). Likewise, Trevor opens by saying, "It is my honor to be

speaking here before you today…" (8). He also ends his sermon by saying "thank you,"

as do Katie, Matthew Sistrunk, and Jane Doe. Matthew Sistrunk thanks the congregation

for their attendance on youth Sunday (12-13). These rhetorical conventions portray

speakers that either (1) are not accustomed to having the attention of such public (adult)

audiences, (2) unreflectively affix "thank you" to the end of public discourse, (3) have a

minimal sense of homiletic authority, and/or (4) feel compelled to gloss the significance

they perceive to be in the homiletic moment. Others (Christine M, Alex D, Jessi)

conclude their sermons by saying "Amen," which suggests that they either perceive their

respective homiletic moments differently than the others or that they engage in an equally

uncritical rhetorical convention as a way of concluding their sermon. The differences in

these comments may connote different senses of authority within homiletic identity. For

those who say "thank you," they may derive some part of their homiletic authority from

the perceived attention of the listeners while those who say "amen" may view themselves

as having more implicit homiletic authority.

Other rhetorical clusters that help construct homiletic identity were present. The

most significant of these clusters reveal what is variously called "purposes of preaching,"

"images of the preacher," or "images of preaching identity."[12] Each preacher's cluster

establishes an embedded construction that details the preacher's identity which contains

the purpose(s) of preaching and an operative theology of preaching.

Re-visiting the above discussion of Chloe's cluster, we find that Chloe views

herself with a minimal sense of agency, as she claims "no titles" for herself and prays for

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[12] See Jana Childers, *Purposes of Preaching* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2004); Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, Ky.: Louisville, Ky. : Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Reid, ed.

a homiletic transparency in order for the congregation to "see" God. Additionally, she sees herself as a "vessel" who delivers God's "message." With only a few indicators Chloe develops an unambiguous conception of preaching where she is chosen by God to deliver a message to the congregation.[13] It is curious, however, that Chloe makes use of a number of personal stories and testimonial moments, despite her prayerful request to be transparent. Chloe either does not believe that these two types of theological rhetoric are mutually exclusive, or she violates her principle of transparency (being a "vessel") for the more rhetorically and theologically powerful stories about herself.

Emily Baird makes a similar claim, though rather than transparency, she hopes to act as a conduit as demonstrated by her prayer, "Please speak through my peers and myself today" (13). In fact, she depicts God's role as highly active in the gathering of the people, in giving the preachers permission to preach, and by attributing to God the capacity for people to leave the church service as different than how they arrived. She prays, "Dear Lord, thank you for bringing everyone here today and allowing us to preach your word…Let everyone here leave changed because of your impact on our lives" (12-14). God performs a dynamic role in the homiletic event, from beginning to end, but God is invited to use Emily and her peers for preaching as they engage in "speaking about Psalm 139" (8-9).

Minister Keith Johnson has a more highly developed sense of God's agency within the pre-delivery sermon process – one that likely has roots in his Pentecostal Holiness tradition. Keith depicts the pre-delivery process as a dynamic conversation between himself and God. God is clearly the source of the sermon, as Keith says, "I give

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[13] It is curious, however, that Chloe makes use of a number of personal stories/testimonial moments. It will be necessary to ask if these two are mutually exclusive or contradictory in the evaluative section below.

you what the Lord has given me" (8) and "And the subject that the Lord gave me on today – he said – going forth in the beauty of holiness" (21). In fact the phrase, "He said," (referring to God's speaking to Keith) appears numerous times. But Keith is not solely an ecstatic receiver of God's message. In a manner reminiscent of characters of the Hebrew Bible, Keith asks questions of clarification of the message, such as "And, and as I was before the Lord, before I came to preach, the Lord was just speaking to me then and he said, 'This message – he said, I want you to go and preach on the battlefront.' So I said, 'Lord, what does that mean?' He said…" (61-64). In addition to serving as a credibility device, Keith establishes this pattern of dialogue with God as a firm sense of homiletic identity. Keith is the messenger of God, but his preaching also engages in a cosmic struggle with the powers of evil as when he says, "There's something else that the Lord shared with me. And the enemy is trying to snatch it from my mind, trying to make me forget it. But, but, the Lord was speaking to me. The Lord was speaking to me. And the enemy, he's trying to take it, he's trying to take. But it's there, and I thank God for it" (108-111). As the preacher, Keith stands in the midst of a homiletic moment where God and "the enemy" are engaged in a struggle for the preacher's message.

In contradistinction to Chloe and Minister Keith Johnson, Katie expresses God's relative distance from the pre-delivery sermon process as part of her preaching identity. As she collapses the sermon-writing event with knowledge about her personal future she says, "God, however, did not give me a scroll – not for my sermon or for my future. Instead, God has given me a pen and a blank piece of paper. But he hasn't left me alone to write it myself" (49-51). Here Katie describes a partnership with God in the sermon-writing process. Katie is neither the recipient of God's completed message filtered

through her experience (Chloe) nor the ecstatic recipient of God's message (Keith). Instead, she engages in a type of compositional partnership between herself, God, the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus. Katie admits a significant amount of human involvement in the sermon. And if we are to follow her construction to its logical conclusion, the sermon and its writer will inevitably make mistakes, though God's presence will be a constant (59-63).

Matthew Sistrunk mediates a double sense of agency. After the lector reads the Gospel reading for the day from the book of Matthew, Matthew says "I'm glad she said that the word comes from Matthew because I didn't know whether she was talking about me or the Lord. Either one is accurate" (10-11). Although Matthew intends the statement as a humorous opening statement, he provides an entrée into his homiletic identity as a co-producer of "the word." Not only is the biblical text derived from God as "the word," but Matthew also believes that "the word" is present within his preaching.

Joshua LaPerriere asserts his homiletic identity in specific relation to the biblical text, rather than God, as he says to his congregation, "So what I want to convey to you guys tonight is pretty much, 'We must win spiritual victories for the glory of God'" (40-41). Joshua sees his function as preacher as one who "conveys" a propositional truth. Like his preaching partner, Alex Beals does not differ from Joshua. In fact he sees himself in continuity with him: "Josh has already given the reason why we must win spiritual victories for the glory of God, but I have a couple more" (8-9). Additionally, Alex repeatedly describes the relationship between sermon ideas, text, and congregation as a process of "seeing." For instance, Alex says, "We see that we must win spiritual victories…because of the effect it will have" (37-38); "We see that in verse ten…" (56);

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"So generations later after David's victories we can see that those victories…" (60);
"Here's a profound was to see how important this is" (61); "So you see that there are
many effects to the decisions…" (65-66). Alex conceives of his function as preacher to
help the congregation come to new realizations and new courses of action through
exposing the truths of the text. For both Joshua and Alex, the biblical text functions
almost autonomously. The preacher's job is to help relay the text's truths (reason-giving)
to the congregation so that they will frame the text correctly, comprehend the force of the
text, and subsequently live it out.

Sam Nguyen sees himself in a similar way to Joshua and Alex Beals, but rather
than reason-giving, he understands himself as a teacher by way of his role as conduit.
For Sam, "it's not by me that this lesson's being produced, it's by you God. And I pray
that you would speak through me…" (9-10). He concludes his sermon by praying that
"everyone in the teen group and me myself has learned something from this, uh, sermon,
O God" (173-174). Sam includes himself as a potential recipient of the lessons provided
by God through the sermon, along with the rest of the listeners. An additional facet of
Sam's self-concept in preaching is his attempt to summarize near the conclusion of his
sermon: "I know we're growing short on time so these are my main points. Ok?" (131)
After this declaration, Sam does not deliver one or even a series of "main points," but
rather continues speaking in a dialogical form. How do we account for Sam's homiletic
(self-) violation? While Sam's sermon organization or conceptual process may have
broken down, or Sam's nervousness or sense of time may have interfered with his ability
to name his main points, it is more plausible that Sam never intended to communicate
"main points" in the first place. While Sam may come from a homiletic community that

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expects points, Sam's communication style within the entire sermon never suggests that "points" will be verbalized. It is likely that Sam knows the rules of his homiletic community, and even acknowledges this one particular expectation, but violates it because it is not integrated with his own homiletic logic. Instead of preaching with points, Sam exhibits a dialogical communication style throughout the sermon.

Alex D also sees himself as a teacher, but does not see himself as a conduit. Finding a congruency between the character in the biblical text and those in the congregation, he "suggest[s] that we may garner two brief lessons" (15). As a part of his teaching, he points to places where he "can identify with this lesson" (35), which in effect (1) strengthens the lesson he is trying to teach and (2) suggests at least the possibility that listeners can find their own points of congruency between their lives, the biblical text, and the lesson derived from the biblical text.

Alex D's preaching partner, Christine M., acknowledges that her preaching is, at least in part, judged by a congregational standard. She preemptively asks for the congregation's forgiveness for her sermon by admitting, "I haven't written anything or been particularly creative or insightful…so you'll have to forgive me if this sermon is a bit boring or unrefined" (15-17). Recognizing that the congregation is a partial judge of the sermon, but a potentially forgiving one, Christine M. develops a homiletic identity that shares in relationship with the congregation. For Christine M., homiletic identity is somewhat based on pre-determined congregational expectation (whether this is real or perceived is unclear). And for her congregation, those expectations center on the sermon's capacity to (1) entertain and/or hold attention and (2) exhibit characteristics of written and oral refinement. The congregation also provides the kind of environment

where a young person can inhabit the space for preaching. She admits, "I honestly can

say that I would not be here today if it were not for all of you" (67). Christine also

recognizes that her sermon "is based on" a biblical text (20). For Christine, the biblical

text provides the foundation for the sermon, but written and delivered in a context where

the conventions of the sermon are shaped by congregational expectation.

Trevor views his homiletic identity as even more relational with the congregation

than the others analyzed thus far. He understands his task to be "sharing with you my

journey at All Saints" (8-9). While his comments about homiletic identity are limited to

this one statement, Trevor understand his role as one who is sharing his religious

experience rather than "speaking," or "giving a message," "preaching," or even

characterizing himself as a "vessel" or conduit. While this statement does not draw out a

theology of the word, it does show that Trevor conceives of his authority as symmetrical:

he is not delivering a message from God, but engaging in the act of "sharing." This

image connotes images of preaching as giving out of one's possessions for the benefit of

others.[14]

Finally, as identified in the section on self-references above, Jessi seems to

develop the least sense of homiletic identity through clusters in her sermon. Aside from

her opening statement where she names the sermon, Jessi only makes two references to

her homiletic activity. First, she indicates sermonic movement when she says, "Now

we're going to talk about the experience of the man of extreme change" (46-47).

Second, she says, "We're going to analyze a little bit the way man offers extreme change

and then the way God offers extreme change" (78-79). Though sparse, Jessi's two

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[14] Trevor's homiletic identity seems to share affinities with testimonial approaches to homiletics. See
Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*; Rose.

comments suggest that she conceives of her role as leading the congregation through a process of analysis with discernible moments along the way.

The analytical tools here begin to give a picture of how these preachers perform homiletic identity. The facets of preliminary rhetorical role, self-references, and clusters provide tools for understanding the various ways in which they self-identify as participants within a homiletic community. In order to understand further how they perform another related dimension of identity, we will now look at how the preachers perform Christian identity.

Christian Identity

The second movement in interpreting these sermons entails exploring the development of Christian identity through pentadic/dramatistic analysis and metaphor criticism. The preachers form concepts of traditional themes constitutive of Christian identity which emerge in their sermons. I will first examine how these preachers mediate Christian identity through pentadic/dramatic structures with dominant elements, then how they construct metaphors that conceptualize Christian identity.

Pentads/Dramatistic Structures

Among the thirteen preachers, none of the pentadic structures were replicated, though as we will see, there are some similarities between pentads. Each of the preachers implicitly assigns a variety of elements to pentadic roles, with different elements rising to the fore as dominant.

For Katie, God is the dominant element in the pentad as the agent. Her pentad also heavily features the act, which for Katie is God's act of giving (the pen and paper, Bible, Holy Spirit, Jesus, comfort, guidance, and help). She describes Christian identity as a relationship between God, who gives out of God's concern for humanity in the form of love and forgiveness (God's agency), and humanity. God's action takes place on the scene of the lives of believers, who experience difficulty in knowing what they are supposed to do with their lives. Katie's sermon serves the rhetorical purpose of voicing a human problem and speaking God's assurances of presence in the midst of that difficulty. As the speaker, Katie acts as a representative of both the congregation's vocational (and here the fullest sense of that word is intended) confusion and God's assurance of presence.

In Minister Keith Johnson's sermon, God is also clearly the agent who acts by speaking and showing through the authority given to Keith (agency). While the agent is the most dominant, act, agency, and purpose are highly integrated as Keith hopes to convince the congregation to live in the way of holiness. While the scene is not a dominant factor, it is the place of a highly stratified view of social activity. There is a clear demarcation by God through Keith that there are acts that are in keeping with the call to holiness, and some that are unclean which violates the church's call to holiness. The scene is the place where the church accepts God's call to holiness. In terms of Christian identity, Keith presents a picture where God clearly speaks to the church, commanding holiness in a world that is not holy (36-40). With God as the strong agent, the faithful can continue to count on God to present a clear message to the world through the Bible and the preacher.

For Emily Baird, God is also the agent who acts by allowing preaching to take place, who speaks through preachers and who "knows me," "never makes mistakes," "loves me," "is in control," "has my back," "protects me," "has a plan," surrounds, and is always with Emily. All this happens on a few scenes: Emily's tumultuous growing up, the life of Moses, and the experience of the Psalmist. God is the dominant, eulogized agent, but God's agency is undeveloped and implied rather than stated outright. God conceivably acts out of the resources of God's own power and foreknowledge, but again, this is unstated. The purpose is muted as well. Emily speaks largely in a testimonial fashion, and thus implies that the truth in her life that God is a consistent presence is also true for others. She does pray to God to "Let everyone here leave changed because of your impact on our lives" (13-14). Christian identity in Emily's pentad is entirely dependent upon God's activity in the lives of human beings, even amidst confusion about God's activity and God's plan for individuals.

Trevor articulates a strong local ecclesiology as his pentad makes All Saints' church the dominant agent. All Saints acts by giving consolation and opportunities on the scene of Trevor's life. The agency in this pentad is muted, but is present as All Saints is credited as being an example of God and by being one of God's miracles. Purpose is muted as well as his intention seems only to be to share his journeys with the listeners, rather than persuading them to believe or act in some fashion. An interesting dynamic exists in the way this pentad works, however. As All Saints is the dominant eulogistic element in the pentad, Trevor could just as easily substitute his life for any other person's life as a scene on which the agent works. While Trevor does not necessarily invite listeners to make this substitution, the arrangement and function of the pentad allows for

the possibility. This means that for Trevor, Christian identity is formed by a strong, benevolent institutional agent and that as a result, listeners can feel proud of this institution and insert their own lives as a scene upon which this agent performs.

Jane Doe's pentad also takes on a dominant agent and a distinctly ecclesiological focus. But Jane takes on the dominant role in the pentad as the agent who acts by telling listeners about what God means to her. She demonstrates this by virtue of her church attendance, her relationships with those in the church, and by her theological questioning (agency). All of this serves the purpose of revealing how she found God to be present in her life and to show others that they can/will experience a similar presence. This takes an ecclesiological focus through the scene of All Saints' church and its life together. Whereas other preachers have focused on biblical texts to accomplish their purpose, or have specifically focused on their personal religious experiences apart from religious institutions, Jane uses the life of her congregation to carry out her purpose. While agent and agency work in tandem to provide a strong sense of meaningful action, the scene serves as a positive, eulogistic term that aids the agent and act. The development of a local ecclesiology where programs, relationships, and atmosphere provide the conditions for her to come to faith supports the agent and act. For Jane, Christian identity comes from involvement in a scene unmistakably identified as the local church. It is on this scene that Jane finds the proper conditions for one to come to faith out of an experience of no faith.

Alex D.'s sermon features a dominant agent as well, but in a very different way than those examined above. For Alex, the text/the woman in the text takes the dominant position as the agent in the pentad. As a paradigmatic character, she teaches lessons to

and challenges those who already follow Jesus (act) by points of intersection between the text and real life (agency). This occurs as Alex draws out details surrounding the text and relevant details about his own life (scene) with the purpose of inviting listeners to become more and more like the woman in the biblical text. Alex determines that Christian identity is derived from the character of biblical figures. Functioning in this manner, the biblical text takes on an active speaking role unlike any of the other preachers thus far. Indeed Alex says, "I believe it [this text] speaks even more to those who already follow him" (9). The text is active to such a high degree that it is able to address different types of audiences of its own volition. The text produces lessons which shape the nature of Christian identity; namely that (1) people of faith are to be humble and (2) that salvation comes only by the kind of faith the woman displays.

Unlike the previous preachers, the scene dominates Jessi's pentad, where change is a constant in the world. Some of this change as a part of the human condition is good and some of it is bad, but the nature of change desired in the Christian life is that of "extreme change," which is typified by Nicodemus. The kind of change Jessi advocates is "a reform or a new lifestyle" (76) which is offered by a rather weak-acting (in terms of the pentad) picture of two agents: God and human beings. As Jessi says, "God's way is…a commitment realized between God and man" (84-87). As Jessi advocates for extreme change (purpose), she continues by saying "extreme change is only possible when our weakness and our will unites with the powerful will of God" (94-95). The purpose is accomplished (1) by the agency of a unification of wills and (2) by more fully understanding the example set by someone like Nicodemus. As the scene of change is ubiquitous, the agent(s) are left with a rather open choice: allow normal changes to occur

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in one's life or choose a more extreme change, which characterizes the identity of Christians. Christian identity is dependent upon choosing to unite with God for the purpose of extreme change.

Matthew Sistrunk's pentad functions in a similar fashion to Jessi, where the scene is most dominant. The scene for Matthew, who is the agent, is suffering in the world and the act is narrating that suffering by the examples he uses: Jodee's life, a soccer player in Brazil, early Christian martyrs, Jaheem, and other less specific situations. He cites the relevancy of persecution and suffering as a driving force behind why he is narrating this scene. As the narration of the scene(s) of suffering become more and more dominant, the intended purpose of encouraging those who are persecuted becomes quite muted. In fact, even though "when we are persecuted, we are brought closer to God," (137) suffering becomes even more prevalent in the believers' lives as "we will be marked by society" (143). Only briefly and at the end does Matthew offer his full rhetorical purpose: "I'm here to tell you that no matter what you go through no matter what persecutions you go through that you are not alone. And Christ will be with you. And that the people sitting right next to you will be with you" (184-186). This purpose is not only muted by its limited size and scope within the sermon, but also by the way Matthew narrates the career successes of Jodee, the author he uses as an example. By championing her career successes, Matthew suggests that perseverance through trials leads to personal fulfillment rather than the presence of Christ and the Christian community. In terms of forming a coherent drama of Christian identity, Matthew clearly presents a picture where suffering is a given in the life of faith, but its resolution functions in a rhetorically confused way (presence of Christ and faith community vs. upward mobility).

Joshua LaPerriere's sermon exhibits a different type of dominant scene. He develops a relationship to the biblical text in terms of agent and act within the pentad. He is the agent who acts by pointing out a particular verse within a biblical text and using its implications to convey the idea "We must win spiritual victories for the glory of God" (41). He does not act out of the agency of his own experience, but rather the text provides the rationale for the act. This type of agency is implied, rather than stated outright. Agency implicates the life of the biblical character David as the scene, which is the dominant element. The life of David provides the narrative and logic that support the act, agency, and purpose. Joshua's act within the pentad runs parallel to the purpose of convincing the listeners that they too should win spiritual victories for the glory of God. In light of Joshua's pentad, Christian identity is formed as humanity imitates the rational principles that emerge from the biblical text. The contours of Christian identity are conveyed by a clear act and purpose and are demonstrable through a propositional type of preaching supported by the scene of the biblical text.

Alex Beals and Joshua preach on the same theme. Despite their overwhelming similarities and sharing scene as the dominant element, however, Alex does not develop the same pentad in his sermon. These two do share the same components of agent, act, and purpose: Alex is the agent, his act is to narrate the reasons why listeners must win spiritual victories for the glory of God, and his purpose is to convince the listeners why they must do so. Rather than the text serving as the agency, however, Alex implies that the ability to "see," show cause/effect, and give reasons for the abstract principle are the means by which the act and purpose (since they are closely related) are accomplished. The scene, the dominant component in the pentad, generally consists of the places that

show an intersection between the reasons that Alex gives (for winning spiritual victories) and life. He gives the examples of Pastor Lee's life, the results of Christopher Columbus' journey in 1492, Middle Eastern history, and the hypothetical situation of the relationship with a "buddy." The biblical texts that Alex uses function in a similar way. The biblical texts are important, but they are a part of a larger corpus of scenes which are referenced to accomplish the purpose. They are used because the abstract principle is true, not because the text demands the principle (which is how the biblical text functions for Joshua). Alex's pentad demonstrates that Christian identity operates under the direction of propositional truths that are corroborated by instances in the Bible and in real life.

Chloe's sermon lifts up a directed course of action specifically and repeatedly – her listeners should choose to serve God and "do the right thing" with their lives. In doing so, she features purpose as the dominant piece of the pentad. This purpose is intended to be acted out on four specific scenes: (1) the life of the church as a whole, both women and men – "But don't we have these problems in the church?" (47), (2) the lives of young people – "Now to the young people – those of us who are still being raised by our parents, aunt, uncles, or grandmothers – or still just under the responsibility of someone" (66-67), (3) the lives of older people – "Now to the older generation in the house" (134), and (4) is also shown as an example in Chloe's own life. Though Chloe is clearly the agent and her own homiletical/rhetorical act parallels the purpose she prescribes, these two features of the pentad largely fade into the background after her initial comments.[15] Agency is more difficult to distinguish. Whether Chloe and the

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[15] It is not unusual in many of these sermons that components of the Christian identity as analyzed through this lens collapses into homiletic identity as well, often making the two almost indistinguishable.

congregation enact the call to being used by God by virtue of free will/human choice, God's empowerment, or a combination of both, agency is a feature used frequently, but not carefully defined in Chloe's pentad. Purpose and scene are dominant and Chloe identifies choosing to serve God in all stages of life, regardless of the conditions surrounding one's life, as an identifying marker of what it means to be a Christian.

For Sam Nguyen, Christian identity is also difficult, but is decidedly not popular. Here the act is the dominant component of the pentad, but it is closely related to the purpose: to communicate the difficulty of being a Christian and bearing witness to others, but also to encourage that God is present. Taking on a Christian identity is a difficult life choice and those who do so should not expect to live the life of faith with ease. Sam functions as the agent whose act is to communicate the struggle in the Christian mission. The difficulty in the Christian life is borne out on the scene of being a Christian at school. And while the scene does not function as a dominant, it serves as the ground which makes the act and purpose take on a symbolically significant role for Sam's audience. School performs a dyslogicstic function within the pentad as it serves as the scene on which Sam's audience will be outcasts and rejected because of their faith. They cannot expect that the Christian message will be met with success among their peers. In fact, they should expect to be rejected.

Christine M. also develops a sense of Christian identity where the act dominates. Understanding the biblical text rightly corrects faulty assumptions about fundamental religious concepts (in this case, the nature of sin and forgiveness). Although Christine preaches on the same biblical text as Alex D., and does so in the same congregation, she develops a different pentad. Rather than the biblical text acting with a tremendous

amount of dominance, Christine acts as the agent who (1) corrects faulty assumptions about what the text is saying and (2) discovers what Jesus is saying in order to replace those preliminary assumptions. Christine's agency functions largely through personal testimony which automatically implicates her life as the scene where this drama unfolds. Through her concluding sentence, Christine shows that her purpose is to encourage the congregation to have the type of bravery to ask for forgiveness exhibited by the woman in the text. The subjunctive, "I pray that we may all have such bravery," (78) and its rhetorical limitation mutes Christine's purpose. She uses her own life experiences to point to the truths she uncovers in the biblical text, effectively showing that Christian identity can be nurtured out of the biblical narrative.

While the bulk of the evaluative process will take place below, it is important to note briefly at this juncture that none of the preachers feature agency as the dominant element in their structuring of Christian identity. In doing so, all the preachers make a distinctive claim about what Christian identity is *not*. Foss points out that Burke correlates dominant pentadic elements with philosophical schools. In pentads that are dominated by agency, pragmatism emerges as the controlling philosophical school.[16] Since agency does not define any one preacher's pentad, or the group of preachers as a whole, for this group of preachers Christian identity does not function in, or center around, a strictly instrumentalized way of correlating thought, identity, action, and its consequences. We now turn to the ways metaphors function in conceiving Christian identity.

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[16] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism : Exploration & Practice*, 389.

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Metaphors

Though treated separately, the pentadic elements each preacher constructs are not unrelated to the metaphors they develop. Within the pentadic structures, each preacher develops metaphors that help them conceive symbol systems which describe the members of the Trinity, the Bible, the church, the self, the Christian life, sin, and/or the relationships among all of these. Because some of the metaphors are highly integrative of a number of those components, we will treat them on a preacher-by-preacher basis in the same order as the pentadic/dramatistic analysis.

God's rhetorical role as agent and God's act are tightly connected to Katie's development of the metaphor for God as a sort of benevolent editor. Katie borrows the details of the text and turns it into a metaphor for the relationship between the faithful person and God (an uninformed use of the anagogical sense of scripture). God gives the implements for writing one's life (pen and paper/scroll) and reference materials to help write one's life: God's own presence, the Bible for guidance, the Holy Spirit for comfort, and Jesus for forgiveness. Because some of humanity's writing will need to be corrected, added to, and amended, God is present through the writing process – not as a ghost writer or heavy-handed editor – but rather as a helpful presence for the moments when a way forward in one's life does not make sense. Those corrections are extended into the metaphor through saying that "We're going to have to cross things out on our scrolls, maybe even start a new paragraph" (61). Life's mistakes and courses of actions are likened to editorial decisions. Katie displays a Trinitarian conception of how God works in the midst of an uncertain future (scene). The future is not pre-determined by God, but God's presence is assured as God promises to equip her as she "writes" her life,

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regardless of success or failure. Katie exhibits an ability to develop this metaphor as a significant operative theology that directs courses of action for herself and her congregation.

With Keith's highly differentiated scene, it is not surprising that his metaphors lend themselves toward displaying opposition between God and other forces in the world. Keith extends the language of "prevailing" from Matthew 16 when he says "We shall go forth in the beauty of holiness because anything that the Lord does shall prevail…So whatever God has set forth to do, it shall prevail – and I thank God for it" (38-40). In keeping with this, he also says "we don't have to worry about any lion or any ravenous beast coming before us to hinder us because he said we're going for in the beauty of holiness" (52-54). The oppositional metaphors intensify as Keith relays his conversation with God: "And, and as I was before the Lord, before I came to preach, the Lord was just speaking to me then and he said, 'This message – he said, I want you to go and preach on the battlefront.' So I said, 'Lord, what does this mean?' He said, as I'm preaching, he said, 'I want' – he want me to stay down here for most of the time…because he said, 'You cannot intimidate the people of God, so you cannot choke the word of God" (61-67). While Keith's thoughts are a bit scattered, he makes the case that coming down from the pulpit and to the congregational level is engaging in a battle at the site of the most significant activity. In other words, preacher and congregation are engaged not in a mere activity of speaking and listening, but preaching participates in a larger, hostile conflict. The preacher runs the risk of both "choking," or distorting the word of God and being intimidated. Additionally, the "enemy" tries to "snatch" what the Lord has shared with Keith for the congregation (108-112) and "the word of God" is "going to tear down

every stronghold that's coming up against the standard of holiness" (165-167). According to the related metaphors that Keith develops, Christian identity and vocation, are involved in a larger cosmic struggle.

Emily also identifies a differentiated, even oppositional sphere through metaphors that describe self and others. She places her functioning pentad into metaphor by setting up what we will call the "self as a picture." Emily's own former self-perception as "overweight and nerdy…It was pretty bad. Also I had the red hair, freckles, braces – it was just not a pretty picture" (21-24). As she ages she comes to a realization "about the hypocrisy of trying to please the world and how people *view others*" (39-40). Emily shows that individuals conceive of themselves as a type of composition that encounters the self-reflexive gaze of the individual as well as the gaze of other people. Emily's self-conception and her understanding of how others judged her as picture show a diminished evaluation of her life story, and her physical appearance in particular. As a picture, she was not aesthetically pleasing.

Emily leaves this metaphor at this point and begins to establish other metaphors around the nature of God and God's relation to herself. God functions twice as more than a stranger: "God knows me" (42, 68). God functions as divine figure who engages in a relationship measured by distance when Emily says that she "tried to run away from God" (42); "He has my back" (70); "God is surrounding me, he's always with me" (77). God is also the perfect divine planner/creator when she describes God as incapable of making mistakes; her experience of "letting him give me a bigger plan like the one he gave for Moses" (58-59); and explaining, "I love myself for who God has made me to be" (74). Emily describes a Christian identity shaped not by the picture she or others

have of herself, but rather by understanding herself in light of the God who is perceived as close and perfect in planning/forming the created order.

Trevor's main use of figures of speech comes by way of using "All Saints" as metonymy.[17] As he recalls the instance of his father's illness he says, "We went straight from the hospital to the church and it was so great to have All Saints here for comfort when there was no other forms of it around" (41-42). Here Trevor clearly does not refer to every member of the congregation or the building, but most likely refers to certain members, groups, or clergy as representatives of All Saints as a collective whole. In the same way that Trevor uses All Saints to describe his experience of a place of comfort, he also uses it as a benefactor when he says, "All Saints has truly been the greatest example of God and one of his miracles in action" (83) and "All Saints is the greatest miracle God has ever given me" (91). Again, Trevor uses All Saints to refer to certain programs, particular groups, and members of the clergy staff to talk about how he perceives God to have gifted him through his time at the church.

He transitions in and out of the metonymy by using metaphor when he says, "When a home was broken, I was given a new one here with the most welcoming inhabitants I have ever known" (84-85). Here Trevor refers to the congregation as a family system where he feels welcome. By using metonymy and metaphor to describe the church, Trevor forms a picture of Christian identity where the church acts as a benevolent caregiver. Trevor finds a new home in All Saints, which is viewed with increasing importance through his life. The congregation acts as an anthropomorphized giver of psychic/emotional consolation and opportunities that have equipped him to help

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[17] Although metonymy is not metaphor, it does function in a similar way: conceiving of one thing in terms of another.

cause change. As God's miracle given to Trevor, the church testifies to God's presence in the midst of his life. Christian identity is formed by a strong local ecclesiology for Trevor. The church does not just provide an environment with the right conditions as it does for Jane Doe; it functions as a powerful, active agent.

Giving a defense of what God means to her, Jane develops a number of metaphors around the concept of a relationship with God. Jane speaks about her relationship with God as one of measurable proximity. She says, "there were two outstanding events that really helped me *get close to God*" (27-28); "I really had to figure out *where I was at with God*" (40-41); and "God will be *in my rearview mirror*" (58). The last statement combines the metaphor of relationship with God as one of measurable proximity with the metaphor of relationship with God as exploratory journey/expedition. She identifies a beginning to her "journey of faith" (16); recounts "the first time I was able to really *explore* what God was and how he was affecting my life" (31-32); says of her confirmation that "I was promising *to continue with my journey of faith no matter where it takes me*" (52-53). God operates in this metaphor as a travel companion on a trip that is in new territory and has no certain or known destination. She also inserts the proximity and journey metaphors into a metaphor where she envisions her relationship with God as one of a simultaneous gamble and safe bet, saying "The most important thing I learned on that retreat was that with God, *you have to take chances*. You have to take that *leap of faith in order to get anywhere*. But don't worry, because *God will always catch you*. He may let you fall for a bit, but *he will always catch you* before you go splat on the sidewalk" (35-36). As someone admittedly new to Christian faith, Jane identifies herself in a relationship with God that takes on a number of different metaphorical descriptors.

As she narrates her journey in the life of the church, she is able to communicate the various ways that her doctrine of God has changed. For Jane, Christian identity is an open process of a developing relationship with God and the church provides the environment for that relationship.

As Trevor and Jane's pentad and metaphors develop around the church, Alex D's pentad is reinforced through his use of metaphors in conjunction with the biblical text. Not only is the text personified by speaking, it "tells" (10), provides a challenge (53), and also functions agriculturally as fertile vegetation from which Alex's listeners may "garner" lessons. Faith is conceived with two strong metaphors as well. Faith that demonstrates humility functions like a magnet as it has the capacity to "serve to draw others to Christ" (32-33). Alex describes the faith of the woman who attended the bible study, saying that she "truly reflected the love of Christ" (40). Here the faith of an individual functions as mirror which reflects the image of Christ. Like Emily, Alex also conceives of the relationship between God and believer as one of proximity. The woman at the Bible study "seemed as if she had dwelled at the feet of Jesus" (44-45); the text challenges believers "to continue to approach Jesus" (53-54); Alex's morning prayer "puts God before me at the start of the day" (58); and the faithful always have the potential to "continually come to Jesus" (61) and "grow closer to Christ ourselves" (66). Functioning alongside the pentad, Alex's metaphors tell a story of Christian identity in which a strong relationship exists between biblical text, believer, faith, and the believer's relationship with God. The text provides a living, speaking example of how believers can have the kind of faith that Jesus praised in the woman, thereby decreasing the perceived relational distance between God and the believer.

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While Jessi's pentad functions in a weak fashion when compared to some of the others, she does develop some strong metaphors around Christian identity. Most notably, she develops "extreme change" as a metaphor of a contract or business transaction. Jessi compares "the way man (sic) *offers* extreme change and the way God *offers* extreme change" (78-79). Change first comes to humans as a kind of sales pitch from a representative. Characterizing God's offer, she says, "God's way is *always free*. It's always *simple* and it's always *easy*. But even though it's simple, easy, and free, they have *conditions that are non-negotiable*" (84-86). Jessi's metaphor begins with the Christian life as a choice between two "sales pitches," but the metaphor intensifies as she describes choosing God's way as simultaneously undemanding and accepted on inflexible terms. Jessi develops Christian identity as a contractual choice between two ways with the conditions of the agreement set by God.

Jessi also explores metaphors for Christian spirituality through her analysis of Nicodemus. She says of Nicodemus, "Observing Jesus and the way that he talked and walked *opened up* and *woke up* the curiosity of Nicodemus" (70-71). In using Nicodemus as an example for Christian spirituality, she proposes two quick metaphors for appropriate Christian spirituality. First, Nicodemus' curiosity operates much like a container, as it was "opened up" by proximity to Jesus. By this Jessi indicates that Nicodemus' capacity to be filled by what Jesus has to offer is made more accessible. Secondly, Jessi proposes the metaphor of spirituality as a condition of sleep. While Nicodemus was ostensibly once asleep, observation of Jesus' actions supplies the necessary action to bring Nicodemus to a situation of spiritual wakefulness. Openness

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and being awake quickly supply Jessi with two metaphors for lifting up Nicodemus as a paragon of Christian spirituality.

Matthew also develops a number of metaphors that explore the life of faith. He articulates the life of faith as a function of (1) proximity to God and (2) focusing vision. He says, "Believe it or not, when we are persecuted, we are brought closer to God. Our eyes are taken off what society deems is important and put on him and his purpose. Our world gets a lot smaller when we realize that it's just us and him" (138-139). Despite its appearance, Christian persecution results in closer proximity to God. But Christian identity functions best only when the individual is able to rightly affix her eyes. Earlier, Matthew says of those who died as a result of persecution that "they lived life and with their eyes firmly (inaudible) on Christ and they died knowing that they lived with him" (118-119). When the field of vision is in its proper place, a function of relationality to God, an appropriate perspective also takes place as the world decreases its proportion.

He also extends the biblical metaphor that comes from the text for the day, Matthew 5.10-12. By way of entering the text, Matthew takes up the idea of the Christian life as having rewards, but extends the metaphor through a type of cost analysis when he says that "Christians in the early church have had to suffer terrible *penalties* for being followers of Christ" (108-109). These Christian martyrs "to the fullest gave him everything" (120). And in analyzing that cost, "A day in his presence is *worth* everything. And the peace we feel in his presence, the love he freely gives and the forgiveness he shares with us are daily *worth* the persecution" (123-125). The Christian life is described as one which exhibits a type of cost analysis along the lines of risk/reward and whether there is an equal or even surplus value for one's own risks.

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In relaying how the details of the biblical text exert a force in one's life, Joshua develops the metaphor of stories as water. He says, "Anyways, but, often times we would read a story like that and not realize *the ripple effect* that it has in people's lives. That sword that was a symbol of victory that day is brought up in several different places throughout the Old Testament. Each time the sword is brought up, which symbolizes the first victory, it's used as an inspiration or stepping stone, if you will, to win the next victory" (29-33). Joshua believes that, like the sword in the biblical text, acts performed by individual Christians as symbols of Christian accomplishment can influence the lives of others in the future. This particular story/symbol acted like a stone dropped into water and so can the acts of individual Christians. As a result, Christian identity takes on the character of having an energetic force through time.

In a related fashion, Joshua also develops the metaphor of the spiritual life as a competition. His consistent use of the words "trophy" and "victories" develops Christian identity as a competition with successes, failures, and rewards. Trophies won serve to remind the Christian of his/her victories and God's intervention in human life. As David's sword reminded his descendents of his victory over Goliath, so too do the symbols and stories of present day Christians serve to remind others of their victories. The entailment of what exactly those kind of present day victories look like or what they are victories over remain undeveloped.

Just as Joshua does, Alex Beals also develops the metaphors of victories and uses the term "ripple effect." More importantly, however, is Alex's development of the metaphor of sight as understanding. Five times Alex directs his listeners to "see" something that he is saying: "We *see* that we must win spiritual victories for the glory of

God because of the effect…but there's also the effect" (37-39); "We *see* that in verse

ten…" (56); "So generations later after David's victories we can *see*…" (60); "Here's a

profound way to *see* how important this is" (61); "So you *see* that there are many

effects…" (65-66). For Alex, "seeing" is understanding the content of the sermon, which

will lead listeners to a way of life that attempts to win spiritual victories. This is not an

unusual metaphor, but it operates in a significant fashion for Alex. Appropriate vision

regarding his proposition is the key for understanding and living out the sermon's

directives. With regard to this metaphor, Christian identity is refined through an ever-

increasing ability to "see" and put into practice the spiritual truths encountered through

preaching.

For Chloe, God is described in two especially rich metaphors. The first of these

metaphors positions God as operating outside the confines of a committee. In describing

the Israelites actions regarding the kingship of Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34 and its

contemporary application, Chloe says that they were "questioning God. God does not

need our help or guidance or our permission on a decision he is going to make or who he

chooses to use. God is god all by himself and he can do whatever he chooses to do and

will not run it by us to see if we are ok with it" (42-45). Chloe conceives of God and

God's use of people as not up to review by committee. As autonomous decision-maker,

there is no open discussion. God is sovereign and able to operate apart from the input of

humanity.

But God does not operate completely apart from humanity. Instead, God operates

as both the divine employer and divine janitor. Anticipating congregational opposition,

Chloe says, "Maybe there is someone here that thinks that God cannot *call you* or *use you*

because of your past. You think he can't *use you* because of all the wrong things you have done. But I'm here to tell you that *God can still use* you if you ask him to. He can *clean you up*" (146-148). She continues, using Paul as an example, saying "God gave Saul a new name when he changed him and *cleaned him up*" (161). This metaphor exhibits Chloe's conception of Christian identity as being called by God for a specific use in the world and being made ready for use by God through God's removal of that which makes humanity dirty (sin/our past).

Sam focuses on Christian calling and action as well. For Sam, the fact that Christian witness itself (act and purpose) is characterized as both "mission" and "struggle" creates a metaphor of Christian witness as engaged in oppositional situations, similar to Minister Keith Johnson. This metaphor is extended and intensified through phrases such as "You have to *fight the devil* to live right" (18); "the 2nd struggle is *the fight for people's hearts*" (19); "some people fight you off" (27); "And that's the best *battleground* for the Christian faith" (94-95); "God's left me all alone to *fight this long, hard battle…this battle that takes a whole lifetime*" (101-102); "It's not going to be a *battle* like that. You're not going to walk in in full glory and *take everybody in the school* for Jesus. It's going to be a *long, hard, tedious struggle*" (125-127); "So the *struggle* in school becomes easier and harder at the same time because of this, right? You realize the *extremity of your fight and the battle* it's going to be, but you realize that you have help" (167-169); "…it's a *hard, long, battle,* God. Lord help us *so that we can overcome this world and we can fight for you*" (178-179). For Sam, Christian identity consists of the faithful engaged in warfare on behalf of Jesus (and aided by the first and third persons of the Trinity) in order to secure the allegiance of those outside the

Christian community. Sam believes that this war is a lifelong calling, so while school serves as the battleground now, it will change in the foreseeable future as he grows up.

Finally, Christine develops a number of metaphors around the concept of sin. Sin operates spatially and as an inside/outside phenomenon when she says, "You should *go out* and sin as much as possible" (31). Sin is conceived of as a choice between methods when she says, "we all know there's more than *one way* to sin" (33-34). Sin holds the potential to do psychic harm and as a function of public/private vision with a spatial component when she admits "our *souls don't just suffer* from the big sins – those sins *the whole world sees and looks down upon*" (46-47). Sin also operates as a force that narrates the world's order, but none of these smaller sins "will *spell* the end of the world" (55). She links sin and grace as a function of cosmetics or construction when she says that "Allowing God to smooth over so many of these little mistakes we are also bound to make, no matter how hard we try not to does allow us to love more deeply and fully. And the Jesus of this passage is only too willing to forgive" (58-60). These metaphors develop the relationship between sin and grace with entailments about the role of God and Jesus as well as the consequences sin has on the cosmic and psychic realms. For Christine, Christian identity functions with a strong notion of the workings of sin and the operation of God's grace for the believer.

Conclusion

All of these preachers exhibit organizing pentads that help communicate their operative theologies. Whether the preachers organize their rhetoric by highlighting themselves, the Bible, God, Jesus, church, or any other element, they all form dramas that

demonstrate how they conceive Christian identity in its ideal form. They also develop

highly functional metaphors for Christian identity. Some of these metaphors are familiar,

while others wholly unfamiliar, but they are coherently employed in service of the

overarching purposes of their sermons. Having listened to these young preachers, and

examined the ways that they conceive of both homiletic and Christian identities, it is now

appropriate to view these interpretations of their preaching in light of liberation and

formation.

Before moving to this process, however, it is important to note that by close

analysis of these young people's sermons, we have already begun to "liberate"

representations of youth. The contemporary literatures examined in chapter three depict

the ontological adolescent as absent, as deficient listeners, as unable to exercise facility

with the church's language (exilic), in need of entertainment, taking part in a

universalized experience, and without capacity for difficult theological reasoning. With

these sermons in view, however, we begin to form a specifically *homiletic* picture that de-

essentializes the representations of young people and begin to present a different type of

public homiletic space for/with young people. More specifically, we can see liberation of

these representations in the following dimensions:

1. Liberation from "absence."
   It is perhaps an overly-simplistic observation, but it must be noted, at the outset,
   that youth are present and are so in significant ways. If we are to take the
   instances of these young people preaching at any level of seriousness, then we
   must admit that young people are not invisible or absent from the preaching
   moment.
2. Liberation from "the non-critical."
   These young people demonstrate a capacity for critical thinking about their own
   homiletic and Christian identities, about their places within their own social
   location, and about how biblical texts are interpreted within/for congregational
   life.
3. Liberation from "the non-ecclesiastical," "extra-ecclesiastical," or "para-church."

The preachers do not exhibit an amorphous religious commitment, but rather show a fairly sophisticated (if sometimes implicit) knowledge of their ecclesial traditions.

4. Liberation from the realm of de-centered, non-authoritative "cultural" Christianity. This is related to number three, above, in that these youth are eager to claim various forms of spiritual authority and voice, whether through implicit theologies of preaching, use of self, the creation of ethos, or measured use of material devices. In this way, they are not guilty of Smith and Lundquist Denton's "moral therapeutic deism," but confess fidelity to, take ownership of, and claim authority within their respective traditions (and the broader Christian tradition at large).

5. Liberation from the "non-theological."
The pentadic analysis demonstrates a range of approaches to the Christian drama. These include the ability to identify spiritual agents, and construct elaborate forms of spiritual agency, theological scenes, theological acts, and purposes. Even if these accounts are unsophisticated (read: not conversant with academic theology), they show the ability to be fairly precise, coherent, and consistent.

6. Liberation from cultural stereotypes and the need for entertainment.
Rather than the young person who can only engage in communication through limited, stereotypical cultural idioms (Mitchell's "lingo"), the preachers here demonstrate the ability to make use of a wide range of metaphors for God, engage in a variety of patterns for communicational design, and are able to manage cultural models that are outside the typical purveyance of "youth." As speakers, they also work past the depiction that young people must be entertained to gain a homiletic hearing.

Mutual Critique through Liberation and Formation

The process of listening and interpretation are only the first steps toward a more appropriate homiletic relationship with young people. The homiletic relationship takes another step forward by placing the analysis of these sermons into a moment of mutual critique through liberation and formation. By evaluating these preachers and their sermons through the established categories of homiletic identity and Christian identity, we find ways that the preaching of young people can offer challenge to homiletic and Christian identities, as well as the places where young people are still in need of homiletic and Christian formation. This section will proceed thematically by using some

of the larger strands that have emerged in the sermons. By way of reminder, the

evaluations of these strands are processed through my own homiletic and theological

commitments, explained in chapter five. The themes discussed here are suggestive of my

own reflections, rather than exhaustive or definitive, and are intended to show the

beginning edges of displaying what the process of listening can look like.

Homiletic Identity

Use of Self

The overwhelming amount of self-references among these young preachers

demonstrates that the use of self in the rhetoric of the sermon is an important category. Is

it a practice that needs to be reined in or does it offer a helpful corrective to established

homiletic concepts? As briefly reviewed in chapter five, the question of whether this

practice is a best practice has been raised by homiletic communities on the levels of

theology of the word (Barth), pastoral integrity (Nichols), and theories of communication

(Buttrick). All three of these levels caution against use of the self (or, in Nichols case the

kind of use of self that he characterizes as self-display). According to Barth, Nichols, and

Buttrick, the use of self by these young preachers might be characterized as violations of

homiletic theology, pastoral integrity, and communication theory. They might also be

labeled as "self-centered" filtered through either a malformed concept of Freud and

Erikson's theories of development, cultural stereotype, or both.[18] All of these options

would thus conceive of adolescent preaching as deficient in some sense because of this

practice.

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[18] Anecdotal evidence bears this out. In conversing with a group of pastors about my "findings," on the topic of use of self, some questioned whether this use of self was simply because "teenagers think the world revolves around them."

Rather than seeing their rhetorical use of the self as some type of homiletic violation or egotistical rhetoric, the use of the self demonstrates a beneficial example of theological and homiletical reasoning. The self is intentionally used as a site of theological reflection and deemed useful for others in the public role of the pulpit. In a sense, these homiletic expressions by young people are processes of becoming "voiced" when the cultural expectations of the voice of young people is quite low. As Mary Donovan Turner and Mary Lin Hudson write, "Voice reflects a valuing of the self in relation to particular contexts, allowing authentic dimensions of the self to arise to expression rather than be submerged in a sea of competing expectations and roles."[19] Rather than being "submerged in a sea of competing expectations and roles," young people come to voice in new ways through the pulpit, and their sermons allow them the opportunity to express a theological-homiletical self. This self sees that God's activity happens in the present, not just in the world of the biblical text or the world of adults, and that their lives are also useful homiletic material in a variety of ways.

Additionally, through the pentadic analysis, we see that the preachers always convey a strategic picture of relationships to God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Bible, church, social structures, etc. They do not use self to the neglect of other indispensible theological partners. Though we should continue to caution preachers against dangerous uses of the self, these young preachers' use of themselves in their sermons help displace Barth's and Buttrick's rigorous homiletic rules. They add their distinctive voices to the conversation about how self-references voice young people beyond cultural expectation (ontological adolescence) and how self-references can serve as authoritative, effective homiletic

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[19] Mary Donovan Turner and Mary Lin Hudson, *Saved from Silence : Finding Women's Voice in Preaching* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1999), 11.

devices. Katie, for example, builds *ethos* with the congregation by giving biographical

information which leads to her contemplation of the future. Trevor does likewise as he

recounts his personal experiences with the church as a place of comfort. Alex D.

establishes authority when he tells the story about the woman from his childhood who

seemed as if she had been at the feet of Jesus. In the same way, Chloe's personal

experiences with prayer establish her as an authority on its effects. Jane Doe exhibits a

participatory role within her denomination as she lists the ways that her experiences with

the distinctly Episcopal ministries of her church have helped her faith. Emily Baird uses

herself in order to establish a theological account of God's activity and care in the midst

of difficult times. All of these examples show that the use of self is a strategic decision

(though this is not necessarily the case in every instance), incorporated into the preaching

moment in order to further the purposes of the sermon.

Purposes of Preaching/Images of Preaching

A variety of models of the purposes of preaching and images of preaching emerge

from these young preachers' sermons. Chloe, Emily, and Sam all exhibit tendencies

toward the image of the conduit as they hope that God will speak through them or that

listeners will see God rather than the preacher. This is consistent with their respective

preaching traditions (Baptist and Assembly of God). But in each case, this hoped-for

invisibility is undone by their significant uses of the self (see discussion above). Since

they are not internally consistent, we should ask if the image they articulate is a desirable

image, or if the image they develop needs formation. My own homiletic commitments

are distanced from the conduit, or herald image. I find that its Barthian roots tend to

denigrate human agency within the preaching process.[20] Since each of these preachers

lift up their own lives as beneficial sites for theological reflection, it seems that their

remarks genuinely serve to invite God into the process and rhetorically serve to indicate

authority and competence (credibility devices), rather than render the preachers invisible.

Indeed, we have already explored the ways that young people are rendered invisible both

inside and outside homiletic discourse! As a convention of homiletic speech learned

from adult sources, we should be careful of language about invisibility encroaching upon

young people's speech. In these cases, the preachers could be encouraged to shift their

image of preaching (and accompanying homiletic spirituality) to that of Tom Long's

"witness" in order to more carefully integrate the roles of God and self within the

preaching identity they already develop.[21] In this case, the adult homiletic community

can offer correction to an internal inconsistency around the image of preaching, as well as

issue a caution to itself about what kinds of images it offers young people.

Although I believe Minister Keith Johnson's development of Christian identity

needs formation (see below), parts of the image of preaching that he develops represents

a strength of his own tradition (Pentecostal Holiness) which is instructive. Keith

envisions preaching as a dynamic conversation between preacher, God, Bible,

congregation, and context. By this, Keith demonstrates a homiletic identity that exists as

a conversational relationship between all the parties associated with preaching, even the

forces of evil. This is a helpful dynamic for conceiving the preaching task, and takes

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[20] Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 24-28. Long admits that this may not be all Barth's fault, but rather those who have taken his direction to an extreme.

[21] Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 45-51.

sermonic form in ways that Ron Allen and Charles Campbell do not necessarily provide.[22]

On the other hand, Keith's conviction that God tells the preacher exactly what to say, even as that takes place within a preparatory conversation, lacks a nuance found in his own tradition. Cheryl Bridges Johns, in speaking about the impact of Pentecost on Pentecostal worship, says "The meaning of scripture is made known by the power of Pentecost. Because of the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit, the text of scripture, as written word, is alive and powerful. Spirit and word are fused into a gestalt which reveals the mysteries of God. It is more than a revelation of meaning, it is a revelation of God whose presence is actualized by the Holy Spirit."[23] Bridges Johns points to a crucial component missing in Keith's operative theology and practice of preaching: the Holy Spirit and its activity in worship practices. Rather than direct, privileged dialogue with the first person of the Trinity, homiletic revelation takes place through the Holy Spirit, "which supersedes any form of human critical reflection, [and] makes known those things which are masked, repressed, and denied."[24]

Trevor's conception of the purpose of preaching as one who shares presents a mixed model for evaluation as well. On the one hand, Trevor articulates a relational homiletic identity where he conceives of preaching as an act of sharing out of his own experience. This is the strength of the more recent testimonial models found in homiletics. But as seen in the pentadic analysis for Christian identity, while he develops

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[22] Allen, *Interpreting the Gospel : An Introduction to Preaching*; Campbell, *The Word before the Powers : An Ethic of Preaching*.

[23] Cheryl Bridges Johns, "What Can the Mainline Learn from Pentecostals About Pentecost?," *Journal for Preachers* 21, no. 4 (1998): 5.

[24] Johns: 5.

a strong and compelling local ecclesiology, purpose takes on a very weak role. Trevor makes no claim for a change in listeners' mindset or behavior, nor does he outline what Brad Braxton calls "gospel conduct."[25] To simply "share" out of one's own experience, while claiming and developing voice, neglects preaching's proper use of authority to call listeners to more faithful conformity to the shape of the good news in one's context. The image of preacher as one who shares limits the authority of the preacher and the weight of the preaching moment in the community of faith. Trevor could have been more explicit in this regard, perhaps by encouraging the congregation to continue their efforts to create and sustain the kind of congregational culture that provides comfort to the hurting.

Matthew Sistrunk's almost flippant opening comment, "I'm glad she said that the word comes from Matthew because I didn't know whether she was talking about me or the Lord" (10-11) expresses the idea of the threefold form of the word of God as a dominant image for Matthew's preaching identity. Matthew simultaneously identifies preaching and the biblical text as Word. Although Matthew's comment arises out of a coincidence between his name and the biblical text from which he preaches, his comment also suggests that he has considered how his preaching functions as an aspect of the Word of God. As Matthew works out his own theology of preaching and sense of authority, he suggests that speaking aloud one's theology of the Word on occasion is a meaningful rhetorical task. Most introductory preaching texts encourage preachers to take stock of their own conception of what God is doing during preaching and to what degree preaching functions as Word, but beyond this introductory pedagogical exercise or

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[25] Brad Ronnell Braxton, *Preaching Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 120. Braxton also follows in the line of Henry Mitchell, who calls this a "behavioral purpose" and Tom Long who more broadly calls this the "function" of the sermon.

occasional prayers for illumination in the liturgy, they do not advocate for the preacher to make a case for how the Word arrives during the preaching moment. In order for congregations to develop their own sense of how the Word arrives, it would be a good pastoral practice to insert rhetorical indicators of the preacher's conception of how Bible and preacher function as Word of God, as Matthew does. In this way, Matthew encourages listeners to, at the very least, be aware that these kinds of considerations take place and at the most, consider how they can function in a highly significant way for preacher and listeners. The Listening to Listeners project shows that God's role in the sermon is a concern for listeners.[26] Matthew serves as an example, perhaps unintentionally, that preachers' intentional speech on this topic can help listeners make sense of God's involvement in preaching.

Privilege of Preaching

Also among these themes is that of the privilege of preaching. On the one hand, these preachers comments indicate that they know that the pulpit is a space normally restricted to those of their age. Their comments show that their speech is often so limited, and silence so often the norm, that they must profusely thank those who have allowed them to speak. Contemporary homileticians marvel at the lowly estate of preaching[27] and wonder at the low enthusiasm for preaching by young people. When pulpits across the United States restrict access to young people in so many ways, the aversion to preaching later in life makes sense. Those who do enter pulpits at such a

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[26] See Mary Alice Mulligan, *Believing in Preaching : What Listeners Hear in Sermons* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2005), 152-168.

[27] See Graves, ed.

young age do so, as seen in many of the sermons examined here, heaping thanks on those who have bestowed the honor of preaching on them. These remarks by young people encourage us to open homiletic space to young people in increasingly significant ways. Here I must admit my commitment to my denomination's relatively "low" theology and ordering of ministry, especially as it relates to those who are allowed to preach. Almost all denominations, however, make provisions to preach for those not yet ordained.

On the other hand, these preachers' comments offer a distinctive reminder that preaching occurs by different types of authorization, and that charge is not to be taken lightly. Preaching is both an honor and a privilege for all who enter the pulpit. As a result, these preachers' comments suggest to all who enter the pulpit, young and old, that they do so with a responsibility to preach with integrity. Preaching occurs for the benefit of those who listen and on behalf of God's desire to draw people into a resurrected community. To handle sacred texts and messages demands much of the preacher and these young preachers offer a reminder to those who have forgotten the weightiness of the call to preach. This is a risky and important concept to admit in the pulpit and these young people model a type of (public) homiletic humility that seems rare among many contemporary preachers. Those of us who are older would do well to learn from them in this regard.

These preliminary categories begin to show the ways that the preaching of young people is liberative for entrenched homiletic theory/practice, as well as the ways that young people's homiletic theories/practices remain in need of formation. We now turn to evaluating the category of Christian identity.

Christian Identity

Nature and Presence of God

In terms of Christian identity, one of the major features of these preachers' theological themes is the nature and presence of God, and more specifically, how God acts in relationship to human beings. Repeatedly, their sermons express how they conceive of themselves and others in relationship to God.

One of the most recognizable ways these preachers talk about their relationship with God is through metaphors of proximity, measurable distance, attention, and visual focus. The metaphors of proximity and measurable distance in particular are rooted in biblical language. All of the metaphors describe a sense of theological anthropology expressed in terms of evaluating the state of a relationship. In describing the contours of a systematic theologian's theological anthropology, Daniel Migliore states that

> human beings are created for life in relationships that mirror or correspond to God's own life in relationship. In light of the history of Jesus Christ, Christian faith and theology are led to interpret the *imago Dei* as an *imago Christi* and an *imago trinitatis*. Just as the incarnate Lord lived in utmost solidarity with and for sinners and the poor, and just as the eternal life of God is in communion, a triune 'society of love' that is open to the world, so humanity in its coexistence with other is intended to be a creaturely reflection of the living, triune God made known to us in Jesus Christ and at work among us in the Holy Spirit.[28]

The preachers express Migliore's thought in an encapsulated form by assessing the status of their respective relationships with God through metaphorical language. As a result, their language reflects their commitment to a historical doctrine: that God exists in relationship with creation and human beings experience varying degrees of the status of that relationship.

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[28] Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding : An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004), 141-142.

This relationship is expressed through other dimensions. Minister Keith Johnson and Chloe in particular envision God as an active speaker to humans. While Keith portrays God as engaging in literal back and forth conversation, Chloe's depiction of God shows God talking to the church in a non-descript manner. For these preachers, God is actively engaged in the life of the community of faith, directing its life.

Sam and Katie envision God acting in relationship as a helper for the human condition. God provides the primary psychic, emotional, and spiritual resources out of which humans are able to live in faithful relationship with God and humanity. Rather than speaking directives as with Keith and Chloe, God resources the Christian life with a support system including the community of faith, the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. These are all positive dimensions to portraying the nature and presence of God. Although they all differ in various ways, these preachers possess an active theological imagination by which they strive to live more faithfully. They encourage faith communities to conceive of God and God's activity in imaginative ways.

Not all the depictions display a positive use of the theological imagination as it relates to the nature of God, however. For Emily, God acts as the divine planner who acts with unmistakable precision. God's plan somehow includes a reversal in her social status as portrayed when "the same kids that hung me up by my overalls in middle school also voted for me as Memorial's homecoming queen. It's true. I know – I now know that God is surrounding me, he's always with me, and there is nothing the world for me to fear" (75-76). Emily indicates that her election as homecoming queen is the sign of God's presence and protection for her. God's salvific activity and providential care for human beings certainly extends to the repair of human relationships. But God, even as

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creator and savior "is the God, not of unrestricted and static powerful 'god almightiness,'

which resulted in empire's worship of 'power itself,' but the social and relational God,

the Trinitarian narrative God, the vulnerable God, the God of covenantal invitation and

participation – in short, the God of the power of love."[29] Emily mistakes God's love for

God's involvement in the processes of social status. Election as homecoming queen

more often functions as a social indicator of popularity and/or physical attractiveness, and

as a result Emily's election reflects the powers of social status rather than reflecting

divine care. Emily's operative theology of God's presence and activity needs further

shaping in such a way that it can account for those who do not achieve the social

successes she does.

Jessi's contractual/business language as she formulates a partial soteriology is

also of concern. If her metaphors are followed through with their entailments, then God

becomes a shrewd contract maker characterized by inflexibility rather than grace. Jessi's

metaphors show how the forces of a market economy and a cultural imaginary filled with

litigious language impinge upon God-language in a way that should be offered up for

further formation.

Suffering

Related to Emily's depiction of God's presence and activity, she, along with

Matthew and Chloe talk about the nature of suffering as a part of Christian identity.

Emily's suffering is at the direction of God's plan. Matthew's depiction of suffering

extends to a wide array of social sources and subjects (both Christian and non-Christian),

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[29] Victor L. Hunter, "Creation" in Peter Heltzel, ed. *Chalice Introduction to Disciples Theology* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2008), 127.

but believes suffering to be essential to Christian identity and redemptive in nature. Chloe pinpoints specific instances of suffering in her community: parental neglect, sexual abuse, economics, and health problems. All three versions of suffering develop significant theological systems, and invite our interaction.

In the same way that Emily's picture of social success does not align with a broad picture of God's activity in the world, the same is true of her picture of her own suffering. God's action as the agent in her pentad corresponds to this view. Emily expresses a theory of theodicy that Migliore categorizes as "the incomprehensibility of God," which "may tend to suppress all questions and to encourage the unchallenged acceptance of all suffering."[30] Emily's uncritical perspective fails to account for her own participation in the natural order which is subject to disease, decay, and death. To disallow humanity's subjection to the natural order distorts what it means to be human in the midst of God's creation.

Matthew's picture of suffering, made apparent through the pentadic element of purpose, approximates what Migliore calls "person-making theodicy" in which "God desires not puppets [as Emily's version might be characterized] but persons who freely render their worship and adoration. Hence human beings are created incomplete and must freely participate in the process by which they come to be what God intends them to be."[31] The point of suffering in this view is for humans to emerge on the other side as having grown into more mature and God-like human beings. Matthew states that the suffering of Christians is a conscious decision that people of faith enter freely for the benefit of eternal life and closer relationship with God: "when we are persecuted, we are

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[30] Migliore, 123ff.

[31] Migliore, 130.

brought closer to God" (128). Migliore points out that the weakness of this model is its

relative lack of emphasis on Christian social ethics.[32] As a result, when Matthew points

to the suffering of the world in the dimensions of economy, family, politics/war, and

technology, he fails to address social responsibility in suffering. Instead he focuses on

suffering incurred because of a non-descript Christian witness. This too is inadequate

because Matthew fails to take into account (1) humanity's participation in causing

suffering and (2) the victimization of many who will not find flourishing through

suffering (and the silence of many Christians on their behalf).

Chloe's approach to suffering, corresponding to her pentadic elements of act and

agent, provides a more palatable model of suffering. While suffering happens as a result

of lack of power to make choices on behalf of oneself because of age, Chloe believes that

there are choices that individuals can make that give individuals some sense of self-

determination. Chloe's approach to suffering here approximates what Migliore calls

"liberation theodicy."[33] Rather than passivity to suffering or expecting growth through

suffering, Chloe advocates pursuing available avenues of action in order to make life

better. Rather than admitting to absolute powerlessness, Chloe pushes young and old to

identify the places where they are able to take action to pursue a godly life. Here Chloe

admits to the specific death-dealing forces that cause suffering in her faith community

and calls her listeners to greater faithfulness in the midst of situations of powerlessness.

While her approach to suffering invites active engagement and names the forces of

suffering, she could also to call attention to the ways that those forces might be called to

conformity with the way of Christ. Of the three, however, Chloe's demonstrates a

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[32] Migliore, 130.

[33] Migliore, 131.

commitment to social engagement and helps the Christian community formulate a response to oppression as an integral part of its identity.

Sin and Grace

Sin and grace are related, in part, to suffering. Disciples assert a few guiding principles around sin and grace. Most broadly, the statement of identity recognizes that we "are a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world."[34] This statement proposes that an underlying nature of sin is the divisions among humanity. Disciples theologian Joe R. Jones suggests that a dimension of salvation for the church "becomes an ethics of grace: given what God has done in Jesus Christ, Christians live under the summons to be peacemakers and forgivers, lovers of neighbors, strangers, and enemies."[35] And it is in baptism and weekly celebration at the eucharistic table that Disciples identify with what God has done in Jesus Christ, providing experiences of grace that empower believers to live out what Jones calls an "ethics of grace." These preliminary statements provide some evaluative guidelines for how a few of the preachers construct Christian identity in their sermons

Christine M., in connection with the pentadic element of purpose, discusses the "little" sins. While the acts she lists might be classified as mere violations of white middle class social conventions, rather than sins, she demonstrates in parts of her list the knowledge that sin consists of being complicit in the fragmented state of the world (not inviting an outsider to social activities, placing self and busyness before friends and family). She is right to acknowledge that none of the acts she lists "will spell the end of

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[34] "About the Disciples".

[35] Joe R. Jones, "Salvation: Mapping the Salvific Themes in Christian Faith," in Heltzel, ed., 200.

the world," (55) but she does acknowledge that these little acts are in need of God's grace. Grace is embodied in the community through acts of love and a process of recognizing mistakes, asking for forgiveness, and trying to live in ways that correct sin (66-73). Even in an unspecific way, Christine suggests a way that the "ethics of grace" operates in her community of faith. This is commendable, even as her understanding of what constitutes sin needs formation.

As with suffering, Chloe recognizes that sin takes the form of violations of the integrity of, and relationships with young people. For Chloe, sin also carries the misguided perception that "God cannot call you our use you because of your past" (146). Though she does not call it grace, Chloe identifies God's salvific activity as God's acting to "clean you up" (148) and, more importantly, the incorporation into the company of those chosen by God for service to the world. This is similar to the gift language found in the Preamble to the *Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, which says, "within the universal church we receive the gift of ministry…In the bonds of Christian faith we yield ourselves to God that we may serve the One whose kingdom has no end."[36] In this language, part of the gift of God's grace is the vocation of ministry to the world. She is not specific as to what that call and service entails, which is desirable. It would be even more desirable for her to name that service as forming a community of resistance and working to right the situations of brokenness she identifies early in her sermon. As it stands, however, she gives a helpful preliminary identification of what sin and grace look like in her community.

For Trevor, the strong pentadic agent of All Saints church provides a picture of an ecclesiology that functions as a model of grace. As he experiences the dissolution of his

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[36] "The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)".

family structure (fragmentation), the church functions as a means by which he encounters God's grace. He also learns what it means to spin that grace outward through his work on immigration and his sister's work in New Orleans. Sharon Watkins expresses this as the ideal function of the church, a "sacrament of human wholeness," whereby "God's intention expressed in the prophetic search for shalom, Jesus' proclamation and the apostles' teaching, is that the human community, indeed the cosmos, though broken and dying, can and should live in peace, in wholeness."[37] Trevor identifies God's activity in the world through the activity of the church, which provides a strong structure for Christian identity.

Minister Keith Johnson's version of sin operates as a byproduct of the pentadic element of purpose, which is to convince listeners to live in holiness. Keith identifies holiness as "God's standard" repeatedly and those who do not "go forth in the beauty of holiness" are "unclean" (33ff). For Keith, sin is violation of standards of holiness clearly outlined in biblical texts. Specifically he points to fornication, lying, cheating, homosexuality, and "whatever falls under the category of sin" (44). Keith's internal homiletic logic supplies only the oppositional categories of holiness and sin, and does so in a rather circular manner. It is difficult to discern how one achieves holiness. Is it bestowed by God, achieved by human will, or both? Keith does not supply a sufficient framework to discern how sin and grace operate in Christian identity other than by repeating the mandate for holiness and pointing out clean/unclean practices.

In terms of experiencing grace, none of the preachers discuss eucharistic practice and only one of these preachers (Jessi) discusses Christian identity with reference to

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[37] Sharon E. Watkins and Harold Keith Watkins, "The Church as Sacrament of Human Wholeness" in Heltzel, ed., 137. This is also an expression of Toulouse's concept of the "restoration principle."

baptism. Even though none of the preachers are inheritors of the Disciples tradition, all

Christian traditions lay some emphasis on water and table as places where we encounter,

or at the very least, remember God's work for humanity in the person of Jesus. That only

one out of the thirteen preachers references baptism and/or eucharist is lamentable and

certainly in need of formation among these preachers. On the other hand, their failure to

identify these practices as significant moments of grace might indicate that they function

as what Gordon Lathrop via Paul Tillich calls "broken myths," in which "the terms of the

myth and its power to evoke our own experience of the world remain, but the coherent

language of the myth is seen as insufficient and its power to hold and create as

equivocal."[38] As such, baptism and eucharist are not rendered obsolete in the

communities of faith, but they have lost a sense of vitality in homiletic speech. As a

result, the young preachers do not know how to speak of these ritual practices in

significant ways. If this is the case, then the relative absence of water and table language

requires of Christian and homiletic communities the hard work of ensuring that the

foundational myths of baptism and eucharist remain "juxtaposed"[39] to vibrant rhetoric

that can (1) nourish Christian identity and (2) come to meaningful expression in homiletic

practice.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that adolescents demonstrate the ability to piece

together rhetorically coherent and theologically significant depictions of homiletic and

Christian identities. By carefully listening to their communicative practices, we become

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[38] Lathrop, 27.

[39] This is Lathrop's language.

more attentive to the ways that their preaching liberates representations of ontological adolescence and possibly liberates privileged, adult-centered homiletic and Christian identities. By moving back and forth between the poles of liberation and formation, with attention to our own rhetorical performances of homiletic and Christian identities, we participate in a process that moves us toward a renewed public sphere of homiletic interaction. We validate their voices as powerful participants in our collective homiletic and Christian lives. In addition, we can still voice the ways in which the faithful homiletic and Christian identities adults have formed can serve to offer corrective to young people's concepts about preaching and faith.

In terms of my own sense of liberation and formation as both a homiletician and a preacher, I am moved by a few key areas of the analysis I have performed. I am now keenly aware of the discussion of the privilege of preaching as I enter the pulpit each week. Many of the remarks by these young people remind me that the pulpit is a space not to be taken lightly. In an era where the attention given to religious authority figures is arguably lower than it has been in American history and other's voices are easily silenced, to ask for people's attention to my own speaking is indeed an increasingly valued activity. I am also more aware of the possibilities of the use of myself in preaching, without having the venerable homiletic patriarchs and their arguments be the only voice on this issue. The emerging theological themes they bring forward are also important. Some of these young people display a tremendous capacity to name suffering or imagine God in ways that need to be heard and celebrated, even as others need to see that their views are formed by forces that render them as disposable. These incisive

theological formulations should be heard from the places where I preach, whether young people speak themselves or their words are carried into the pulpit by someone else.

This study is not an end in itself. Included here are only the beginning contours of a disposition of listening to youth. This preliminary study serves as an invitation for those interested in youth and preaching, worship, Christian education, pastoral care, leadership, and other ministry practices (as well as more traditionally academic disciplines such as constructive theology, historical theology, and biblical studies) to listen deeply to the fugitive forms of knowledge among young people in their midst. By integrating the theological and ethical disposition of liberation and formation into projects of attentive listening, scholars and communities of faith can certainly refine their public practices. But beyond that, they also create an opportunity to reform public spheres in order to establish an atmosphere for youth that moves beyond the destructive forces of disposability and commodification.

As a result of this study, scholars of preaching, seminaries, and congregations can have more lively conversation about the nature of preaching and faith. We do not seek the restoration of the homiletic integration of young people as seen in the literature of the 17th-19th centuries. Nor do we seek an easy answer to the problems indicative of the contemporary literatures. Instead, we place into practice a more substantive theological ethic of listening to young people. And as we continue to integrate reflection and practice around the communicative practices of adolescents in the faith community, both preaching and the life of faith are enriched by the previously silenced and/or trivialized voices in our midst. A youthful homiletic emerges, and as a result, so does a more just, welcoming community that reflects the image of the Creator, who has welcomed young

and old as bearers of that image through Jesus, and who, through the sustaining presence

of the Spirit, brings our homiletic communities closer toward the reign of God.

Sermon Analysis Worksheet (Fig 4.1)

Homiletic Identity

Preliminary Sources of Rhetorical Role:

Use of Credibility Devices:
- Power
- Competence
- Trustworthiness
- Idealism
- Similarity
- Dynamism
- Material

Self-references:

Clusters:

Sermon Analysis Worksheet (Figure 4.2)

Christian Identity

Pentadic/Dramatistic Criticism

Pentadic Elements:
Agent-

                                            Scene-

Act-

Agency-   Purpose-

Ratios:
Agent-scene:
Agent-act:
Agent-agency:
Agent-purpose:

Act-scene:
Act-agent:
Act-agency:
Act-purpose:

Agency-scene:
Agency-act:
Agency-agent:
Agency-purpose:

Scene-act:
Scene-agent:
Scene-agency:
Scene-purpose:

Purpose-scene:
Purpose-act:
Purpose-agent:
Purpose-agency:

Dominant element and its effects (Featured? Muted? Eulogistic? Dyslogistic?):

Conclusions concerning the speaker's Christian identity:

Metaphor Criticism

Metaphors (vehicle, tenor, and entailments):

Conclusions regarding Christian identity:

Sermon Analysis Worksheet (Fig 4.3)

Foregrounding Theological and Homiletic Commitments

Theological Commitments:

Historic Tradition:

Contemporary Theological Families:

Social Location:

Homiletic Commitments:

Dominant Image or Theological Model:

1   Alex Beals
2   Alex Beals: Suncoast Youth Group: Preacher Boy
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ89bzD2bLU
4
5   Baptist
6   White Male
7
8   Hi, my name is Alex Beals. I am in 10th grade at Northpoint high school. And Josh has
9   already given the reason why we must win spiritual victories for the glory of God, but I
10   have a couple more. The second point is that we…ah…The second reason why we
11   should win spiritual victories for the glory of God is because of the effect it will have on
12   the lives of those around us. Each spiritual victory that we win will affect at least
13   someone around us. Let's go back and think about how much David's victories affected
14   the lives of those around him. Turn in your bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 17 verses 8 and 9.
15   It says, "And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel and said unto them, 'Why come
16   out and ...am I not a Philistine and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man…choose a
17   man for you and let him come down too. If he be able to fight me and kill me then will
18   we be your slave…servants. But if you prevail against him…but if I prevail against him
19   and kill him, then ye shall be our servants and serve us.
20
21   If David had not come along with his strong faith in God, then the Philistines probably
22   would have beaten Israel and the Israelites would have become slaves to them. Think
23   about that. One man, one victory changed the entire history of the Old Testament as we
24   know it. Each victory that we have does not go without a ripple effect.
25
26   There was a man in Jacksonville, FL named Paul Woods. He is the youth pastor at
27   Trinity Bible College and Paul was called into the ministry when he was in high school.
28   So he went to bible college and became the youth pastor there and one night when he was
29   having a sermon or something, Pastor Lee (laughs), Pastor Lee was called into the service
30   and because of Paul Wood's victories pretty much, Pastor Lee was able to share his
31   victories with us and now me and Josh are out here preaching today.
32
33   It's really neat if you sit back and think about how much another person's life has
34   affected yours. And how much they influence you to win more victories. What victories
35   have you accomplished lately that you will (stumbles)…What victories have you
36   accomplished lately for the glory of God so that other people can see and reach their
37   own? We see that we must win spiritual victories for the glory of God because of the
38   effect it will have on our own lives and the lives of those around us, but there's also the
39   effect that it will have on the lives of future generations.
40
41   Turn in your bibles to 2 Kings chapter 11 verses 10-12. I'm not going to read the passage
42   yet because I want to explain the background of the story first. So you have the people of
43   God, years later, hanging out, when you see the house of Ahab is ruling over the throne.
44   And the house of Ahab does not want to lose their throne at all so Ahab's daughters sent
45   out men to kill everyone in the royal family. And they think that they've succeeded
46   except that there's one boy who survives and he lives in the Temple of the Lord for 7

47   years. And after those seven years, the priests in that temple decided to bring the little
48   boy back to the throne. Verses 10-12 say, "And to the captains over hundreds did the
49   priest give king David's spears and shields, that were in the temple of the LORD. And
50   the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the
51   right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along the altar and the temple.
52   And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the
53   testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and
54   said, God save the king.
55
56   We see that in verse 10 that David's swords and shields were used years later to give
57   these people their victories. What if David had never even fought those battles or if he
58   had never brought those swords or shields as testimonies to the great things he's done for
59   God. We would probably assume that those wicked people in the story would still have
60   control over the throne. So generations later after David's victories we can see that those
61   victories have brought about even more victories. Here's a profound way to see how
62   important this is. In 1492, you all know Columbus sailed the ocean blue. And because of
63   his victory of finding the United States of America, we are sitting in here today. The
64   decisions that each one of you are making today and tomorrow will affect future
65   generations to come if the rapture hasn't occurred yet. So you see that there are many
66   effects to the decisions that you make may they be good decisions or bad decisions. It
67   doesn't matter the severity of your victory either. It could be something simple like
68   inviting your buddy to church or something fantastic like getting that buddy saved. I
69   recommend that tonight and every night for the next couple of weeks, you tally up your
70   victories for that day and see how many you have whether it be a lot, a little, or at least
71   one. Because at the end of the day when you look back and see that during your lunch
72   break you helped a complete stranger get to know Christ as their savior, you will never
73   have a greater feeling. So I'm telling you tonight that we must win spiritual victories for
74   the glory of God.

1   Alex D.
2   Youth Sunday Sermon
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bGCY03jg48&feature=related
4
5   Episcopal
6   White Male
7
8   Although this section of the gospel is often used to point out Jesus' forgiveness for the
9   unsaved, I believe it speaks even more to those who already follow him. Note that
10   although Luke never tells us of how the woman knew of Jesus, she did in some way
11   believe he had the power to forgive her sins. The very action of going to his feet and
12   humbling herself as she did suggests that she had quite a strong faith in him indeed. In
13   fact Jesus says that it is her faith which has saved her. This understanding that the
14   woman was…that someone with faith in Jesus, very much like ourselves, that I would
15   suggest that we may garner 2 brief lessons.
16
17   The first lesson has to do with humility. We are shown a woman who approaches Jesus
18   in tears. She anoints his feet and dries them with her hair. Even among some who do not
19   accept him as the messiah. Imagine the effect that such an intimate gesture might
20   produce. Although it would surely be an uncomfortable moment for the observer, it
21   would also open up a great many doors for conversation. In fact, it is only after this
22   woman approaches him that Jesus is able to point out that the Pharisee did not neglect to
23   greet him in a proper manner, but he also neglected to provide him water for his feet and
24   oil for his head. And lest we should think that Jesus was being conceited by expecting
25   these things, it is important to remember the time in which he lived. He was probably
26   walking around all day in sandals, so his feet would have been covered in dirt and grime.
27   They didn't have anti-perspirants back then, so he probably carried a rather foul odor. So
28   the Pharisee's apparent oversight was, in fact, an insulting gesture.
29
30   But immediately after Jesus rebukes the Pharisee for his judgment of the woman, he
31   forgives the woman's sins, thereby inviting the Pharisee into forgiveness as well. So too,
32   we are shown how our humility, uncomfortable though it may be, can serve to draw
33   others to Christ.
34
35   For me, the strongest point that I can identify with this lesson is from when I was very
36   young – about 7 or 8. At that time, my family and I attended a bible study every Friday
37   night. Through the years I grew very close with one of the women who attended. And in
38   some ways she become almost like a young aunt or an older cousin. I thought of her as
39   very nearly perfect. She went on nursing missions to Africa, she was always there for
40   you and she truly reflected the love of Christ. So it was hard for me to see why she
41   would ever need to be sorry for anything. But then, one Friday as she was leaving was
42   leading worship, she sang us a song that she had written that described coming to the feet
43   of Jesus, repenting and finding comfort. It did not strike me consciously then, but
44   looking back now I know it made an impression on me. It seemed as if she had dwelled
45   at the feet of Jesus and I thought of her as nearly perfect, then everyone must need to.
46

47   The second lesson is based on the word "faith." Even though it may seem like a matter
48   of mere semantics, it struck me that Jesus did not say that love saved the woman, or even
49   her repentance, but faith. This tells me that though she did love him and though she did
50   repent, she knew deep down that he would not abandon her. I must admit that in my own
51   life, I often find this faith difficult to achieve. When I was little, I think I must have
52   asked Jesus to save me at least a hundred times just to ensure that I was going to heaven.
53   But here we are challenged to try to have that faith. We are challenged to continue to
54   approach Jesus in a genuine manner, contrite and humble, and to also remain confident in
55   him. Despite the fact that I do not read my bible as much as I should and I don't really
56   have any semblance of a regular quiet time, I try and live these lessons. One way that I
57   have found very helpful is to start the day off with a prayer. It's simple and short, no
58   more than a minute. But it puts God before me at the start of every day. And though I do
59   not flaunt the fact that I am praying, I don't try to hide it either. This practice might not
60   work for everyone. It might not be practical for everyone. But there are many small
61   ways that we can continually come to Jesus, repent, and show our faith to others.
62
63   It is easy for us to be like the Pharisee and frown upon the sinner, asking why Jesus
64   demands that we love, all the while forgetting that we ourselves are sinners. But perhaps
65   that despite looking to the woman in this passage, who is labeled as a sinner, that we can
66   grow closer to Christ ourselves. So may we remain humble and faithful and always
67   remember that in some ways, we are exactly like that woman. Amen.

1   Chloe
2   Youth Message From A Youth Part 1
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=io6CyCNmpo4
4   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pabCWS14WDA&NR=1
5
6   Missionary Baptist
7   African American Female
8
9   I come before you with no titles. Not Reverend Chloe, not Preacher Chloe, not
10   Evangelist Chloe, just Chloe. A vessel. A young vessel, a chosen instrument of God
11   being used as a messenger for Christ. That's it. Will you please go before the throne of
12   grace with me?
13
14   Dear Lord I wanna thank you for this day that wasn't promised to me. I ask you to let
15   your people see you through me and none of me. In Jesus' name, amen.
16
17   If you have your bibles, please turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 34. We will be reading verses
18   1 through 3. Everyone who is able, please stand and honor the word. Josiah was 8 years
19   old when he began to reign. And he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. And he
20   did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his
21   father, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left. For in the eighth year of his
22   reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in
23   the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the
24   groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. Amen. Be seated.
25
26   Now Josiah became king at the age of 8. God saw something in him that a normal person
27   would never see in an 8 year old. Josiah reigned in Jerusalem for 31 years doing what
28   was right in God's eyes. King Josiah was getting older and was beginning to see the
29   things his people were doing. He saw that his people were worshipping false gods and
30   idols in the temple. Josiah began revivals and started burning down all the false idols and
31   gods that his people were worshipping. One day his servants had found the book of law
32   or bible as they were digging in the ground. Josiah told his servants to read it to him.
33   When they were done Josiah was struck with guilt and reformed his nation, having his
34   people pledge to the covenant. The subject of this message is – to the youth: you are not
35   too young. And to the older generation: it is not too late to do the right thing.
36
37   Now God saw that Josiah was the one to reign over the people in Jerusalem. Now I'm
38   sure that there was a lot of gossipers or haters or some church folk who were questioning
39   how an 8 year old boy could rule over a nation. And right now I bet there are someone
40   sitting here saying that I am too young to get behind this pulpit and give a message. But
41   the people who were bothered by this and asked these type of questions were not only
42   questioning Josiah, but questioning God. God does not need our help or guidance or our
43   permission on a decision he is going to make or who he chooses to use. God is god all by
44   himself and he can do whatever he chooses to do and will not run it by us to see if we are
45   ok with it.

46
47 But don't we have these problems in the church? When certain people or persons placed
48 in a position at church there is always that group of people that meet up and discuss how
49 they feel about the decision. Because they think that whoever made the decision should
50 have ran it by them or perhaps considered them first to be the one over that certain
51 position. For example, if the pastor places a woman over the women's ministry, maybe
52 it's because he feels that woman has the gift to lead, connect and reach out to women.
53 Now don't be mad or be a hater because it's not you over the ministry, maybe it's not
54 your time.   Or maybe it's just not meant to be. Women, we have so many gifts and
55 talents. We must do the right thing. Stand together and work together to build up the
56 kingdom of God and not tear each other down.
57
58 To the men, first let me say, I'm glad to see some of the few men we have here today.
59 But I've noticed that the women outnumber the men. And I know there are some men
60 who are struggling with committing to the things of God. For example, I'm learning that
61 some men have problems with having another man having authority over them – like the
62 pastor. Do the right thing for some of those who (sings) got a big ego. Drop your ego.
63 Stop ego-trippin'. Don't think of him as the boss. Think of him as a tour guide. A sheep
64 leader, giving you directions to get to the (inaudible).
65
66 Now to the young people – those of us who are still being raised by our parents, aunt,
67 uncles, or grandmothers – or still just under the responsibility of someone. Being our age
68 there are choices that are made for us. Some of them good and some of them bad. Now
69 all the good things may not seem so good to us right now, but as my momma always says
70 to me, "You may not understand right now, but one day when you become older, you will
71 see that I'm doing this for your good." Some of the decisions that are made for us when
72 it comes to what we can and cannot wear, where we can and cannot go, who we can and
73 cannot hang with, what time to be on and off the telephone or cell phone, all the way to
74 maybe what we eat, or what they will or will not spend they money on when they're
75 buying us things. These good choices may not always be what we need…I mean…may
76 not always be what we want, but in the long run we will see it is what we need.
77
78 And then there are the bad choices, the ones we have no control over because we are not
79 yet accountable for ourselves. We have no control or no choice in choosing what kind of
80 mother or father we have here on earth. No choice in having a momma or a daddy that
81 are strung out on drugs, alcohol, or gambling so bad that they can't even take care of us.
82 We have no control or no choice having a momma or a daddy that chooses the street life
83 over parent life. We have no control over parents who choose not to spend time with us
84 and love us the way a parent should. We have no control over having a father who wants
85 nothing to do with the children he helped to make. We have no choice in having a father
86 who thinks it's alright to have sex with his son or his daughter.
87
88 But in the midst of all the choices we cannot make, there are some that we can make.
89 We have the choice to either dwell on the fact that we don't have a mother or father to
90 take care of us, but if God has blessed you with someone to step in and take care of you,
91 and keep you safe, whether it be your grandmother or your grandfather, your aunt, your

92   uncle – you have a choice to either rebel because your parents aren't the ones raising you
93   or you can show respect and love them because they are there for you.
94
95   And youth, we also have a choice on who we will serve. Matthew 10.32 and 33 says that,
96   "whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my father who is
97   in heaven. But whosoever will deny me before men, him will I also deny before my
98   father who is in heaven." To confess simply means that you are not ashamed to say that
99   you believe that you know Jesus and are willing to do his work. To deny is another way
100   of saying that you don't know Jesus and you are not willing to do his work. I want to
101   encourage the youth and everyone here on today that whenever you are asked to pray,
102   read the scripture, or give service and effort to build God's kingdom or to do anything for
103   the Lord, stop saying you cannot or you are scared or that you don't want to. Instead, ask
104   and choose to be used by God and know that he will bless you for doing his work in his
105   name.
106
107   Now let's spend a little time on prayer. This is something I'm learning the power of very
108   early in life. You see it started with me hearing my mother pray over some situations and
109   some circumstances that we were facing in my family. I remember her praying out loud
110   either by herself or just asking me to pray with her. I was almost six years old, I
111   remember her thanking God for the gift of motherhood and for blessing her with me.
112   And then she went on to say, "but if it be your will, would you please allow me to
113   experience motherhood again" by blessing her with another child. Sometimes she would
114   pray so hard that she would start to cry. You see the doctors told her that she couldn't
115   have any more children without the assistance of fertility drugs. Now I did not
116   understand any of that at that time, the one thing that was clear to me was that my mom
117   was asking God for another baby. Shortly after that, my daddy was struck with diabetes,
118   so bad that he was sick for almost a year, practically bedridden. I remember hearing my
119   mother praying around the house and pulling me aside to pray with her. This time she
120   was praying for the healing of my father. Then one day she told me to go lay on my
121   daddy and pray for him out loud and to make sure that I prayed loud enough for him to
122   hear me. And I did without hesitation. She told me to do that several times while he was
123   sick. Again I did not understand all that was going on, but I know [break in clip]
124
125   [part 2]
126   (inaudible) you know, the rest is history. Now here I stand the day before my birthday,
127   and I can tell you that I understand the power of prayer. You see I know the same God
128   who answered the prayers of my mother and me is the same God who can hear my
129   prayers and can hear your prayers. Even now I'm praying for and asking the Lord to do a
130   mighty work on my daddy once again. See I believe that if he did it before he can do it
131   again. To the youth of the church you are not too young to pray to God, to talk to him,
132   and for him to hear your prayers.
133
134   Now to the older generation in the house. It's not too late for you to choose to let God
135   use you. If you've been putting of doing God's work, getting close to him, letting him
136   use you, and just doing what is right in his sight. See God told Noah to build an ark and
137   load up (inaudible) two by two of every clean species and seven unclean species along

138   with his family. Noah was 600 years old of age when the flood came upon the earth after
139   building the ark. Noah was obedient. When God called him, he answered. Noah did the
140   right thing. Now…now don't wait until you're 600 years of age to decide that you want
141   God to be in your life because you don't have all that time to wait. Tommorow's not
142   promised to you. There is somebody that's here today that God has chosen and he's
143   calling you right now and you are choosing not to answer. Joshua 24 and 15 says, "to
144   choose you this day who you will serve. Will it be God or man?" Joshua goes on to say
145   "that for me and my house, I choose to serve the Lord." Maybe there is someone here
146   today that thinks that God cannot call you or use you because of your past. You think he
147   can't use you because of all the wrong things you have done. But I'm here to tell you
148   that God can still use you if you ask him to. He can clean you up. Don't let your past
149   interfere with your future. Romans 3 and 23 says, "For all have sinned and fallen short of
150   God's glory."
151
152   Look at Saul in the book of Acts. Saul was known for hustlin', cussin', and gang
153   bangin'. He stole, tortured, and killed people who believed in God. But one day God
154   struck him and asked Saul, "Saul, why do you persecute me?" God took away his sight
155   for 3 days. You see for some of us this is what we need in order to hear what God is
156   trying to tell us. Sometimes he has to blind us or take some things away in order to get
157   our attention. Now I don't know what your blind spot is but maybe God has to take
158   something away that's distracting us in order for us to see what he's trying to tell us. See
159   Saul was living a thug life. He was known as Saul the persecutor or the gang banger.
160   But when God changed him so that he could use him, he also changed his name to Paul.
161   God gave Saul a new name when he changed him and when he cleaned him up. That
162   same God wants to give somebody else a new name. He wants to clean your name up
163   and make it something…known for something good as an instrument for him.
164
165   If you are here today, know that God is …know that it is God's way of giving you
166   another chance to do the right thing. And the right thing is to stand up to God's call
167   today while we are still young or while we still have the time. The time is now. There is
168   no more time that we have to be wasted. Because like I said, tomorrow is not promised
169   today. You can wake up and realize there is no more time left for you to make this
170   decision. Remember God called Josiah at the age of 8 and he answered the call. Some of
171   us are wondering how and why did he become king at such a young age. I don't know
172   why, but one thing I do know is that he did what was right in God's eyes. And whatever
173   is right in God's eyes is the only approval that matters. If God can call an 8 year old to
174   be king, he can call each and every one of us to do great things if we are willing to
175   answer the call and choose to be used by God. Amen.

1   Christine M.
2   Youth Sunday Sermon
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jNWWStOudw&feature=related
4
5   Episcopal
6   White Female
7
8   Hey guys! How y'all doin'? Um, so, a bunch of people told me that since my dad's been
9   preaching sermons about me, I should, you know, since it's Father's Day and all, I should
10   take this opportunity to (inaudible) him. But, unfortunately by the time that was
11   suggested to me, it was a great idea, and I really wish I would have thought of it, I had
12   already finished the sermon, so I know you're all disappointed. Sorry.
13
14   Anyway…get you later…first off, let me just say that ever since AP exams were finished
15   for us seniors way back in May, um, we've been done. And I mean totally done. I
16   haven't written anything or been particularly creative or insightful since then, so you'll
17   have to forgive me if this sermon is a bit boring or unrefined. I'm a bit off my stride with
18   that whole doing work thing.
19
20   So today's sermon is based on a pretty well-known story – a simple woman washing
21   Jesus' feet with her hair. I've gotta say, this woman is a lot braver than I'd ever be.
22   She's a known sinner – probably been sleeping around and prostitutin' and such and she
23   just waltzes into this room with all these priests and religious higher-ups, all of whom
24   have probably berated her or openly spoken ill of her. It might have taken some doing
25   just to get into the place and I'm sure the atmosphere really wasn't that welcoming. I
26   mean it takes some guts to crash a party. So to go to all that trouble must have meant that
27   she was pretty dedicated. And she was certainly pretty gutsy.
28
29   Now at first glance in this gospel it might seem like Jesus is saying that those who sin
30   more need to be forgiven more and thus they love more. So if you really want to love
31   Christ, you should go out and sin as much as possible. Except, that isn't true at all, as we
32   all know. Truth be told, the Pharisees in that room were just as sinful as that woman.
33   Their sin might not have been as blatant or apparent, but we all know there's more than
34   one way to sin. They just didn't realize their own sin or choose to ask for forgiveness.
35   They could not be forgiven much because they didn't ask to be forgiven.
36
37   Now this might seem pretty easy, but honestly, this is one of the things I have most
38   trouble with. A lot of times I consider myself to be a pretty good person who's doing
39   pretty well in life. I mean, I have a few flaws here and there, but who doesn't? And most
40   of the time I'm doing better than the rest, right? I mean, I have friends who go out and
41   drink on weekends, who lie to their friends and family, who mess around with sex and
42   drugs. I look at them and I look at me and I don't think I really need to make that many
43   changes. I tend to focus more on helping others fix themselves than focusing on fixing
44   my own life. And I tend to fell as if I don't really need to ask for that much grace.
45

46 Of course, that's just what the Pharisees thought too. But our souls don't just suffer from
47 the big sins – those sins the whole world sees and looks down upon. I know I often times
48 suffer more from the little things – the things most people don't hold against me. I feel
49 bad when a bunch of friends and I are hanging out and I don't take the time to call and
50 invite another friend who doesn't often get invited to things. I feel bad if I'm always too
51 busy to spend time with old friends or new ones. I feel bad if I'm out every night of the
52 week and haven't seen my family in ages. I feel bad if I always show up late just because
53 I try to do one more thing before I hop in the car. I feel bad if I procrastinate on really
54 important things like scholarships or this sermon for example. None of these things are
55 huge or disastrous and none of them will spell the end of the world, but as humans we all
56 make so many little mistakes and we all just need so much grace.
57
58 Allowing God to smooth over so many of these little mistakes we are also bound to
59 make, no matter how hard we try not to does allow us to love more deeply and fully.
60 And the Jesus of this passage is only too willing to forgive. As long as we just ask, he's
61 more than willing to do, or at least help with all the rest. The more we realize our own
62 shortcomings the more we can forgive others' flaws and not take it so hard when our
63 friends arrive late or our families can't spend time with us. When we ask for grace, we
64 understand that we are no better than anyone else.
65
66 I have been shown so much of this grace and love at St. Matthews throughout my 6 years
67 here. And I honestly can say that I would not be here today if it were not for all of you.
68 The love and dedication of my church family and friends has helped me so much over the
69 years and shown me so much grace when the world is so often been unwilling to.   It is
70 one of the things I love most about St. Matthews. We tend not to judge people. We
71 would much rather show them that they are loved and I cannot tell you how beautiful that
72 is. I think this is in part because you are not afraid to realize your mistakes, ask for
73 forgiveness, and try to correct them as best as we are able.
74
75 This simple woman was brave enough to crash a party full of people who hated her. And
76 she was brave enough to recognize her own sin and brave enough to ask for grace. It is
77 not exactly the courage of the dragon-slaying knight, but perhaps it is far more relevant to
78 us all here today. I pray that we may all have such bravery. Amen.

1   Emily Baird
2   My Sermon
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jX4IeKxuiME
4
5   Baptist
6   White Female
7
8   We're very thankful to be here with you this morning. It's an honor to be involved in the
9   weekend in such a huge way. I'm glad y'all came. Today we'll be speaking about Psalm
10   139. Please pray with me.
11
12   Dear Lord, thank you for bringing everyone here today and allowing us to preach your
13   word. Please speak through my peers and myself today. Let everyone here leave
14   changed because of your impact on our lives. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.
15
16   My name is Emily, also known as Mustang Sally by my peers at Memorial High School.
17   Yes, that's right, I'm the mascot. I think it's perfect for my personality. I mean, I love
18   attention and making people laugh and I love hugging little kids at all the football games.
19
20   In middle school though, I would have loved to have a mascot suit to hide in. I was kind
21   of self-conscious, I felt overweight and nerdy. I also felt like all the other girls were
22   more fashionable than me and more attractive. In fact to my idea of fashion was wearing
23   overalls every single day. In fact I even got hung up by my overalls one day. It was
24   pretty bad. Also I had the red hair, freckles, braces – it was just not a pretty picture. I got
25   called Pippi Longstockings every day I wore pigtails. But things began to change in 7th
26   grade. I started losing weight. And not just losing baby fat, growing up kind of weight.
27   It was a lot of weight. I would be hungry non-stop and I would eat whatever I wanted.
28   And I would still be losing weight. I also couldn't sleep at night. My heart would just be
29   pounding and I would just sit up in bed wondering what was going on. Well I told my
30   parents and they knew something was wrong too. So we went to the doctor. We ran
31   some tests and after the results came back in I found out I had a disease. This disease is
32   called Grave's Disease and it affects your thyroid. I was immediately put on beta-
33   blockers to slow down my heart rate so I wouldn't have a heart attack. It was a terrible
34   point in my life. I was at my worst. I didn't feel good, I was always hungry, and I still
35   couldn't sleep. Also it was confusing because I was really, really thin and I didn't feel
36   good and teachers and parents and kids would say, "Emily you look so great. You're
37   becoming such a beautiful young lady. You're so skinny." And I was confused thinking
38   this…my doctor says this isn't a healthy weight, why are you telling me I look great?
39   And it just taught me a lot about the hypocrisy of trying to please the world and how
40   people view others. It just, it really was hard to learn at such a young age.
41
42   And God knows me, even when I'm angry or trying to run away from him. To be honest
43   I was mad. I felt like I didn't deserve this. I mean, I was only 13 years old in the 7th
44   grade. I was just beginning to meet my new friends in middle school and it just, it was
45   just a bad time for me. I also was angry because I couldn't do the things I wanted to do
46   anymore. I couldn't play sports anymore. I had to sit on the sidelines. I had to get blood

47   drawn all the time for tests and I had to take really bad tasting medicine. I tried to run
48   away from God because I was mad and I also tried to fight this disease thinking that God
49   had made a mistake. Well, God never makes mistakes.
50
51   But this is the same kind of situation with Moses and God. In Exodus 3.11, Moses said
52   to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"
53   God had told him to go save the Israelites from Pharaoh but Moses was saying to God,
54   "what are you doing? You're making a mistake." He was basically telling God, "I'm
55   right, you're wrong." And that's kind of the thing. God you made a mistake I'm not
56   supposed to [video skips] this disease, maybe that's somebody else, maybe you made a
57   mistake but God basically showed me that I had to make a choice between dwelling on
58   this illness or moving on and letting him give me a bigger plan like the one he gave for
59   Moses.
60
61   Please open your bibles to Psalm 139 verse 1 through 5. It reads, "O Lord, you have
62   searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my
63   thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with
64   all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. You hem
65   me in-behind and before;
66   you have laid your hand upon me."
67
68   God does know me. He knew how much I could handle and even though he gave me this
69   disease, I never hit my breaking point. And right now I'm stable with the medicine I'm
70   on. He loves me and he is in control. He has my back. He protects me. Knowing that
71   God's in control of my life has really allowed me to be free. I can be free with God
72   knowing that he's got the plan and I don't know…have to know everything every second
73   of every day. Also it just allows me to trust others and love them for who God has made
74   them to be now that I love myself for who God has made me to be. God definitely has a
75   plan, because this fall the same kids that hung me up by my overalls in middle school
76   also voted for me as Memorial's homecoming queen. It's true. I know…I now know
77   that God is surrounding me, he's always with me, and there is nothing in the world for
78   me to fear.

1   Jane Doe
2   Youth Sunday Preachers at All Saints Pasadena, Part 1
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2IPpCRXxEE
4
5   Episcopal
6   White Female
7
8   What God means to me. What a question. About two years ago, I would have said
9   nothing. But now, God means everything. I first starting coming to All Saints because of
10   Desmond Tutu. My mother heard from her union that he was speaking, and she came to
11   listen and told me that I just had to come see this place. Well, my mother is agnostic, so
12   for her to be telling me to go to church – I knew I had to go. I came one Sunday and was
13   amazed. I felt so comfortable here. I wasn't being told that I had to believe anything. I
14   wasn't being forced to say anything. I was allowed to just be. Then, I filled out one of
15   the newcomer information cards from the pew rack in front of me, and so began my
16   journey of faith.
17
18   My first year at All Saints was a hectic one. My very first youth group, I signed up for
19   fast relief. Fast relief is a fundraiser in which we fast for 30 hours to help raise money for
20   Episcopal relief and development. It was an amazing experience. Then I attended the
21   diocesan senior high dance bishop's ball. One of the most fun dances I have ever been
22   to. Trevor was there too. And then I was an angel in the Easter vigil. That is where I
23   met Wilma and MaryAnn. It was amazing and so are they. Well that was how it all
24   began.
25
26   I started to develop relationships with all the kids in youth group and all the volunteers.
27   But more importantly, I started to develop my relationship with God. For me, there were
28   two outstanding events that really helped me get close to God. The first was the winter
29   retreat I went on to Camp Stevens. We were only there for a weekend, but it changed my
30   life. I remember it was the first time that I truly felt like a child of God. For one thing, it
31   was my first weekend away from home. Secondly, it was the first time I was able to
32   really explore what God was and how he was affecting my life. The most important
33   thing that I learned on that retreat was that with God, you have to take chances. You
34   have to take that leap of faith in order to get anywhere. But don't worry, because God
35   will always catch you. He may let you fall for a bit, but he will always catch you before
36   you go splat on the sidewalk. The other thing that happened on that retreat was that I got
37   really close to Dave Erickson. It was the first time I got to have a serious conversation
38   with him and ever since then, he has been the person that I could go to for anything.
39   The second event that changed my faith was "Seekers." For anyone that doesn't know,
40   "Seekers" is the confirmation class here at All Saints. "Seekers" was the first time that I
41   really had to figure out where I was at with God and if I was ready to make a major
42   commitment to him. There were a few things I knew for sure. There is a God. I do
43   believe in Jesus. I am forever loved. And God will always be there for me. Now this
44   may sound like a firm basis on which to get confirmed, but I changed my mind more than
45   anyone else in my class. There was and is a lot of pressure from my relatives to be a

46   Lutheran. But, after my mother stopped going to church altogether, they figured a
47   different church was better than no church.

48   Another hurdle in deciding to get confirmed was dealing with the idea of forgiveness. It
49   just seems too easy. But that is an entirely different subject. But because my mother
50   supported me every time I changed my mind, I continued to question. So what I finally
51   decided with "Seekers" was that I was ready to make a commitment to God to stay
52   committed. I decided that by being confirmed, I was promising to continue with my
53   journey of faith no matter where it takes me. I realize that I don't have to agree with
54   everything the church says and I am forever allowed to change my mind, but I do have to
55   continue to question. I must continue to pray and listen. I will never get all the answers I
56   want, but I will always get all the answers I need. And as long as I continue to pray, God
57   will provide. As long as I work on our relationship, so will he. Every time I look up,
58   God will be in my rearview mirror. All I have to do is try and I will be rewarded with
59   more than I could ever imagine. And the best part, so will you. Thank you.

1   Jessi
2   Youth Sermon Part 1/2
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2eQ5w4dXVg&feature=related
4
5   Seventh Day Adventist
6   Latina Female
7
8   The title of tonight's sermon is extreme change. In a convention of barbers, they wanted
9   to show that their profession was able to change a person's life. After running through
10   some streets in the city, they found the perfect person. An alcoholic. He stunk. And
11   dirty and a beggar. Well, before, 2 days after, they found this guy in the streets. But
12   before they took the man and they bathed him, they shaved him, they cut his hair, and
13   they clothed him in a very elegant and professional way. His appearance, his odor, his
14   (inaudible) was all different. Like how I said before, two days later he was in the streets
15   again. He had torn his clothes and had wasted all the money on alcohol and drugs. The
16   barbers were able to change the man's outside, but he couldn't change his nature. The
17   constant change. Let us pray.
18
19   Heavenly father, which art in heaven. Help us to be better Christians. And to have the
20   presence of your Holy Spirit inside of us. Because we ask these things in your sweet
21   name, through your son Jesus Christ. Amen.
22
23   Extreme change are transformations produced by circumstances that can either be
24   external or internal. Things that you saw coming or things that came by surprise.
25   Nowadays the industries that are most lucrative are the ones that deal with plastic surgery
26   or aesthetic surgery. People will pay whatever they need to pay to make certain changes
27   in their bodies so they can look a little bit more beautiful. To be a little more attractive or
28   to be in the new, in the new fashion mode. In Columbia for example, a person, one of the
29   people that experienced an external, uh, aesthetic change, was a football star that played
30   in the national football team of Columbia. Renee Egita. He entered into a surgical
31   procedure that helped him look physically more handsome. And even though they could
32   change him physically, he says "I am still the same inside." Now through
33   communication and commercials, everybody is really big into plastic surgery and all sorts
34   of aesthetic procedures. Changes are constant in our world. We have the society is
35   changing. Economics are changing, nature is changing. Scientific breakthroughs. A
36   spiritual revival and physical change, babies are growing up into adults. Changes will
37   affect a human being in one way or another. We will either respond with rebellion or
38   peaceably. We will either become addicted or abstinent. We will either refuse to believe
39   and doubt or to believe and have faith. We'll either wind up poor or we'll wind up rich.
40   Healthy or sick.
41
42   What are changes and what do they require. Extreme changes are – youth of integrity
43   require valor. Those who want to transform need to first learn how to accept. Those who
44   want to be definitive need to know how to make decisions. Those who want to improvise
45   need to learn how to adapt. Those who don't want to fall into the regular routine need to
46   know how to be innovative. Now we're going to talk about the experience of the man of

47   extreme change. His biography goes a little something like this. This man would fight
48   for the people. This man was a member of the Sanhedrin. He was a zealous Pharisee.
49   He was from…he was a Jew by nationality. And he was a doctor of the law. His
50   characteristics were…he was, uh, question, able to answer questions, very curious person,
51   very innovative, he would not conform, and he was very sensitive to the needs of the
52   people. And he was a religious leader. And he was always ready to serve. In John
53   chapter 3 verses 1 through 4. Let us read together. There was a man of the Pharisees
54   named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said to him,
55   "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God. For no man can do these
56   miracles that thou does except God be with him if God was not with him." And Jesus
57   said to him, "Verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot see the
58   kingdom of God." [break in clip]
59
60   Jessi Youth Sermon Part 2/2
61   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xU9AZCu2I7Q&NR=1
62
63   Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second
64   time into his mother's womb and be born again?" The man of extreme change is
65   Nicodemus. He came by night because he wanted to avoid criticism. He wanted to hide
66   from judgment. And in reality he knew compared to Jesus he was in spiritual darkness.
67   Verse number 2 and he said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God for no
68   man can do these miracles that thou does except God be with him." Here Nicodemus
69   recognizes that Jesus was an extraordinary man. That his miracles and his works had to
70   come from God. Observing Jesus and the way that he talked and walked opened up and
71   woke up the curiosity of Nicodemus and the desire for extreme change. The answer that
72   Jesus gave to Nicodemus confirmed his great need and his great, uh, his great need for
73   salvation. In verse number three says, "Verily I say unto thee except a man be born again
74   he cannot see the kingdom of God." Whoever wants to see the kingdom of God and
75   whoever wants to be there and experience it…they need an extreme change. As I mean
76   to say, you need to experience a reform or a new lifestyle.
77
78   We're going to analyze a little bit the way man offers extreme change and then the way
79   God offers extreme change. In John 3.4 we read, "Can I enter in the second time
80   into…can man enter a second time into his mother and be born again?" Man always
81   looks for his own way to salvation. He thinks that the answer is in him and that he has
82   whatever it takes. But when he realizes what God's way is, he is surprised. In John 3.5
83   we read, "Verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he
84   cannot enter into the kingdom of God." God's way is always free. It is always simple
85   and it's always easy. But even though it's simple, easy, and free, they have conditions
86   that are non-negotiable. He who is not born of the water – the being born of water is a
87   symbol of baptism. It's a commitment realized between God and man. It is the cleansing
88   of a sinful heart. And it's a change for a brand new heart. And when we switch hearts,
89   we change our habits and we change our acts into acts of obedience. Whoever is not born
90   of the Spirit, it's the Holy Spirit that makes sense of our life. And it makes our Christian
91   walk possible. To be born of the Holy Spirit is to receive the help from God so that we
92   can understand and be empowered to do God's will.

93
94　In conclusion, extreme change is only possible when our weakness and our will unites
95　with the powerful will of God. It's the extreme change that God does in us that allows us
96　to go into heaven. We all here tonight every one of us need an extreme change.
97　Something that can transform our lives forever. To change our broken promises to
98　fulfilled promises by the power of God. To change our sadness into joy and to turn our
99　tears into gladness. Amen.
100
101　Let us pray. Holy father, help all of us make a real change. Not just a change but an
102　extreme change in our lives so that when Jesus comes we can be with you in heaven. We
103　ask all these things in the name of Jesus, amen.

1 Joshua LaPerriere
2 Suncoast Youth Group: Joshua LaPerriere: The Swords of David
3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvgxOxxEiDM
4
5 Baptist
6 White Male
7

8 Many of you already know that this passage tells the story of David and Goliath. David
9 experienced one of his greatest victories of his life in these verses. And tonight, I'm not
10 going to take the time to explain the entire story in detail, but I will give you a brief
11 summary in case you aren't familiar with the story. (sings) Only a boy named David,
12 only a little sling. Only a boy named David, but he could pray and sing. Only a boy
13 named David, only a rippling brook. Only a boy named David, but five little stones he
14 took. And one little stone went into the sling and the sling went round and round. And
15 one little stone went into the sling and the sling went 'round and 'round. And 'round and
16 'round and 'round and 'round and 'round and 'round and 'round. And one little stone
17 went into the air and the giant came tumbling down. (Audience claps)
18
19 I just want you guys to know, Pastor Lee forced me to sing that. Anyways, but, tonight I
20 would just like to uh point out one particular verse in this story which is verse 51. And it
21 says, "Therefore David ran and stood upon the Philistine and took his sword and drew it
22 out its sheath and slew him and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw
23 that their champion was dead, they fled." So in other words, David walks up to Goliath
24 and hits him with a rock and David falls, I mean, Goliath falls down and David takes
25 Goliath's sword and severs his head from his body. Now a man's sword is generally
26 proportional to his body. Kind of like this one is proportional to me. I know it's not the
27 sword that they used, but hey, it's only story time. Now, I'm like about 5 feet tall, or so,
28 and Goliath is 10 feet tall so twice the size of this sword. David picks this up I mean like
29 "man that's huge!" Anyways, but, often times we would read a story like that and not
30 realize the ripple effect that it has in people's lives. That sword that was a symbol of
31 victory that day is brought up in several different places throughout the Old Testament.
32 Each time the sword is brought up, which symbolizes the first victory, it's used as an
33 inspiration or a stepping stone if you will to win the next victory.
34
35 Now remember back in elementary school you know when you had to take, uh, spelling
36 tests? That good grade that you got became a trophy or to remind you of what you've
37 done and what you can do in the future. In the same way, every time you live through a
38 victory in our spiritual life it can be used as a trophy and as inspiration to win the next
39 victory. So, here's the thing – that trophy isn't only going to encourage me again, but it's
40 going to encourage others as well. So what I want to convey to you guys tonight is pretty
41 much, "We must win spiritual victories for the glory of God." Why you might ask?
42 Because of the effect that it will have on your own life. Turn your bibles to 1 Samuel
43 chapter 21. Now we see here in these verses that just a short time later, David is about
44 the king's business and when he comes to Ahimelech the priest it says, in verses 8 and 9,
45 "and David said unto Ahimelech and is there not here under my hand a spear or a sword
46 for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me because the king's

320

47   business required haste. And the priest said, the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom
48   thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod,
49   if thou will take that, take it for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is
50   none like that; give it me." So, pretty much David's [stumbles] is doing the king's
51   business and requires haste. So like I don't know like maybe he's going to pick fruit I
52   don't know and he needs a sword, whatever. So he goes up to his old buddy Ahimelech
53   and he's like, "Hey, you got a sword or a spear or something?" And he's like, "Well I
54   got this thing, Goliath's sword. You used it to chop his head off before. So, then David's
55   like, "Hey, that right there is an awesome sword. Give it to me." So, when David took
56   the sword, it probably…it probably brought back some memories. As he held the handle,
57   touched the blade, it must have reminded him of his day when he fought Goliath, when
58   he stood up and trusted the Lord to give him that victory. Now if he didn't do that, and
59   fought Goliath, he wouldn't have that sword to do the king's business, so what would he
60   have? It's because of that one trophy that he was able to get the job done.

1   Katie
2   Redeemer Lutheran Youth Sermon
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPunXsiuaMs
4
5   Lutheran
6   White Female
7
8   Good morning everyone. Hope you all are enjoying the service so far. Before I start, I
9   want to give a round of applause to Pat (inaudible). She did a good job organizing and
10   encouraging us teenagers, which is not easy to do – and we couldn't have done it without
11   you. Alright. So to start off, I wrote this on the bus ride back from my basketball game
12   on Wednesday, so my intro. is a bit lacking. But everyone bear with me and Andy, don't
13   fall asleep this time.
14
15   So to begin, here's a little bit about me. My name is Katie Whiteman and I'm a junior at
16   Bettendorf [high school] and I've been going to Redeemer since I was about 7 years old.
17   I love The Office. Dwight Schrute is my absolute favorite. I whistle when I feel
18   awkward and I can fold an elephant out of a dollar bill. Some other stuff: I play varsity
19   basketball and varsity soccer. And I just started rowing this fall. I've been taking piano
20   lessons since I was 10 and art lessons since I was 7. I'm a part of a lot of different clubs,
21   one of them being German club despite the fact that I've never taken a German class in
22   my life. Now, I bet you all are thinking, "Hm, she's a junior. One more year, I wonder
23   where she's going to college. I wonder what she's going to do with the rest of her life?"
24   I think I get asked the question just about 10 times a week. 5 of those being my parents.
25   You could be a teacher, I tell myself. You really like kids. And this stint teaching
26   Sunday school has been a good one. Or why not a journalist? You really like to write.
27   Even a doctor? You like helping people. You've been drawing since before you could
28   walk – why not an artist? So, as all of you can see, my future has a big fat question mark
29   at the end of it. In other words, I have absolutely no idea.
30
31   I wish it were simple. I wish I could just be handed a scroll with all the plans God has for
32   me. I'd open it up, read it, and instantly know what I was going to do with the rest of my
33   life. But wait, this sounds familiar. It happened to Jesus in our gospel for today. Let's
34   take another look. "He stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to
35   him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the
36   Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent
37   me to proclaim release for the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the
38   oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And he rolled up the scroll,
39   gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all the synagogue were fixed on
40   him." So basically, (inaudible – Jesus threw it down?). Jesus walks into the synagogue
41   where he's supposed to give a sermon. Some random person hands him a piece of paper
42   with basically all the answers these people are looking for on it – who he is, where his
43   powers comes from, and what his job on earth is all about. These people had been
44   listening to this guy named Isaiah talk about this problem for a long time. Jesus walks in
45   and basically says, "Hey, I'm the one you're talking about." He reads a sermon and once
46   again, wows the crowd.

47
48   And I know, all of you are going to have the same exact reaction when I'm done with my
49   sermon right now. God, however, did not give me a scroll – not for my sermon or for my
50   future. Instead, God has given me a pen and a blank piece of paper. But he hasn't left
51   me alone to write it myself. In fact, it's the exact opposite. He has given me his word in
52   the Bible and I'm trying to use it to guide me. He's also given me his Holy Spirit, which
53   calms me down and keeps me from freaking out when everyone asks me these dreaded
54   "future" questions. And finally, he's given me his son, Jesus Christ, who died on the
55   cross for my sins. And he's also done this with every one of you (inaudible). Because no
56   matter what we do with our lives, no matter whether we succeed or fail, we can know that
57   his love and forgiveness will always be with us.
58
59   So figuring out what we are supposed to do with our lives is not going to be as easy as
60   Jesus had it on that day in Galilee. I know I'm going to make mistakes. I think we all do.
61   We're going to have to cross things out on our scrolls, maybe even start a new paragraph.
62   But that's ok, God…because God will always be with us. He'll always be over our
63   shoulders, comforting us, guiding us, and helping us every step of the way. Thank you.

1   Matthew Sistrunk
2   Youth Sunday Sermon pt 1
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDhKipjeuLU&feature=related
4
5   Presbyterian Church (USA)
6   African American Male
7
8   Introduction from an adult
9
10   Good morning. I'm glad she said that the word comes from Matthew because I didn't
11   know whether she was talking about me or the Lord. Either one is accurate. Um, I'm
12   glad you guys came out here on youth Sunday this morning. Um, I really appreciate you
13   guys coming out here again. As Jessica said, I am a senior at Decatur High School. And
14   actually as a graduating senior I've been assigned a good number of books to read. And
15   because of this, the high school has made the bookstore my second home. And Borders
16   actually being my favorite. I don't know if you guys spend much time in Borders but my
17   experience is that everyone in there is so nice and friendly. Like when you go in there
18   they just run up to you with a smile on their face. And not only do they point you to the
19   section where the book you're looking for might be in like Barnes and Nobles, like, the
20   go to you to the section, pick the book and hand it to you, ask you what the next book is
21   on your list so they can repeat the process over again.
22
23   Now it makes me feel bad sometimes when I actually don't want the book because they
24   actually go through all that trouble. So sometimes I actually sneak the book back when
25   they're not looking. It works, it works a lot better when it's busy in there, they don't
26   notice you as much.
27
28   Um, I actually went into Borders this past Spring break looking for books to fill my time
29   and so I had free time and I actually noticed that there were crates near the front of the
30   store with books marked down to 3.99 a piece. And now, mind you, these are books that
31   are usually 10, 12, 14 dollars. So, and I was even more excited to find out that the books
32   were buy 2, get the third one free. However, the smile on my face faded a little when I
33   found out that the books that were on sale were either cook books or children's books.
34   So, I actually still had to kill some time so I rummaged through the piles to hope that
35   something would pop out and to my satisfaction, something did pop out. It was actually a
36   New York Times bestseller um, called *Please Stop Laughing at Me* by Jodee Blanco.
37   Now I'm thinking that New York Times bestsellers shouldn't be on sale for 3.99 but in
38   the same sense, it seems like everything these days is a New York Times bestseller. And,
39   actually Blanco begins the novel in the parking lot of a hotel where a high school reunion
40   is taking place. She is quite hesitant, she is hesitant to go inside to face the faces that she
41   faced in high school. Um, she's hesitant because she remembers the experiences and the
42   suffering she had to go through in high school. She, in her New York Times bestseller,
43   tells how she was bullied and shunned in elementary school, middle school, and high
44   school. This happened not because of how she looked, or who her parents were, or where
45   she lived, but because of her personality and values. Now I'm sure you're asking
46   yourself, how can a person's values result in their being teased by their classmates? She

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47 recounts that the bullying starts when she befriended a handicapped girl. Her once then
48 best friend, or her former best friend began to ignore her because of this. She began to
49 call her really ugly names because of this. She later stands up for a group of deaf
50 children who are being teased by the older kids. She received more ridiculing because of
51 this. She tells of how she was shunned because she wouldn't play nasty jokes on her
52 teachers or classmates. Because she wouldn't make fun of the mentally challenged kids
53 in her class. Instead she saw the kids as just people like herself. She engaged them in
54 conversation and made them feel comfortable by volunteering her free time to help them
55 with their lessons. She invited, she invited those who were outcast into her life because
56 she saw that she needed them and they needed her. Because of this, again, she was
57 shunned and excommunicated if you will.
58
59 After the Columbine shooting a couple years ago, or a few years ago rather, students who
60 knew the young man, who knew the young men who took their lives and the lives of their
61 classmates were interviewed. The students who happened to be on the wrestling team
62 with the young men stated they were surprised that anyone would plan such a thing.
63 Everyone at Columbine was so nice to each other.   However, the students who knew the
64 students really well, the best friends of the two young men said that they had to face
65 humiliation, teasing, and were spat upon – and they had to hide while they were
66 transferring classes through the hallways. Now how can both of these be true you ask.
67
68 Jodee also, in her book, also called, or was called names. She had her life threatened, she
69 was spat upon, had her hair pulled out, gum put in her hair. She found articles of her
70 clothing found in toilets, as well as her lunch. She was, she found garbage stuffed in her
71 locker and her back pack. She was held on the ground many times, had snow stuffed
72 down her throat to the result of her choking, and she had rocks pelted at her and was
73 again held down and beaten over and over again until she wouldn't even scream anymore
74 because it would go by faster and she wouldn't feel it as much if she zoned out mentally.
75 One day a teacher witnessed these attacks. The teacher told her that it would be better if
76 she learned to fight her own battles by herself. Her teachers, school administrators, and
77 even psychiatrists dismissed it as kids being kids and blamed Jodee for not trying hard
78 enough to fit in. When this first started happening at her elementary school, her parents
79 made Jodee switch schools. The first few months of the new school would be fine with
80 her making friends, but as soon as she held out a helping hand to those who needed her,
81 as soon as she showed compassion to others who were bullied, who were tormented, she
82 would find herself shunned as well and left out to an even worse extent than before. Her
83 new friends would now see her as the enemy. She would be in the same situation as she
84 once left at the previous school. She would eventually change schools numerous times
85 up until she went to high school. Actually, before class she would pray, please God don't
86 let anyone see what I really look like. She had to put on facades to fit in. She wanted to
87 be accepted and to do so, she couldn't nor didn't show compassion for others. She didn't
88 volunteer her time to those who were deemed unacceptable by society. She didn't want
89 her suffering to continue. She wanted to fit in and she tells of a time when she even went
90 to the length of playing a cruel joke of one of her teachers, on one of her teachers.
91 Afterwards, she confessed that she felt extremely guilty and apologized to that same
92 teacher. And it was on this day that she realized that you cannot run from who you are.

93
94 Now many of you can probably imagine why I chose to speak from the book of Matthew
95 this morning. It probably reminds me of an old friend. However, I wanted to speak
96 about suffering and persecution today because it's relevant in the world that we live in.
97 In national news, local news, and even at the lunch tables, everyone is on the subject of
98 suffering. The car companies are suffering, this economy, the stock market is suffering,
99 the divorce rates is on the rise because of this, and children are suffering. The internet
100 has provided new ways for bullies to harass people and youth through cyberspace. Civil
101 wars are going on around the world and nations are also suffering. Everyone is either
102 suffering or knows someone who is suffering. In fact the suffering and persecution that I
103 want to talk about today and that Jesus spoke about is a persecution for his sake.
104 Suffering for standing up for people what we, for people and what we know is right in the
105 name of Christ. I have listened and watched and it seems that both Christians and non-
106 Christians alike are shocked with how much suffering and persecution is happening and
107 going on in the world today. But however we should not be surprised by this because
108 persecution is not a new problem. Christians in the early church have had to suffer
109 terrible penalties for being followers of Christ. They were jailed, fed to lions, [end of
110 clip]
111
112 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Xk8TYcl2sY&feature=channel
113
114 and even burned alive. Now Matthew 5.10-12 says, "Blessed are those who are
115 persecuted because of righteousness." Then it goes on to say, "blessed are you when
116 people insult you, persecute you falsely, and all kinds of evil against you." But it asks
117 you to, to rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven. These Christians
118 were blessed for their persecution for righteousness in God's name. They lived life and
119 with their eyes firmly (inaudible) on Christ and they died knowing that they lived in him
120 and to the fullest gave him everything. And now they are with him in the heavenly
121 kingdom today. Yes they are blessed. Our time here in this world is hardly anything at
122 all. The real life is the eternal life following. The world is the small picture. Time spent
123 with Jesus here in the eternity is the big picture. A day in his presence is worth
124 everything. And the peace we feel in his presence, the love he freely gives and the
125 forgiveness he shares with us daily are worth the persecution.
126
127 Jodee, the author of the book, wasn't burned alive, but she is an example of modern day
128 persecution for righteousness. She tells how her parents raised her Catholic and taught
129 her to follow in Christ's name. She was persecuted for following Jesus' example. And
130 Matthew 5.10-12 goes on, as I said, and asks the persecuted to be rejoiceful. Jodee used
131 her pain and suffering in school to build her literature skills by writing about what she
132 had to deal with and then she went on to NYU to become an author and English major.
133 After graduating, she planned huge events in which she met huge celebrities and heads of
134 state by (inaudible)-ing with them. God has blessed her with these opportunities and has
135 learned to rejoice in suffering and her persecution has become her blessing.
136
137 Believe it or not, when we are persecuted, we are brought closer to God. Our eyes are
138 taken off what society deems is important and put on him and his purpose. Our world

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139   gets a lot smaller when we realize that it's just us and him. When we walk with Christ,
140   when we live in his example, and build a life in him, the world will reject us and we
141   cannot run from the fact that the teachings of God are contrary to what society deems is
142   important. The teachings of God are contrary to the teachings of society because…and
143   because of this to be followers of Christ we will be marked by society.
144
145   A little less than a month ago, on April 16th, an 11 year-old boy who lived in Stone
146   Mountain, like myself, by the name of Jaheem Hererra, came home happy to have his
147   report card in hand. He rushed to show it to his mother and his mother gave him a high-
148   five because of the A's and B's it contained. Afterwards he went upstairs to wait for his
149   mother to finish dinner. When dinner was ready his mother sent his sister upstairs to tell
150   Jaheem that it was time to eat. Moments later, screams came from within his room.
151   Jaheem had hung himself by his belt. It turned out that he was continuously being bullied
152   and being called obscene names at his elementary school. His mother knew of his
153   bullying because he would tell her from day to day. And she complained numerous times
154   not only to the school but the school board. And the day of his death, Jaheem told his
155   best friend that he was tired of telling his mother and other adults what he was
156   experiencing because nothing was being done by the school board or the school at all.
157   Jaheem thought that he was alone in his struggle. He did not know that Jesus was right
158   there with him in his struggle. He didn't have anyone in his class putting their neck on
159   the line with him facing down his persecutors with him and he died thinking that there
160   was no hope.
161
162   School grounds are not the only place where persecution can take place. A while back a
163   soccer player in Brazil accidentally scored a goal on his own team's…on his own team.
164   He was taunted, bullied, and after the game even killed by the fans because of this.
165   Persecution also takes place in the office or work place. Just because people grow up
166   does not mean that they mature. And you may go to work every day and have to face
167   people who taunt, mock, dis-, or discriminate against you. But no matter whether we are
168   persecuted in the school, on the sports field, or in the place of work, we will not be alone
169   in our struggles. Christ is with us and he will always be. And if we are honest with each
170   other about what we are going through, we can also be with each other. And we
171   shouldn't have to fight our own battles alone. No matter whether we are persecuted in
172   the school or sports field or the work place, we will not be alone in our struggle. Jodee
173   during her senior year of high school won a scholarship to a writing conference at a
174   university. And at this conference she met other students who were going through
175   exactly what she had experienced in her years of schooling. And she was shown that she
176   was not only alone nor neither were the others. Because of this she was able to get
177   through her persecutions. She was able to do what she knew was right without worrying
178   about judgment and how she was treated by others. Again she made her
179   persecution…again she made her persecution into…and rejoiced and made it her
180   blessing. Because of this she was able to, again, to go to NYU, to become a writer, and
181   to inform others out there who might be going through the exact same experiences that
182   she went through…that they are not alone.
183

184   I'm here to tell you that no matter what you go through no matter what persecutions you
185   go through that you are not alone. And Christ will be with you. And that the people
186   sitting right next to you will be with you. Thank you.

1 Minister Keith Johnson
2 "Going Forth In The Beauty of Holiness 1, 2, and 3
3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ksy8btH8JcQ&feature=related
4
5 Pentecostal Holiness
6 African American Male
7
8 (Inaudible) but I give you what the Lord has given me and I thank God for removing the
9 fear because we didn't come to tend to Satan's affairs but I come to give you what the
10 Lord has given me. What he says is what you'll receive. In Isaiah the 35th chapter
11 beginning at the 8th verse, "And a highway shall be there and a way and it shall be called
12 the way of holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it but it shall be for those the
13 wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therin. No lion shall be there nor any ravenous
14 beast shall go up thereon. It shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.
15 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting
16 joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall
17 flee away." And Saint Matthew the 16th chapter and the 18th verse reads, "And I say also
18 unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of
19 hell shall not prevail against it."
20
21 And the subject that the Lord gave me on today – he said – going forth in the beauty of
22 holiness. Going forth in the beauty of holiness, now, now, this is not a beautified or some
23 type of special message, but he said, "going forth in the beauty of holiness." Holiness is
24 right, holiness is God's standard it is beautiful and we shall move forth in it and I thank
25 God for it. In the scripture read, "and there shall be a highway and a highway shall be
26 there and a way shall be called holiness." And it said the unclean shall not pass over it so
27 I have come to learn that in the way of holiness there is no unclean thing and I thank God
28 for it. He said the unclean shall not pass thereover. And it said it shall be for those the
29 wayfaring men, those that are willing to pick up the cross and follow the Lord – I thank
30 God for it – he said, "going forth in the beauty of holiness."
31
32 And just something he said right quick, he said holiness is not a revelation or a vision that
33 the Lord gives to an individual church. He said holiness is God's standard for every
34 church. So he said at the end of the day when you finished going from this church to that
35 church and this center to that center, he said you're still required to be holy and I thank
36 God for it. He said, we're going forth in the beauty of holiness and there is an attack on
37 holiness because nobody wants to live holy in today's society, in today's world, but God
38 is requiring that every one of us live holy. We shall go forth in the beauty of holiness
39 because anything that the Lord does shall prevail. And he said that the gates of hell, shall
40 not prevail. So whatever God has set forth to do, it shall prevail – and I thank God for it.
41 He said going forth in the beauty of holiness. And the scripture said, the unclean shall
42 not pass over it. And anything that's sin and unrighteousness is unclean, so the adulterer
43 shall not walk in the way of holiness. The fornicator shall not walk in the way of
44 holiness. Nor shall the liar, or the cheater, or whatever sins fall under the category of sin
45 shall not walk in the way of holiness. That is the unclean thing that shall not pass over it.
46

47   He said the fools shall not err therein. They shall not. (Inaudible) The unclean shall not
48   go in the way of holiness. Those that are fools or those that may not understand, they still
49   will have some type of understanding of the way of holiness because that's what the word
50   says. The fools shall not err therin, they shall not do wrong in this way. And he said no
51   lion shall be there nor any ravenous beast so as we're walking in the way of holiness and
52   if we're really committed to seeking the Lord and we're walking this walk, we don't have
53   to worry about any lion or any ravenous beast coming before us to hinder us because he
54   said we're going forth in the beauty of holiness.
55
56   And he told me just pinpoint the word going forth. Going forth, and I said, "Well, Lord,
57   going forth, what do you mean?" And he said he'll manifest it at the end but it just said
58   pinpoint going forth. Then the scripture goes on to say that the redeemed – but the
59   redeemed – shall walk there, so I've come to learn that as we're walking that if we want
60   to be holy, we have first to be redeemed, we have to be washed in the blood of the lamb,
61   we have to be clothed in righteousness in order to live a holy life before the Lord. And,
62   and as I was before the Lord, before I came to preach, the Lord was just speaking to me
63   then and he said, "This message – he said, I want you to go and preach on the
64   battlefront." So I said, "Lord, what does that mean?" He said, "As I'm preaching, he
65   said, I want - he want me to stay down here for most of the time." So once I've finished
66   with the scriptures you'll see me down here for most of the time because he said, "You
67   cannot intimidate the people of God, so you cannot choke the word of God, so as the
68   preacher is preaching we hope to be able – I could have a chair and sit right here and
69   preach under the anointing of God because whatever he sets forth to do shall be done. He
70   said you cannot hinder his preachers, you cannot intimidate these preachers from
71   preaching the word of God. He said we're going forth in the beauty of holiness.
72
73   See, see, nobody, there's so many churches taking down from holiness but we have to
74   live holiness. I was looking online the other day and I came across this church that said
75   New Covenant Christian Church. And, and I said, "OK, what is this about?" And I
76   looked it up and it said there was the pastor, his name was Pastor Randy Morgan and he
77   was married to the assistant pastor whose name was Pastor John Morgan. And I said,
78   "Lord, Randy and John. Randy is bald. John got a short cut, you know, he got his pants
79   on." I said, "Both of them are men, pastoring the church." And the deacons are married.
80   The deacons are women and they're married to each other. And all the other pastors and
81   member of this congregation were homosexuals but that's unclean and it shall not go in
82   the way of holiness.
83
84   So we have to go forth in the way of holiness. And the preachers, we have to continue to
85   preach and stand on the word of God because we must be holy. But, see, see nobody
86   wants to live holy because they feel that it's just, "you do this and you do that. And you
87   give this and you give that." But the scripture just goes on to say that, it says that "the
88   ransomed of the Lord shall return and shall come to Zion with songs and joy, everlasting
89   joy upon their heads." So as we're walking this life, clean and holy before the Lord
90   there's also joy and there's songs of praise going up before the Lord because I'm still
91   saved and I'm still living a holy life before the Lord. He said going forth in the beauty of
92   holiness. There's so many people, even though they realize they're not holiness, they're

93   professing to be holiness because, because it brings on some type of – there's an
94   attraction behind that name holiness. But he said don't carry the name if you're not
95   going to live holy. (inaudible) go forth in the beauty of holiness. And he said, he said, in
96   Saint Matthew the 16th chapter and the 18th verse when he said, "Thou art Peter" and,
97   and, and "upon this rock I shall build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail."
98   Because Jesus wondering, you know, "Peter who do you say that I am?" And he said,
99   "Thou art the Christ, son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Surely flesh and blood has
100   not revealed this to you but it was my spirit. It was the father which is in heaven that
101   revealed this unto you." So just as sure that Jesus Christ is the son of the living God that
102   he came and he bled and he died for the remission of our sins – just as sure as the gates of
103   hell shall not prevail against what God has set for us. He said going forth in the beauty of
104   holiness. So we have to continue to stand on the word of God we have to continue to
105   preach against sin. We have to continue to lift up a standard of holiness. And we cannot
106   bow down and I thank God for it.
107
108   There's something else that the Lord shared with me. And the enemy is trying to snatch
109   it from my mind, trying to make me forget it. But, but, the Lord was speaking to me.
110   The Lord was speaking to me. And the enemy, he's trying to take it, he's trying to take
111   it. But it's there, and I thank God for it. Going forth in the beauty of holiness. And he
112   said, holi- and there it is! He said holiness, in holiness, there is structure in holiness.
113   And I looked up the word structure. And the word structure said that it's uh, uh a unique
114   or there's a systematic uh, composure of something. Something that has been composed
115   systematically. And, and what the Lord showed me, he said "Could you imagine that
116   your brain is the center of your nervous system, so every nerve in your body functions
117   through the brain. So he, he showed, this is what the Lord said to me, he said, "Could
118   you imagine your arm one day saying, 'You know what? I think I can do this. I'm going
119   to send signals through the body now.'" Because, because that's what, that's what the
120   conception has been that – what, what, how, how can, you know if I had those same
121   nerves in my arm then I'm gonna, I'm gonna take control of this body. But could you
122   imagine the arm trying to, trying to control the body, when the brain holds every, every
123   function of the nervous system. So what he's saying is the structure will not work
124   because it's not according to the system. So he said the head controls every nerve in the
125   body so therefore the arm cannot control anything because it has not been given the
126   power or the authority to do so through the function of the body.
127
128   Now, spiritually we have to apply that because the Lord did not tell me to elaborate on it.
129   He said, but we're going forth in the beauty of holiness. So everything that is unclean
130   and everything that is unholy shall not prevail in the house of God because we are a holy
131   people and we will serve the Lord in the beauty of holiness. He said going forth in the
132   beauty of holiness.
133
134   [break in clips]
135
136   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPb_YGSmfZg&NR=1
137

138   Don't forget the vision. And what that means is, the Lord woke me up one Sunday
139   morning. It was about 4…4:30 in the morning, and he said, "We're coming out." So I
140   said, "OK, Lord we're coming out." And then he brought my attention to Joshua the 6th
141   chapter when, when the walls of the city of Jericho were shut up because of the children
142   of Israel and he said that we're coming out. And he sent Joshua over the city and over
143   the king and he said, "I want you to gather your men and 7 priests." I need, I need 7
144   people, uh, I need 7 people to show you what the Lord showed me. Elder Thompson,
145   Elder Middleton, Elder Pendleton, Minister Johnson, Minister. Gifford. We've got
146   2…4…5…Mr. Thompson. Is that 6? And I'll be 7 because the 7th that the Lord showed
147   me is not here. And he said…this is the vision that the Lord showed me, he said, "we're
148   coming out." And he showed me the scripture where Joshua was over the city of Jericho
149   and all the people and the walls of that city were shut up because of sin, because the
150   children of Israel had been sitting and doing wrong, but he said
151
152   [break in clips]
153
154   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsbeFDSW4n4&NR=1
155
156   Oh boy, y'all was supposed to grab y'all bibles, but that's alright. He said, we're gonna,
157   we're gonna take these 7 priests and we're gonna march around the city. We're gonna
158   march around the walls of the city 7 six…seven times. But he said, on the 7th day, I want
159   you to march around the walls on the 7th day seven times. But the Lord intervened and he
160   showed me we're only gonna march around three times: one for the Father, one for the
161   Son, and one for the Holy Ghost. And he said on the 3rd time we're gonna shout "Jesus!"
162   and you were supposed to have your bibles. Because in the scripture, those men and
163   those priests that were marching around the walls they all had horns. And they were
164   supposed to blow the horns at the time they marched around the walls the 7th time. So as
165   we're marching around the walls with the word in our hand, it's the word of God that's
166   going to tear down every stronghold that's coming up against the standard of holiness
167   because he said we're going forth.
168
169   So this is what the Lord showed me. Y'all come on. He said we're going to march
170   around these walls 7 times, but we're only going 3 times. He said I need some power, I
171   need some anointing. He said I need some Holy Ghost because the walls are coming
172   down. He said we're going forth in the beauty of holiness. So we're going around the
173   walls 3 times. And we're gonna (inaudible) because the Lord said we are coming out in
174   the name of Jesus. He said we're going forth in the beauty of holiness. He said we shall
175   not bow down. Every unclean thing shall be (inaudible). He said we're going forth in
176   the beauty of holiness. He said you cannot (inaudible). He said anything (inaudible). He
177   said it shall prevail. He said it shall prevail. It shall prevail. Somebody tell the Lord
178   thank you. He said we're going forth in the beauty of holiness. Ohhhhh yeah. He said
179   we're going forth in the beauty of holiness. And the gates of hell shall not prevail.
180   Ohhhh. Somebody tell the Lord thank you. The walls are coming down, the walls are
181   coming down. He said we shall be holy. We shall live righteous. Somebody say yeah.
182   Owwwww. (inaudible) Ohhhhh. (inaudible). He said because holiness is (inaudible).
183   Holiness is God's standard. He said preach the word in season. Out of season.   You

184   don't like it? Then tell it anyhow. He said who (inaudible) will not want to know the
185   truth. In order to reign in the end. But we're going forth…Holy Ghost…oh
186   yahyahyahyahyes. Ohhhhh. He said we're going forth in the beauty of holiness. And he
187   said every…every wicked imagination that has exalted itself against the knowledge of
188   God…he said it's coming down. Because he said that the enemy comes in like a flood.
189   The spirit of God will lift up a standard high. A standard. Holiness. Ohhhhh. Thank
190   you Jesus. Ohhhhh. He said the walls are coming down. He said the walls are
191   coming…yes. He said the walls are coming down. He said the walls are coming down.
192   (inaudible) The Spirit will lift up a standard of holiness. Ohhhhhh. He said all the walls
193   must come down. He said the walls of deceit (inaudible). Owwwww. Owwwww.
194   Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Every wall must come down. Jes-, Jes-, Jes-,
195   Jes-, Jes-, Jesu-, oh glory. He said we're coming out. He said the walls are coming
196   down. Ohhhhh. Ohhhhh. The walls are coming down. (inaudible) Jes-, Jes-, the walls
197   will come down. Ohhhhh. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yes. Come on, Jes-, come on, Jes-, come
198   on Jes-. Tear 'em down. Said we're going forth in the beauty of holiness. Woah-
199   ohhhhh. The gates of hell shall not prevail. He said we're going forth in the beauty of
200   holiness. He said if you don't like it, you don't have to (inaudible). Said that we're
201   going forth in the beauty of holiness. Ohhhhh, yeah, yeah. Come on and tell him thank
202   you. Tell him thank you. Tell him thank you that the walls are coming down. Tell him
203   thank you. Ohhhhh. Thank you. Oh.

1   Sam Nguyen
2   Sam Nguyen preaching Vietnamese A/G Charlotte part 1 of 2
3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpAdw4pppBs&feature=related
4
5   Assembly of God
6   Asian American, Male
7
8   (inaudible) what you have in store for them and what you want to teach them. Because
9   it's not by me that this lesson's being produced, it's by you God. And I pray that you
10   would speak through me because as you can see, I'm very stuttering with words and, uh,
11   I pray that you would help me to become less nervous and less hungry as they all take
12   away from my focus (inaudible) oh God. In your precious name I pray, amen.
13
14   Alright, everybody can sit on down. Alright. So how's everybody's week – the first few
15   days of school? Ok, that's great everybody answered. Ok, the topic of my sermon is
16   called, "The 2nd Inward Struggle." Uh-huh. Good question. So what's the first, right?
17   The first struggle is to live daily with Christ. Right? That's already a struggle in itself.
18   You have to fight the devil to live right. But the 2nd is being able to…the 2nd struggle…I
19   lost my train of thought there…ok…the 2nd struggle is the fight for people's heart. Ok,
20   and Mark 16.15, ok…yeah, if you could all turn at all…up…to me…with me. Like I
21   said, stuttering my words. Alright, in…it says, "He said to them, Jesus, go into all the
22   world and preach the good news to all creation." Sound familiar? We've been learning a
23   lot about "the mission" these past few weeks, correct? So I'm just going to expand on
24   this. We talked a lot about the mission itself, the people involved, and what we have to
25   do. But we haven't talked about the struggle within this mission.
26
27   What's the struggle? People aren't always very cooperative. Some people fight you off,
28   some people don't believe you, some people just act like you're stupid. Countless things.
29   I know y'all have experienced those and if you haven't, I know you know what I'm
30   talking about. Now 1st John 3.13, you don't have to open up to me, says that, "Do not be
31   surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you." So once again, assurance that you will be
32   hated, ok? 1st John 3.13 – that the world will not accept you. That's not saying that
33   everybody in the world – some people will accept you – some people will believe, and
34   that's our point, right? That's our purpose in life, to reach out to those few and to spread
35   the seed to those few who will receive it. But the majority will not receive you, ok?
36   You've heard all these things before, but here's an example of it to clarify more of what it
37   really feels like, ok?
38
39   Who here has read the Chronicles of Narnia? Yeah, favorite book! Or books. Well,
40   you're going to have to follow along. Alright, so this party was traveling, right? A party
41   is a group of people. Ok. Alright. A party was traveling. Lucy, who is the youngest
42   sibling of the four which has ruled Narnia, had spoken to the great Lion Aslan, he wished
43   for them to follow him down a road which seemed to take them in the opposite direction
44   of their destination. Others couldn't see Aslan and so didn't believe and went the wrong
45   way. They met the enemy and had to run back to the same spot before, which is twice
46   the work. Later that night, Aslan showed up again and once again wanted them to follow

47 them on account of belief that he knew what he was doing. "Will the others see you
48 too?" asked Lucy. "Certainly not at first," said Aslan. "Later on, it depends." "But they
49 won't believe me. Oh dear, oh dear," said Lucy. "And I was so pleased at finding you
50 again. And I thought you'd let me stay." "It is hard for you, little one," said Aslan.
51 Lucy eventually waked the others and after some surprising support from their brother
52 Edmond, they set off not knowing where they'd end up. Later on, (inaudible) turns to a
53 happy ending. Ok?
54
55 So, how do we relate to this story? Um, some of you may have guessed it already. But
56 I'm going to explain so everyone can hear it. Ok, um, ok, who are we like? Lucy,
57 exactly. What are we trying to do in this world? Convince some people of something
58 they can't see. Convince people that there is something there. And he wants something
59 so great for us. He wants what's better for us than we could ever think of ourselves. But
60 people can't see that. And ever heard of that saying, "A picture's worth 1000 words?"
61 So they can't see the picture, there's no use in 1000 words. Ok? That means we have to
62 say 2000.
63
64 Alright, but then, continuing on, so what did Lucy have to do? She had to go to people
65 who were older than her, more mature than her, and definitely people more grumpier than
66 her, because they had to wake up from sleep, right? Cause everyone's grumpy after
67 having been wakened up. So she had to go to them, which was a struggle in itself to
68 wake them. Then she had to convince them that somebody that they all knew, somebody
69 that they all thought they knew, was standing right there and they couldn't see him.
70 How's that feel? Does that sound like you walking up to someone and telling them
71 "Jesus loves you" and then they walk away from you because they said, "Jesus doesn't
72 exist. I don't see Jesus. Where's Jesus at?" Ok?
73
74 But then, we see that although he…there's actually another quote in here that says, Aslan
75 is talking to Lucy, I didn't want to include this earlier, "and they will not…and they will
76 not follow you and you at least must follow me alone." And then later on, Lucy says
77 something to herself to keep her going: "I musn't think about it. I must just do it."
78
79 Those exact words, although they might not be from the bible, relate to us really clearly.
80 Even though people around us don't follow Jesus, we have to follow Jesus. If we can
81 lead them, that's great. But that doesn't mean we stop following Jesus just because
82 people around us don't.
83
84 How do you do it? Don't think about it. Don't sit there and think about, "Oh well, what
85 is he going to think of me? Ahh, they're not going to be friends with me anymore."
86 Don't think about that stuff. Do what's right in your heart. Because the Holy Spirit's
87 inside of you convicting you. And nothing that he says can be wrong. What you think
88 of, what you say, "Oh this is going to make me happy. This is going to make me popular.
89 This is going to make me full…is what drives you away, right? Am I right in saying that
90 everything that seems to make you happy is in the wrong direction, but everything that
91 makes God happy seems so hard until you really look at it.
92

93 This is one of the ways that I, like, cope with struggle at school, most definitely. Because
94 school is one of the most diverse places you can walk into. And that's the best
95 battleground for the Christian faith. John 16.32b to 33 says, ooh that's not it. "You will
96 leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, my father is with me. I have told you these things
97 so that indeed you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I
98 have overcome the world." I'm not going to explain that verse because every person has
99 a different perception on that. To me, when I read those verses and when Jesus is talking,
100 I feel that it's saying what my heart thinks because don't I feel alone sometimes? Don't I
101 feel like God's abandoning me? God's left me all alone to fight this long, hard
102 battle…this battle that takes a whole lifetime. But then, words of reassurance. My father
103 is with you…Holy Spirit, remember? So the Holy Spirit is always there even though we
104 can't see him. Even though sometimes we can't even feel him or hear him. So…but the
105 most important verse is "I have overcome the world." So everything that will control you
106 in this world…persecution from people such as making fun of you, looking down on you,
107 not being friends with you. You might be the outcast in the school. Everyone knows
108 about those, right? People, people who sort of sit by themselves. You might be the
109 outcast in the school. I'm just warning you right now, you could be that person. Ok, and,
110 you could even die. Everyone's heard of martyrs. I'm not saying each of you is going to
111 die for Jesus, but there's always that calling. If someone pointed, if somone pulled a gun
112 at you right now and said, "Do you believe in Jesus? If you say yes, I'll pull the trigger."
113 Can all of y'all say to me, look me in the eye, and say yes. [break in clip]
114
115 Sam Nguyen part 2 of 2
116 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZpP7u50RwQ&NR=1
117
118 We face a lot of things from this world, because the world doesn't believe in Jesus. The
119 world is against Jesus. It says in the bible, "Do not love the world or anything that's in
120 the world for if any man loves the world, the love of the father is not in him." Can't tell
121 you the verse number. Um, but, guys it's gonna be hard. I can tell you that for sure. It's
122 gonna be hard, so don't think, "Alright, I'm gonna live for Jesus. I'm gonna be pumped
123 about this. I just came from a convention. I'm like brimming with the Holy Spirit. I'm
124 going to walk into school like, ah, "Believe in Jesus. Believe in Jesus. God loves you."
125 You can't be like that. It's not going to be a battle like that. You're not going to walk in
126 in full glory and take everybody in the school for Jesus. It's going to be a long, hard,
127 tedious struggle. And you have to work at it. How do you do things? Simple things,
128 such as acts of caring, acts of love. Like sitting with the person that's sitting by
129 themselves. Ok?
130
131 But, I know we're growing short on time so these are my main points. Ok? Not what
132 will they think of me and how will they treat me and will I feel after this, but rather we
133 should think about what will they think of him, what would or did they treat him, and
134 how will he feel after this? Because if we keep our attention on God, there's gonna
135 be…it takes away from the focus on our own lives and gives us the bigger picture,
136 alright? We can see things through God's eyes and we can see that, ok, we talked to 5
137 people about Jesus, none of them believed you. But afterwards, after they've heard you
138 talk and then they see someone else working in their lives for Jesus, they all begin to see

139 Jesus (inaudible). Right? We may not see that, but God sees that, so God rewards us for
140 that.
141
142 And, alright, who here likes Christmas? Everyone loves Christmas? Dang. Alright.
143 Laney, you wanna stop writing for a second? Volunteer. Um, Lydia. And…Tara. Can
144 you guys come up here since you volunteered so willingly, because you love Christmas?
145 Alright, I'm gonna give each of you a sign, alright? Here's yours. And I personally
146 made these so these look kinda garbage. Hold that out. Alright, stand in a line.
147 Shhhhhh… Alright, you're backwards. So everyone can see this, right? Tim, can you
148 see it? Alright. Alright. This word says "Christmas." And I personally love Christmas.
149 It's the best time of the year. Alright, but we can see in this that, there's the word
150 "Christ." But there's the word "Sam" as well. It's backwards, don't turn it, don't turn it.
151 Alright, "Christ-mas," which is "Sam" backwards. But if you turn Christmas around, you
152 lose sight of Christ and keep your attention on Sam. Sh…stop moving. So, if we focus
153 on Christ, flip it back around, we can't see "Sam," alright? It's either one or the other,
154 you can't see both at the same time. Ok? And it would have been better if I could tape it
155 because (inaudible) smart and turn it around right now. But, uh, you can't see Christ and
156 yourself at the same time. These are all the little things which keep you going which
157 keep you remembering that God's in control. You can't control everything in your life.
158 Because (inaudible) do it, then where would God be? Alright, you can give me my signs
159 back. You didn't? I'll show you afterwards.
160
161 Alright, so, that's kind of cool, right? And, uh, I did think of that myself, I was laying in
162 bed and it came to me. Big man upstairs. But, um, yeah, so, each and every one of us
163 has these little things which remind us God is still there, but that we have to focus on
164 him. Because if we look down and look at ourselves, we can't see people around us. But
165 if you look at God, he'll show you each person around you that you need to touch.
166
167 So the struggle in school becomes easier and harder at the same time because of this,
168 right? You realize the extremity of your fight and the battle it's going to be, but you
169 realize that you have help. Alright, so before anything else, let's pray so we can close
170 this.
171
172 Dear heavenly father, I just thank you for this wonderful time that, uh, we've gathered
173 here and, um, both everyone in the teen group and me myself has learned something from
174 this, uh, sermon, o God. And it's all because of you though Lord. Um, I just thank you
175 for this. And I pray that each and every one of us may remember you in our hard
176 struggles and remember that you're still here, you're still walking beside us, you're
177 carrying us O God, and God I pray for each and every one of us, for our struggles at
178 school because it is a hard struggle, it is a hard, long battle, God. Lord help us so that we
179 can overcome this world and we can fight for you and can remember that you're always
180 there. In your precious name I pray, amen.

1 Trevor
2 Youth Sunday Preachers at All Saints Pasadena, Part 2
3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EoGHpSvQcA&NR=1
4
5 Episcopal
6 White Male
7
8 It is my honor to be speaking here before you today sharing with you my journey at All
9 Saints. When I first came to All Saints, 3 years ago, I had few expectations. I had never
10 heard of the place, I figured it was simply another church I would go to for a couple of
11 months before I phased out on it. Boy was I wrong. Instantly I had connected with the
12 kids, community, and leaders. All Saints was not my first church. I had attended Church
13 of the Valley for as long as I could remember. I thought it was normal to wake up at 6 in
14 the morning and drive an hour to church every Sunday. Around the time of middle
15 school though, my pastor retired, my parents divorced, and church took a back seat in my
16 life. When I was a freshman in high school, I started going to a youth group on
17 Wednesday nights at a large church in Pasadena. My mom had already stumbled upon
18 All Saints and it was only 5 minutes away from home. After about a year, she bribed me
19 to try the youth group here one Wednesday. I didn't want to come, but when we got
20 home that night I told her, "I hate it when you're right." I didn't want to like your
21 church. Ever since then I've been coming every Wednesday.
22
23 My first year here gave me a place to be myself, share my feelings, and in a sense to get
24 away from home. Not to mention how nice it was to be able to sleep until 11 and still be
25 able to go to church. The divorce wasn't easy and it happened very quickly. I've never
26 been a fan of psychologists so I dealt with it on my own, which wasn't too hard but it was
27 at times stressful. My dad was still there to pick us up after school though and numerous
28 occasions I would sleep over at his house after watching a movie or going to a baseball
29 game. All these things made what would happen next so much harder. One week after
30 my 16th birthday, my dad called to say that he was sick and couldn't pick me up. He
31 sounded tired, so I told him to get some rest, feel better, and I could get a ride home. If I
32 had known that that would be the last conversation with my father as I once knew him, I
33 certainly would have thought to say something more important like how much he meant
34 to me and how I've appreciated every moment he has spent on making me a better
35 person. On Wednesday the same thing happened except this time no call. He wasn't
36 picking up at home or on his cell, so my mom got us and we went home. I don't know
37 exactly what happened but we rushed to the ER and learned that my dad had been found
38 unconscious on his kitchen floor. The doctors wouldn't tell us anything more and all I
39 saw was him asleep on his bed. I had no idea on earth what was going on and all I could
40 think of right then and there was how much I wanted to be at All Saints for youth
41 Wednesdays. We went straight from the hospital to the church and it was so great to
42 have All Saints here for comfort when there was no other forms of it around. My dad
43 slipped into a coma for the first 2 months and we didn't think he was going to come out
44 of it. Shannon Ferguson came to the hospital and performed the sacrament of unction.
45 Amazingly enough, as we were around praying him, he woke up right then and there. He
46 is now living in a facilitated care center which isn't ideal, but it's still nice to have him

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47   here even if he isn't the same person he once was. Through the worst times and the ups
48   and downs, I had All Saints to help.
49
50   They say Wednesday nights are for youth group, but that meant little to me. There were
51   numerous occasions where I would show up unannounced looking for Dave Erickson and
52   he would always have time for me – something I will never be able to thank him enough
53   for.
54
55   All Saints has not been simply a place of consolation for me. It has been a place of many
56   opportunities as well, most importantly my transformational journey trip to Nogales with
57   Borderlinks. I was one of two high school students, the other being (inaudible), to go on
58   this trip which certainly is not one designed for kids. It was a real look at immigration
59   and the reform that is needed. There was not sugar-coating or beating around the bush. I
60   was thrown into a situation where nothing is hidden. We walked the same path that a
61   group of immigrants might use to cross the border and one person got a cactus stuck in
62   his foot. Mind you this was the daytime – I couldn't even imagine navigating a route like
63   this in the freezing cold at night with no real light to guide you. We spoke with people
64   who have made such a trip sometimes 9 times in failure and were now beginning to give
65   up hope for a better life for themselves and for their families. It is not typical for a
66   teenager to know so much about a big issue like immigration, but thanks to the
67   opportunity All Saints gave me, I have a firsthand knowledge and can help to cause
68   change in the world. This is just the type of program that makes our youth program so
69   very special. Just this past year my sister went with a group to New Orleans to help
70   rebuild and another group went on the same trip that I did with three kids this time.
71
72   The opportunities for our youth are only growing and I've been lucky enough to have
73   been given so many opportunities and taken advantage of so much. Speaking here today
74   I am humbled by what All Saints has offered me so freely only to help me become a
75   better version of myself. In the lyrics of Matisyahu's "Youth," he says "some of them are
76   looking for fun, some of them are looking for a way out of confusion, some of them don't
77   know where to go, some of their teachers squash the flame before it's had a chance to
78   grow." All Saints gives our youth a place to find whatever they are looking for and so
79   much more. No flames are squashed here by the teachers, they're given a chance to grow
80   and glow. We depend on people like you who volunteer to help more flames to be
81   ignited.
82
83   All Saints has truly been the greatest example of God and one of his miracles in action.
84   When a home was broken, I was given a new one here with the most welcoming
85   inhabitants I have ever known. When my father fell ill and I had no adult male figure to
86   turn to, I was given Dave, who was always there for me before and after youth group and
87   any other day of the week for hot coffee and a warm hug. Too often have I heard that
88   God is not around anymore, that no one knows if God is there. But I can say with
89   conviction that God is alive and well here and for me and anyone else who enters these
90   grounds. I don't need to see the Virgin Mary in a rock cliff or a misshapen chicken
91   McNugget. I know for a fact that All Saints is the greatest miracle God has ever given
92   me. Thank you.

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