



C.M.A. van Ekris

MAKING SEE

A Grounded Theory of the prophetic
dimension in preaching

LIT

MAKING SEE

A Grounded Theory of the prophetic dimension in preaching
(with a summary in English)

SEHEND MACHEN

Eine Grounded Theory über die prophetische Dimension der Predigt
(mit einer Zusammenfassung in deutscher Sprache)

TE ZIEN GEVEN

Een Grounded Theory van de profetische dimensie in prediking
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

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door

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Cover: Moses and Aaron confronting Pharaoh,
Icon by Wasili Wasin

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CIP-GEGEVENS

Ich glaube, man könnte bei allen wirklich großen theologischen Gestalten zeigen, daß neue theologische Aufbrüche nur dann ermöglicht werden, wenn zuerst ein prophetischer Durchbruch da ist. Solange man nur rational weiterarbeitet, kommt nichts wesentlich Neues. Es wird vielleicht immer genauer systematisiert, es werden immer subtilere Fragen erfunden, aber die eigentlichen Durchbrüche, in denen dann wieder große Theologie neu entsteht, kommen nicht einfach aus dem rationalen Geschäft der Theologie, sondern aus einem charismatischen, prophetischen Anstoß heraus. Insofern, glaube ich, gehören Prophetie und Theologie eng zusammen. Die Theologie als wissenschaftliche Theologie im strengen Sinn ist nicht prophetisch, aber sie wird nur wirklich lebendige Theologie, wenn sie von einem prophetischen Impuls angeschoben und erleuchtet ist.
Joseph Ratzinger, Das Problem der christlichen Prophetie

Propheten reifen in der Regel nicht in heilen Welten.
Rudolph Bohren, Prophetie und Seelsorge

My task which I am trying to achieve, is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see. That – and more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: Encouragement, consolation, fear, charm – all you demand – and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.
Joseph Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus

Keep your vision clear, Tony, so that you can see, and help us see, God with us in the places where God's holy presence is desperately needed and far from obvious: In the defeats and the losses that come from war, from illness and death, from misplaced hopes, from our repeated failure to trust God more than ourselves.
Ellen Davis, Ordination of Anthony Petrotta, Sermon on Isaiah 6

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When I lectured Old Testament Theology in Indonesia (Java), the first student who wrote her thesis under my guidance was a young Moluccan theologian. It was in the early years after the conflict in the Moluccas, and she and her family had been marked by violence and loss. She approached me with the idea of writing a small missiology for her Moluccan context, based on the Isaian Songs of the Suffering Servant. It was her desire to return home, to serve the church and her people as a Christian minister who knew how to build bridges instead of deepening distances, how to bear suffering instead of inflicting it on others. She longed for *a time to heal* and for preaching that facilitated healing. In her way of believing, in her homilies and in how she studied Theology, she taught me not to flee from danger, but to search for a way of being a redemptive presence amidst of it.

While writing the final draft of this PhD study, I have been thinking of her. Not only of her, but of other Christian ministers as well who, in complex and sometimes dangerous contexts, search for truth, integrity and wisdom. Though this study will predominantly analyse sermons from well-known preachers, I am deeply convinced that the subject we discuss, (namely *living prophetic speech*), is performed by a numerous amount of anonymous, local preachers, male and female, world-wide and in a variety of ways. Preachers, who in their own contextual circumstances discern destructiva, embody grace, search for redemption, and make congregations resistant. Where we use 'he' or 'she' in this study, this background should be considered.

In this book, we offer a reconstruction of an intriguing feature in the practice of preaching, heuristically called the 'prophetic dimension in preaching'. The challenge of the study was to select paradigmatic examples of this dimension, to describe the phenomenon in a consentient way and to develop a conceptual grip on this elusive factor in preaching. It is my hope that the joy of studying and analysing these sermons resound through this book, that the captivating, often paradoxical, power present in the sermons will inspire others and that my conceptual reconstruction will stimulate further study.

In this PhD project, I have been accompanied and guided by a fine team of scholars: prof. dr. Gerrit Immink, prof. dr. Edward van 't Slot, dr. Theo Pleizier and dr. Bert de Leede. Through their encouragement and discipline, their scholarly sharpness and shared experience in serving the church, they have stimulated me in this study, and I am grateful for the opportunity I received to theologise in the company of these four scholars. I especially thank prof. Immink, who guided me from the start of the project as promotor. The way he combines a love for the Protestant theological and ecclesiastical tradition with a solidarity to the present context, has been a source of inspiration for me these years.

Writing the acknowledgements of a book is a way of deepening the awareness of how connected with others one's own life is. This study is not written in a vacuum. Thankfully, there always was a congregation to be part of and to be nourished by. In Indonesia, the Christian Church in Northern Central Java (GKJTU), in the Netherlands, the Reformed congregations in Breukelen and in Zeist. I am thankful for the stimulating way dr. Michael Rainer from LIT Verlag made the publication of this study possible, and I am honoured that the study is published in the series of 'Homiletische Perspektive'. During the research, I had the opportunity to join three international colloquia, and the discussions with prof. dr. Albrecht Grözinger, prof. dr. Jan Hermelink, prof. dr. David Plüß and their PhD students, increased the joy of studying Theology and doing practical theological research. I also thank the Dutch local preachers whose sermons I will discuss in chapter 8, for their consent to analyse their sermons.

With respect and gratitude, I want to name Tobias Hendrik van der Hoeven (1957-2014) here. In my *coming of age* years, it was his example and his friendship that convinced me of the dignity, the freedom, and the joy of being a minister in the congregation of Jesus Christ.

In the last months before publishing this study, Els Veurink-Geurtsen meticulously screened the text and made it readable and accessible, Gerard Bakker was prepared to look at this book with the eye of a designer and to help me prepare it, and Ira Wilhelm translated the summary in German. The icon on the cover of this book, of Moses and Aaron confronting Pharaoh, is from Wasili Wasin and is used with permission (from www.galeriezwijzen.nl). In an original way, the icon illustrates and integrates the power of the illuminative (see Moses) and the interruptive (see Aaron) dimension in prophetic speech.

Finally, thankfully there always was a family to be part of. Christian Wiman wrote that 'life is *always* a question of intensity, and intensity is always a matter of focus'. I am grateful to have been raised in a family and by parents who taught me to

focus on the things that will not vanish, to love and serve God, and who initiated me into a degree of intensity that makes the experience of life deeper and richer. I am grateful for Arianne, from whom I learned perseverance and vulnerability. We learned to see that life can never be taken for granted, but always is a gift. Thank God, we continued to receive this precious gift. May our children Sem and Lionson, when they have reached their adult years, live to share in the vision that pulsates through this study, of God, *the God of all comfort*, making things well.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Part I Practical theological and methodological prolegomena

Chapter 1 | Perceptions of the prophetic

Phenomenological and practical theological introduction

Chapter 2 | Research journey: Motives and method

Homiletical and methodological introduction

Part II Empirical research: Five concepts of the prophetic dimension of preaching

Chapter 3 | Exposing destructiva

The expository dimension

Chapter 4 | Interrupting dominant discourses

The intervening dimension

Chapter 5 | Recognising the Word

The illuminative dimension

Chapter 6 | Overcoming destructiva

The cathartic dimension

Chapter 7 | Edifying the congregation

The mystagogic dimension

Part III Conclusions and homiletical proposals

Chapter 8 | Making See

Closing argument

Chapter 9 | Learning to See

Epilogue on the interplay between the inductive and the illuminative in prophetic speech

CONTENTS (EXTENDED)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

XI

Part I Practical theological and methodological prolegomena	1
Chapter 1 Perceptions of the prophetic	3
Phenomenological and practical theological introduction	3
1.1 Finding access to a complex phenomenon: Introduction to the study of the prophetic dimension in preaching	3
1.2 Phenomenology: Anatomy of perceptions of prophetic speech	6
1.2.1 The prophetic developing in Scripture: Continuity and diversity of the prophetic dimension	9
1.2.1.a Perceptions of the prophetic in the Old Testament	9
1.2.1.b Perceptions of the prophetic in the New Testament	12
1.2.2 The prophetic travelling in time: Mutual dynamics between prophetic texts and confessional traditions	15
1.2.2.a Prophetic disputes as debates on epistemology, authority, and identity (Laura Nasrallah)	16
1.2.2.b The Prophezei in Zürich: A case study of an attempt for contemporary 'learned prophecy'	17
1.2.3 The prophetic elaborated in thinking: Contemporary intellectual discourses on the prophetic	19
1.2.3.a Friedrich Nietzsche and the redemptive and tragic features of prophecy	20
1.2.3.b Max Weber and the charismatic and rational features of prophecy	22
1.2.3.c Michel Foucault, <i>parrhêsia</i> and the feature of audacity in truth-speaking	25
1.2.4 The prophetic emerging in cultural discourses: 'Pop-up prophetic fragments' on YouTube, in literature and music, in societal/political action and aesthetics	27
1.3 Recapitulation: Summary of phenomenological observations and modern sensitivities	32
1.4 Practical theology: The prophetic as integral part of the divine-human dynamics (Designing a theological framework for the study of the prophetic dimension of preaching)	34
1.4.1 Elements of the prophetic in the texture of the liturgy	35
1.4.2 The prophetic dimension as an integral factor in the life of faith itself	37

Chapter 2 Research journey: Motives and method	41
Homiletical and methodological introduction	41
2.1 Introduction	41
2.2 Motives and methods of this research	42
2.2.1 Previous research: Prophetic speech as a ‘20th century phenomenon’ (1 discourse-defining studies, 2 applicative studies, 3 primal sources studies, 4 discourse-development studies)	42
2.2.2 Featuring this research: Backgrounds, relevance, and research question	49
2.3 Preparing the research: Data gathering, theoretical sensitivity and developing ‘sensitizing concepts’	51
2.3.1 Approaching the prophetic as a phenomenon: Selecting the sermons	51
2.3.2 Studying entire sermons: The unity, integrity, and temporal particularity of sermons	55
2.3.3 The selected sermons as ‘prototypical practices of prophetic preaching’	56
2.3.4 Theoretical sensitivity and developing ‘sensitizing concepts’	58
2.4 Analysing the data: Coding, memo writing and theoretical sampling	62
2.5 Generating a theory: Theoretical sampling and theory formation	65
Part II Empirical research:	
Five concepts of the prophetic dimension of preaching	71
Chapter 3 Exposing destructiva	73
The expository dimension	73
I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part	73
3.1.a Exposing destructiva	73
3.2.a Deconstructing the concealments of destructiva	76
3.3.a Being called to expose	80
3.4.a Iconography: Epitomising destructiva in sermons	83
II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part	87
3.1.b Sermon illustrating ‘Exposing destructiva’ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Revelation 2.4. f7 (Berlin, 1932)	88
3.2.b Sermon illustrating ‘Deconstructing the concealments of destructiva’ Desmond Tutu, sermon after a banned rally (Cape Town, 1988)	96
3.3.b Sermon illustrating ‘Being called to expose’ Martin Luther King Jr., sermon on the Vietnam War (Atlanta, 1967)	106
3.4.b Sermon illustrating ‘Epitomising destructiva’ Desmond Tutu, sermon at the funeral of Steve Biko (King Williams’ Town, 1977)	116
Chapter 4 Interrupting dominant discourses	125
The intervening dimension	125
I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part	126
4.1.a (1) Variety and multiplicity of interruptive moments	126
4.1.a (2) Quality of interruptive moments: Juxtaposing of worldviews	126
4.1.a (3) Generativity of the interruptive moments	127
4.2.a Attuning: Necessity, responsibility, sensorium, and strategy	131

II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part	134
4.1.b Sermon illustrating 'Interrupting dominant discourses' Rowan Williams, sermon on Matthew 22.1-14 (Harare, 2011)	134
4.2.b Sermon illustrating 'Attuning: Necessity, responsibility, strategy and sensorium' Werner Krusche, sermon on Jeremiah 29.4-14a (Magdeburg, 1985)	143
Chapter 5 Recognising the Word	155
The illuminative dimension	155
I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part	156
5.1.a Recognising the Word	156
5.2.a Absorbing	162
5.3.a Theologically qualifying the contemporary situation	164
II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part	166
5.1.b Sermon illustrating 'Recognising the Word' Werner Krusche, sermon on Acts 12.1-17 (Halle, 1982)	167
5.2.b Sermon illustrating 'Absorbing' Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Luke 13.1-5 (London, 1934)	177
5.3.b Sermon illustrating 'Theologically qualifying the present' Gerhard von Rad, sermon on Isaiah 29.9-14 (Heidelberg, 1966)	187
Chapter 6 Overcoming destructiva	197
The cathartic dimension	197
I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part	198
6.1 Introduction	198
6.1.a Seeing the Lord: The cathartic power of God <i>praesens</i>	199
6.2.a Opening up the future: Hope as anticipation of God	204
II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part	208
6.1.b Sermon illustrating 'Seeing the Lord: The cathartic power of God <i>praesens</i> ' Martin Luther King Jr., sermon held after the Chicago Summit (Chicago, 1967)	209
6.2.b Sermon illustrating 'Opening up the future: Hope as anticipation of God' Desmond Tutu, inauguration sermon (Cape Town, 1986)	220
Chapter 7 Edifying the congregation	231
The mystagogic dimension	231
I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part	232
7.1.a 'This is my God': Initiating the congregation in the way of the Lord	232
7.2.a 'This is my world': Making the congregation participant in the crisis of her context	236
II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part	240
7.1.b Sermon illustrating 'This is my God: Initiating the congregation in the way of the Lord' Werner Krusche, sermon on John 6.64b-71 (Magdeburg, 1969)	241
7.2.b Sermon illustrating 'This is my world: Making the congregation participant in the crisis of her context' Rowan Williams, inauguration sermon (Canterbury, 2003)	249

Part III Conclusions and homiletical proposals	259
Chapter 8 Making See	261
Closing argument	261
8.1 Introduction	261
8.2 Making See as central explanatory concept	263
8.3 Making See: Vigilance to make destructiva visible	264
8.4 Making See: Interrupting to show alternatives	268
8.5 Making See: Illumination and transferring insight	273
8.6 Making See: Voicing a vision to participate in its power	281
8.7 Making See: Disclosing destructive and redemptive patterns in real-life	288
Chapter 9 Learning to See	295
Epilogue on the interplay between the inductive and the illuminative in prophetic speech	295
9.1 Introduction	295
9.2 On the interplay between the human and the divine in prophetic speech	295
9.3 On discernment: Assessing the credibility of prophetic speech	301
Appendix A: List of Codes	305
(of the first cycle of sermon analysis: Sermons from Bonhoeffer, King and Tutu)	305
Appendix B:	319
Theses on the prophetic dimension of preaching	319
Bibliography	321
Summary (in English)	331
Zusammenfassung (in German)	341
Samenvatting (in Dutch)	353
Index of Persons	365
Curriculum Vitae	369

Part I
Practical theological and methodological prolegomena

CHAPTER 1 | PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROPHETIC

Phenomenological and practical theological introduction

1.1 Finding access to a complex phenomenon: Introduction to the study of the prophetic dimension in preaching

What is religiously happening in the prophetic dimension of preaching? What are the basic theological processes that are discernible in sermons assessed to be prophetic? This homiletical research is an answer to these basic questions. In the following study, we develop and propose a theological reconstruction of the prophetic dimension of preaching as a contemporary homiletical concept.

The antecedents and credentials of prophetic speech as a theological concept are impressive and promising. There is an old intuition in the church and in homiletics that prophetic speech is an indispensable feature of being church.¹ According to Karl Rahner, for instance, it is in the *charismata*, including the charism of prophecy, that the church ‘participates in the prophetic charge of Christ.’² This prophetic feature in the life of the church, helps to make the message of Jesus new, relevant and actual in each changing age.³ Oliver O’Donovan similarly called prophecy the ‘archetypical charism.’⁴ To O’Donovan, ‘the church that arose from

1 See for instance Rahner, K., ‘Prophetism’, in: Rahner, K. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. (London: Burns & Oates 1975), p 1288, and: Käsemann, E., ‘Prophetic Task and National Church (‘Volkskirche’), in: Käsemann, E., *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene. Unpublished Lectures and Sermons*. (Ed. Rudolf Landau). (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 2010), pp 2911-306.

2 Rahner, K., *Ibid.* p 1289.

3 The quote continues with: ‘It does not matter whether the representatives of this charismatic prophecy in the Church – the authors of religious renewal, the critics of the Church and the society of their day, the discoverers of new tasks for the Church and the faithful – are called prophets or are given other names. (...) If such men do not merely reaffirm general principles and apply them to new cases, but display in their message something creative and incalculable, with the force of historic turning-points, so that they are legitimate and effective in the Church, we may say that the Church has had a ‘major’ or a ‘minor’ prophet.’ Rahner, K., *Ibid.* p 1289.

4 ‘Out of all its vocations the church prophesies: its administration, its charity, its music, its art, its theology, its politics, its religious ecstasy, its preaching. Prophecy is the archetypical charism, the paradigm of all the others’ O’Donovan, O., *The desire of the nations. Rediscovering the roots of political theology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), p 188.

Pentecost is a church of prophets, and it is, notably, in speech that ‘the powers of the Kingdom of God are displayed.’⁵

Prophecy is thought to have a specific kind of power in the church, and this power is also more directly related to the practice of preaching. Rudolf Bohren, in his *Predigtlehre*, observed that preaching has ‘a tendency to become prophetic.’⁶ In their attempt to actualise Scripture to their own context, preachers participate in a prophetic dynamic: ‘Alles Predigen tendiert demnach zur Prophetie.’⁷ In their recent homiletical design, Ciska Stark and Bert de Leede, while referring to John Calvin, called the prophetic dimension one of the several theological identities of the sermon. ‘Preaching is *Ankündigung*, communicating the prophetic word for the present’, they wrote.⁸

Prophetic speech captures the imagination of many, not only in the church and in homiletics. There are also modern sensitivities or contemporary intuitions, in a variety of disciplines, discourses and cultures, for this specific elusive feature in speech. There is a growing corpus of literature analysing the rhetorical, visionary and interruptive force of decisive speeches of politicians like Churchill, Kennedy and Obama, of influential TEDx Talks from CEOs, artists and thinkers that made a difference in their discipline, or of poetry with a distinctive counter-perspective (like W.H. Auden’s poem, responding to Hitler (dated ‘September 1, 1939’): *All I have is a voice / To undo the folded lie*).⁹

The haunting question that emerges in all these different examples is: ‘What is exactly meant by the term prophetic’. What is cherished and nurtured in this specific dimension in speech? Rino Fisichella has made the striking observation that ‘confronting the subject of prophecy is like looking at wreckage after a shipwreck.’¹⁰ The complexity and variety of contemporary understandings of the concept cannot be illustrated more poignantly. Prophetic speech is also a nebulous concept. In all kinds of discourses, the adjective ‘prophetic’ is used, but often in rather random ways. Fritz Stolz, in his article on *Propheten und Prophetie*, in the *Evangelisches Kirchenlexicon*, called this *Umbildungen*: ‘In der Moderne

5 O’Donovan, O., *Ibid.* p 187.

6 Bohren, R., *Predigtlehre*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1980), p 72. See also: Nierop, J., *Die Gestalt der Predigt im Kraftfeld des Geistes. Eine Studie zu Form und Sprache der Predigt nach Rudolf Bohrens Predigtlehre*. (Zürich, Berlin: LIT Verlag 2008), pp 81-82.

7 Bohren, R., *Ibid.* p 72

8 Leede, B. de, and Stark, C., *Ontvouwten. Protestantse prediking in de praktijk*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2017), p 34 and p 38.

9 Bartlett, T., *Analysing power in language. A practical guide*. (London: Routledge 2015); Jong, J. de, et al. (red.), *Beïnvloeden met emoties. Pathos en retorica*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2015); Leith, S., *You Talkin’ To Me? Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama*. (London: Profile Books 2011); Sonneveld, J., ‘De poëzie van alledaagse taal’, *Liter* 74 (June 2014), pp. 71-72.

10 Quoted in Hvidt, N. C., *Christian Prophecy. The Post-Biblical Tradition*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), p 24.

ist es zu einer Verallgemeinerung des Begriffs und zur Projektion auf andere Kulturräume gekommen. Prophetie bezeichnet jetzt nicht mehr Phänomene im religiösen Binnenraum, sondern in der distanziert wahrgenommenen Umwelt.¹¹ The label 'prophetic' is given to a variety of phenomena, and Stolz is critical of this development, 'in allen Fällen droht ein inflationärer Gebrauch des Begriffs'.¹² The term 'prophetic' may become inflationary, he argues, and it may even degenerate into a 'frame concept without concrete content'.¹³ In this research, we respond to this unclarity and develop a conceptual reconstruction of a contemporary understanding of how prophetic preaching can be understood.

Our study consists of three major parts:

Part 1 is a phenomenological, practical theological and methodological introduction. We started our research by making an initial 'topography of the prophetic'. Where, in our contemporary context, do we meet discourses on the prophetic and how do they influence modern sensitivities concerning the phenomenon of the prophetic? This initial phase of the research also functioned as a way of making conscious what kind of ideas concerning the prophetic the researcher brought along in this study. At the same time, it was a practice of opening up to surprising and unexpected perceptions of the prophetic (further 1.2). From phenomenology we turned to practical theology. We approached the Christian congregation in this research as a *topos* of the prophetic, and the prophetic tradition is present in it in prominent ways (in her Scriptures, tradition, liturgy, language, and theological concepts). In this part, we developed a fitting theological framework for our study, by situating the prophetic as an integral factor in the *divine-human dynamics* (further 1.4).

In the methodological part of our study, we prepared the empirical analysis of the phenomenon. Our study has an empirical character. This means that we reconstruct an understanding of what is happening in prophetic speech through analysing empirical practices of preaching. For the selection of the empirical material (read: sermons), we consulted a broad community of scholars in homiletics, with the basic question of what they assess to be undisputed, contemporary practices of prophetic speech. After this consultation, we selected the sermons, we refined our research question ('What is religiously happening in the prophetic dimension of preaching?') and we applied the Grounded Theory Methodology (further: GTM)

11 Stolz, F., 'Art. Propheten, Prophetie (Religionswissenschaftlich)', in: Fahlbusch, E., Lochman, J.M., et al., (Hrsg.), *Evangelisches Kirchenlexicon. Internationale theologische Enzyklopädie*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1992), pp 1335-1339.

12 Stolz, F., *Ibid.* p 1336.

13 As remarked by E. Fascher in his '*Prophetes: eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*', quoted in Hvidt, N.C., *Christian Prophecy. The Post-Biblical Tradition*, p 20.

to come as close as possible to the phenomenon. An important feature of our study is that we do not primarily analyse a concept, but that we conceptualise an empirical phenomenon (further chapter 2).

Part 2 of our study is the empirical analysis of sermons. Through two cycles of empirical analysis of ultimately nineteen sermons, we generated a reconstruction of the basic theological processes that are active in the data and thus we formulated the conceptual infrastructure that characterises the phenomenon. In the empirical chapters of this study (chapters 3-7), we present five homiletical concepts that were extracted from the data, namely *exposing destructiva* (chapter 3), *interrupting dominant discourses* (chapter 4), *recognising the Word* (chapter 5), *overcoming destructiva* (chapter 6) and *edifying the congregation* (chapter 7). According to our analysis, these five concepts form the theological infrastructure of a contemporary understanding of the prophetic dimension of preaching.

Part 3 contains our closing argument. In chapter 8 and 9 we review the main results of our study and translate it into a proposal on the prophetic dimension in preaching, a proposal that implies regular, local practices of preaching. This chapter is called *Making See*, and this central concept of *seeing* refers in our study to a major theological process that happens in prophetic speech, namely the gift, the occurrence and the transference of seeing. In our closing argument, we develop an understanding of the prophetic dimension as a *potentiality* in preaching. Intrinsically tied to the act of preaching is the 'unavoidable risk', as Michael Beintker called it, of sermons becoming prophetic.¹⁴ One of the results of this study is that we see the prophetic not as a characteristic of persons, but as a potentiality of a practice. Prophetic speech is not merely impressive speech of 'great men in dark times', to allude to a book by Hannah Arendt. In our view, (true to its own graduality and related to the specifics of its circumstances), prophetic speech can potentially happen in any Christian community gathered for worship.

1.2 Phenomenology: Anatomy of perceptions of prophetic speech

In the initial phase of our research journey, we realised that contemporary manifestations and modern perceptions of prophetic speech are affected by a vast variety of different sources and influences. We decided to design an initial 'topography of prophetic speech', with the main question: In what kind of surroundings do we meet vivid discourses on prophetic speech and in what way may these discourses influence a contemporary understanding and usage of the term? We distinguished at least five surroundings in which a formative discourse on

14 Beintker, M., 'Das (unvermeidliche) prophetische Risiko beim Verkündigen', in: *Die Zeichen der Zeit* 40 (1986), pp 64-71.

prophetic speech occurs, namely: 1 Scripture, 2 history or tradition, 3 intellectual discourse, 4 culture in its broadest sense and 5 the Christian congregation. In this paragraph (1.2) we give examples of how prophetic speech is a theme within the first four surroundings (Scripture, confessional traditions, intellectual discourse, and culture) and in paragraph 1.3 we focus on the Christian congregation as *topos* of prophetic speech.

There were several reasons for this phenomenological start. The first reason was theological. One of the expectations involved in this research was that prophetic speech is probably not an ‘intramural phenomenon.’ We assumed that prophets are *free*, in many ways. Their voice may arise inside or outside religious communities, from the margins or in the heart of power-centres, in religious or in secular discourses, in familiar words or with a new vocabulary. This freedom should not be obstructed or limited by a narrow methodological design of the study. Our broad phenomenological opening intends to do justice to this theological intuition.¹⁵

The second reason was methodological. The phenomenological explorations were intended to broaden the, in many ways, limited view of the researcher. It became our research experience that a sharpened awareness of the diachronic complexity of the phenomenon and of the multiplicity of interpretation possibilities, stimulated the sensitivity of the researcher toward the phenomenon. The preliminary observations did not narrow down the researcher’s perspective, but rather made him conscious of his own preconceptions, (filtering them out and relativising them), while they made curious about new and alternative interpretations. Therefore, in this paragraph we give a variety of snapshots of perceptions of the prophetic (1.2). These impressions are short, sometimes somewhat imprecise and cursory, as we move swiftly from one discourse to another. Please note that the impressions are not the empirical research itself, but that they function as a preparation for it. Reading Old Testament perceptions of the prophetic (1.2.1.a), Laura Nasrallah’s historically informed view on early Christian and classical prophecy as a discourse on epistemology, identity and authority (1.2.2.a), Paul van Tongeren’s interpretation of possible prophetic motives in Nietzsche’s Zarathustra (1.2.3.a) or the markedly Roman Catholic roots of prophetic speech in the novels of the American writer Flannery O’Connor, has made the researcher modest,

15 See for a discussion on the differences, continuities and discontinuities between biblical and extra-biblical forms of prophetic speech: Stöckl, J., *Prophecy in Ancient Near East. A philological and sociological Comparison*. (Leiden: Brill 2012). See for a discussion on continuity, discontinuity and newness within the prophetic corpus in the Hebrew Bible: Leene, H., *Newness in Old Testament Prophecy. An Intertextual Study*. (Leiden: Brill 2013), and: Lange, A., *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition: Studien zur Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte innerprophetischer Konflikte in der Hebräischen Bibel*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2002).

aware of the complexity of the phenomenon, and eager to analyse the specific material he found.¹⁶

Our third reason for this phenomenological start was homiletical. Preaching is a dialogical practice, in various ways. Notably in their sermons, preachers communicate with their hearers, with contemporaries and sometimes with adversaries, with society in general.¹⁷ This fluidity to what happens in society and among hearers, influences the sort of speech that preaching is. Immink called homiletics a 'somewhat trendy discipline'.¹⁸ Preaching is practically and principally an open practice with all kinds of cross links to those realities that define the context. When prophetic speech happens in the church, as was our intuition, it is not likely to occur in a vacuum, but in dialogue with historical developments, with political circumstances, with atmospheres in society and in the church, with the sciences, with 'extra-ecclesial voices' who have similar intuitions as the preacher concerning what is damaging society. In the beginning of our research, we wanted to explore on a phenomenological level this reciprocity between context and sermons. How may prophetic voices in the arts, in political uprisings, in literature and in aesthetics influence preaching? More generally said: How is the human factor a possible ingredient in the prophetic moment? Through this phenomenological opening, we aimed to open our research to these questions. Simultaneously, we hoped to prevent by it that any theory on Christian prophetic speech would become shortsighted or parochial.

16 The choices we made in selecting the different perceptions are not arbitrary. At the same time, other choices could have been made as well. To give some examples: We considered to include a paragraph about J.H. Newman's views on the prophetic office (see: Newman, J.H., *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church viewed relatively to Romanism and popular Protestantism*. (Oxford: Rivington & Parker, 1838)), or a paragraph about H. Bavinck's views on the visionary or prophetic power of art (referred to in: Wit, W.J. de, *On the Way to the Living God. A Cathartic Reading of Herman Bavinck and an Invitation to Overcome the Plausibility Crisis of Christianity*. (Amsterdam: VU University Press 2011), p 36). We considered to explore how prophetic speech functions in G. van der Leeuw's phenomenology (See Leeuw, G. van der, *Phänomenologie der Religion*. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1933), see for instance § 27 'Vertretung. Der Sprecher', which deals with the figure of the prophet). Or, instead of discussing the prophetic quality of Shostakovich' music, we considered studying an interpretation of the poetry on prophets of Rainer Maria Rilke (see: Sander, G.M., *Unter dem Diktat der Kunst. Propheten im Spiegel der Gedichte Rainer Maria Rilkes*. (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag 2015). The point is, this paragraph is not intended to be encyclopedic in any way. The paragraph wants to evoke something of the vibrant, diachronic and interdisciplinary forcefield that constitutes and surrounds the phenomenon of prophetic speech in the present. During our research journey, many of these contemporary studies crossed our way and paragraph 1.2 is a limited expositions of some of them.

17 See on the dialogical character of preaching, Jonker's paragraph on 'the preacher between God and men'. Jonker, H., *Actuele Prediking*. (Nijkerk: Callenbach z.j.), p 39.

18 'Preaching not only requires exegetical and pastoral skills, but also skills to speak effectively and to communicate adequately. Theories of language, rhetoric, and communication are therefore part of the homiletical discipline. No wonder, homiletics is a somewhat trendy discipline. It is eager to be modern, intending to follow (sometimes uncritically) the latest fashion. Indeed, the cultural, social, and philosophical movements and directions of recent decades have had their impact on the practice of preaching and on homiletical theories.' Immink, F.G., 'Homiletics: The Current Debate', in: *International Journal for Practical Theology* 8 (2004), p 90.

There are theological, methodological, and homiletical reasons to take into account a plurality of different sources that have their own role in the genealogy of preaching as prophetic speech.

1.2.1 The prophetic developing in Scripture: Continuity and diversity of the prophetic dimension

1.2.1.a Perceptions of the prophetic in the Old Testament

One of the first, obvious sources in contemporary understanding of the prophetic is Scripture. In this study, we limit ourselves to Christian perceptions of the prophetic, but we are well aware that sacred scriptures in general have a major influence on the practice and the perception of the prophetic in specific traditions and in specific cultures. It matters if the formative images of the prophetic in a society are taken from the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament, the Qurʾān, or another sacred text, or from a specific, ideological point of view.¹⁹

In this paragraph, we give a rough outline of a variety of antecedents of prophetic speech in the Hebrew Scriptures (2.1.a) and in the New Testament (2.1.b). Through it, we also sketch paradigmatic changes in the perceptions of the prophetic in Scripture itself.

Notably, we use the term ‘perceptions of the prophetic.’ John Barton introduced this term in the subtitle of his study.²⁰ One of the claims of his influential monograph²¹ is that the history of the interpretation of prophecy is a reality of changing perceptions. One major change, according to Barton, happened through and after the period of the Exile. ‘For pre-exilic Israel, the classical prophets were eccentrics, strange and alarming figures who broke the mould of accepted beliefs and values but who, in the process, changed these values and altered the national religion into something scarcely paralleled in the ancient world. For post-exilic Judaism, especially in its development from the time of Ezra, the prophets were characters in a book written by the finger of God. Their utterances were not the words of mortal men, but divine oracles.’²² This is a paradigmatic shift in understanding prophecy, and it is happening in an internal-biblical discourse. Barton called this

19 See for instance Igrave, M. (Ed.), *Bearing the Word. Prophecy in Biblical and Qurʾānic perspective. (A record of the third ‘Building Bridges’ seminar held at Georgetown University, Washington DC, 30 march – 1 april 2004)*, (London: Church House Publishing 2005).

20 Barton, J., *Oracles of God. Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile*. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1986).

21 See Ehud, B.Z., ‘Rereading *Oracles of God*’, in: *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* (2007/7).

22 Barton, J., *Ibid.* pp 268-269.

specific transition from the actual prophetic activity of the classical prophets to this corpus of prophetic scriptures, an ‘infinitely complex process.’²³

John Barton’s study makes the contemporary student of prophecy aware of the various episodes of prophecy in the Bible itself, of the mutations that happen in the development of prophetic practices and of the variety of paradigmatic readings of the prophetic that have emerged as *Wirkungsgeschichte*. There is no fixed, timeless understanding of prophecy in Scripture. To give some examples of paradigmatic perceptions: 1 Prophetic speech can be interpreted, with good scriptural legitimations, as principally *ethical* or *halakhic*, an interpretation grounded in the conviction that the prophetic tradition begins with and finds its essence in Moses and in moral exhortation. 2 Prophetic speech can be legitimately interpreted as *critical speech to contemporaries*, coming from a voice embedded in institutional religion or as a voice unexpectedly emerging in society. It is inspired speech, in which individuals confront others with the lacking integrity of their beliefs and religious practices. This is a reading grounded in a modern, critical reconstruction of the classical prophets. 3 Prophetic speech can be understood as the *hermeneutical activity* of making earlier prophetic texts accessible and relevant for the present, and thus to continue this prophetic tradition in the present. 4 Prophetic speech has a long history of being interpreted as speech with a ‘forward moving drive’, as *eschatological* and *predictive* speech that announces something to happen and that looks to the imminent or far future in which God’s promises will be fulfilled. 5 Prophetic speech can be seen as a form of *apocalyptic* speech, discerning speech in which knowledge is shared of how contemporary occurrences/developments can be seen as part of God’s divine plan for history.

In the introductory phase of our research, we noticed that a specific reconstruction of the classical Hebrew prophets has captivated the dominant imagination in the 20th century of what prophetic speech was essentially thought to be. Barton called this ‘one of the success stories in the history of the critical study of the Bible.’²⁴ ‘When Christian writers and church leaders speak of the ‘prophetic’ role of the Church or its members, they are nearly always referring to the distinguishing marks of ‘classical’ prophecy *as reconstructed by a century of biblical criticism* (italics CMAE).’²⁵ The convictions, for instance, that prophecy is something principally different than prediction, or that the prophet is an individual, are theological judgements, tributary to the work of 19th century European biblical scholars like

23 Barton, J., *Ibid.* p 272.

24 Barton, J., *Ibid.* p 13.

25 Barton, J., *Ibid.* p 13.

Julius Wellhausen and Bernard Duhm.²⁶ More than the *halakhic*, hermeneutical, apocalyptic, or predictive dimensions of prophecy, it is this specific profile of the prophet that has gained much attention in 20th century popular discourses, namely of the prophet as a free-spirited individual, with the guts to provoke and the stubbornness to dissent. Through it, in popular discourse, the prophetic came to be equated with the irregular, the critical and the controversial.

But this perception is changing too. David Schnasa Jacobsen has criticised this 'lonely genius' understanding of the prophets.²⁷ Interestingly, he linked the popularity of this imagery with 'contemporary myths'. He suggested that the reason why this *maverick* image of the prophetic became popular, was not only for its careful scholarship, but also because of the presence of 'cultural myths', like 'the modern myth of the individual who, with the proper mindset and dedication, is capable of such genius and innovation as to redeem primitive systems and traditions.'²⁸ Here, a phenomenological approach proves its worth. In this example the cultural and the scriptural, the academic and the ecclesiastical merged into a specific imagination about the prophetic. A specific cultural climate seemed to be accommodative and supportive of this specific understanding of the prophetic.

A closing remark of Jacobsen enables us to move to the New Testament discourse on the prophetic. One of the more dubious effects of the imagination of the prophet as an individual, is the propensity to theological heroism that is easily caused by it. This heroism may also influence homiletics, it may give rise to a perception of the preacher/prophet as the lonely genius in the pulpit who bravely says what he sees and who is not afraid to say so. A man (almost always a man) who is critical and provocative, but also a gifted speaker, able to motivate and to inspire, not only the congregation but the public discourse likewise. But Jacobsen is definitely right in his critical remarks: the community, or more specifically the Christian congregation, is lacking in this specific theological understanding of the concept. In the New Testamental concepts of the prophetic, the congregation plays a far more formative role: 'Not everyone in the congregation is a prophet, but prophecy is anything but a private possession; it was something to be exercised in and with the church.'²⁹ Jacobsen writes that this 'lonely genius' concept of the prophetic

26 Barton, J., *Ibid.* p 14. Joseph Blenkinsopp makes the same point: 'One of the most significant achievements of biblical scholarship in the nineteenth century was the rediscovery of prophecy as a distinctive religious category.' (.....) '..... critical scholarship claimed to rediscover the true lineaments of the prophet as a unique type of religious individualist with a message addressed to the contemporary world rather than being concerned with the past or with the future.' Blenkinsopp, J., *A History of Prophecy in Israel (Revised and Enlarged)*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 1983, 1996), pp 16-17.

27 Jacobsen, D.S., 'Schola Prophetarum: Prophetic Preaching toward a Public, Prophetic Church', in: *Homiletic* 34 (2009)/1, pp 12-21. Jacobsen refers to R. Clements, *One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation*. (Philadelphia: Westminster 1976).

28 Jacobsen, D.S., *Ibid.* p 15.

29 Jacobsen, D.S., *Ibid.* p 16.

may even hinder the discernment of the prophetic in the present: ‘Our modern, nineteenth-century ‘lone ranger’ myth of prophetic preaching has made it harder for us to see the prophetic task as the communal one that it was. If it takes a village to raise a child, certainly it takes a community to be prophetic.’³⁰

1.2.1.b Perceptions of the prophetic in the New Testament

Jacobsen is right. Throughout the New Testament, new episodes in the internal-biblical discourse on the prophetic are added. In the New Testament, paradigmatic changes occur once more, in this dynamic and meandering history of prophecy. These changes are part of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* in the Jewish history of prophecy. The New Testament presents new prophetic episodes: the description of the Christ event in terms of prophecy and its fulfilment, the description of Jesus as a ‘Prophet and Seer’,³¹ prophets and prophetic speeches in the Acts of the Apostles, the description of the church as a community to which the *donum prophetiae* is given.³² There are different kinds of communities in this New Testamental landscape with different accents on the prophetic, such as the Pauline concept of the *charisma prophetikon*,³³ the Johannine concept on prophecy and discernment,³⁴ the central role of the itinerant prophet in the Apocalypse, the prophecies to seven congregations and the apocalyptic-sermonic character of the entire book.³⁵

In our orientation phase of the research, (as we were trying to get a grip on the complexity of the phenomenon and the characteristics of contemporary usage of the term), we noticed that New Testamental antecedents of modern forms of prophetic speech are often taken from either the prophetic discourses in Luke-Acts or from the *charisma prophetikon* of the earliest Pauline congregations. As there was a tendency in Protestant theology to focus on a specific reconstruction of the classical Hebrew prophets, when it comes to prophetic preaching, likewise there may be a tendency in Roman-Catholic and Pentecostal theology, to focus on the *exhortatory* (aiming to develop the congregation) and *charismatic* characteristics

30 Jacobsen, D.S., *Ibid.* p 16.

31 Witherington, B., *Jesus the Seer. The Progress of Prophecy.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2014).

32 Gillespie, Th.W., *The First Theologians. A study in Early Christian Prophecy.* (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans 1994), Johnson, L.T., *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church. The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians.* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2011), Müller, U.B., *Prophetie und Predigt im Neuen Testament (Studien zum Neuen Testament 10).* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn 1975)

33 Kraus, H-J., ‘Charisma Prophetikon’, in: Bohren, R., et al., *Wort und Gemeinde. Problemen und Aufgaben der Praktischen Theologie. (Eduard Thurneysen zum 80. Geburtstag),* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag 1968), pp 80-103.

34 Moberly, R.W.L., *Prophecy and Discernment.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), pp 150-168.

35 Collins, A.Y., *Crisis & Catharsis. The Power of the Apocalypse.* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press 1984). Aune suggests that the whole of the book of the Apocalypse, since it was intended for delivery in worship, functioned in the place of a ‘prophetic sermon’ which would otherwise have been delivered by a local prophet, and ‘as such it is what we would call preaching’. See Aune, D.E., *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World.* (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans 1983), p 275.

of prophetic speech in Luke-Acts and in the Pauline writings. To get some grip on this argumentation, because it influences contemporary understandings of the prophetic, we decided to survey some theological perspectives on the relationship between the *charismata*, prophetic speech, and the divine-human dynamics.

The academic discourse on the ministry of early Christian prophets received a major impetus with the discovery of the text of the *Didache* in 1873 (*Didache* or: *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*). In 1884, Adolf von Harnack published a critical edition of the text and an influential interpretation. This initiated a century of theological productivity on the subject of ‘prophecy in early Christianity’.³⁶

In Alistair Stewart-Sykes’ reconstruction of the relationship between prophecy and preaching in the earliest Pauline congregations, we see Jacobsen’s earlier plea for a more *communal* understanding of prophetic speech confirmed.³⁷ In his dissertation, Stewart-Sykes works with a distinction between missionary, catechetical and liturgical preaching in the New Testament, and he cites the ‘wide agreement’ that prophecy in the Pauline communities was ‘functionally equivalent’ to what we call ‘liturgical preaching’.³⁸ In his book, he makes a socio-historical and theological recapitulation of how this preaching became more institutionalized. Stewart-Sykes begins with the social setting of the *oikos*, and with the ‘oracular prophetic word’ that happened in these small, embryonic Christian communities. The reading of Scripture was not yet a liturgical practice in this ‘liturgy’, as the liturgical gathering still happened parallel to membership of the synagogue (in which the Scriptures were read and explained). The prophecy that happened in their own gatherings was ‘preaching *in nuce*’, Stewart-Sykes writes.³⁹ It did not have the degree of formality that we know, but it was similarly an ‘ordered communication of the will of God’.⁴⁰ The brief oracle gave rise to significant conversation (*homilia*) and to further supporting revelations. It is possible to see this ‘conversation’ as early ‘homiletics’, as a form of ‘the prophet submitting his prophecy to the judgement of the members of the congregation’.⁴¹ ‘This prophecy, together with interpretation and judgement, functioned as the homily in time would function, as the communication of the word and will of God for the edification of the congregation through new revelation and through the paraenetic exposition of revelation previously given.’ (...) ‘This is the origin of the homily’, *dixit* Stewart-Sykes.⁴²

36 Gillespie, Th.W., *Ibid.* pp 2-3.

37 Stewart-Sykes, A., *From Prophecy to Preaching. A Search for the Origins of the Christian Homily. (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae. Vol. LIX)*, (Leiden: Brill 2001).

38 Stewart-Sykes, A., *Ibid.* p 8.

39 Stewart-Sykes, A., *Ibid.* p 92.

40 Stewart-Sykes, A., *Ibid.* p 92.

41 Stewart-Sykes, A., *Ibid.* p 102.

42 Stewart-Sykes, A., *Ibid.* pp 104-105.

Here, we see a specific and contextual form of the divine-human dynamics operative, which is a historical antecedent of prophetic speech. It is a form in which the individual speaker/prophet and the addressed community work together in an interplay of speech and *diakrisis*, aimed at the *paraklēsis* of the congregation. As synagogue and congregation became estranged, through the parting of their ways, a process of ‘synagogalisation’ emerged in the congregations, Stewart-Sykes states. Prophecy was absorbed into preaching and prophets into the offices of the *ekklesia*.⁴³ In this process, the liturgy of the congregations changed and developed. The reading of Scripture entered the liturgy and took the place of the earlier prophecy, the sermon became a ‘scriptural homily’⁴⁴ and the inspired *diakrisis*, essentially a prophetic activity too, ‘was transferred to those who were equipped as teachers to interpret the sacred texts.’⁴⁵

We conclude the paragraph by exploring another, less of a socio-historical and more of a biblical/systematic-theological perspective on this charismatic origin of ‘prophetic speech’, in Ernst Käsemann’s understanding of it.⁴⁶

Though it is important to remember that the data on early Christian prophecy are scarce and disputed and that the Christian practice of prophecy was ‘unstructured and unstable’, as Aune evaluated it,⁴⁷ Käsemann developed a fundamental theological perspective on it.⁴⁸ For Käsemann, the *charismata* are intrinsically tied to what is the essence of *charis*, grace, and thus he qualified the *charismata* as a ‘Projektion der Rechtfertigungslehre in die Ekklesiologie hinein.’⁴⁹ The *charismata* are ‘attacks of grace’ and ‘through *charismata* the Spirit rules the

43 Stewart-Sykes, A., *Ibid.* p 17.

44 Stewart-Sykes, A., *Ibid.* pp 104-105.

45 Stewart-Sykes, A., *Ibid.* p 139.

46 In the orientation phase of this research, we considered to engage Käsemann’s sermons into our cycles of empirical analysis. In August 1937, Käsemann preached in his congregation in Gelsenkirchen on Isaiah 26.13: ‘Herr, unser Gott, es herrschen wohl andere Herren über uns denn du, aber wir gedenken doch allein dein und deines Namens’. After the sermon he was detained, and in prison he began to write his commentary on the book of Hebrews, later published as *Das wandernde Gottesvolk*. Käsemann’s biography is marked by another incision, again in confrontation with a totalitarian regime, as his daughter Elisabeth, working as a volunteer in Argentina, was tortured and murdered in 1977. See Käsemann, E., ‘Predigt im Bittgottesdienst am 15. 8. 1937 in Gelsenkirchen-Rothausen’, in: Adam, J., et al., (Hrsg.), *Dienst in Freiheit. Ernst Käsemann zum 100. Geburtstag*. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag 2008), pp 87-90.

47 ‘The institution of Christian prophecy, it appears, does not readily lend itself to categorical conceptualization. This negative conclusion, however, is not without significance. It indicates that Christian prophecy, in all its various forms and manifestations, did not possess a dominant form or structure (or a relatively small number of dominant forms or structures); i.e. early Christian prophecy was a relatively unstable and unstructured institution within early Christianity.’ See: Aune, D.E., *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, p 231.

48 We read Käsemann’s extensive writings through Gillespie’s recent reconsideration and confirmation of Käsemann’s theses on the *charismata* and prophecy (see: Gillespie, Th. W., *The First Theologians. A Study in Early Christian Prophecy*), and through Kraus’ reconstruction of the ‘charisma prophetikon’ (see: Kraus, H-J., ‘Charisma Prophetikon’, in: Bohren, R., et al., *Wort und Gemeinde*).

49 Kraus, H-J., ‘Charisma Prophetikon’, p 82.

congregation'. The earliest manifestations of power in the Pauline congregations, were not through the 'offices,' Käsemann accentuates, but through the Spirit and the *charismata*.⁵⁰ The preaching of the Word is a central activity in the lists of these *charismata*, Käsemann explains. In Gillespie's analysis of Käsemann's theology: 'God has ordered the Spirit's work in the church around these activities that mediate the inspired intelligible word.' 'Prophecy is the most essential gift to which a believer might aspire because it mediates the Gospel to the church in intelligible speech.'⁵¹ All these pneumatological activities burst forth from a central proclamation, namely the *kerygma*. Behind the entire New Testament, according to Käsemann, an insistent, apocalyptic question is posed: Whom does the sovereignty of the world belong to?⁵² Paul's resurrection theology is the answer to that question. The Gospels are portrayals of Jesus from this eschatological perspective, and the Christian prophets are the *hermeneuts*, 'the first theologians,' interpreting the implications of this *kerygma* to the congregation. In this light, we can understand Käsemann's dictum that 'apocalyptic is the mother of all theology', we can understand the *charismata* as being individuations and concretisations of the power of grace and we can perceive prophecy as 'kerygmatic hermeneutics'.⁵³

1.2.2 The prophetic travelling in time: Mutual dynamics between prophetic texts and confessional traditions

While analysing, in our initial panoramic *tour d'horizon*, what kind of sources and antecedents influence contemporary assessments of the prophetic, we noticed that not only Scripture, but tradition too plays a pivotal role. The prophetic is not only a scriptural phenomenon, as we surveyed in the paragraph above, but also a historical one. When we apply Mieke Bal's terminology, we may approach the prophetic as a 'travelling concept', as a concept that 'travels' through Scripture, but also through time (and through intellectual discourse, 2.3, and through cultures, 2.4).⁵⁴ Religious and confessional traditions may be interpreted as specific 'tracks' through which the prophetic has travelled in time, in specific ways. Each tradition has its own history of what it considered as prophetic, its own historical reminiscences of prophecy, its own more troubled chapters with possible excesses of it. Through these accumulated experiences and their consequent interpretations, a frame of understanding has emerged.⁵⁵ In this way, traditions are formed, or influenced by prophetic practices and prophetic sacred texts, but it is also the other way around, in these traditions the prophetic practices and

50 Kraus, H.J., *Ibid.* p 83.

51 Gillespie, T.W., *Ibid.* p 126.

52 Gillespie, T.W., *Ibid.* p 257.

53 Gillespie, T.W., *Ibid.* pp 10-11.

54 Bal, M., *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities. A Rough Guide.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2002).

55 See, applied to the Dutch context, for instance: Lieburg, F. A. van, *De reformatorische profetie in de Nederlandse traditie.* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn 2001).

texts are subsequently framed in a specific way. Hereafter, we give a brief example of this mechanism (of how the prophetic is traceable in traditions and of how these traditions subsequently frame the prophetic), in discussing the episode of the *Prophezei* in Zurich, in the early Reformation-period (see below).

1.2.2.a Prophetic disputes as debates on epistemology, authority, and identity (Laura Nasrallah)

First, we discuss a model for detecting and interpreting the prophetic in all kinds of traditions. Laura Nasrallah, in her book on prophetic experiences in the broad Greco-Roman world (including the New Testament), argues that the cases of prophecy she studied, were essentially ‘the locus of important discursive struggles over identity, authority and epistemology’.⁵⁶ Rather than studying the prophetic from a metanarrative of ‘charismatic origins devolving into institution and office’, which is essentially a Weberian paradigm (see below 1.2.3b) that can function as a negative narrative of decline and cessation, we rather should study prophecy from the perspective of a ‘model of struggle’, she proposes. In prophecy, Nasrallah sees a fundamental dispute going on. A debate on three issues: 1 on the theme of *epistemology*: What can be known about God in the present? 2 on the theme of *authority*: Who has the right to speak on God’s behalf and on what grounds?, and 3 on the theme of *identity*: What should the consequences of these claims about God be for individuals and communities?⁵⁷ Nasrallah questions the validity of a hermeneutical model of cessation, a model of ‘vibrant and powerful charismatic origins declining into church institutions’, a model through which, theoretically, subsequent traditions are basically depleted from prophetic speeches. Prophecy as a ‘model of struggle’, she proposes, is helpful to interpret both the biblical prophetic discourses and subsequent historical and contemporary prophetic disputes, as ‘public debates of the *ekklesia*’.⁵⁸

56 Nasrallah, L., *An Ecstasy of Folly. Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*. (Harvard: Harvard University Press 2003), pp 2-28.

57 Nasrallah, L., *Ibid.* pp 2-28.

58 Nasrallah, L., *Ibid.* p 22.

1.2.2.b The Prophezei in Zürich: A case study of an attempt for contemporary 'learned prophecy'

The case of the *Prophezei*, or the *Letzgen* (an Old German word for *Lesung*), in Zurich, is an interesting example showing a historical attempt to make prophetic speech a contemporary practice.⁵⁹ On the one hand, it shows how contextual prophetic practices are indeed part of the history and theology of a certain tradition (in this case the early Reformation in the Swiss context), while on the other hand it shows how, through it, a tradition emerged with a specific frame of the prophetic that may have influenced the subsequent Reformed perspective on prophecy.

The *Prophezei* is a well-known feature of the Zurich Reformation - although not only in Switzerland, but also in England and Germany 'a form of congregational prophecy came into fashion';⁶⁰ in the Dutch context preparations were made as well to initiate and to integrate a form of the prophetic office in the nascent Reformed congregations, as Van Lieburg has shown.⁶¹ This specific practice in Zurich was initiated by Zwingli (though the name *Prophezei* was not from Zwingli himself, but of a later date). The practice lasted from 1525-1556. What did the 'Prophezei' look like? Every morning, except on Fridays (when there was a market on the town square), and on Sundays, there were public meetings to study the Bible. First, the canons, chaplains, preachers, and advanced students gathered in the choir of the cathedral, for a reading from the Old Testament. Subsequently, the Latin, Hebrew, and Greek versions of the texts were compared and discussed. Then the doors were opened, Van der Borght writes, the congregation was invited to join the meeting and one of the preachers would preach to the congregation. After that, there was also room for posing questions.⁶²

59 In our description of this casus, we are informed by: Timmerman, D., *Heinrich Bullinger on Prophecy and the Prophetic Office (1523-1538)*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2015). In this short paragraph, we will focus on Zwingli and the description of the 'Prophezei', and we will leave an important aspect of Timmerman's study aside, namely the question whether and how Bullinger theologically continues this tradition in his three main works on prophecy and preaching. See also Van der Borght on Zwingli and the 'Prophezei' in: Borght, E. Van der, *Theology of Ministry. A Reformed Contribution to an Ecumenical Dialogue*. (Leiden: Brill 2007), pp 15-30.

60 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* pp 17-18.

61 Lieburg, F.A. van, *De reformatorische profetie in de Nederlandse traditie*, pp 5-7.

62 Lieburg, F.A. van, *Ibid.* p 9. Van der Borght writes that this role of the congregation was principal though minimal: 'There is no mention of any addition or judgement from the congregation. In practice, therefore, this was a gathering for the purpose of exegetical and theological work that included an opportunity for the congregation to hear the Word'. This is a modification in Zwingli's thinking: 'Previously, his (Zwingli's, CMAE) understanding of the text (I Corinthians, CMAE) had been that it gave all the male members of the congregation the right to speak in the framework of the charismatic congregation, provided this was done in an orderly manner. Now he sees it as a description of professional prophesying or explaining Scripture by returning to the original languages. This means that the other members of the congregation may speak only if the last prophet has failed to explain the meaning clearly. The ordinary members of the congregation do retain some sort of role: they still have the authority to judge the explanation because of the Spirit that also lives in them. A difference with the Roman church remains because there the parishioners do not have any of such authority'. Borght, E. Van der, *Ibid.* pp 20-21.

The practice aimed to facilitate the emergence of a form of ‘learned prophecy’.⁶³ In the theology of this practice, besides Old Testament motives like the prophet as a herd or a watchman, a specific understanding of I Corinthians 14 played a remarkable role.⁶⁴ As the New Testament texts were not yet available in the early Corinthian situation, Zwingli assumed that it was the text of the Old Testament that was read and explained by the prophets in Corinth, that is, the Hebrew text in its ‘original tongue’. In these Hebrew Scriptures, accordingly, Zwingli sought the sources for contemporary prophecy, and an indispensable quality in this procedure was ‘linguistic expertise’, being able to study and to explain Scripture in its original languages. ‘For Zwingli, prophecy is primarily interpretation of Scripture grounded in philological examination of the original text.’⁶⁵

Timmerman repeatedly shows how important the concept of prophecy was in this period of the Reformation. For instance, in his theology of the ministry, Zwingli assigned the roles of prophet, priest, bishop and missionary to the local *Pfarrer* (in critical antithesis with the power structures of the Roman Catholic Church),⁶⁶ we read about the theological prominence of the sermon and its proximity to and continuity with prophecy,⁶⁷ we read about the essential role of clergy being able to translate the ‘biblical tongues’ into intelligible speech.⁶⁸ We also come across Zwingli’s attempt to implement another characteristic of I Corinthians into this Zurich’ context, namely the spiritual and prophetic authority of the *congregation*. Zwingli’s congregational application of *charismata* included this active role of the congregation, it implied an emphasis on the inner illumination of believers, it included the right to judge the minister’s teaching as it also included the right of the congregation to appoint their own minister.⁶⁹ The ‘Prophezei’ was primarily an educational event, and, in that mode, thought to be potentially prophetic.

It may be argued that in the epic dispute of the reformers with the Roman Catholic Church, the concept of prophecy played a leading role. One of the stakes in this clash was the *prophetic potentiality* of the sermon, of the local *Pfarrer* and of the local congregation. At various moments in his study, Timmerman explains that ‘one of the central concerns of the Protestant reform movement was the issue of authority in the church. Who has the right and the power to interpret Scripture and to pronounce authoritative statements in matters of faith and praxis?’⁷⁰ In

63 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* p 17.

64 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* p 115.

65 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* p 105.

66 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* p 71, 98.

67 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* p 17, 57-58.

68 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* pp 102-105.

69 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* pp 85-86, 105.

70 Timmerman, D., *Ibid.* p 75. See also p 116: ‘Throughout the centuries, and particularly in the sixteenth-century Protestant reformation, the rediscovery of the notion of prophecy was intertwined with the question of authority in the church.’

Nasrallah's terms: The Protestant reform movement initiated a new public debate in the *ekkklesia* on the issues of epistemology, authority, and identity.

This dispute had another front in the growing tensions with, what came to be known as, the 'radical reformers', contemporaries who embraced the new prophetic emphasis and sought to implement it in a specific way.⁷¹ Timmerman and Van der Borcht describe how, in due time and due to this dispute, second thoughts arose among reformers about their original proposals, and how, for instance, the role of the congregation in interpreting Scripture was limited,⁷² how the stress on linguistic competence (and thus on the role of clergy or 'specialists') became progressively more important, how the model of the priest (the episcopal dimension) came to balance the initial focus on the prophet as archetype for local ministers. The tension between these two poles became part of the texture of the Reformed tradition concerning its perspective on prophecy. Phenomenologically seen, the 'in-between position', between radical reformers and the Roman Catholic power structures, may have become a subsequent hermeneutical frame through which prophetic sacred texts were interpreted.

The point we want to make here, through discussing this specific case, is that in contemporary understandings of the prophetic, not only Scripture, but tradition too plays an influential role in the way prophecy is being assessed. Sacred prophetic texts have a *Wirkungsgeschichte* within traditions, and, through it, traditions generate their own frames of how these prophetic texts are to be interpreted. These frames of understanding may facilitate new explorations in and manifestations of the prophetic, but they can also problematise prophetic speech or even rule it out. This paragraph also shows how perceptions of the prophetic, like Zwingli's, are deeply contextual.⁷³ These perceptions are marked by specific historical, religious, and political circumstances and they are determined by the degree of exegetical and theological knowledge that was accessible in that period.

1.2.3 The prophetic elaborated in thinking: Contemporary intellectual discourses on the prophetic

While preparing the empirical analysis of contemporary forms of prophetic speech, we designed a 'topography of the prophetic'. The main question was: In what kind of influential discourses do we encounter an interest in prophetic speech

71 Timmerman, D., Ibid. pp 86-96.

72 See in Luther's case: 'As a result of these and other more radical applications of his reformative ideas, from 1525 onwards Luther's use of 1 Cor. 14 capsizes. Faced with the obtrusiveness of the *Schwärmer*, he no longer considers the entire congregation to be the addressee of Paul's words, but rather the Protestant clergy.' Timmerman, D., Ibid. p 78. See for the same development in Zwingli's thinking: Borcht, E., Ibid. pp 20-21

73 Borcht, E., Ibid. pp 20-21.

and how may these discourses have generated concepts and images that may have influenced contemporary understandings of the prophetic? In this orientation phase, we observed that the prophetic is not only a scriptural and a historical or traditional concept, but also an intellectual concept. In this paragraph, we briefly examine three interpretations of how contemporary thinkers use and understand the concept of prophetic speech (Nietzsche, Weber, and Foucault). The paragraph can be read as another episode in the history of perceptions of prophetic speech. However, not in Scripture or tradition, but in contemporary thinking.

1.2.3.a Friedrich Nietzsche and the redemptive and tragic features of prophecy

The first philosopher we turn to is Friedrich Nietzsche, especially the figure of Zarathustra in his work.⁷⁴ In Zarathustra, Nietzsche introduced a Persian prophet. It is a personage with, on a formal level, prophet-like characteristics, and the allusions to biblical prophets, including Jesus, are various and often polemical. Zarathustra is a prophet in the Nietzschean discourse on the 'death of God'.⁷⁵ Van Tongeren, whose interpretation we follow here, first draws attention to the kind of texts Nietzsche used when it comes to the theme of this presumed 'death of God'.⁷⁶ These texts are not plain philosophical discourses, but they are mainly parables, aphorisms, and arcane stories. Like prophetic oracles in the Old Testament and parables in the New Testament, these obscure sayings need explanation. The texts come from a prophet and need the explanation of a prophet to be understood. A second observation Van Tongeren makes, is about the *pathos* of this speech. Zarathustra, the prophet, spoke of a catastrophe. The language and metaphors that are used in *Der tolle Mensch*, a text we should read alongside the Nietzschean texts on Zarathustra, as Van Tongeren explained, are likewise extreme and dramatic, (like: 'who gave us the sponge to wipe away the horizon', 'who gave us the right to detach the earth from the sun', and 'we are continuously falling'). Nietzsche's assessment of his present situation and the spiritual diagnosis of those who live in this reality of 'God's death', is likewise dramatic: We live in a 'chilling night' and in an 'endless void', for 'we are the murderers of God'. Van Tongeren sees the reason why this pathos intensifies in the texts in the unresponsive reaction of the hearers. The prophet meets with a mixture of hilarity, contempt, and indifference.

74 Nietzsche, F., *Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen.* (in Dutch: *Aldus Sprak Zarathustra. Een boek voor allen en voor niemand* (Ingeleid door H. Marsman). (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek z.j.).

75 See Prosman, for a summary and evaluation of *Also sprach Zarathustra*: Prosman, A.A.A., *Geloven na Nietzsche. Nietzsches nihilisme in de spiegel van de theologie.* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2007), pp 104-120.

76 Van Tongeren focused on the aphorism of *Der tolle Mensch* in Nietzsche's *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* and on the *Vorrede* of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. According to Van Tongeren, the two texts should be read together. See his lectures on *Nietzsche and Nihilism* (ISVW Uitgevers 2011), especially lecture 5: 'Atheism & Nihilism', and his book: Tongeren, P. van, *Een dreiging die niemand schijnt te deren – Friedrich Nietzsche over het Europese nihilisme.* (Nijmegen: Sun 2012).

The 'death of God', seen as a catastrophe by the prophet, left the hearers cold. In Van Tongeren's reconstruction, the prophet has a specific kind of knowledge, an awareness of something catastrophic, he is 'ahead of his hearers,' but he can not convince them of that reality. The prophet and his prophecy are untimely. 'I have come too early', Zarathustra concluded. The intensified pathos in the speech is an angry attempt to shock the hearers out of their indifference and complacency. But the prophet does not succeed. The hearers at the market-place, (in the *Vorrede* of *Also sprach Zarathustra*), came for their hour of distraction (a rope-dancer was announced to perform), and they would not let this strange hilarious voice disturb their moment of amusement.⁷⁷

A third observation Van Tongeren makes, concerns the 'redemptive' aim of this prophecy. Van Tongeren explains that Zarathustra came with an 'offer of redemption'.⁷⁸ He descended from the mountain where he had resided for ten years, to share with his contemporaries from his 'richness', his insight. The message he wants to share is the assumed liberating power of the 'Übermensch'. According to Safranski, this 'Übermensch' is the Nietzschean answer to the 'death of God'. The 'murderer of God' must become a god himself, an 'Übermensch', or he will relapse into banality.⁷⁹ After the 'death of God', the religious 'god-generating powers' in human beings must be preserved and applied into a specific way of living. That was the new morality Zarathustra wanted to preach about. But the tragedy of this prophet is double, Van Tongeren concludes. The hearers are not only unaware of the catastrophic reality of the 'death of God' (and of their own guilty role in it), but because of this ignorance they are also unresponsive to and unreachable for Zarathustra's preaching about the 'Übermensch'.

We present this fragment as a cursory example of our phenomenological *Rundschau* on prophetic speech. In this paragraph, we briefly mention several perspectives on prophetic speech that have become part of modern sensitivities to the phenomenon of prophetic speech. Nietzsche's diagnosis of Nihilism as a subconscious layer in the European mind, has had its effect on contemporary thinkers.⁸⁰ In this diagnosis, the figure of the 'prophet' plays an intriguing role. Nietzsche's portrayal of Zarathustra is a parable on how prophetic insight can be premature and incommunicable. Van Tongeren stressed that it is primarily a parable on miscommunication, and thus of a tragic feature in prophecy. It is the

77 Nietzsche, F., *Aldus Sprak Zarathustra*, p 28.

78 Prosman cited Ulrich Willers (*Friedrich Nietzsches antichristliche Theologie. Eine theologische Rekonstruktion*) that 'redemption is the central category in Nietzsche's Zarathustra'. See Prosman, A.A.A., *Ibid.* p 105.

79 Safranski, R., *Nietzsche. Een biografie van zijn denken.* (Amsterdam: Atlas 2000), p 265.

80 For example, see for the influence of Nietzsche on Bonhoeffer: Frick, P., 'Friedrich Nietzsches Aphorisms and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theology', in: Frick, P. (Ed.), *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation.* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008), pp 175-200.

tragedy of contemporaries unaware of a catastrophic reality, in which they already live and of which they will suffer the dramatic consequences, and it is the tragedy of the prophet who wants to ‘make them see’, but who is disregarded. This explains Van Tongeren’s title of his book on Nietzsche: Nihilism is ‘a threat that nobody seems to care about’. In Flannery O’Connor’s work (2.4), we will encounter the same effect that the unresponsiveness of hearers has on the character of communication, namely in her use of the grotesque, the satirical and the aggressive. These are all violent, literary means to get a vision across to a hostile or indifferent audience.

1.2.3.b Max Weber and the charismatic and rational features of prophecy

The second example we selected, is contrary to Nietzsche’s tragic profile of the prophetic. Max Weber’s concept on the prophetic as a *charisma*, that we shortly discuss here, is a category of authority, not of being disregarded as prophet, but, conversely, of having an impact on contemporaries. To Weber, prophecy is a concept of power. The interesting effect of Weber’s work is that it has provided a terminology that frequently occurs in 20th/21st century discourses on the prophetic.⁸¹ Weber’s contribution is well-known. In his *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* of 1922, he offered a typology of authority in three different modes, each corresponding to their own sources, namely the legal, the traditional and the charismatic form of authority. As legal authority is grounded in laws, and traditional authority in traditionally sanctified offices, the third form of authority is grounded in charisma. Though it is a New Testamental term, Weber used it as a generic and sociological concept, a concept discernible in all kinds of religions, societies, and smaller communities. What he meant by ‘charismatic authority’ is an authority grounded in exceptional qualities that command obedience (*eine als ausseralltaglich geltende Qualitat einer Personlichkeit*).⁸² Weber observed that this charismatic authority typically emerges when the regular, traditional holders of authority seem to be incapable of performing leadership that is able to face the challenges and difficulties of a context. This explains the tension that often arises between new, charismatic forms of authority and the older, traditional forms of power. The weakness of charismatic authority is its essential instability, tied as it is to the charismatic personality of the ‘leader’. In new, changing circumstances, leaders may lose their ‘charisma’ and in periods of power transfer, their successors

81 Justin Taylor mentioned Weber’s ‘major, if not always recognised, influence upon the Christian Church in the 20th century’. Taylor, J., ‘Max Weber Revisited: Charisma and Institution at the Origins of Christianity’, in *Australian ejournal of Theology* 19/3 (december 2012), p 195.

82 ‘For Weber, the legitimacy of charismatic authority rests on ‘devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him’ (...) ‘These (qualities) are such that they are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them, the individual concerned is treated as ‘leader’. Classic examples of the charismatic leader in a pure state are the heroic warlord, the prophet, the saint or the sage.’ Taylor, J., *Ibid.* pp 196-197. See on Max Weber also: Cohen, F., *Het knagende weten*. (Amsterdam: Prometheus 2016, 2017), pp 313-347.

may lack it. Weber also designed a term to describe this period after the charismatic leader has gone, he called it the 'routinisation of charisma' (*Veralltäglicung*). A community may emerge, where the fruits of the original charisma are continued in other recipients or the original vibrancy of that power may diminish or disappear.

One of the important features of this model is the inherent tension it assumes between institution and charisma. Justin Taylor has explained how this competitive model has often been applied, not only to the assumed tension between priesthood and prophecy in the Old Testament, but also to the assumed tension between the charismatic origins in the New Testament and a subsequent 'routinisation of charisma' in the episcopal structures of the church. This development is regularly qualified as a 'decline or deterioration, a cooling down of inspiration, a fixing of original spontaneity'.⁸³ Subsequently, ecclesiological models emerged that either called for a return to these charismatic origins or accepted the cessation of that powerful origin. Taylor pleads for a more nuanced view on how institutional elements in Christianity should not be seen as secondary or as deterioration. He ends his article with the interesting question whether the New Testament shows a 'routinisation of charisma' in the Weberian sense, or a 'charismatisation of routine'?⁸⁴ It is indeed a fascinating question. Is the negative view on institutions and offices the result of exegesis, or one of the reflexes in which we recognise the effect that modern intellectual concepts on prophecy, like Weber's model on authority, have had on 20th century theological discourse on prophecy? The mechanism is a good example to show how intellectual discourses on the prophetic influence contemporary understandings of it.⁸⁵ It is through a phenomenological approach that this relationship becomes evident.

Before we move to our next example, there is a rather different feature of prophecy that Max Weber also pointed to. Weber not only analysed the charisma of prophecy, but, *mirabile dictu*, also the *rationality* of prophecy. Discussing Israelite prophecy, he explained that the inner tension in prophets is caused by the conflict they experience between their religious 'unified view of the world, derived from

83 Taylor, J., *Ibid.* p 200.

84 '(...) the institutional features of the Church should not be regarded as secondary. Rite, office, tradition belong to the very origins of Christianity and were inherited from the original Jewish environment from which Christianity emerged. Indeed, the Christian gospel can be seen as breathing new life and meaning into existing structures. So, Christian baptism is still a rite of initiation, as at Qumran, but is now a mystical participation in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The Eucharist is still a ritual meal reserved to initiates, but is now a sharing in the blood and body of Christ.' Taylor, J., *Ibid.* pp 207-208.

85 We should not overlook that Weber developed the concept of charisma as a portrayal of the sociological dynamics of authority and power. Contemporary exegetical and systematic-theological conceptions of charisma should not be equated too easily with Weber's sociological observations on 'how power works'. In the Weberian sense, warlords, demagogues and prophets share in the same 'charisma'.

a consciously integrated, meaningful attitude towards life' and empirical reality.⁸⁶ Weber explains: 'The conflict between empirical reality and this conception of the world as a meaningful totality, which is based on the religious postulate, produces the strongest tensions in man's inner life as well as in his external relationship to the world.'⁸⁷ In this view, the origin of prophecy is in a rational awareness of the conflict between how life should be lived to be meaningful and the empirical reality. When political practices, social realities or the integrity of religious life are shaped in a way of 'how life should *not* be lived', it is criticised prophetically.

Joseph Blenkinsopp used these Weberian observations in his proposal to see prophecy, especially the prophecy that emerged from the eighth century BC in figures like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, as a new type of 'intellectual leadership'.⁸⁸ These 'classical prophets' were the heirs of the older *nēbī'im*, and in a way they shared in the same practice, but the prophetic tradition *evolved*.⁸⁹ Aware of the 'perils of importing modern categories into ancient texts', Blenkinsopp introduces the term 'dissident intellectuals' for these prophets.⁹⁰ This last observation triggers Blenkinsopp to a reflection on the role of intellectuals in public discourse: 'In the formation, maintenance, transformation and disintegration of traditions, intellectuals (not necessarily the same as academics) can have the function of sustaining and empowering the symbols and the models by which society understands itself, and thus they can sustain its identity and morale.' Intellectuals can be supportive of dominant ideologies, 'but they can also play a socially destabilizing role, in taking an independent, critical, or innovative line towards commonly accepted assumptions or a dominant ideology'. 'In fact, radical change rarely, if ever, comes about without the cooperation or intervention of an intellectual elite.'⁹¹

Weber's writings are instructive in showing how specific concepts (like charisma as a form of authority/power) influence contemporary discourses on what the prophetic is thought to be. Discussing the theme of prophetic speech without this Weberian notion of charisma, is hardly thinkable in our context. It also shows how presumed tensions between, for instance, institution and charisma can

86 Quoted by Blenkinsopp, who makes extensive use of Weber's comparative method in his approach of Old Testament prophecy. See Blenkinsopp, J., *Sage, Priest, Prophet. Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 1995), p 145.

87 Weber in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp 1.450-451, quoted by Blenkinsopp in: *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, pp 145-146.

88 Blenkinsopp, J., *Ibid*. 141.

89 Blenkinsopp, J., *Ibid*. pp 141-143.

90 'What this is meant to say is that they collaborated at some level of conscious intent in the emergence of a coherent vision of a moral universe over against current assumptions cherished and propagated by the contemporary state apparatus, including its priestly and prophetic representatives'. Blenkinsopp, J., *Ibid*. p 144.

91 Blenkinsopp, J., *Ibid*. p 144.

come to dominate theological and popular imaginations. At the same time, this exploration makes us sensitive to alternative models of the prophetic, and this awareness of alternatives is imperative for empirical research. From Weber and Blenkinsopp we learn that the prophet is not necessarily a charismatic figure, but that he or she can also have a rational judgement on how life should *not* be lived. This prophetic dimension, according to Blenkinsopp, can emerge in intellectual leadership that does not eschew public debate.

1.2.3.c Michel Foucault, *parrhēsia* and the feature of audacity in truth-speaking

The final example in our panoramic view of intellectual discourses on prophetic speech, is Michel Foucault, more specifically the last series of public lectures he gave in the Collège de France, in Paris (in the semester of 1983-1984).⁹² We shortly discuss his opening lecture, held at 1 February 1984, five months before his death. The theme of these lectures is the *parrhēsia* (*franc parler*, truth-speaking) and the *epimeleia* (*gouvernement de soi*, taking care of oneself). In the course of the various lectures, Foucault sketches the development of the concept of *parrhēsia*, from political truth-speaking developing to truth-speaking in which the speaker screens the truth of his own speech (*gouvernement de soi*), to truth-speaking as a praxis, as a lifestyle of living good by living differently (analysed in the writings of the Cynics and Epicurists).⁹³

In the lecture we discuss, the focus is primarily on the relationship between subject (i.e. the one who speaks), and truth (i.e. what is said). The main theme is knowing the truth about oneself. Foucault explains that, for the truth about ourselves, we need the other (be it a confessor, a therapist, a preacher, or a friend). In the lecture, he explores how in Antiquity there was this quest for ‘knowing oneself’ and in that specific context *parrhēsia* meant that the ‘other one’, through which we only can obtain true self-knowledge, needs to be able to speak freely. Without this *parrhēsia* of the other, self-knowledge is unattainable. Flattery, the opposite of *parrhēsia*, promotes self-deception. In this act of honesty, Foucault explained, the subject, who speaks the truth, ties himself to the truth, obligates himself to speaking truthfully, and thus he takes a risk. At this moment of risk, the title of the published lectures hinted: *Le courage de la vérité*. Foucault coins a term for the context that facilitates this daring speech: the ‘*parrhēsiastic* play’. Every

92 Foucault, M., *Le courage de la vérité. Le gouvernement de soi et des autres*. Cours au Collège de France (1983-1984). (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil 2009). (Foucault, M., *De moed tot waarheid. Het bestuur van zichzelf en de anderen II*). (Amsterdam: Boom 2011). We especially focus on the lecture held on 1 February 1984 (pp 19-54). Note also Foucault’s final lecture, dated 28 March 1984, that includes a reflection on the use of *parrhēsia* in the New Testament (pp 369-388).

93 Karskens, M., *Foucault*. (Amsterdam: Boom 2012)

community that seeks the truth about itself or every individual who searches self-knowledge, should accept the rules of the pact of the '*parrhēsiastic play*', namely for the speaker, the risk of speaking the truth and for the listener, the risk of hearing inconvenient truths about oneself. Both acts need a kind of spiritual grandeur, Foucault underlines. In a side remark, he explains the flaws of rhetoric in Antiquity, seen from the perspective of this truth-speaking. A capable orator can defend convictions he himself does not share. In rhetoric, Foucault explains, the tie between the speaker and his speech is broken. It is the aim of rhetoric to create a powerful relationship explicitly between the speech itself and the hearer, without the personal convictions of the orator. In *parrhēsia*, as its opposite, the tie between the subject and the truth is essential, and the response of the audience secondary.

After these preliminary reflections, Foucault turns to three forms of speaking the truth in Antiquity, namely prophecy, wisdom, and education. He compares these three forms of speech with *parrhēsia*. In prophecy, the truth of *another* is articulated, Foucault explains, namely the truth of the gods. Secondly, prophecy speaks about the *future*, about what is to come. And thirdly, prophecy is not necessarily transparent. The prophet discloses something, but never without also concealing something. Prophecy never 'speaks the plain truth', he adds. Foucault contrasts this prophetic speech in Antiquity, with *parrhēsia*. The *parrhēsiastes* must speak on their own *account*, they do not speak about the future but about what *is*, and thirdly they must speak as plain and as clear as possible.⁹⁴

At the closure of the first lecture (of 1 February 1984), Foucault changes his focus. Instead of stressing the differences between these four forms of truth-speaking, he makes another point, namely that speaking the truth is in many cases a mixture of these four elements. Then Foucault mentions the practice of *preaching*. Speaking the truth, he argues, is in each context a specific constellation of the four elements of prophecy, wisdom, teaching and *parrhēsia*. In medieval preaching, according to Foucault, the preachers were both prophets and *parrhēsiastes*. They foresaw what was coming, they told the truth about 'who the hearers essentially were', they played a pivotal role in all kinds of renewal and transformation, and with *parrhēsia* they urged their hearers to change.

We selected this specific example to show how the core question of our research, concerning prophecy and preaching, emerges in a modern, philosophical context. Foucault's analysis of the relationship between speaker, speech, truth and

94 Foucault applied the same procedure in comparing wisdom to *parrhēsia* (the sage tends to be silent whereas the *parrhēsiastes* is an interpellant) and in comparing education to *parrhēsia* (the teacher focusing on 'know-how', tends to become a technician and thus speaks without risk, whereas the *parrhēsiastes* is defined by the risk he runs because of his speech).

rhetoric, or his proposal of a specific merger of prophecy, wisdom, teaching and *parrhēsia* in preaching, are philosophical explorations of our own homiletical research. Foucault provides us with a terminology that is helpful to get a grip on contemporary images of the prophetic and modern sensitivities to it. We assume that the profile of the *parrhēsiastes*, of those who speak ‘truth to power’, who take a risk in speaking the truth, who are personally tied to the veracity of their speech and who practice this truth by living differently, may come close to what contemporaries imagine to be ‘prophetic’. Not only in scriptural (1.2.1) and in confessional traditions (1.2.2) we encounter antecedents of speech/preaching becoming prophetic, but also in contemporary philosophical discourses (1.2.3).

1.2.4 **The prophetic emerging in cultural discourses: ‘Pop-up prophetic fragments’ on YouTube, in literature and music, in societal/political action and aesthetics**

Fourthly, as we move closer to our main field of research, namely the Christian congregation as *topos* of prophetic speech, we first turn to another venue in which we encountered a specific discourse on prophetic speech, namely contemporary culture. The prophetic is not only a scriptural, a historical/traditional and an intellectual concept, it is also a cultural concept. We selected four examples of contemporary receptions of what is considered prophetic, taken from popular culture, politics, literature, music, and aesthetics. The procedure of the paragraph is that we present short snapshots of where we encountered the ‘label’ prophetic.

We start with a popular example from YouTube. In a global culture, where the World Wide Web, Twitter, Facebook and vlogs have become influential realities, the power of images to unleash both public admiration and controversy, sympathy and aggression is enormous (think of the power of cartoons, photographs, paintings, and YouTube fragments).⁹⁵ To give a single example: There is a fragment that has gone viral, situated in the tumultuous year 2011 in Tunisia, when all kinds of revolutions were on the brink of breaking through in the Middle East. In the context of a political demonstration, amidst an atmosphere of excitement and fear, a woman is filmed, Emel Mathlouti, a young singer. While the other demonstrators sit and wait for what is happening, she sings a song, called *Kelmti Horra*, which can be translated as *Ma parole est libre/My word is free*.⁹⁶ What is interesting is the scenic power of the fragment. In the fragment, we see the contrast between fear, possible violence and a young girl singing, and we sense the contrast between a dictatorial political system and a powerful/powerless song like *Ma parole est libre*.

95 See for instance: Mitchell, W.J.T., *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1996).

96 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a77s097Qvw&feature=related

While we should not be naïve about how YouTube fragments are complicated sources, susceptible to all kinds of manipulation, it is interesting to notice the phenomenon of how in popular and global, cultural reception, moments like these can get their own momentum. The song, specifically tied to the moment when it was sung, is said to have an *aura prophétique* (Anne Berthod).⁹⁷ In 2015, at the Nobel Prize Peace concert, Emel Mathlouti was invited to perform the song again. What started with a YouTube fragment, developed and evolved into a performance on a stage with a worldwide audience. The mechanism at work in these moments (incidents of protest that are filmed, and, through the power of media, are drawn to a global stage), will be analysed in our research as ‘iconographic mechanism’, see 3.4).

When we continue to reflect on these moments, we may find that a similar essence occurs in other more reflective cultural expressions, the essence of a contemporary (be it a citizen, an artist, a writer, or a politician) expressing, in his or her own form of communication: *Ma parole est libre*. Think of literature. In the work of novelists like Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Toni Morrison and Nadine Gordimer, prophetic dimensions are said to be present. Their literature is studied for that prophetic content and their influence on contemporary culture is noteworthy.⁹⁸ Nadine Gordimer, who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1991, wrote her debut novel, *The Lying Days* in 1953. In her work, she exposed and translated into literature the complexity and the injustices of the apartheid system in South Africa. Hans Ester, in an obituary to remember Gordimer, called her the ‘gadfly of the Nationale Party’.⁹⁹

A similar example can be given in the case of Javier Sicilia, a catholic-mystic poet who lost his son through a brute murder by drug traffickers in Mexico. Sicilia started a movement of resistance against the disruptive forces of drug syndicates (called *Estamos hasta la Madre*, a strong exclamation meaning *We are fed up*), and against governmental liability in it. In 2011, Time magazine elected *The Protester*

97 See for A. Berthod’s comment: www.telerama.fr/divers/emel-mathlouti,156550.php. See also J. Pelly: ‘Why the world needs Emel Mahtlouti’s anthems against the dictatorship machine’, www.pitchfork.com/features/rising/9949-why-the-world-needs-emel-mathlouti-anthems-against-the-dictatorship-machine. For a discussion of the dynamics of change in these ‘street-life contexts’: Bayat, A., *Life as Politics. How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2013).

98 On Toni Morrison, see: Watson, K.T., *Literature as Prophecy: Toni Morrison as Prophetic Writer*. (*English Dissertations 50*), (Georgia State University Press 2009). See also the dissertations on the prophetic dimension in Flannery O’Connor’s literature (see below).

99 Ester also made an interesting observation about her last novel *No Time Like the Present* (2012), in which the storyteller, a refugee from Nazi-Germany, comments that the suffering under this regime has caused a specific clarity of mind in his thinking about good and evil, and triggered a vocation to live a life dedicated to social progress. As we observed earlier, in the discussion on the writings of Weber: prophecy can also emerge out of a biographical confrontation with injustice, and as a rational judgement about ‘how life should not be lived’. See: Ester, H., ‘Nadine Gordimer bleef strijden voor het vrije woord’. In: *Reformatorsch Dagblad* 14 July 2014.

as the ‘Man of the Year’, a choice especially inspired by the collective uprisings in Egypt on the Tahrir Square, but also because of many other individuals who oppose injustice within their own context. One of the interviews in the Time series was with Sicilia. He wrote: ‘I think the greatest change the movement produced was that we made the drug war’s victims’ names and faces visible – we reclaimed the victims, put the photos of them smiling, into the national consciousness. We made the rest of Mexico recognize that we have a national emergency to confront, and we got the nation and its families together to question how the government was confronting it. (...) For me personally it even made my faith deeper – made it naked for the first time in my life. It made the mediation of religion more real than ever for me. (...) It’s a bit like the idea of prophecy in Judeo-Christian tradition, a voice speaking out inside the tribe.’¹⁰⁰ In this phenomenology of cultural intuitions of the prophetic, we notice how in many instances the prophetic is not perceived as a problem, but as a power. In a personal confrontation with a senseless murder, as in Sicilia’s case, a certain power is developed through which individuals mobilize resistance.

A final, short reference about the potentially prophetic character of music. Thera Klaassen wrote about the complex and grim relationship between the Russian composer Shostakovich and the political ruler Stalin.¹⁰¹ She wrote how in this totalitarian context, Stalin increasingly tried to get a grip on music and musicians. Stalin drew up the rules for the music that could obtain his *nihil obstat* and thus could pass the censorship. This type of music should avoid dissonances, it should follow traditional harmonic schemes, it should be simple, ‘abstract’ instruments should be avoided, jazz rhythms were *anathema*, the opera should deal with the goodness of Soviet life, and all musical influences from ‘the West’ should be absent.¹⁰² This was not a suggestion, but a rule of conduct for Russian musicians, and the possible repercussions were threatening. Klaassen writes about the subtlety of protest that Shostakovich hid in his earlier symphonies. She also cites the question that Shostakovich posed after he composed his 11th symphony: Can music attack evil? Can it make man stop and think? Can it cry out, and thereby draw man’s attention to various vile acts to which he has grown accustomed?¹⁰³ To be sure, there is an ongoing discussion about whether Shostakovich managed to guard his integrity during this troubled period or not,¹⁰⁴ but his use of the poem ‘Babi Yar’ in his 13th symphony (1962), a reference to the place near Kiev where 34.000 Jews were massacred, stands for itself. Interesting is the suggestion

100 *Time Magazine* (december 2011, interview by Tim Padgett).

101 Klaassen, T., *Muzikaal Geweld. Muziek als wapen in de Koude Oorlog (1917-1991)*, (Utrecht: Thesis Utrecht University 2006), pp 41-43.

102 Klaassen, T., *Muzikaal Geweld. Muziek als wapen in de Koude Oorlog (1917-1991)*, p 45.

103 Klaassen, T., *Muzikaal Geweld. Muziek als wapen in de Koude Oorlog (1917-1991)*, p 52.

104 See, as an example of this discussion on the integrity of his life, the recent novel from Julian Barnes, *The Noise of Time*. In Dutch translation: Barnes, J., *Het tumult van de tijd*. (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact 2016).

of Solomon Volkov that Shostakovich, in his strategy to survive, used the concept of the *Jourodivy*, a cherished personage in Russian folktales and deeply rooted in the communal public imagination.¹⁰⁵ The *Jourodivy* is the Russian 'holy fool', who personifies the collective conscience of the people, a person of critique, be it openly and grotesque, or subtle and hidden. The *Jourodivy* can be interpreted as a contextual embodiment of the prophetic. The prophetic tradition travels into Russian history by means of this 'holy fool' who questions the rich and the powerful.

These are all examples of cultural manifestations of resistance. In these examples, we see human beings resist suffocating powers, like regimes in Tunisia, South Africa or Russia or the terror of drug syndicates disrupting society. Through a song, a book, a symphony or by exposing pictures of murdered young Mexicans, they expose these powers and try to stop them. The insight and audacity they show, is recognised by others, and perceived as being 'prophetic'. It is remarkable how the terms 'prophetic', 'aura prophétique' or 'prophetic power' *pop up* in these discourses. For our research, these phenomenological impressions are fruitful. They show that the prophetic, in contemporary perceptions of it, is not an atavistic phenomenon, something merely happening in old, sacred texts. On the contrary, the phenomenon is perceived as a powerful living reality.

We close the paragraph by briefly hinting at another kind of perception, not of art being prophetic because of its protest (a mode primarily *moral* in character), but a perception of art as potentially prophetic because of its own discerning and exposing quality of the reality of God. To illustrate this position, we briefly turn to the American writer Flannery O'Connor.

In her theoretical essays, O'Connor (1925-1964), has explained how art can have a prophetic vision. O'Connor is an interesting voice in our research. Her fiction, as well as her letters and essays on art, have been fruitful for theological and philosophical reflection. Two dissertations have been written on the prophetic character of O'Connor's work.¹⁰⁶ As a Catholic thinker and artist, O'Connor

105 See Volkov, S., *Shostakovich and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2004), cited in Klaassen, T., *Muzikaal geweld*, p 42.

106 Rabascha, I.C., *The Prophetic Voice and Vision of Flannery O'Connor. The Influence of the Old Testament Prophetic Literature on her Fiction*. (New York 1995). Srigley, S.M., *Prophetic Vision and Moral Imagination in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction (diss.)*. (Hamilton 1995). See also Rowan Williams, who in his Clark Lectures of 2005 discussed the work of O'Connor and Maritain: *Grace, Necessity and Imagination: Catholic Philosophy and the Twentieth Century Artist – Lecture 3*, (Cambridge: Trinity College 2005). See also the New Testament scholar J. Louis Martyn who wrote an article comparing the apocalyptic theology of the apostle Paul with O'Connor's fiction: Martyn, J.L., 'From Paul to Flannery O'Connor with the Power of Grace', in: Martyn, J. Louis, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*, (London: Continuum 1997), pp 279-297. See for a general introduction of her work: Wood, R.C., *Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-haunted South* (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans 2004).

was influenced by Thomas Aquinas and the philosopher Jacques Maritain. It is through these theological antecedents, we encounter a specific concept of the prophetic, different than we encountered in the other sources. O'Connor claims that prophecy is not primarily a moral discourse, but it is rooted in a fundamental vision on reality. Every artist works with a framework of assumptions about humanity and the world in which we live, and in O'Connor's vision, it is axiomatic that there is an 'inherent connection between visible and invisible reality', and it is the prophetic eye that discerns this connection.¹⁰⁷ The prophetic dimension in art is in making others see this connectedness. Faith, as a religious mode of perceiving reality, according to O'Connor, is one of the last few things in the modern world that guarantee the respect for the mystery of this connectedness of the visible and the invisible. Faith creates a receptivity for the 'extra dimension in facts, in human beings, in occurrences'. In this way, faith does not hinder art, but facilitates it. More poignantly said: 'Dogma is an instrument for penetrating reality'. 'When people have told me that because I am a Catholic, I cannot be an artist, I have had to reply, that because I am a Catholic, I cannot afford to be less than an artist'.¹⁰⁸

In O'Connor's essays, as a consequence, she protests against the separation of nature and grace, of reason and imagination, of fact and mystery. To her, it is in the discernment of the divine *in* the material reality, that art is true to that reality. The opposite is also true. When art denies or disconnects this relationship, it can only portray reality and human existence as being absurd and meaningless, 'in fact then art simply ends up mirroring the distorted image of human existence within this lopsided spiritual condition'.¹⁰⁹ To O'Connor, the work of the artist exists in presenting a 'truthful vision' through which a spiritual order in reality is revealed. In her view, this intrinsic relationship between the seen and the unseen must be honoured by both sides. For her, 'belief adds something to what is seen, without taking away what is seen'. She cites a remark from St Gregory: 'When Scripture describes facts, it reveals mysteries'.¹¹⁰ Facts contain mysteries, and these two should not be vivisected from each other, but seen in relation to one another. When art manages to make this connectedness visible, it is prophetic in O'Connor's understanding.

However, this does not make O'Connor's fiction ethereal. On the contrary, her work is filled with rough and grotesque characters. Her work has a sceptical and satirical, almost destructive character. In part, this is caused by her negative view on contemporary society. 'To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the

107 Srigley, S.M., *Prophetic Vision and Moral Imagination in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction*, p 1.

108 Williams, R., *Grace, Necessity and Imagination: Catholic Philosophy and the Twentieth Century Artist – Lecture 3*, (Cambridge: Trinity College 2005).

109 Srigley, S.M., *Ibid.* p 24.

110 Srigley, S.M., *Ibid.* p 27.

almost-blind you draw large and startling figures’, she famously wrote.¹¹¹ But there are also other theological motives. Resisting grace or accepting it, resisting vocation or following it, are all realities in human lives and through the grotesque, O’Connor intends to show the intensity of how people can resist this grace, and how this resistance affects and distorts their lives, can, in fact, make it grotesque. Nonetheless, her novels always provide unexpected openings, through which glimpses can be seen of the perspective that this distorted world is the same world to which redemption has been offered.

In the next paragraph, we classify and summarise all these different phenomenological observations on the prophetic dimension, and make the transition to practical theology.

1.3 Recapitulation: Summary of phenomenological observations and modern sensitivities

In this study, we develop a conceptual grip on prophetic speech as a contemporary phenomenon. Before we entered the main, substantive area of our research, (i.e. the prophetic dimension in the Christian practice of preaching), we explored the phenomenon of prophetic speech in a broader sense. In this exploration, rendered in the preceding paragraphs, we observed that the prophetic is a vibrant phenomenon, discussed and developed in various discourses (see: the prophetic as scriptural, historical, intellectual, and societal concept). Before we continue our research with the focus on the Christian congregation as *topos* of prophetic speech, we classify/capture the results of the previous paragraphs in six conclusions.

1 Our first conclusion is that the prophetic is a profound scriptural concept. Prophecy in Scripture is a theological category of divine presence and communication. In the formative periods of Israel and of the Christian congregation, prophecy has proven to be an eminent factor in a historical, theological, and conceptual way. The prophetic is also a dynamic phenomenon, as its morphology changes and we can trace several paradigmatic changes in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*. In contemporary 20th century discourses, we observed a predilection for a specific reconstruction of the classical Hebrew prophets.

2 In the New Testament, the prominence of the prophetic is continued. The Christ event, as its theological centre, is described in terms of prophecy and fulfilment, and the figure of Jesus Christ as well as the community gathered around him, (and later: the community in which his presence is continued), have prophetic qualities. We explored the concept of the *charismata prophetikon*, a New

111 Srigley, S.M., Ibid. p 97.

Testamentical concept of the presence and the communication of Jesus Christ in the congregation. In this exploration, we observed for the first time a dialectical tension between individual and community in the understanding of the prophetic.

3 The interest in and practice of prophetic speech, is, seen from a phenomenological angle, discernible in all kinds of religious and confessional traditions, as well as in modern intellectual discourses and in contemporary societal dynamics. It is remarkable to see the emergence and importance of prophetic speech in decisive periods of confessional traditions, in decisive thinkers of contemporary intellectual discourses and in decisive transitions in modern history.

4 In different sources we found antecedents and credentials of the combination of prophecy and preaching. In Scripture, prophetic preaching is prominent (through prophets, through tradents and hermeneuts of prophetic texts, through inspired members of the congregation). In confessional traditions, we surveyed a specific case, the example of the *Prophezei*, a historical attempt for contemporary 'learned' prophetic speech. In intellectual and popular discourses as well, the concept of truth-speaking is also applied to preaching. Nasrallah's proposal, that, in prophetic speech, a debate is going on concerning the themes of epistemology, authority and identity is instructive. In these different examples, the concern is indeed about divine presence, about who is qualified to communicate about that presence, about what the content of this communication is and what it means for the lives of individuals and congregations.

5 In modern discourses on the prophetic, we observed specific sensitivities concerning the prophetic. There is a modern sensitivity to 'disconnectedness'. Prophetic speech may encounter unresponsiveness or laughter, it can be 'untimely'. The prophet may feel as if he speaks 'ins Leere', an experience of an absence of resonance among hearers to what is said.¹¹² There is a modern sensitivity to power. Prophetic speech may be part of a discourse on authority, and through charismatic qualities individuals may obtain influence. There is a modern sensitivity to the 'inspirational side' of prophecy. We observed a tension between institute and charisma, a tension between inspiration, relevance, and the capacity to manage contextual complexities. There is also a modern sensitivity to public discourse. Prophetic speech may be a form of intellectual leadership, and in that mode, raise its voice in public debate.

112 The term 'ins Leere reden' is taken from Bonhoeffer's lecture on the prophets, held in Barcelona: 'Eine kaum tragbare Last war damit dem Jesaja aufgebürdet: Seinem geliebten Volk predigen zu müssen – die Propheten waren die glühendsten Patrioten, die man sich denken kann - - und zu wissen, daß er ins Leere redet, ja vielmehr, daß er durch die Predigt das Böse nur immer mehr heraustreibt, deutlicher macht, und so den Gerichtstag immer näher herbeiführt,' 'Die Tragödie des Prophetentum und ihr bleibender Sinn', in: Bonhoeffer, D., *Barcelona, Berlin, Amerika 1928-1931. (DBW 10)*, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1992, 2015), p 290.

6 There is also a modern sensitivity to the risk of prophecy and thus to its ‘purity/authenticity’. In prophetic speech, there is a risk to be taken, the risk of speaking the truth and of the possible repercussions of it. We saw this risk being formulated by Foucault and we saw it being practised in the concrete examples of truth-speaking that we discussed (in literature, music, and political protest). This risk can be seen as being part of *parrhēsia*, a form of ‘being tied to the truth’ as an imperative in prophetic speech. Prophetic speech does not only have an exterior dimension, as it is concerned with concrete realities in a context, we also discussed the interior reality, of the speaker of truth screening the integrity of his own words and praxis. Finally, there is a modern sensitivity to the artistic dimension of prophecy. We observed that prophetic speech may also have a creative and synthetic quality.

This phenomenological opening has shown us the variety and the diachronic dynamic of perceptions of the prophetic. One of the things we learned, is that each case of prophetic preaching should be studied in its own historical and contextual circumstances. The challenge of our own empirical research is to show how the prophetic ‘travels’, how it is expressed in a specific tradition and context, what form it takes on and why. This is one of the reasons why, in the empirical chapters, we ‘tell the story’ of each sermon rather extensively and summarise it in its entirety. We explain the circumstances and context of the sermons, introduce the preacher, the situation and the various traditions influencing the sermon.

1.4 Practical theology: The prophetic as integral part of the divine-human dynamics (Designing a theological framework for the study of the prophetic dimension of preaching)

These conclusions bring us to a fifth surrounding of the prophetic, namely the Christian congregation. In this venue (literally: a place of action), we arrive at the primal scene of our research. In this paragraph, we show that traces of the prophetic have found their way into the texture of the Christian liturgy (1.4.1) and we explain that these liturgical elements refer to the reality of the prophetic in the dynamics of faith itself (1.4.2) Here, we construct the practical theological framework for our study of the prophetic as integral part of the divine-human dynamics.

Moving from phenomenology to practical theology, we start with the observation that the Christian congregation is not an isolated community. All the previous perceptions of the prophetic may influence Christian communities. The Christian congregation is, theologically seen, a distinctive community with its own identity, possessing an intrinsic relationship with its context as well. Cultural discourses and societal sensitivities do not pass the internal discourses in the congregation.

Earlier, we gave the example of how societal paradigms on individuality influenced the idea of the 'religious genius' as the true prophet, or how a negative perception on institutions became part of what was thought to be typically prophetic. Perceptions of the prophetic have their own date and context of origin. The specific constellation of how culture and congregation relate to each other in continuity and discontinuity, should be analysed separately in each context. It is often only in retrospect that the specifics of this relationship become evident.

This being said, the Christian congregation also has its own engagement with the prophetic. In chapter 2 we show how the prophetic has been applied to disciplines like pastoral care, diaconal presence, and ecclesiology, but here we focus on liturgy and preaching. In the next paragraph, we show how the prophetic is interwoven with the structure of liturgy and how it is part of the dynamics of faith itself. In this paragraph, we do not suggest how congregations *should* engage themselves with the prophetic, but first of all we show how they in fact *already do*. To prove this point, we give examples taken from Protestant liturgies.

1.4.1 Elements of the prophetic in the texture of the liturgy

Our first focus is on the place or *habitat* of the liturgy. Heiko Oberman has accentuated the importance of the Protestant understanding of the liturgy as taking place *in the world*: 'The congregation does not flee the world for the sanctuary, not for that matter does it bring the world into the church, but the service takes place in the world. The world as God's creation, with its need and promises, is not lost from sight for one moment.'¹¹³ Oberman called the liturgy essentially a *trialogue* between God, his creature and his creation.¹¹⁴ For the understanding of the prophetic element, this positioning is crucial. The reading of Scripture and its explanation in the sermon, but also prayer, lament and doxology, all happen in this public surrounding. There is a fluidity between the reality of the world in which the congregation lives and her communication with God.

The second focus is on the form of interaction that takes place in the liturgy. The liturgy can be seen as a sequence of different moments in which a redemptive reality is mediated. In different moments and in different forms, God's redemptive presence is mediated to human beings. It is mediated in the greeting at the beginning of the service and in the blessing at the end. Then, in a different form, in the commandments and in the reading of Scripture. In the preaching of the Word a redemptive dynamic happens, as well as in the sacraments in yet another form. In all these sequential liturgical moments, God's redemptive presence

113 Oberman, H., 'Preaching and the Word in the Reformation', in: *Theology Today*, XVIII (1961-1962), p 22.

114 Oberman, H., *Ibid.* p 23.

comes to the congregation in different modes. The congregation takes part in this interaction. She comes to the service, she responds to this presence in prayer, in listening, in doing penance, in receiving, and sharing. We call this the reality of the *divine-human dynamics* in the liturgy, a term coined by Theo Pleizier.¹¹⁵ The point we want to make in this paragraph is that the prophetic dimension can be seen as a specific quality *in* these divine-human dynamics and that these qualities can be detected in the liturgy itself. Prophetic elements have grown into the liturgies that congregations use in their communion with God.

To give some examples of how and where these prophetic elements can be detected: In every Christian liturgy, the Scriptures are read. This is one of the defining moments in the Protestant understanding of liturgy. In many of the readings of Scripture, *prophetic* texts are read and applied to the present situation during the sermon. The theological paradigm that causes this reading and explanation of Scripture to be crucial, is the understanding that ‘this is the Word of God.’¹¹⁶ This even has become a liturgical habit of closing the reading of Scripture: ‘This is the Word of God’. It is important to notice, that this theological concept of ‘the Word of God’ explicitly originates in the prophetic tradition.¹¹⁷ On a structural level, this prophetic element has become an integral and principal part in the Christian liturgy.

Another example: The reading of Scripture is preceded by prayer. In the Reformed tradition, the *epiclesis* is a prayer with an invocative character.¹¹⁸ It is a prayer for the Holy Spirit to enliven the words of Scripture and to illuminate the hearts and minds of the hearers. This prayer is also prayed at the beginning of the Eucharist. But what do we pray for when we ask the Spirit to be present? Though every confessional tradition may have developed its own accents in understanding the presence of the Holy Spirit, *prophetic* dimensions in this presence of the Spirit are hardly ever absent. The same applies to the congregational understanding of the presence of Jesus Christ in the gathering of the congregation. To give an example from the Reformed tradition: The *munus triplex* has played a formative role in understanding the identity of Christ and its meaning for believers.¹¹⁹ The royal,

115 Pleizier, T., *Religious Involvement in Hearing Sermons. A Grounded Theory Study in Empirical Theology and Homiletics*. (Delft: Eburon 2010), pp 57-82.

116 See on this history of this concept of the Word of God, its contemporary homiletical expressions and its perceptions in the congregation: Stark, C., *Proeven van de preek. Een praktisch-theologisch onderzoek naar de preek als Woord van God*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2005).

117 Körtner, U.H.J., *Theologie des Wortes Gottes. Positionen – Probleme – Perspektiven*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2001), p 271.

118 See on the ‘crucial importance of the *epiclesis*’, Immink, F.G., *The Touch of the Sacred. The Practice, Theology, and Tradition of Christian worship*. (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans 2014), p 52-56.

119 See the instructive paragraph 7.6 of Marquardt on ‘Jesus als Beamter’ (Die Lehre vom *munus triplex*: das *munus regium*, das *munus propheticum*, das *munus sacerdotale*), in: Marquardt, F-W., *Das christliche Bekenntnis zu Jesus, dem Juden. Eine Christologie. Band 2*. (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1991) pp 135-217. See also Immink, F.G., *Jezus Christus. Profeet, Priester, Koning*. (Kampen: Kok 1991).

priestly, and prophetic character of Christ is thought to be beneficiary for believers and to have an impact on their lives. The Heidelberg Catechism even applied these royal, priestly, and prophetic features, in a modified way, to the existence of individual believers (Q/A 31-32). The point is: In this Protestant tradition, the presence of Christ is thought to include *prophetic qualities*. In the congregational understanding of the presence of the Spirit and of Jesus Christ, a presence that is prayed for, prophetic elements are operative.

Other examples can be added. In many Protestant liturgies, there is a moment of exhortation or *paraklēsis*. In it, there is a liturgical moment when the concrete daily life of the individual hearers and the spiritual quality of their communal life is confronted with the commandments of God. This liturgical moment is about 'how life should be lived' and 'how life should *not* be lived'. The members of the congregation are exhorted to confess their guilt, to change their lives and to follow Jesus Christ. *Paraklēsis*, as we saw in our phenomenological survey (see 2.2) is a crucial concept in the New Testament understanding of prophecy.¹²⁰

Another example: We could analyse the songs that the congregation sings. In the Psalms, but also in the hymns and spirituals that have been developed in confessional traditions, specific reminiscences of the prophetic tradition can be traced. Or, to add a final example, both in the offerings of the congregation as in the communal prayers, concrete societal needs are addressed. It is expressed to God but also brought to the awareness of the congregation. In many contemporary congregations, deacons make the congregation conscious of specific needs, like poverty, suffering or injustice, and they urge the congregation to take responsibility in it.¹²¹

1.4.2 The prophetic dimension as an integral factor in the life of faith itself

Seen from this perspective, the prophetic is not something at the fringe of Christian life, but traces of the prophetic tradition can be found in the texture of the liturgy. To take our argument one step further, it is our suggestion that these prophetic elements have grown into liturgy, because the prophetic element is integral to the life of faith itself.

120 An analogous analysis could be made for Pentecostal liturgies. A specific understanding of the congregation as a *charismatic* community, is translated into liturgical practices in which also *prophetic* moments may emerge.

121 See Wolterstorff, N., *Hearing the Call. Liturgy, Justice, Church and World*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2011).

David Plüss has described how formal elements of the liturgy have the intention of engaging the hearers on the level of their own inner life, and to draw them into communication with God.¹²² Plüss called this the *Dramaturgik* of the liturgy, and he explained how he understands the *Tiefensgrammatik* of his Swiss Reformed tradition to bring the hearers into a reality of prayer and reflection. In this article, he writes about the *Verinnerlichung* that intends to happen through the liturgy and the *Verdichtung*. Through prayer and reflection, the conscience of the hearer is addressed and formed: ‘The *Fokussierung* in the liturgy on a scriptural pericope stimulates the *innere Gottesdienst*’. Now it is our suggestion, to employ Plüss’ terms, that the prophetic dimension has its place in the *Dramaturgik* of the liturgy, that it is part of its *Tiefensgrammatik*, as we have shown, because it has its place in the *Dramaturgik* of living with God.¹²³ Theologically and spiritually seen, the prophetic dimension is an integral quality in the divine-human dynamics.

This, concludingly, brings us to an understanding of faith in which these realities are acknowledged. Faith, as Immink described it, can be seen as a lively dynamic with God, an existential, intersubjective dynamic between the human subject and God as a subject.¹²⁴ This communication is what the liturgy intends to facilitate, to actualise and to renew. Immink stressed the fundamental affirmative character of this dynamic between God and human beings and the reality of it in the life of hearers. Believing in God is not something foreign to the human mind and soul, and it is not a reality that remains exterior to the human existence. In the act of believing, the whole ‘infrastructure of the human spirit’ is active in response to God, in feelings of trust and joy, in acts of obedience and sacrifice, in responses of singing and praying. And God, on his part, is essentially beneficial towards human beings, his aim is their salvation and their well-being. Immink theologised from the perspective of an affirmative relationship, but he also mentioned the possibility of a ‘polar tension.’¹²⁵ It is exactly this ‘polar tension’ we want to explore in our thinking on the prophetic dimension of preaching. If the communication between God and human beings is thought to be dialogical, a real existential, intersubjective dynamic, then there must be conceptual space in this dynamic for tension, distance, and disobedience, for misunderstanding and withdrawal, for critical discourse, anger, and judgement.¹²⁶ If these lively dimensions that are not

122 Plüss, D., ‘Oraisons publiques et solennelles’ – Die Grundzüge reformierter Gottesdienste’, in: Beintker, M. (Hrsg.), *Uns zu dem Leben führen. Hoffnung predigen. (Fs. Peter Bukowski)*, (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Theologie 2015), pp 19-36.

123 Empirical research confirms the experience of hearers that in the liturgy, especially in listening to sermons, a beneficiary and affirmative reality is experienced, as well as a critical and interruptive reality. See: Pleizier, T., *Religious Involvement in Hearing Sermons*, pp 265-273.

124 Immink, F.G., *In God geloven. Een praktisch-theologische reconstructie* (Meinema: Zoetermeer 2003), pp 27-51 (in English: Immink, F.G., *Faith. A Practical Theological Reconstruction*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 2005).

125 Immink, F.G., *Ibid.* pp 48-51.

126 Immink, F.G., *Ibid.* pp 125-129.

without tensions, are principally excluded from our conceptual thinking on the divine-human dynamics, it is not legitimately called 'an existential, intersubjective dynamic'.

In this way, the concept of divine-human dynamics offers a practical theological paradigm to study the prophetic. We expect this 'polar tension' to be one of the 'theological spaces' in which the prophetic dimension is operative. If faith is to be understood as an existential, intersubjective relationship, the prophetic dimension has an integral part in the infrastructure of faith itself. The prophetic is not only interwoven with the liturgy, but with the dynamics of faith itself. Maybe this is one of the reasons why this prophetic dimension is a formative element in the 'identifying stories' in Scripture about the character of the lively interaction between God and human beings.¹²⁷

With this practical theological framework of the divine-human dynamics, we now turn to homiletics. Especially when it comes to preaching, some kind of prophetic actuality may happen in this liturgical, spiritual dynamic. In the act of preaching, as Michael Beintker defined it, there is the unavoidable risk (cf. 'das unvermeidliche prophetische Risiko beim Verkündigen') that something of the prophetic may be triggered into actuality.¹²⁸ Oberman wrote that the Reformation has an essential, apocalyptic understanding of the sermon. In the sermon, he wrote, 'Christ and the Devil are revealed, Creator and creature, love and wrath, essence and existence, "Yes" and "No"', and in such an understanding, something of the prophetic may indeed be expected to happen.¹²⁹ All these different theological terms point to a potential happening in preaching of that which tradition called 'prophetic'. In this study, we develop a conceptual grip on this specific quality in preaching.

127 Immink, F.G., *Ibid.* p 59.

128 Beintker, M., 'Das (unvermeidliche) prophetische Risiko beim Verkündigen', in: *Die Zeichen der Zeit* 40/ (1986), pp 64-71.

129 Oberman, H., 'Preaching and the Word in the Reformation', p 19.

CHAPTER 2 | RESEARCH JOURNEY: MOTIVES AND METHOD

Homiletical and methodological introduction

2.1 Introduction

In chapter 1, we made a phenomenological inventory of discourses on prophetic speech. We discussed four different sources and perspectives in the understanding of the prophetic: the scriptural, the historical/traditional, the intellectual and the cultural factor in prophetic speech. In the second part, we discussed the Christian congregation as *topos* of the prophetic, we showed how traces of prophetic concepts have grown into liturgies and how a prophetic dynamic can be interpreted as part of the reality of faith itself. Our study will focus on prophetic speech as a congregational reality, and more specifically as a homiletical category.

In this second chapter, before we start the empirical analysis of sermons, we turn to methodology and homiletics. The questions at stake in it, are decisive in research, including our own. In this chapter, we explain the motives for this research, its relevance, and the goals we hope to achieve with it.

In paragraph 2.2, we give an overview of the kind of studies that are influential in the discourse on the phenomenon of prophetic speech and we explain the kind of knowledge we hope to gain through this research. In this paragraph, we explain that the recent research history on prophetic speech is dominated by, what we propose to call, ‘discourse-defining studies’, and we give concise characterisations of two influential perspectives on prophetic speech (of Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner). We explain the importance of ‘primal sources studies’ and indicate how our own study is a contribution to the research field.

In the three following paragraphs (2.3, 2.4 and 2.5), we describe the research design we employed to analyse the phenomenon. We explain the essence and the

instruments of the method we used, Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM),¹ and we show how these instruments guided us in preparing and conducting the research (2.3). Here, we discuss questions essential to our research, for instance how we selected our empirical material. After that, we explain how ‘sensitizing concepts’ in GTM enable researchers to find a fruitful balance between existing preconceptions of the researcher and methodological open mindedness. Furthermore, we show how, by means of coding, the empirical material is analysed in this method and how processes and patterns can be distinguished in the material (2.4). Finally, we show how GTM enables generating concepts and how it stimulates the formulation of a theoretical framework (2.5).

2.2 Motives and methods of this research

2.2.1 Previous research: Prophetic speech as a ‘20th century phenomenon’ (1 discourse-defining studies, 2 applicative studies, 3 primal sources studies, 4 discourse-development studies)

1 Discourse-defining studies

A brief survey of the extensive research history on prophetic speech, shows the multiple theological disciplines that are involved in studying this phenomenon. As we try to make a provisional overview of the different kind of studies, the first studies we mention are systematic and biblical studies in which a comprehensive theological design of the prophetic is developed. We call these ‘discourse-defining studies’. The strength of these studies is in their integrative character, integrative in the sense of interdisciplinary, but also integrative in the sense of responding to historical, ecclesiastical, and cultural developments. Because of the depth and broadness of these studies, they have become influential on an academic level and often also on a popular one. These studies ‘define the discourse’, and they influence the practice of preaching, both directly and indirectly. It is interesting to notice that in the theological legacy of influential 20th century theologians (like Bonhoeffer, Barth, Tillich, Rahner, Von Balthasar and Ratzinger) reflections on prophecy and prophetic speech are easily found. The same goes for influential

1 See for further discussion, explanation and legitimation of how to use GTM in recent homiletical studies, Pleizier, T.T.J., *Religious Involvement in Hearing Sermons. A Grounded Theory Study in Empirical Theology and Homiletics*. (Delft: Eburon 2010), pp 1-28, 83-154; Verweij, A., *Positioning Jesus’ Suffering. A Grounded Theory of Lenten Preaching in Local Parishes*. (Delft: Eburon 2014), pp. 59-84; Boonstra, P., *Omgang met de Bijbeltekst in de preek. Een empirisch homiletisch onderzoek*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic 2016), pp 77-102.

biblical scholars like Abraham Heschel,² Gerhard von Rad,³ Hans-Joachim Kraus⁴, Walter Brueggemann⁵ and Luke Timothy Johnson⁶. These theologians, who often were preachers too, 'set the climate' of their context, with various studies concerning the questions of prophetic speech, of prophetic presence and of prophetic protest in contemporary circumstances.

We give a brief characterisation of the theological assessment of prophetic speech by Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner, as an introduction to this kind of theological and spiritual influence.⁷

Paul Tillich wrote an essay on the rediscovery of the prophetic tradition in the Reformation.⁸ In it, he equates the vibrant 'Protestant spirit', that, according to Tillich, characterised the early Reformation, with the biblical 'prophetic spirit'. To Tillich, being Protestant, in the original sense of the word, means being prophetic. But what does the word 'prophetic' mean for him. Tillich locates the core and the origins of prophetic theology in its protest (*Angriff*) against distortions (*Verzerrungen*) in the understanding and representation of God.⁹ Further, he characterises prophetic (and Protestant) theology as being marked by a primal and fundamental tension between God and human.

2 Heschel, A.J., *The Prophets*. (New York: Harper & Row 1962); Heschel, A.J., *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity. Essays* (Ed. by Susannah Heschel). (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1996).

3 Rad, G. von, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band II: Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1960, 1980), Rad, G. von, *Gottes Wirken in Israel. Vorträge zum Alten Testament* (Hrsg. Odil Hannes Steck). (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag 1974).

4 Kraus, H.-J., *Prophetie heute! Die Aktualität biblischer Prophetie in der Verkündigung der Kirche*. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag 1986).

5 From Brueggemann's many publications, we mention: Brueggemann, W., *Cadences of Home. Preaching among Exiles*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 1997); Brueggemann, W., *Like Fire in the Bones. Listening for the Prophetic Word in Jeremiah*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2006); Brueggemann, W., *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination. Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012); Brueggemann, W., *Reality, Grief, Hope. Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 2014).

6 Johnson, L.T., *Scripture and Discernment. Decision Making in the Church*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1983, 1996); Johnson, L.T., *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church. The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians*. (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans 2011).

7 We could also have given the example of Karl Barth's theology on the prophetic quality of the Christian congregation and his own practice of teaching homiletics, his essays or his sermons. See: Barth, K., 'Der Götze wackelt'. *Zeitkritische Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe von 1930 bis 1960* (Hrsg. K. Kupisch), (Berlin: Käthe Vogt Verlag 1961); Barth, K., *Vorträge und Kleinere Arbeiten. 1930-1933*. (Hrsg. M. Beintker). (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich 2013); Dienhart Hancock, A., *Karl Barth's Emergency Homiletic. 1932-1933. A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich*. (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans 2013).

8 Tillich, P., 'Die Wiederentdeckung der Prophetischen Tradition in der Reformation', in: Tillich, P., *Der Protestantismus als Kritik und Gestaltung. Schriften zur Theologie I (Gesammelte Werke. Band VII)*. (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk 1962), pp 171-215. See for the biographical dimensions of Tillich's theology, especially his experiences as a chaplain in World War I, the 'Zeitdeutungskämpfe' in the Interbellum and his 'exile' to the United States: Pauck, W. & M., *Paul Tillich. His Life & Thought. Volume I: Life*. (London: Collins 1977), pp 40-57. See for a historical-theological review on how Tillich was part of the 'discourse-defining circles' in Germany, before World War II: Christophersen, A., *Kairos. Protestantische Zeitdeutungskämpfe in der Weimarer Republik*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008), pp 68-126.

9 Tillich, P., *Ibid.* p 173.

Applied to Calvin's theology, Tillich observes that there has not been a theologian more concerned with idolatry and with *falsche Religion* than Calvin, and because of this, he called the *Spannung des Prophetischen* integral to Calvin's theology: 'In seinem Kampf gegen die falsche Religion wird das Kernmotiv des Calvinismus sichtbar. Das ist nicht ein Interesse Calvins an der Religionsgeschichte (.....), das ist auch nicht sein Angriff auf den Katholizismus, Kernmotiv ist vielmehr seine Einsicht, daß ein götzendienerisches Element im Wesen jeder Religion enthalten ist.'¹⁰ According to Tillich, this was an anthropological axiom for Calvin: 'das Schöpferische im Menschen drängt zur Erschaffung Gottes.'¹¹ Concerning the relationship between God and men, Tillich writes about an absoluteness, which he calls *das Unbedingte*, and it is this absoluteness that creates the prophetic tension: 'Das Element des Unbedingten, dem die Reformatoren so mächtig Ausdruck gaben, so prophetisch im radikalen Sinne des Wortes, dieses Element muß in einer bedingten Gestalt erscheinen und sich durch sie hindurch manifestieren.'¹² This tension is a theological deadlock: How can finite (*bedingte*) and sinful people, bear witness to the holy dimension of God (*das Unbedingte*)? Tillich claims that prophetic tension arises, because prophets cling to this *unbedingte* sovereignty of God and that they criticise the lacking correspondence to this holiness in *bedingte* priests, persons, institutions and sometimes an entire people.¹³

The last part of Tillich's essay, concerns the question of how this prophetic theology can create *lebendige Gemeinschaft*. For Tillich, this is the *Grundfrage des Protestantismus*. In the origins of Protestant theology, there are, on the one hand, 'ecstatic claims about the godness of God' (for instance in Calvin's theology of the predestination and in Luther's *Geschichtstheologie*), but there are, on the other hand, these 'obscure conclusions concerning the nature of man.'¹⁴ How can this tensed theology become a liveable historical reality? In different kind of examples, Tillich shows the tensions that arose in the subsequent history of Protestantism. The tension between the 'spiritual power of the Word' and its *Verkörperlichung*, for instance in a progressively legal understanding of the authority of Scripture¹⁵; the tension between 'spiritual freedom as an essence of Reformed theology' and the formation of a church-organisation, with offices, dogma's, sacraments and discipline¹⁶; the question of how *das Unbedingte* should be applied to society and worldly rulers? Tillich ends his essay by concluding that 'the tension between the prophetic principle and its realisation is an eternal problem of religion, because

10 Tillich, P, Ibid. p 174.

11 Tillich, P, Ibid. p 175.

12 Tillich, P, Ibid. p 184.

13 Tillich, P, Ibid. p 184.

14 Tillich, P, Ibid. p 200.

15 Tillich, P, Ibid. p 205.

16 Tillich, P, Ibid. p 210.

it is rooted in the basic relationship (*Grundverhältnis*) of God and humans.¹⁷ There is a 'dynamic polarity' integral to religion, says Tillich, and Protestantism, 'poor and weak as it may be', is 'in the history of religion and of Christianity, the strongest inner dynamic power, as long as it is conscious of this function, namely of showing the tension between these two elements, a tension that is nothing else but an expression of the tension of human existence as such'.¹⁸

Karl Rahner would have agreed with Paul Tillich on many issues concerning prophecy. They had similar views regarding the origins of the church as prophetic, they shared the conviction that for its vitality and relevance, the church needs prophetic speech, they shared a perspective on the prophetic as an integral part of human existence. However, when we study Rahner's interpretation of prophetic speech, we enter a different register of theological concepts. In his design there is, among many other features, a specific anthropological notion of prophetic speech that is not in tension with, but is also coming forth from, human thinking, striving and longing.

Rahner has stressed the anthropological characteristics in his notion of contemporary prophetic speech. In his theological design 'the possibility for prophecy is present in every human being'.¹⁹ Mary Hilker has translated Rahner's notions for homiletics, and she has explained how in this understanding, 'human words, spoken from the centre of ourselves, (words or phrases like 'I love you,' 'Here I stand,' or 'I have a dream'), can, in a profound sense, become revelatory, allowing a deeper dimension of reality to emerge'.²⁰ In Tillich's terminology, these words are 'depth words', and they can become sacraments, 'because they function as symbols that allow a deeper mystery, namely the offer of grace, to become more concretely present and available in human life'.²¹ Rahner accentuates the anthropological factors in the prophetic moment, like the reality of a general moral-faith instinct in human decision-making,²² like the notion of human freedom and subjectivity and the human propensity to develop this freedom and subjectivity, like the ability

17 In Tillich's understanding: 'Gott, der den Menschen unendlich übersteigt, wird dem Menschen offenbar und erscheint unter den Menschen. Nehmen ihn die Menschen auf, so machen sie aus ihm unvermeidlich einen Götzen, und sie schaffen tagaus tagein Götzen, und der prophetische Geist muß wieder aufstehen und Protest erheben.' Tillich, P., *Ibid.* p 215.

18 Literally: '(...) wie arm und schwach auch äußerlich der Protestantismus sein mag, er ist in der Geschichte der Religion und des Christentums die stärkste innere dynamische Macht, solange er sich seiner Funktion bewußt ist, die Spannung zwischen diesen beiden Elementen zu zeigen, die nichts ist als ein Ausdruck für die Spannung der menschlichen Existenz überhaupt.' Tillich, P., *Ibid.* p 215.

19 Lowry, D., *The Prophetic Element in the Church (As Conceived in the Theology of Karl Rahner)*. (Lanham: University Press of America 1990), p 21.

20 Hilker, M.C., *Naming Grace. Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*. (New York: Continuum 1997), pp 31-34.

21 Hilker, M.C., *Ibid.* p 33. Rahner's concept of 'depth words' is developed in the essay 'Priester und Dichter', in: Rahner, K., *Schriften zur Theologie. Band III: Zur Theologie des geistlichen Lebens*. (Zürich/Köln: Benziger Verlag 1957), pp 349-378.

22 Lowry, D., *Ibid.* p 55.

of human beings to always look for new possibilities and strive for the absolute,²³ like the openness of humans towards the future and the intrinsic hope that can be detected in these mechanisms. For Rahner these anthropological dynamics are given and facilitated by God: the divine self-expression and self-giving, form the a-priori conditions for these anthropological dynamics.

Secondly, while the *possibility* of prophetic speech may be present in every human being, Rahner describes the church from the perspective of the *reality* of this speech: 'ecclesial Christianity is necessarily prophetic.'²⁴ What did Rahner mean by it? In his description of prophetic speech in the lemma 'Prophetism' in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Rahner states that the church is the community of the eschatological prophet: 'Jesus Christ is the great prophet, the absolute bringer of salvation. This does not mean that prophecy has simply ceased. But the only prophets are those who strive to uphold his message in its purity, who attest that message and make it relevant to their day'.²⁵ To Rahner, the church is the 'permanent presence of the word of the prophet, Jesus Christ', and it is 'in the church that the word effects what is signified by it, and thus can legitimately be called prophetic.'²⁶ Then Rahner turns to the charisms,²⁷ which he calls 'the essence of the Church',²⁸ and which he saw in continuity with the 'order' of the Church, 'for the "order" of the Church is itself nothing else than a participation in the prophetic charge of Christ. This charismatic prophecy in the Church helps to make the message of Jesus new, relevant and actual in each changing age'.²⁹ In Rahner's design, prophecy is not marked by absolute tensions between God and human (as in Tillich's design), but it is characterised in words like creativity, relevance and *aggiornamento*: discovering new tasks for the church and being critical to what has become obsolete.

Discourse-defining studies design and propose an integral understanding of prophetic speech. In these studies, prophetic speech is not an isolated or accidental phenomenon, but it is related to the essences of the relationship between God and humans and to crucial aspects of being church in contemporary times. Because of the reach and the depth of these studies, they have become influential on a theological, ecclesiological, and practical level.

23 Gooijer, A., *De Geest in schepping en verlossing. De betekenis van Pinksteren in de theologie van Karl Rahner en Karl Barth*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic 2016), p 36.

24 Lowry, D., *Ibid.* p 203.

25 Rahner, K., 'Prophetism', in: Rahner, K. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. (London: Burns & Oates 1975), p 1288.

26 Rahner, K., *Ibid.* p 1288.

27 See further: Rahner, K., *Das Dynamische in der Kirche (Quaestiones Disputatae 5)*. (Freiburg: Herder 1958), Rahner, K., *Visionen und Prophezeiungen*. (Freiburg: Herder 1963). See also: Edean, Ph., *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001, 2009).

28 Rahner, K., 'Prophetism', p 1289.

29 Rahner, K., *Ibid.* p 1289.

2 Applicative studies

A second cluster of studies is related to this first category. These studies could be called applicative studies. In these homiletical, pastoral, or practical theological publications, the earlier mentioned 'discourse-defining studies' are elaborated and applied, specific characteristics from it, are integrated into new proposals. In these studies, the definition of prophetic (or what it can be or should be), is derived from the 'discourse-defining studies'. These contributions are not original in their definition of the prophetic, they are original in their application of a concept to specific and new situations or to specific disciplines (like applications in ethics and preaching,³⁰ in ecclesiology³¹ or pastoral care³²). Heinz Blum, for example, translated and adjusted the dialectical tradition on prophetic preaching for a new decade,³³ and Gerrit de Kruijf surveyed how especially Karl Barth's notions on the prophetic quality of the Christian congregation, can (and cannot) be applied in modern secular Western democracies.³⁴

3 Primal sources studies

A fundamental different approach can be found in a third category of studies, namely studies that describe and interpret concrete practices of prophetic preaching. Although it would be unfair to suggest that the above-mentioned approaches are not related to 'empirical realities', the studies in this third category turn explicitly to *primal sources* for their understanding of what prophetic speech is. These studies do not depart from a theoretical point of view, but empirical practices are studied to describe what is happening in them and what this means for our understanding of prophetic speech. This is a third approach that can be distinguished in the research field. Richard Lischer wrote his classic case-study on the preaching practice of Martin Luther King Jr.,³⁵ a team of scholars around Hendrik Pieterse composed an empirical study on the sermons of Desmond Tutu,³⁶ Sebastian Kuhlman wrote his dissertation on the prophetic dimension of

30 See for instance: Campbell, Ch.L., *The Word before the Powers. An Ethic of Preaching*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2002), Tubbs Tisdale, L., *Prophetic Preaching. A Pastoral Approach*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2010).

31 Healy, N.M., *Church, World and the Christian Life. Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000).

32 Kelsey, M.T., *Prophetic Ministry: The Psychology and Spirituality of Pastoral Care*. (New York: Crossroad 1982); Bohren, R., *Prophetie und Seelsorge. Eduard Thurneysen*. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag 1982); Gerkin, Ch.V., *Prophetic Pastoral Care. A Christian Vision of Living Together* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1991); Miskotte, H.H., *Pastor & Profeet. Over de andere kant van pastoraat*. (Baarn: ten Have 1992).

33 Bluhm, H., *Prophetische Verkündigung heute*. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1967); see for a study from the Roman-Catholic tradition: Hvidt, N.C., *Christian Prophecy. The Post-Biblical Tradition*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007).

34 Kruijf, G.G. de, *Waakzaam en nuchter. Over christelijke ethiek in een democratie*. (Baarn: Ten Have 1994). See also the subsequent discussion in 'Kerk en Theologie': Janse, S., 'Hebben volk en overheid volgens het Nieuwe Testament nog boodschap aan de profetie?', en: Kruijf, G.G. de, 'Over profetie', in: *Kerk en Theologie* 48 (1997), pp 238-252.

35 Lischer, R., *The Preacher King. Martin Luther King, Jr. and The Word That Moved America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995).

36 Pieterse, H.J.C. (Ed.), *Desmond Tutu's Message. A Qualitative Analysis*. (Leiden: Brill 2001).

the sermons of Martin Niemöller.³⁷ Similarly, there are studies on the sermons of bishop Oscar Romero, (who was assassinated in 1980, while preaching in the cathedral of San Salvador³⁸), or a study on the prophetic speeches of pope John Paul II, especially concerning his confrontation with communism.³⁹ In this category we could mention studies that are generated through the participation of researchers in concrete contexts, like the huge corpus of studies from the perspective of liberation theology, but also studies like William Cavanaugh's *Torture and Eucharist* (about the Eucharistic practice and theology developed in Chile in response to the systematic practice of torture under the military dictatorship of General Pinochet).⁴⁰

All these studies try to capture the reality of an empirical phenomenon, namely a preaching practice that a variety of participants and observers judge to be 'prophetic'. In all these instances, the empirical reality itself is the principal source for understanding the prophetic. Although in the conclusion of these studies we often read suggestions for prophetic preaching in general, the studies are *de facto* mostly about a single preacher, a single practice, or a single context.

4 Discourse-development studies

A fourth category in the different publications can be called studies of 'discourse-development in homiletics'. A contemporary understanding of the prophetic is not only stimulated by fundamental studies of it, or by empirical research of concrete prophetic practices, there is also the 'regular' ongoing debate in homiletical standard works and monographs, in lemmata on prophetic preaching⁴¹ or in more detailed articles on specific aspects of prophetic preaching.⁴²

These contributions do not have to address the subject of 'prophetic preaching' explicitly to contribute to the development of its understanding. To give two examples: When Albrecht Grözinger in his *Homiletik*, wrote a critical paragraph on how political preaching can in fact, de-politicise the congregation, (because

37 Kuhlmann, S., *Martin Niemöller. Zur prophetischen Dimension der Predigt*. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2008).

38 Romero, O., *Voice of the Voiceless. The Four Pastoral letters and Other Statements*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1985); Romero, O., *The Violence of Love. (Selected sermons and writings, with a foreword from Henri Nouwen)*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1988).

39 Formicola, J.R., *Pope John Paul II. Prophetic Politician*. (Washington: Georgetown University Press 2002).

40 Cavanaugh, W.T., *Torture and Eucharist. Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ (Challenges in Contemporary Theology)*. (Malden/Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 1988).

41 See for instance Turner, M.D., 'Prophetic Preaching', (pp 101-102), and McMickle, M., 'Prophetic Message', (pp 408-409), in: Wilson, P.S. (Ed.), *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press 2008).

42 Tubbs Tisdale, L. and DeWet, F.W., 'Contemporary prophetic preaching theory in the United States of America and South Africa: A comparative study through the lens of shared Reformation roots', in: *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70 (2)/ 2014. See also: DeWet, F.W., 'The DNA of prophetic speech', in: *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70 (2)/ 2014.

of the lack of concreteness in it and the lack of respect for the complexity of the lives of the hearers), we consider this to be a form of ‘discourse-development’ of prophetic preaching.⁴³ Grözinger explains that when the unavoidable compromises of the everyday-life of the hearers are rejected in the sermons and when political acting is mainly drawn into the sphere of moral heroism, the hidden tenor of these sermons might not only be anti-democratic, but in effect they may even cause a certain kind of inability among the hearers to take political responsibility in their concrete lives. Contemporary reflection on prophetic preaching, needs to be informed by a critical contribution like this. To give another example, Johan Cilliers’ study on apartheid-preaching in *Nederduits Gereformeerde* sermons, is a contribution to the understanding of how preaching can in fact become ‘anti-prophetic preaching’, as he called it, and his study contributes, in a paradoxical way, to a deepened understanding of the genre of prophetic preaching.⁴⁴ These studies and articles help to develop the discourse on prophetic preaching in homiletics.

Though these distinctions are somewhat rough, they help defining the specific features of our own study, as expounded in the next paragraph.

2.2.2 Featuring this research: Backgrounds, relevance, and research question

What is the character of our own study? Our research project has been conducted, originating from a basic and clear aim:

The aim of this study is to make a theological and conceptual reconstruction of a specific phenomenon in the Christian practice of preaching, called the prophetic dimension. In this empirical research, we try to reconstruct the prophetic dimension as a contemporary homiletical concept. The question that leads our research is: What is religiously happening in the prophetic dimension of preaching?

According to our provisional categorisation of studies (2.2.1), our research is a ‘primal sources study’. This study has a principal empirical and qualitative character. We analyse concrete practices of prophetic preaching and in our research question we focus on the religious and theological processes that are operative in the phenomenon. This research question is broad, supplying the necessary flexibility and freedom for our exploration, while at the same time it is

43 Grözinger, A., *Homiletik*. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 2008), pp 320-326.

44 Cilliers, J., *God vir ons. 'n Analise en beoordeling van Nederduitse Gereformeerde Volksprediking (1960-1980)*. (Kaapstad: Lux Veri 1994); translated as: Cilliers, J., *God for us? An analysis and evaluation of Dutch Reformed preaching during the Apartheid years*. (Stellenbosch: Sun Press 2006).

focused on detecting the religious and homiletical dynamics in the phenomenon.⁴⁵ What do we hope to add with our research? The contribution and specificity of our own research is that we do not study a single preacher or a single instance of prophetic preaching, but that we compare multiple preachers and multiple instances and contexts. Through this comparative qualitative research, we hope to provide the research field with a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon, an understanding that is inductive, grounded in concrete practices, while at the same time theoretical, and thus transcending the specifics of time and place.

In describing the characteristics of our study, we may write about the hoped-for relevance of it as well. To whom might this study be relevant?

1 Our study is *phenomenon*-oriented. In the previous chapter, we surveyed the vitality of the phenomenon in many disciplines and areas: 'prophetic' is a popular and powerful term. But we also noticed that an indefinite use can turn it into a vague or even meaningless term. The first relevance of this study is related to this unclarity: We hope to develop a conceptual grip on the phenomenon, describe and clarify it in such a way that its homiletical profile increases. These results can be made fruitful for further theological discourse. The discussion on what the prophetic dimension in homiletics is or can be, should not be decided on scriptural, historical, or systematic-theological grounds only, but empirical reality (and the subsequent conceptualisation of it) should also contribute to this theological discourse. Empirical concepts can gain an integral place in theological reflection and strengthen the discourse through it.⁴⁶

2 Our study is *practice*-oriented. Our focus is on the Christian congregation as locus of the prophetic, and, more specifically, on the Christian practice of preaching. A major question underlying our study, is whether this prophetic dimension is incidental or integral to the practice of preaching. To answer this question, additional research is needed, for instance a congregational study on how in specific circumstances preachers address specific themes and how this might be related to the prophetic tradition. The relevance of our study for routine practices of preaching (the essential form of preaching), was never absent in our research. In the final chapter, we write about the potential prophetic quality of preaching, including regular local practices of preaching. To illustrate this point, we include sermon fragments taken from Dutch local scenes. In this sense, our study aims to be relevant for preachers in general. Preaching on Sundays is an activity performed in the 'company of preachers' (Lischer), and all preachers in

45 See 'Framing the research question', in: Corbin, J. and Strauss, A., *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. (4th Edition). Los Angeles, London: SAGE 2015), p 35.

46 Pleizier, T., *Religious Involvement in Hearing Sermons. A Grounded Theory Study in Empirical Theology and Homiletics*. (Delft: Eburon 2010), especially § 1.1: 'Doing theology in the real world', pp 1-6.

this study are practitioners of that same practice. A sub-motive in our research is the documentary goal of it. The empirical chapters in which we describe and summarise sermons, can also function as a small anthology of *Starke Augenblicke* in the recent homiletical tradition of the church.⁴⁷

3 Finally, our study has a *cultural* orientation. It is our intuition that the attention for the subject of ‘the prophetic dimension in preaching’ has increased during the 20th-century. That century has been extremely volatile and violent. It turned out to be an age of mass-culture, of mass-destruction, of violent world wars. The spiritual turbulence of the age, at least in Europe, is also reflected in an ongoing process of secularisation.⁴⁸ Maybe the emergence of the prophetic as a notable theological category in this turbulent century, is not surprisingly at all. The prophetic may be a theological category congruent to the character of these times. It is an intriguing intuition that the church may have been very close to her contemporaries, perhaps at its closest, in the prophetic element. This intuition is one of the motives of this study: to explore this interrelatedness of church and society in the prophetic dimension, also for our own age.

2.3 Preparing the research: Data gathering, theoretical sensitivity and developing ‘sensitizing concepts’

2.3.1 Approaching the prophetic as a phenomenon: Selecting the sermons

Prior to explaining our methodological choices, we want to emphasise the role that the ‘real world’, that is: the empirical world of real human lives, has in GTM in general as well as in our own research.⁴⁹ A concise impression of the origins of GTM as a method, illustrates this importance. GTM literally emerged out of ‘real life’ themes. The first Grounded Theory ever published, was an empirical study on processes of dying, called *Awareness of Dying* (1965). Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss conducted the study. Their study became one of the four monographs that are generally seen as foundational in the development of Grounded Theory

47 The term is borrowed from: Földényi, L., *Starke Augenblicke. Eine Physiognomie der Mystik*. (Matthes & Seitz Berlin).

48 See for instance: Dunk, H.W. von der, *De verdwijnende hemel. Deel I en II*. (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff 2000).

49 Cf Pleizier: ‘To keep theology firmly rooted into concrete human existence it needs an empirical method to do so. This prevents theology from an upward flight in mystical speculation, a backward cherishing of a dearly valued religious past, and an impressionistic rendering of its present. The study of ‘human life as lived in relation to God’, the real word of faith, or lived religion is particularly the domain of practical theology. The study of faith *as it occurs in the real word* moves beyond history, exegesis and dogmatics into the empirical realm.’ Pleizier, T., *Ibid.* p 5.

Methodology.⁵⁰ The publication was the fruit of a research programme of six years in six different hospitals (the programme was called: ‘Hospital Personnel, Nursing Care, and Dying Patients’). Glaser and Strauss conducted intensive fieldwork on this delicate subject. They were allowed to observe all thinkable facets of ‘dying in a hospital setting’, like interviewing medical personnel, attending staff meetings in which patients were discussed, and observing the interaction between patients, family, and nurses/physicians. In these observations, they meticulously observed and described the processes that are operative in hospitals when patients are dying.

The study was conducted in the 1960s, a period of hesitance to talk openly about dying. Glaser and Strauss identified four ‘levels of awareness of impending death’, and showed how each level affected patients, relatives, nurses, and physicians. The four levels they distinguished were: ‘closed awareness’, ‘suspected awareness’, ‘mutual pretence awareness’ and ‘open awareness’. Essentially the researchers revealed and explicated the visible and invisible patterns and processes that were operative in these concrete circumstances. They studied, for instance, patterns of maintaining the ‘fiction of recovery’, the often unconscious ‘patterns of appreciation’ among nurses and physicians concerning what they themselves assessed to be ‘dying with dignity and grace’ and the effect of this assessment on their conduct towards patients. The study *Awareness of Dying* was influential and has had its effect on the development of the quality of ‘end of life’-processes in hospitals, palliative care and hospice care.⁵¹ Two years later, in 1967, Glaser and Strauss published a textbook, called *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in which they explicated the methodology they had used in *Awareness of Dying*. This methodology would become a dominant paradigm in qualitative research in many disciplines.

These origins reveal something of the character of the method. Herbert Blumer (a leading methodologist in the 1950s, and teacher of Anselm Strauss), spoke of ‘the respect for the nature of the empirical world and the obligation to develop a methodological stance that reflects that respect’,⁵² and this can be called one of GTM’s primal features. Researchers in this tradition are trained to respect reality, to develop a sensitivity and ability to discover abstract categories in this

50 See: Bryant, A. and Charmaz, K., ‘Introduction. Grounded Theory Research: Method and Practices’, in: Bryant, A. and Charmaz, K., *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. (SAGE: London 2007, 2013), p 7. See also: Andrews, T., ‘*Awareness of Dying* remains relevant after fifty years’, in: *Grounded Theory Review. An International Journal* (2015)/2. Also: Glaser, B.G., ‘The Grounded Theory Perspective: Its Origins and Growth’, in: *Grounded Theory Review. An international journal* 15 (2016)/1, p 1. See also: Corbin, J. and Strauss, A.L., *Basics of Qualitative Research*, pp 6-7.

51 In the foreword of their study, Glaser and Strauss wrote about his intention: ‘We wish to contribute toward making the management of dying – by patients, families and health professionals – more rational and compassionate (and the two are far from incompatible).’ Glaser, B. G., and Strauss, A.L., *Awareness of Dying*. (Transaction Publishers 1965).

52 See: Bryant, A., and Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* p 36.

‘raw material of reality’.⁵³ The set of instruments of GTM particularly enables researchers to approach a phenomenon as close as possible, and to stay as open as possible to the essential processes that characterise the specific phenomenon.

This is important for our own study. We use GTM to come *as close as possible* to a specific reality that is happening in the practice of preaching, and which is tentatively referred to as the ‘prophetic dimension in preaching’. We do not primarily study an abstract theological construction, a ‘textbook reality’ as it were, but we explore something that is said to happen in the real life of the church. The essence of our research question is directed to that reality: What is religiously happening in this prophetic moment of preaching? This question guides our research to detect, analyse and conceptualise the religious and theological processes that characterise the phenomenon.

In the orientation phase of the research, we investigated the phenomenon by asking basic questions, such as Where, in the collective memory of *societies*, did prophetic preaching occur?, and: Where do *theologians and homileticians* point to, when asked about this phenomenon of prophetic preaching? In addition: Where, in the collective memory of the *church*, can recent traces of the prophetic be found? If these three contexts of culture, academy (read: the scholarly community of homileticians) and church agree on labelling and judging certain practices of preaching as prophetic, we have reached a trustworthy starting point for our study.

This procedure became essential in selecting the material for our first cycle of sermon analysis. We started to search for practices of preaching that were broadly assessed as prophetic. The requirements for the selection of the material are:

- 1 *Communis opinio*. There must be a trustworthy testimony of a broad variety of communities and disciplines (scholarly, cultural, and ecclesiastical), agreeing in their assessment that a specific practice of preaching had a prophetic quality.
- 2 Accessibility of the material. The material that is assessed as prophetic, must be available in print, accessible for research and for critical scrutiny. We do not only need access to the text of the sermons, but also to the broader context, the backgrounds of the sermon, biography of the preacher, character of the congregation, nature of societal tensions, reception of the sermon, etcetera.
- 3 Critical secondary discourse. A corpus of secondary literature, (preferably from cultural, ecclesiological, and academic sources) is essential, in which these sermons have been critically studied and through which we can gain access to the reasoning of why the material is assessed to be prophetic.

53 See also: Pieterse, H.J.C., ‘Grounded Theory Approach in Sermon Analysis of Sermons on Poverty and Directed at the Poor as Listeners’, in: *Acta Theologica* (2010/2), p 114.

4 Non-incidentalness. It is preferable that the material does not consist out of an incidental sermon that is assessed to be prophetic, but out of a corpus of sermons, emerging from a practice of preaching that has had some duration and is embedded in a communal discourse.

5 Contemporariness. The research aims to reconstruct the prophetic as a contemporary homiletical concept. Therefore, we decide to search for preaching practices in the 20th or 21st century, sermons of which the *Wirkungsgeschichte* in the present is still traceable.

6 Variety of the material. There have to be significant differences between the selected practices (differences qua content, theology, confessional tradition, political and societal circumstances).

With these parameters in mind, we surveyed secondary literature,⁵⁴ and selected three contemporary practices of preaching that are broadly assessed as prophetic, namely the preaching of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr., and Desmond Tutu.⁵⁵

In the next step of our research journey, we studied specific secondary literature on these three preachers, and we posed similar basic questions: If we are to study prophetic sermons of this specific preacher, which sermons may specifically qualify to be studied?⁵⁶ In this phase the communal character of our research was helpful. The first major phase of this study was conducted in a research group, and during our research we also attended several international seminars.⁵⁷ In these different contexts, we checked our initial selection of preachers and sermons, asked for further reflection and received additional input from a variety of colleagues. Through this process we picked out three sermons from each of the three selected preachers, and these nine sermons became the primary object of our analysis:

1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Revelation 2.4. f7 (Berlin, 1932)

2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Luke 13.1-5 (London, 1934)

3 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Jeremiah 20.7 (London, 1934)

54 In the analysis and discussion of the sermons (see the empirical chapters 3-7), the secondary literature that was studied, will be cited.

55 Other preachers that we considered for this first cycle of analysis, were Kosuke Koyama (Japan), Eka Darmaputera (Indonesia), Oscar Romero (El Salvador), John Paul II (Poland), Ernst Käsemann (Germany), Karl Barth (Switzerland), and in our own Dutch context Jan Koopmans, Kornelis Miskotte, cardinal De Jong, Jo Verkuijl or Jan Buskes.

56 The impressions and observations from this specific phase, were later crystallised in the formulation of 'sensitizing concepts', see 2.3.3.

57 See for a reflection on the 'peer review'-mechanism, operative in this specific research group: Boonstra, P., *Omgang met de Bijbeltekst in de preek. Een empirisch homiletisch onderzoek*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic 2006), p 85.

- 4 Martin Luther King Jr., sermon on the Vietnam War (Atlanta, 1967)
- 5 Martin Luther King Jr., sermon held after the Chicago Summit (Chicago, 1967)
- 6 Martin Luther King Jr., sermon at a gathering of garbage workers on strike (Memphis, 1968)

- 7 Desmond Tutu, sermon at the funeral of Steve Biko (King Williams' Town, 1977)
- 8 Desmond Tutu, inauguration sermon (Cape Town, 1986)
- 9 Desmond Tutu, sermon after a banned rally (Cape Town, 1988)

These are the nine sermons that were selected as the 'rich material', as it is called in methodology, to form the basis of our analysis. In paragraph 2.4, we explain how we analyse the sermons, how the logic of GTM enables researchers to move from empirical data to the construction of a theory.

Before this, we need to consider three methodological questions that are important in our research. The first question is about whether we would study incidents in sermons or sermons in their entirety (2.3.2), the second question is about the theological calibre of the selected preachers and sermons and how they can be seen as representative or not (2.3.3) and the third question is about the delicate relationship between the theological biography of the researcher, and possible biases that can hinder open-minded empirical research (2.3.4).

2.3.2 Studying entire sermons: The unity, integrity, and temporal particularity of sermons

First, a reflection on the unity and integrity of sermons. Respect for 'the nature of the empirical world', where Herbert Blumer wrote about, is also reflected in Kathy Charmaz' acknowledgment of the 'diversity and the complexity of local worlds'.⁵⁸ André Verweij also recognised this tendency in qualitative research focussing on 'concrete cases in their temporal particularity'.⁵⁹ These are essential observations for our research. In the way we study and analyse our data, we respect this temporal particularity too. In the following empirical chapters, we continuously move through different 'local worlds', with different traditions, tensions and peculiarities. Each sermon is respected in its temporal particularity,

58 Charmaz, K., *Constructing Grounded Theory. A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. (Los Angeles: SAGE 2006, 2008), especially c 6 'Reconstructing Theory in Grounded Theory Studies', pp 123-150.

59 He cited Uwe Flick, who characterized modern qualitative research as returning to particulars: to oral traditions, to local practices and to describe these practices in their own historical and temporal context. See: Verweij, A., *Positioning Jesus' Suffering. A Grounded Theory of Lenten Preaching in Local Practices*. (Delft: Eburon 2014), pp 60-61.

as is reflected in the structure of this research. The empirical chapters 3-7 are designed as a diptych. Each chapter begins with 'Fundamentals': in it, we present the conceptual, theoretical results of the analysis of the sermons. In the second part of each chapter, we introduce, summarise, and analyse each sermon separately. This second part is called 'Particulars'. The temporal particularity of the sermons is safeguarded in the 'Particulars' part of each chapter.

In line with these considerations, we made the methodological decision to take each sermon in its entirety as input for our research. A focus on incidents only in sermons (as an alternative for analysing entire sermons) may seriously narrow the entirety and the integrity of the theological, rhetorical, and contextual dynamic that is operative in the sermon.⁶⁰ In this research, we approach sermons as a unity, we assume the entirety of the sermon contributes to the prophetic moment that is said to have happened through it. We therefore also included the summaries of these sermons in this book. Through these summaries, the reader can judge whether the developed concepts are indeed traceable and recognisable in the empirical data.

2.3.3 The selected sermons as 'prototypical practices of prophetic preaching'

Secondly, a further reflection on the sermons is related to their theological and homiletical calibre. The six parameters we generated for the selection of sermons is a way of safeguarding and guaranteeing the quality of our primal data. The sermons that conformed to these criteria, turned out to be outstanding sermons (a major reason why they were published, read, analysed and cherished by a wide audience). Methodologically seen, the sermons are 'rich data': they are detailed, focused and full data concerning the subject of our study, and therefore they provide solid material to function as a basis for our research.⁶¹ At the same time, we are aware that these sermons are taken from, what we could call, 'prototypical practices of prophetic preaching' in the 20th century. Bonhoeffer, King, and Tutu are of a particular calibre and they occupy a specific position in the 'company of preachers'. During this research, we develop our own thoughts and proposals about whether and how these specific sermons can be related to sermons of another calibre. In the final chapter, we challenge this question, by studying regular, local practices of preaching for their resonance with the prophetic patterns we generated.

60 See David Buttrick's study for a plea on the integrity of the *entirety* of sermons: Buttrick, D., *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1987), pp 1-112.

61 Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* especially c 2 'Gathering Rich Data', pp 13-41.

During the research, we learned not to ‘jump to conclusions’ on this question, either to the side of an assumed incomparability of these ‘high calibre sermons’ with other practices of preaching, or to the side of a too easy identification of these specific practices as model for any form of preaching. Several considerations and observations on this issue, though, were helpful during our research:

1 Martin Riesebrodt wrote a chapter on ‘religious virtuosos’, and he depicted them as individuals who ‘seek salvation, whatever the costs.’⁶² But Riesebrodt also added that ‘the practices of virtuosos follow, on a “higher” level, the same logic as those of laypersons’ and he also explained that ‘virtuosos show in an exaggerated form what society expects from everyone’. In other words, there are performances of religious practices that may be of a different calibre compared to others, but that does not necessarily disconnect them from the other performances of the same practice. They may differ in degree or density, but not in essence or logic.⁶³

2 In the discourse on practices, we speak of ‘excellent performances.’⁶⁴ This excellence is a *judicium* that follows out of the origins, tradition, spiritual intention, ethics and goals that are integral to the specific practice itself. Excellence means a flourishing of the practice, a being close to the essence of what a practice aims to attain. Excellence, in this way, is a term of truthfulness to what is hoped for in this practice. Practices can therefore fail or succeed, and that tension is necessary for a practice to be meaningful. Spiritual and professional training can stimulate the quality of the performance of practices. In analysing ‘prototypical practices of prophetic preaching’, we may tentatively assess them as ‘excellent practices’, in which a specific quality in preaching is performed in an exemplary way. Preachers like King and Tutu mastered a specific practice, namely preaching, but at the same time, they are also students of this practice. Maybe the practice itself even facilitated them to speak in the way they did.

3 Joseph Ratzinger, then cardinal, suggested that theology and the church ‘live’ from ‘charismatic, prophetic breakthroughs’. He depicted academic theology and the ecclesiastical routine as worthy and important, but at the same as *not* capable

62 Riesebrodt, M., *The Promise of Salvation. A Theory of Religion*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2010), pp 122-123.

63 What we call ‘prototypical practices’ may also be seen as ‘Verdichtungsphänomene’. We borrow the concept from A. Christophersen. In his book *Sternstunden der Theologie*, he gives twenty-eight theological and biographical sketches of key-figures and key-moments in the history of Christian theology. In his *Verantwortung* he writes about these key-moments as ‘Verdichtungsphänomene’, in which ‘Ereignis- und Problemgeschichte, die Fragen, Hoffnungen und Ängste einer Generation oder eine ganze Epoche verschmelzen in einem Werk onder einer Biographie’. See: Christophersen, A., *Sternstunden der Theologie. Schlüsselerlebnisse christliche Denker von Paulus bis heute*. (München: C.H. Beck oHG 2011), p 7.

64 See for instance: Nieman, J., ‘Why the Idea of Practice Matters’, in: Long, Th.G., and Tubbs Tisdale, L. (ed.), *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice. A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2008), pp 18-40.

of facilitating new spiritual breakthroughs, when these are needed: 'Die Prophetie und Theologie gehören eng zusammen. Die Theologie als wissenschaftliche Theologie im strengen Sinn ist nicht prophetisch, aber sie wird nur lebendige Theologie, wenn sie von einem prophetischen Impuls angeschoben und erleuchtet ist.'⁶⁵ 'Prototypical prophetic practices' may function in exactly this way, as a prophetic impulse for a tradition, for a generation, for a way of practising theology in a specific period. Maybe, in retrospect, that has been the exact function of preachers like Bonhoeffer, King, and Tutu. They may be called 'practice-defining preachers' for their context.

4 Finally, the goal and logic of the method we use, is to move from the empirical to the conceptual, and the claim of the theory that emerges through this procedure is that its content is grounded in, but at the same time transcends, the specifics of time and place. When we develop a theory that is able to describe and clarify the prophetic quality of the sermons of Bonhoeffer, King, and Tutu (all different theologians, raised in different theological traditions, preaching in different contexts, and dealing with different kind of crises), then it should not be dismissed *a priori* that elements of this theory may be recognised in local practices of preaching. In our opinion, we should take into account and embrace the possibility of the *potential* prophetic quality of local practices.

2.3.4 Theoretical sensitivity and developing 'sensitizing concepts'

Thirdly, there is the dilemmatic question of the researcher's foreknowledge and his or her openness (or lack of openness) to the empirical scene that is studied. How can potential biases in the mind and in the theology of the researcher influence the research? The researcher of this analysis, for instance, is a theologian and a minister in the Protestant church, a former lecturer in Old Testament Theology in a seminary in Indonesia, currently also active in the homiletical-missionary training of preachers in post-academic education. The methodological question is how all these earlier experiences influence the research.

The issue is fundamental, especially in qualitative research, and especially within the method of GTM. In its explicit claim of 'respecting the nature of empirical reality', the openness of the researcher to this empirical reality is crucial. A true *Methodenstreit* has emerged on the question whether concepts are 'found/discovered' in the empirical realm or 'constructed'. This debate is about the question whether the concepts that are generated and proposed in a theory, fit

65 Hvidt, N.C., "Das Problem der christliche Prophetie'. Das Christentum trägt immer eine Hoffungsstruktur in sich. Interview mit Kardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in: *30Giorni* 1/(1999).

the data or are forced upon the data.⁶⁶ Charmaz was realistic about the dilemma: ‘Tensions between data collection strategies and what constitutes ‘forcing’ (of pre-conceived ideas on the data, CMAE) are unresolved in grounded theory.’⁶⁷ It is a dilemma between the existing mindset of the researcher, probably influencing the choices, analysis and conceptualisation of the data, and the methodological demand of being ‘as open as possible’ to the studied scene.

Obviously, there is no ‘GTM for dummies’, no easy and fast way of resolving these tensions. It needs training, peer review and critical self-knowledge to be able to abstain from preconceived concepts.

At the same time, it can also be argued that this method of qualitative research stimulates a continuous awareness of the dilemma, as it also offers concrete tools to make them fruitful. Juliet Corbin proposed concrete ways for researchers to monitor this dilemma, for instance by keeping a journal during the research.⁶⁸ We can also point to the corrective strength of working in a group of researchers (even sometimes in an international setting) and of reflecting on each other’s work. But more principally, the method of GTM itself contains corrective methodological mechanisms. GTM has an *abductive* character. It is not only an *inductive* method, as Charmaz repeatedly stressed. The first empirical/inductive analysis of the data is formulated into initial observations, but these observations are subsequently researched in a *deductive* way, in new cycles of empirical analysis. There is an iterative movement between data collection, data analysis, conceptualisation and new empirical research. This methodological movement has the character of a continuous comparison of different kind of data (further 2.5). In our research, (when we include the last tentative empirical cycle of local practices in chapter 8), approximately twenty-five sermons in a variety of significantly different contexts were analysed by continuously comparing them to each other.

Another way of dealing with the dilemma is making the existing mindset of the researcher explicit and fruitful in ‘sensitizing concepts’ (a tool originally proposed by Blumer).⁶⁹ Interestingly, pre-understanding may also develop as a strength in analysis. Maybe the researcher even needs an intimate knowledge and disciplinary understanding of the phenomenon, to be able to discover something new in it.

66 Wertz, E. ., ... (et al.), *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis. Phenomenological Psychology, Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis, Narrative Research, and Intuitive Inquiry*. (New York: Guilford Press 2011), pp 168-172. See also: Pieterse, H.J.C., ‘Grounded Theory Approach in Sermon Analysis of Sermons on Poverty and Directed at the Poor as Listeners’, p 117.

67 Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* p 18.

68 Corbin, J. and Strauss, A., *Basics of Qualitative Research*, pp 46-48.

69 Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* p 16.

Charmaz calls this ‘vantage points’.⁷⁰ Instead of suppressing or hiding preliminary conceptions, they may be formulated as starting points of the research.⁷¹ Initial ideas and intuitions, initial phenomenological observations and experiences can be developed into becoming ‘sensitizing concepts’, and then function as an initial frame of understanding. In any research, Charmaz explains, ‘sensitizing concepts may stimulate thinking, rather than limit it’.⁷² These concepts may give the researcher ‘leads to follow, questions to ask and a heightened awareness of what in the data is different’.⁷³

We decided to create similar starting points for our own study, and to define in sensitizing concepts the researcher’s prior intuitions, knowledge and experiences concerning this subject. In the initial phase of our research we defined six intuitions (taken from a memo, dated in the early stage of our research, September 2012). We explain them briefly.

1 Time/context, person, and God

2 Language and reality

3 Preacher and congregation

4 Office and charisma

5 Knowing and seeing

6 Believing and acting

Ad 1 ‘Time/context, person and God’. In our research, we are sensitive to the relationship between the context of church and society, the position of the preacher in this context and for the way these elements are related to each other in sermons. From the biographies of Bonhoeffer and King we know of the costs of their discipleship, in Foucault’s discourse we read about the risk of truth-speaking and the self-scrutiny the truth-speaker has to conduct regarding his own interior life. During our teaching years in Indonesia, where we taught young theologians in their preparations to serve in complicated, and sometimes dangerous contexts, we also observed the importance of these factors: biography, context and God.

70 ‘Professional researchers and many graduate students already have a sound footing in their disciplines before they begin a research project and often have an intimate familiarity with the research topic and the literature about it. All provide vantage points that can intensify looking at certain aspects of the empirical world, but may ignore others. We may begin our study from these vantage points but need to remain as open as possible to whatever we see and sense in the early stages of the research’. Charmaz, K., *Ibid*, p 17.

71 See on this issue Hennie Boeije, who thinks, supported in this view by Kathy Charmaz, that a thorough study of relevant literature is even essential in qualitative research, as it is helpful in defining the theoretical framework in which the study is conducted. Chapter 1 and 2 in our research have that function. See Bosch, R. en Boeije, H., ‘Wetenschapsfilosofische grondslagen bij *Analyseren in kwalitatief onderzoek*’, Bijlage in: Boeije, H., *Analyseren in kwalitatief onderzoek*. (Amsterdam: Boom 2005), p 9.

72 Charmaz, K., *Ibid*. p 16.

73 Charmaz, K., *Ibid*. p 16-17.

Ad 2 'Language and reality'. In this research we analyse 'speech'. In theological and cultural traditions, the power of speech may have a central position in religious practices. We are sensitive to the kind of speech used in the data, for how the cultural and theological context influences the rhetorical strategy in sermons, and vice versa, for how preachers try to influence their hearers through their speech. We are also interested in the *weakness* of language, in its own susceptibility for corruption and in its powerlessness when it comes to violent or dictatorial realities.

Ad 3 'Preacher and congregation'. In chapter one, we observed the continuous tension between the individual and the community in the phenomenon of prophetic speech. It is an individual who speaks, it is the community who is spoken to, and yet the relationship may be far more complex, ingenuous, and fruitful than only this visible dynamic of speaking and being spoken to suggests. Furthermore, instead of merely thinking in terms of tension, the data may also give examples of a sort of communality between preacher and congregation during the practice of preaching.

Ad 4 'Office and charisma'. Another tension that is part of the general pre-understanding of the phenomenon is the charismatic quality of prophetic speech. Can we conceptualise what is meant by it? Do we recognise it in the data? A standard element in the perception of the phenomenon, is the tension between this *charisma* and the *institutional* side of the church. Are these tensions traceable in sermons? Is prophetic speech compatible with institutionalised forms of preaching?

Ad 5 'Knowing and seeing'. In our research, we are also sensitive to the *rational* side of prophetic speech. We saw Joseph Blenkinsopp stress this aspect of 'rational dissent with empirical reality'. Prophetic speech can be rational protest against 'how life should *not* be lived'. We analyse how political, economic, and societal considerations of the preacher are present in the sermons. We are also sensitive to aspects of a *kairological* nature. We expect to encounter forms of urgency in sermons. What is the nature of this urgency, what is the threat that preachers see, do they warn against such a threat and in what way?

Ad 6 'Believing and acting'. We expect the practical reality of concrete life to be present in a fundamental way in these prophetic sermons. What happens in 'real life' may trigger this speech, and, vice versa, this speech may aim for concrete effects and changes in the 'real life' of the hearers. How do 'believing and acting' relate to each other in the sermons? Do preachers 'call for action'? Do preachers themselves take part in concrete societal or political activities?

2.4 Analysing the data: Coding, memo writing and theoretical sampling

After these methodological preparations, we started with the analysis of the nine sermons. What we essentially tried to do in this analysis, was penetrating to the core of the experience that is said to have happened in and through these sermons. To get a grip on that specific experience, in all its temporal particularity, we reconstructed the larger discourse in which the sermons played their role. Therefore, we studied the context in which they were held, we read about the political, societal and ecclesiastical circumstances, we studied biographies, from preachers and sometimes from contemporaries, we checked newspapers, magazines and other testimonies about these specific preaching events.⁷⁴ In this way, we *reconstructed* the setting of the sermons. It is impossible, in our view, to study the prophetic dimension in preaching, which is essentially tied to temporal circumstances, without reconstructing this larger discourse. In the empirical chapters of our study, we introduce and summarise the ‘narrative’ of each sermon, we show how the preacher reacts on these circumstances, how the context is resonating in the sermons and what can be seen as prophetic in this dynamic.

The context is crucial, but the principal objects in our analysis were *texts*. The ‘extant texts’, as they are called in methodology: texts on which the researcher does not have any influence.⁷⁵ A period of intensive engagement with the texts of the nine sermons followed. The data was analysed through, what GTM refers to as, ‘coding’. We started with ‘line-by-line coding’. Every line of each sermon was analysed, and a shorthand label was given to characterise what is happening in that specific line. This intensive and time-consuming method draws a researcher literally into the material. Coding is a ‘heuristic device for becoming involved in the analysis: shedding preconceptions, seeing the data anew, focussing on what is happening in a small segment of the text.’⁷⁶ It is, what Bergson called ‘not going around the studied phenomenon, but attempting to go inside it.’⁷⁷ Coding is a form of analytically slowing down of what is happening in the data. At the same time, the method urges the researcher to focus on activity, on processes, on the ‘fluidity of the experience’ happening in the data.⁷⁸ In the analysis, we made a ‘slow-motion’ of the processes happening in the studied experience, and we consequently analysed this ‘slow-motion’, fragment by fragment. That is an important reason why we used gerunds in the codes (and also in the concepts): ‘gerunds preserve action and promote seeing processes that a language of topics

74 See Charmaz’ plea for the importance of situating texts in their context, of describing the times, the actors and the issues that are at stake in the texts, of studying other sources that can tell ‘the story behind the texts’. Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* pp 35-41. The literature that was used to reconstruct this background of the sermons, will be cited when we discuss the specific sermons, see hereafter.

75 Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* pp 37-39.

76 Wertz, F.J., et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, p 172.

77 Wertz, F.J., et al., *Ibid.* p 292.

78 Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* p 17.

and structures minimalises'.⁷⁹ The logic of the method is that by reconstructing the substantive processes in the data, we may detect the generic processes that cut across specific empirical settings and problems. If that generic process is found, it can be applied to different substantive areas.⁸⁰ Charmaz is keen on stressing that in all the codes and concepts that are generated in a GTM, the 'power of the studied experience' must be preserved in the concepts, and must not be sterilised into the often 'lifeless language of academic or bureaucratic discourses'. In this way, we analysed the nine sermons, and generated a total amount of 560 codes from it (see Appendix A: List of Codes).

In the second major phase of the research, we studied all these different codes, and selected the most significant and/or most frequently occurring ones. In other words, we analysed the 560 codes to identify the patterns in it, to notice recurring observations in the different codes, to notice unexpected aspects. GTM is a method of constant comparison, in this case, of continuously comparing the codes from one sermon to the codes of another one, of searching analogous processes that can be traced in all these different sermons, of observing the differences and the peculiarities in each casus. GTM offers the tool of 'memo writing' to capture and to stimulate the reflections that are made in this phase. In the intermediate phase between data analysis and generating concepts, a 'memo' is a helpful instrument. It functions as an 'analytical break'. In a memo, we analyse our thoughts on specific codes and through analysis, we try to increase the level of abstraction in the research. Therefore, we identify patterns of codes to become the first tentative concepts, and in these first concepts new ideas are captured.⁸¹

In conceptualising, we 'take the understanding of reality to a next level', as Theo Pleizier formulated it, with the explicit aim of 'manufacturing new ideas' on the data: 'Grounded Theory is ideational; a sophisticated and careful method of idea manufacturing. The conceptual idea is its essence. [...] The best way to produce is to think about one's data to generate ideas'.⁸² In our memos, we reflected on the codes and analysed them, and consequently we crystallised the patterns in the codes into initial concepts.

In a homiletical miniature, we give an example of this process of coding, comparing and conceptualising. In Bonhoeffer's sermon 'Aber ich habe wider dich', there is an incident in which Bonhoeffer exclaims: 'Wenn ich doch jetzt dies Wort so zu sagen vermöchte, dass es uns wirklich weh tut'. The sermon in its entirety, in our analysis, is essentially about self-deception, about

79 Wertz, F.J., et al., Ibid. p 172.

80 See chapter 4: 'Generating homiletical theory', in: Pleizier, T., Ibid. pp 83-110.

81 Charmaz, K., Ibid. pp 72-95.

82 Pleizier citing Glaser, see: Pleizier, T., Ibid. p 85.

celebrating an ecclesiastical 'Feiertag' like the Reformation day in 1932, as if nothing was happening, as if we do not possibly live in the 'dying seconds of our church', as Bonhoeffer called it. Bonhoeffer tries to make his hearers see another reality, namely of God's protest against the church. Bonhoeffer's exclamation in the sermon of wanting to hurt the hearers (including himself), shows something of the struggle that is going on in this sermon: 'I wish I could express this word in such a way, that it would really hurt us'. In our coding, we interpreted the incident in this way: Bonhoeffer wanted to shock the hearers out of a form of apathy, out of being untouchable. This apathy prevented them to see reality, as Bonhoeffer saw it, namely of a God that was discontent with the German church and society of that moment. The preacher urged in the sermon for repentance and change, but the aggressive rhetorics show something of the resistance of the hearers to it. We compared this incident with a fragment in a sermon from Martin Luther King. It is the sermon on the Vietnam War, and King talked about 'being blind to our own sins', and the aggressiveness of his rhetorical strategy is comparable to Bonhoeffer's. Both King and Bonhoeffer aimed to trigger insight, but something seemed to obstruct that insight. In Tutu's sermon, another incident occurred, in which he spoke of the 'prostitution of language'. Language can be made a lie, Tutu claimed, a lie that prevents to see reality as it is.

GTM works in such a way, that from specific observations like this, the data and the codes are analysed again, (this is the iterative process), and we searched the other sermons for comparable aggressive incidents. If comparable incidents would be detected in the data, the pattern of codes could be defined into an initial concept. In the memo, we wrote about these incidents, we reflected on 'interruption': the preachers clearly intended to interrupt something. We also reflected in the memo on destructiva that were 'concealed', that were not evident to the hearers. It is a concealment that must be 'deconstructed' by preachers, to make the hearers see what they see. During our research, these observations were checked in a following cycle of sermon analysis, and in that process, it became stronger. Eventually it became a property of the concept 'exposing destructiva', namely 'deconstructing the concealments of destructiva' (see 3.2).

In the next step of our research, we clustered the patterns of codes into ten initial analytical concepts. Behind each of these ten, still heuristic, concepts, there are thirty to forty codes that build up the specific concept. In this phase, we did not question yet whether there was an internal logic between these early concepts, neither did we analyse a possible linearity between the concepts, we just structured the 560 codes into potentially decisive patterns in the data. This is an important moment in the research. The 560 original codes are still recognisable in these early concepts, while simultaneously we move from the empirical level to a more theoretical level. This theoretical level must remain grounded in the empirical data, while at the same time a theory must transcend the particular instances. The

ten initial concepts became the starting point for a new cycle of empirical analysis of sermons (see the next paragraph).

The ten early categories were (taken from a memo written in September 2014):

1 Discerning destructiva

(discerning destructiva, lamenting destructiva, trying to make destructiva visible)

2 Making sense

(attributing theological qualifications to a contemporary situation)

3 Making the redemptive drama actual

(re-imagining the present in a soteriological way)

4 Intervening

(interrupting in the sermon, the sermon becoming a requisitor)

5 Tracing God

(sharing traces of God in reality)

6 The catalytic quality of the sermon

(something is being triggered in the sermon)

7 The cathartic quality of the sermon

(something is overcome in the sermon)

8 The sanitising quality of the sermon

(something is healed in the sermon, hearers are reclaimed to God)

9 Anticipating

(the sermons develop hope, but the sermons also warn for impending danger)

10 Edifying

(the sermons make resistant, initiate in God's ways, demands commitment)

2.5 Generating a theory: Theoretical sampling and theory formation

With these ten initial concepts, we returned to the 'empirical world' in a second cycle of sermon analysis. GTM strategy includes a moving back and forth between data gathering and data analysis, formulating initial concepts and developing these concepts through new cycles of empirical research. This new cycle of data analysis is called 'theoretical sampling' in GTM. It means going back to the 'empirical world' with your initial, tentative concepts, checking how 'thick or thin' these concepts are, observing how the concepts resonate (or not) when they are analysed in sermons that are held in different circumstances and

how new properties of the concepts may be discovered in these new contexts. It is important to understand that this next step in the research is meant for the theoretical development of concepts. It is not about gathering new data until we find the same patterns reoccurring in it, it is not about the statistic generisability of the research, it is essentially about developing, deepening, and strengthening initial concepts.⁸³

What did we want to explore and develop further in our initial ten concepts, in the next cycle of sermon analysis? In other words: What were decisive reasons in the selection of new sermons to analyse?

One of the three clusters of questions we wanted to explore deeper, concerned the concept of 'interruption' (see 1, 2, 3 and 6 in the ten initial concepts above). What does this concept of interruption look like in contexts that hardly tolerate critique? How do preachers interrupt in delicate circumstances like that? Is intervention subtler and less explicit in these cases? Or, to pose another question: What does interruption look like in a *pluralistic* context? How do preachers interrupt in contexts with a multiplicity of perspectives? Is there also a *non-antagonistic* mode of prophecy? And, to pose yet another question, What does interruption look like in less volatile contexts, when the need for interruption is less obvious? Are there forms of prophecy that happen in contexts where crises (political, societal, economic), are seemingly absent? This cluster of questions became important in the choice of the sermons we selected for the second cycle.

A second cluster of questions, concerned the theme of 'tracing God'. We noticed in the initial concepts a, for us, surprising attention for themes like redemption, hope, healing, i.e. the *sanitising* effect of sermons (see 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 in the ten initial concepts above). Traditionally, prophecy is associated with critique, with a negative function of showing deficits in society or in a religious community. How can we study more synthetic aspects of the phenomenon? In the second cycle of sermons, we wanted to deepen this understanding of 'tracing God's actual presence' in sermons, and analyse how this may be related to interruption. Is interruption possibly a form of presence? Or, is the interruption in the sermon an intervention in something that prevents God's presence?

A third cluster of questions circled around the theme of 'interpreting/qualifying the present situation from a theological or spiritual perspective' (see 2, 3 and 10 in the ten initial categories). In the sermons of Bonhoeffer, King and Tutu, we noted an early awareness of incidents being a kind of 'sign of the times'. These preachers had an early awareness of the danger and the poisoning effects of specific realities

83 See c 5: 'Theoretical Sampling, Saturation and Sorting', in Charmaz, K., Ibid. pp 96-123.

in their context. Can we find contemporary forms of preaching with a similar awareness? To what kind of developments do these contemporary preachers point to, as being dangerous, both for society and for the spiritual life of Christian congregations?

These were leading questions in the selection of new sermons. Besides the criteria that emerged out of these initial ten concepts, we maintained most of the parameters for the selection of sermons in the first cycle of analysis (as explained in 2.3.1). We maintained these criteria to safeguard and guarantee the quality of the material of our research.

The selection of the new sermons was, again, a communal process: both the members of the research group as well as international colleagues put forward helpful suggestions.⁸⁴ We decided to select three preaching practices and to pick out three sermons from each of these new contexts. First, we selected three sermons from Werner Krusche, a German Protestant minister who served as bishop in the *Evangelische Kirche* in the province of Saxony, in the former German Democratic Republic (DDR). Krusche played a significant role in developing a theological paradigm for being church in the context of Socialism. We selected sermons that were directly related to this DDR context, sermons in which we could analyse the modus of interruption in a context that hardly tolerated critique. Does the awareness of living in a censored society, full of fear and possible repercussions, influence this interruptive aspect? In addition, how does Krusche speak of God's presence in these circumstances? Does the DDR context generate a specific way of talking about 'God *praesens*' or 'God *absens*'?

Secondly, we selected three sermons from Gerhard von Rad, three sermons from the 1960s, held in the university context of Heidelberg. The restlessness of the 1960s is present in these sermons, the tension between the generations and the tension of the political conundrum caused by the post-war enmity of 'left and right'. In his sermons, we see Von Rad searching for orientation in these specific circumstances. In the sermons, we also see a renowned and nuanced biblical scholar, with many publications on the theme of the biblical prophets, ponder on paradigmatic changes in the spiritual atmosphere of post-war Europe. The sermons can be read as an early intuition of the effects that secularism may eventually have on the mindset of Europeans.

Finally, we studied four sermons from Rowan Williams, from the period in which he served as archbishop of Canterbury. We searched for sermons in which the

⁸⁴ It was, for example, prof Albrecht Grözinger who suggested we study the sermons of Werner Krusche, a suggestion that turned out to be very instructive for the development of our research.

reality of a multi-cultural society is present, sermons that were held in contexts that resist authoritarian modes of thought and communication, contexts that are deeply pluralistic. In Williams we also sought for a theologian who had access to mystical resources. How does this public theologian speak about the specific presence of God?

When we had made this second selection, we realised these were all 'exemplary practices of leadership in preaching'.⁸⁵ In all these cases we see preachers searching for a 'way-of-being in the world' for the church, in times when its mode of existence was changing. The sermons we studied were:

- 10 Werner Krusche, sermon on John 6.64b-71 (Magdeburg, 1969)
- 11 Werner Krusche, sermon on Acts 12.1-17 (Halle, 1982)
- 12 Werner Krusche, sermon on Jeremiah 29.4-14a (Magdeburg, 1985)

- 13 Gerhard von Rad, sermon on Isaiah 26.20-21 (Heidelberg, 1963)
- 14 Gerhard von Rad, sermon on Isaiah 29.9-14 (Heidelberg, 1966)
- 15 Gerhard von Rad, sermon on Joshua 5.13-15 (Heidelberg, 1968)

- 16 Rowan Williams, inauguration sermon on Matthew 11.25-30 (Canterbury, 2003)
- 17 Rowan Williams, sermon on John 10.1-18 (Nagpur, 2010)
- 18 Rowan Williams, sermon on Matthew 22.1-14 (Harare, 2011)
- 19 Rowan Williams, Christmas sermon on John 1.1-14 (Canterbury, 2011)

85 We are aware of the strength but also of the serious limitations of our selection. Other preachers that were considered to be studied in this second cycle, in which a richer diversity of gender, ethnicity and age is present, were: Gerrit Singgih (Indonesia), Dorothee Sölle (Germany), Prathia Hall, Barbara Brown Taylor or Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (United States), the Prague sermons of Thomas Halik. During this phase, we also considered to study sermons that were held in the actual and violent political crises that were developing during the period of our research. We considered studying sermons held in Iraq, during the IS attacks on Christians in Mosul, or sermons held in Syria during the civil war, or sermons from Egypt, after the violent bombings of Coptic church buildings. We considered to study sermons from several periods of the 20th century in China, held in circumstances of persecution. The reason why we did not involve sermons like these, was pragmatic, due to limitations of time and methodology: sometimes translations of sermons were not available; often it would require forms of contextual embeddedness of the researcher, to be able to acquire and to select relevant sermons, and to situate the sermons in their context and to give a fundamental, theological and contextual analysis. The conceptual proposal on prophetic speech that we give in chapters 8 and 9, hopefully can serve as a starting point for further homiletical analysis of sermons like these mentioned here. It would be a fascinating research programme, both for the church and the academy: local prophetic speech in recent violent contexts. See for a further orientation: Chandler, A., *The Terrible Alternative. Christian Martyrdom in the Twentieth Century*. (London: Cassell 1998).

This second cycle of sermon analysis turned out to be fruitful for the theoretical development of the concepts. The concepts gained profile in this phase and both the distinctions and the connections between the different concepts became clearer and sharper. We studied the ten sermons by using the methodological instrument of ‘focused coding’, a form of coding that is more ‘directed, selective and conceptual’ than the line-by-line coding of the first cycle.⁸⁶ With this specific tool, a researcher can focus in the new material on the specific concepts he wants to develop. In our analysis of the new set of sermons, we made the basic observation that the ten tentative concepts that we had developed previously, were ‘fitting’, were able to describe what was happening in these new sermons too. As we gradually clustered the ten initial concepts into five central concepts, the contours of a theory emerged. Strong concepts, as Charmaz defined, have theoretical reach, inclusiveness, generic power, and a clear relatedness to the other concepts.⁸⁷ The five concepts we ultimately generated have these qualities. They are theologically and homiletically promising concepts, they are open to further development and refinement, and the relationships between the concepts open a new field of reflection and research possibilities.

We now turn to the next part of our study, in which we will explain and develop the five concepts we generated through the empirical analysis of sermons.

86 Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* p 57

87 See c 6: ‘Reconstructing Theory in Grounded Theory Studies’, in: Charmaz, K., *Ibid.* pp 123-150.

Part II
Empirical research:
Five concepts of the prophetic dimension of preaching

CHAPTER 3 | EXPOSING DESTRUCTIVA

The expository dimension

Summary: In prophetic speech, there is a strong sensitivity to what preachers assess as destructive realities in the context of the hearers. One of the primal acts of prophetic speech is making these destructive visible (3.1). This exposure is connected to deconstruction. The reality of destructiva is often not evident, but concealed, censored, or tabooed. In their sermons, preachers deconstruct these concealments to facilitate exposure (3.2). A further dimension in exposure is ‘calling’. In exposing destructiva, preachers function as dissidents, exposing uncomfortable truths. In the sermons of our study, preachers confess that the imperative to take on this burden happened in the theological category of calling (3.3). Finally, a homiletical-technical aspect is discernible in these moments of exposure. In their sermons, preachers epitomise destructiva in miniatures, in concrete incidents in which the essence of that which haunts church and society is exposed in iconographic and iconoclastic ways (3.4).

I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part

3.1.a Exposing destructiva

Exposing, in our reconstruction, means ‘making something visible’, something the hearers of the sermon are not yet aware of, something that may be inconvenient or dangerous to acknowledge, something that may be obscured or censored. ‘Exposing’ is the homiletical act of making these things visible. This visibility facilitates awareness, and the effect aimed for by means of this growing awareness is insight. The character of this concept of exposing is stipulated by its strong occupation with destructiva. The prophetic moment makes damaging realities visible.

We use the intuitive and heuristic collective term ‘destructiva’ in a broad and inarticulate way.¹ In our data, it can refer to a variety of phenomena. It can refer to societal realities obscuring or denying the divine image in human beings, realities like poverty, racism, or a dehumanising ideology (Rowan Williams). It can refer to the apostasy that preachers see enveloping in their church, in which people, caused by pressure, fear or prosperity, ‘return to their old life’ (Werner Krusche). In each instance, these realities are assessed as damaging and destructive for both the communal and individual, the physical and spiritual well-being of people.² Theologically speaking, the term revolves around the categories of sin, evil and the ‘powers that be’, all opposites of God’s salutary design. In a preliminary sense, destructiva may be defined as those realities that damage the integrity of being human seen from a Christian perspective.

In the sermons, preachers name these destructiva in their particular manifestations. In the sermons we studied, different kind of destructiva are discerned. A destructivum has a particular profile, particular causes, and particular effects. In the sermons, we see preachers, with their own biographical background, with the specific *sensorium* of their own theological tradition, with their own inherited ways of interpreting Scripture and in their own political and cultural constellation, discern and expose what they assess to be destructive. In the particular interaction of Christian preachers (or broader: of the ‘Christian narrative’) with the particular political, economic, and spiritual constellations of their context, the exposure of destructiva happens.³ Prophetic speech is a critical, dialogical moment in which religious and theological convictions gain a particular point of application and confrontation in a discourse with church and society. Prophecy is *critical* theology *in particular*.

To give an example of this particularity:⁴ In his inauguration sermon as archbishop of Cape Town in 1986, Desmond Tutu exposed the concrete inequalities present in all sectors of the communal life of his own society (in areas like housing, labour, education, health care, political processes of

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- 1 See for the history, the usefulness and the actuality of terms like ‘evil’ and ‘destructiva’ in religious and Christian thinking, Schaafsma, P., *Reconsidering Evil. Confronting Reflections with Confessions* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers 2006), Hoeven, T. van der, *Het imago van satan. Een cultuur-theologisch onderzoek naar een duivels tegenbeeld*. (Kampen: Kok 1998) and the popular essay: Graaf, B. de, *Heilige Strijd. Het verlangen naar veiligheid en het einde van het kwaad*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2017).
 - 2 See for an insightful approach on the effects of a *destructivum* like torture on the social imagination of a society, on language, on the production of fear, isolation and chaos in communities, on physical bodies of individuals as well as on the ‘body of the church’: Cavanaugh, W.T., *Torture and Eucharist. Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ*. (Malden/Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 1998), pp 1-71.
 - 3 See on this particularity and its *incarnational* features, Lieven Boeve’s paragraph on ‘Truth and Incarnation’, in: Boeve, L., *God interrupts history. Theology in a time of upheaval*. (London: Continuum 2007), pp 172-178.
 - 4 It has been a puzzle to decide whether to use the past tense or the present tense in summarizing the sermons. As a rule of thumb we decided to use the past tense when we reflect in an analytical way on what is happening in sermons, and to use the present tense when we give a summary of the sermons.

decision making). Tutu asks his hearers: 'Would you let your brother live an unnatural life as migrant worker in a single-sex hostel? Would you let his family, your relatives, eke out a miserable existence in a poverty-stricken Bantustan homeland? (...) Would you deny your sister, your brother a proper education, fobbing them off with something that you had designed as an inferior and cheaper commodity than that which you provided for other members of the same family?'⁵ Tutu makes something visible of the particular destructiva of the apartheid context and in talking about 'your sister, your brother', these realities are brought home to the life of the hearers in concrete examples. The hearers are made participants in a concrete discourse on destructiva and by making these realities visible, the preacher aims for insight, acknowledgement and, ultimately, for resistance. Apartheid is not only withspoken as an ideological system, but it is explicated and lamented in the particular suffering it causes.

In this expository moment, an enigmatic kind of actuality emerges. In exposing destructiva, preachers confront hearers with a critical assessment of the concrete reality they live in. They show how and where damaging facets are operative or about to occur and what their effects are or will be on the hearers and on society in general. In these moments of exposure, preachers denounce a dimension of reality that is often suppressed or denied. We consider the prophetic moment as a *Streit um Wirklichkeit*, as a dispute about what is real and what is deceptive, about which suffering is real.⁶ Exposing destructiva therefore has a disturbing feature, because, by exposing what they see as real and true, preachers concurrently expose what they assess as untrue, false, or sinful. This distinction between the true and the deceptive is an integral effect of the exposure of destructiva. When this distinction is made in sermons, a *kairological* actuality emerges, in which hearers are forced in a position of choosing between what is salutary and what is damaging.

An example of this eerie form of actuality, in which a preacher exposes destructiva and urges hearers to choose, happens in a sermon on Jeremiah 29, held by Werner Krusche, bishop during the DDR-era. It is a fragment about betrayal, about living in a lie and a call to conversion: 'Mir erzählte vor längerer Zeit ein Pfarrer, eine Kirchenälteste sei zu ihm gekommen und habe ihm gesagt: Ich halte das nicht mehr aus. Ich kann seit eine Monat nicht mehr richtig schlafen. Alles worüber im Gemeindegemeinderat geredet wird, alles, was sie mir ganz arglos erzählen, muß ich berichten. Ich halte dieses Leben in der Lüge nicht mehr aus. Wo Menschen auf andere angesetzt werden, um sie zu beobachten und über sie zu berichten, da geht im Menschlichen etwas unheilbar kaputt und da wird jede Gemeinschaft in der Tiefe zerstört. 'Der Stadt Bestes' suchen heißt hier ganz schlicht: sich jedem solchen

5 Tutu, D., 'Agents of Transfiguration', in Tutu, D., *The Rainbow People of God*. (London: Doubleday 1994), p 117.

6 See Schori, K., 'Predigt als Streit um Wirklichkeit. Rekonstruktion eines Predigtgesprächs', in *Praktische Theologie* 39/3 (2004), pp 173-186.

Ansinnen verweigern. Ich sage das mit großem Ernst. Wo immer wir Schäden wahrnehmen, wo Unrecht oder Unsinn geschieht, da sollen wir dazu helfen, daß das abgestellt wird, und nicht aufgeben bis es abgestellt ist. Ich denke, ich brauche jetzt nicht weiter konkret zu werden!⁷

In this fragment, visibility occurs. The preacher makes something visible of the destructive side of an entire system. While in its official language, the DDR-system may confess to search for humanity and equality, and while Krusche is willing to acknowledge where this humanity occurs, this example exposes the hidden aspects of a destructive reality, a reality that damages communal human living and that eventually will sabotage an entire society, Krusche claims. It is evident that this exposing of concrete destructiva is not without risk for the preacher and that it requires audacity, a sense of calling and love for one's society, to say this in public (further 3.3). Secondly, this fragment contains a distinction. This is a fragment about what we call *Streit um Wirklichkeit*, a dispute about 'what is real?', 'which assessment of reality is real?' and about 'which destructiva are real? In this sermon, there is a dispute between competing versions of reality, and the preacher draws a distinction between true and false versions of reality, and consequently between the truth and the lie of human lives that inhabit the one or the other version (see the confession: 'Ich halte dieses Leben in der Lüge nicht mehr aus').

Finally, this discourse on truth and deception is particularised in the sermon. Through the concrete example of an elder of a congregation who betrays his brothers and sisters and in the remark of the preacher that 'he does not need to become even more concrete', a peculiar kind of actuality happens, in which the distinction between living in a lie or living in the truth is placed as an actual and present choice for the hearers. Destructiva are not only exposed, they are also actualised, brought home to the hearers, to urge them to choose.

In our analysis of Bonhoeffer's sermon 'Aber ich habe wider dich', we develop our notion of *Streit um Wirklichkeit* as a major motive in the expository moment (see below 3.1.b)

3.2.a Deconstructing the concealments of destructiva

Exposing does not only entail visibility but it entails deconstruction as well. A second observation from our data is that insight in the reality of these destructiva is *hindered*. In the reality of the hearers something is operative that *resists* exposure. Notably, not only destructiva are exposed in the sermons, but also their concealments. Preachers try to expose and deconstruct these concealments in order to facilitate insight. It is illustrative how often in the sermons of our study the idea of 'being deceived' and 'being manipulated' is mentioned. Bonhoeffer's sermon on Reformation day in 1932 is primarily about the self-deception of his

7 'Predigt am 10.2. 1985 (Sexagesimae) in der Kreuzkirche zu Dresden', in: Krusche, W., *Und Gott redete mit seinem Volk. Predigten aus der achtziger Jahren*. (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1990), p 72.

church and the consequences of it (3.1.b). Tutu laments about the ‘prostitution of language’, as he calls it, through which injustice and suffering are filtered out from the public discourse and through which people are conditioned in their assessment of reality (3.2.b). In Martin Luther King’s sermon on the Vietnam war, he talks about how, in times of war ‘most nations are deceived about themselves’: ‘Rationalisations and the incessant search for scapegoats are the psychological cataracts that blind us to our sins’ (3.3.b). Exposing destructiva includes exposing the deceptive strategies that hinder insight.

Language plays a fundamental role in obscuring destructiva. Things are called by the wrong name, preachers claim. Concentration camps can be called medical experiments, for example. The prophetic moment of exposing includes an attempt to break through these concealments and through these semantic lies manufacturing consent. ‘Wenn ich doch jetzt dies Wort so zu sagen vermöchte, daß es uns wirklich weh tut’, Bonhoeffer exclaimed in an attempt to break through a specific kind of blindness, that he assumed to be present in his church.⁸ Because language plays such a fundamental role in this obscurity, we reflect in paragraph 3.2.b on the ‘schwarze Magie des Wortes’ (Václav Havel) and on the contrast between ‘dead language and living speech’ (James Boyd White).

This tension between visibility and obscurity in our data, deepens our understanding of the concept of exposing destructiva. It underlines at least two important features: 1 discernment is a grace, and 2 discernment is conflictuous.

1 Insight in the nature of destructiva and their damaging reach, at the actual moment of their manifestation, is *not* evident. We, as contemporary readers, study the sermons in their historical context, and in a way, it can be said that the course of history has proven the veracity of the sermons under scrutiny. But our contemporary judgements are *a posteriori*. The fascination with these sermons is exactly in their early moment of discernment, in the exposure of specific destructiva while they were happening. Van der Ven called the discernment of evil a ‘mercy’⁹ and Lischer wrote about the ‘ability to see evil’: The prophet is given ‘a sharper eye than others to perceive the true nature of the evil around him. What others accept as “doing what comes naturally”, the prophet sees in all its grotesque horror.’¹⁰ In the prophetic moment, there is a specific *Urteilkraft* occurring: Preachers are able to discern and willing to expose destructiva in an

8 ‘Predigt zu Apokalypse 2.4. f. 7. Berlin Reformationsfest, 6. 11. 1932’, in: Bonhoeffer, D., *Berlin 1932-1933*. (DBW. Band 12). (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1997). pp 426.

9 Van der Ven, J.A., ‘The Moral and Religious Self as a Process’, in: Pieterse, J.C. (ed.), *Desmond Tutu’s Message. A Qualitative Analysis*. (Leiden: Brill 2001). p 79.

10 Lischer, R., *The Preacher King. Martin Luther King and the word that moved America*. (Oxford: University Press 1995), p 177.

early stage of their manifestation and in their particular expressions, and they share these insights with their hearers in order to make them see too. In these prophetic incidents, preachers seem to be driven by some *Ekstase der Vernunft*, to use a term from Paul Tillich, these *epiphanic* moments of clarity of mind in which 'eine sonst verschlossene Tiefe der Einsicht' is opened up to them.¹¹ We develop these observations in 3.3.a: Being called to expose (about the interference of biography, calling and context), and in chapter 5: Recognising the Word, about the illuminative dynamic between Scripture and context in the sermons.

2 Secondly, in these moments of exposing destructiva, a *conflict* occurs in our data. Exposing destructiva aims at triggering insight, and this insight is an archetypical dimension of the prophetic. Prophecy is about seeing and traditionally, prophets are also called seers.¹² At the same time, this theme of insight has a *conflictuous* nature. In prophetic texts, we often encounter the lament about those who do *not* see, who refuse to see, whose eyes are veiled, whose hearts are hardened or whose minds are deceived.¹³ In our own data, we also observed a combatant atmosphere when it comes to exposing destructiva. In exposing destructive, preachers enter dangerous and delicate zones of speech.

We illustrate the tension between seeing and not seeing, and of trying to break through obscurity, by a short fragment from a sermon from Gerhard von Rad on Joshua 5.13-15, held at Heidelberg university in 1968.¹⁴ The text is about Joshua encountering an 'invisible Man' with a sword, whom he asks: 'Are you a friend or an enemy?' Von Rad called the theme of the sermon: 'das Zusammenleben der Menschen'. In the sermon, he qualified his context as being without 'Ruheort': 'Zu all dem, was seit Urzeiten auf dem Menschen liegt, ist nun noch ein schreckliches geistiges Unbehautsein über die Menschen

11 See Körtner on Tillich's term: 'Die Gesetze der Vernunft werden in solcher Ekstase nicht außer Kraft gesetzt. Aber das Denken erreicht eine sonst verschlossene Tiefe der Einsicht und der Erkenntnis, die sich besonderer Intuition verdankt. Prophetie als Gegenwart des Geist Gottes führt zu einer besonderen Gegenwart und Helligkeit des menschlichen Geistes. Sie ist also Geistesgegenwart im doppelten Sinne des Wortes. Nach Paulus steht das Charisma prophetischer Rede freilich neben einer ganzen Reihe anderer Geistesgaben oder pneumatika, die in I Kor. 12,8ff aufgeführt werden. Nicht nur Prophetie, sondern auch Predigt und theologische Lehre, der Glaube, Heilungen und Glossolalie, aber auch theologische Urteilskraft sind nach Ansicht des Paulus Gaben des gegenwärtigen Geistes.' Körtner, U.H.J., *Theologie des Wortes Gottes. Positionen – Probleme – Perspektiven*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), pp 275, 276.

12 See on the archetypical character of insight in the prophetic moment and its conflictuous nature: Schmidt, W.H., 'Prophetie als Selbst-Kritik des Glaubens', in: *Prophetie und Charisma*. Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie. Band 14 (1999). (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag 1999), p 16. Also: Schmidt, W.H., 'Einsicht als Ziel prophetischer Verkündigung', in: Diedrich, F, Willmes, B. (Hg.), *Ich bewirke das Heil und erschaffe das Unheil*. (Würzburg 1998) and Schmidt, W.H., *Zukunftsgewißheit und Gegenwartskritik. Drei studien zur Eigenart der Prophetie*. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag 2002).

13 See for instance on the importance of Isaiah 6.9-10 in the New Testament (in Mk 4,11f, Mt 13, Lk 8.4-18, Apg 28,26), all texts with the explicit tension between seeing and not-seeing, all texts located in conflictuous circumstances in the New Testament: Gnllka, J., *Die Verstockung Israels. Isaias 6,9-10 in der Theologie der Synoptiker*. (München: Kösel-Verlag 1961).

14 Rad, G. von, *Predigten* (Hrsg. Ursula von Rad). (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1972, 1978), pp 154-160.

gekommen'. Some are still searching for *Geborgenheit*, others already have said farewell to that. A young generation cannot recognise or accept the 'Vorstellungswelt der Alten', an older generation sees something destructive in 'dem Aufbruch der Jungen'. The sermon is held in the tumultuous year 1968, and the location is a university, focus of turmoil and protest. More specific: The location is the university of Heidelberg, where such a grim atmosphere was troubling communal life. Möller, commenting on this sermon, even talked about an atmosphere of 'Terror',¹⁵ and in the sermon Von Rad tries trying to give theological and spiritual words to what was happening below the surface. It is an attempt of triggering insight. What we need, Von Rad says, is not this *Freund oder Feind*-thinking, with which Joshua encountered the 'strange Man', but we need 'jenes weites Raum, in dem wir über des Freund-Feinddenken hinausgehoben wären'. The 'weites Raum' is a place of mercy, where enmity is overcome and where real encounters are possible.

In the sermon, Von Rad enters in a dialogue with Joshua, a dialogue about the harshness of the heart, especially in the contemporary estrangements of 1968: 'Lieber Josua, weißt du denn nicht, was sich alles in uns querlegt, wenn wir auf Gott hören sollen? Weißt du den nicht, daß jeder von uns wie in einem zementenen Turm sitzt mit schmalen Luken, die wir lieber als Schießscharten benutzen als um hinauszuhorchen?' The preacher sees people of all generations hiding, 'wie in einem zementen Turm', preferring to shoot at each other rather than coming out of their bastions. And then, Von Rad talks about a 'bewitchment' by which we are all deceived, a strange blindness that hinders us in seeing the other and meeting the other: 'Es gibt ja einen Bann, der um uns Menschen liegt, einen Blindheit für die anderen, die ist furchtbar. Und sie weicht nur, wo uns Gott in seine Freistatt hinausführt und wo er uns wissen läßt 'sein herrlich Recht': da werden die Menschen freier und wissender, da erst sehen sie den anderen nicht nur im Freund-Feind- Schema, da erst, so könnte man ganz einfach sagen, werden sie menschlicher'.

Although unlike the more violent contexts of Bonhoeffer, King and Tutu, the mechanism operative in the sermon is similar. At the surface, there is enmity between the generations, estrangement, mistrust and a form of blindness: There is something that obstructs insights in this atmosphere of 'blödsinnigen Parolen, das aggressive klassifizierende Denken von rechts und links, von Rot und Schwarz'.¹⁶ Von Rad searches for the causes of this mentality, and one of

15 'Ganz deutlich ist an dieser Stelle das Bedrängtsein des Predigers von Attacken und Parolen der 68er Jahre zu vernehmen, das ja gerade in Heidelberg so tobte und so viele theologische Lehrer an die Zeit des dritten Reiches erinnerte, obwohl es jetzt der Terror von links und nicht der Terror von rechts war. Was will der Prediger mit seinem Text in dieser situation erreichen? Er will die aktuelle Situation überholen und durchbrechen, um alle miteinander in einem neuen Raum, eben in jene Heilige Stätte, an jene Freistatt hinaus zu holen, wo Gott seine Hand über unsere Gespräche hält und das Freund-Feind-Schema überholt und durchbrochen ist'. Möller, C., 'Von dem Geheimnis Gottes im Wort innehalten. Gerhard von Rad als Prediger und Helfer zur Predigt', in: Alston, W., und Möller, C. (hrsg), *Die Predigt des Alten Testaments. Beiträge des Symposiums 'Das Alte Testament und die Kultur der Moderne' anlässlich des 100. Geburtstags Gerhard von Rads (1901-1971)*. (Hamburg: LIT Verlag 2003), p 9.

16 Möller, C., 'Von dem Geheimnis Gottes im Wort innehalten', p 10.

them he sees in our *geistliches Unbehaustsein*. But Von Rad also turns to the language of blindness, of being deceived, of hardened hearts, a ‘Bann der um uns Menschen liegt, einen Blindheit für die anderen’. At the same time, he talks about the God who can create ‘zones of freedom and trust’, generous moments of understanding and friendship. The sermon ends with the promise that God will always create these ‘zones’ anew, where human beings can find God and overcome their enmity and fear for each other.

The sentiment of the sermon, the context, the language, and the metaphors are radically different from, for example, Tutu’s sermons in his apartheid context. But the essence, about the blindness and fear for the other, about enmity and overcoming hatred, is similar. In exposing destructive, preachers expose the hidden forces that damage human life, and they denounce the mechanisms that conceal these destructiva and resist their exposure. There is a gradual difference in the violent character of the contexts, but the theological mechanisms are the same. In our discussion and analysis of Tutu’s sermon ‘You will bite the dust’, we prolong and deepen our reflection on the obscuring of destructiva, the role of language and the prophetic moment as a form of living speech (see further 3.2.b).

3.3.a Being called to expose

In the act of exposing destructiva the preacher is a *contrarian*. Communities and societies generally do not like to be reminded to what they prefer to forget or deny. As a rule, they feel disturbed and troubled by people who remind them of it. Consequently, to feel the obligation to expose destructiva and their concealments is experienced by preachers as a burden, as a ‘vocation of agony’ (Martin Luther King). The societal and ecclesiastical themes surrounding these destructiva are delicate, dangerous, and controversial. It not only requires insight to speak, but also courage and faith. In the data, we frequently encounter preachers addressing, and lamenting the theme of their calling, referring to a strange persistent compulsion that forces them to speak about these inconvenient themes. Calling is in our data interwoven with exposing destructiva. In this context, we also hear preachers talking about their preparedness to bear the costs for speaking disturbing words. Bonhoeffer, in his sermon on Jeremiah 20 (see below), made Jeremiah a contemporary who knows about being scolded at: ‘Phantast, Sturkopf, Friedensstörer, Volksfeind hat man ihn gescholten, hat man zu allen Zeiten bis heute die gescholten die von Gott besessen und gefasst waren, denen Gott zu stark geworden war. Wie gern hätte er mit den anderen Friede und Heil geschrien, wo doch Unfriede und Unheil war.’¹⁷

17 ‘Predigt zu Jeremia 20, 7. London, 21. 1. 1934’, in: Bonhoeffer, D., *London 1933-1935. (DBW. Band 13)*. (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1994), p 348.

This obligation to speak is integrally related to the concealment and the denial of *destructiva* (3.1 and 3.2). Because silence, censorship, or blindness obscure *destructiva*, because language may fail to give proper names to injustice, apostasy and suffering, someone must speak (3.3).

In this concept of calling, we see a blending of biography, societal context, and vocation. Faith, biography, context and calling coalesce in the existence of the preacher. Qua epistemology, this coalescence is important. The sources for the knowledge and the spiritual assessment of *destructiva* are *experiential* and *existential realities* for the preacher. The factors of credibility, authority and charisma may have this specific dynamic as background and origin. We propose the term ‘interiority’ to understand this mechanism: the crisis of the context resonates in the interior life of the preacher. The preacher knows the crisis biographically, he suffers because of it, he is troubled and enraged by it, and at the same time he cannot distance himself from it. It is in this inner turmoil that crisis and calling come together and forms of insight and speech are born. In 3.3.b we reflect on Abromeit’s suggestion that there is a relationship between *Erkenntnis und Existenz*. On the one hand, the preacher is captured by God’s calling and his life becomes marked by it, on the other hand it is only through focused and devoted lives, knowledge and insight may happen.

We illustrate this interference of biography, context and calling, by discussing a fragment from Bonhoeffer’s ‘Jeremiah sermon’, held in London, on January 21, 1934, in the ‘spannungsgeladenen Tagen’ before representatives of the German Church would meet Hitler, in Berlin.¹⁸ In the week before this sermon, Bonhoeffer had written a protest letter on behalf of the London clergy to the Reichskanzler, and through it he was actively trying to prevent the ‘Gleichschaltung der Kirche’. The text of the sermon is Jeremiah 20.7, ‘Herr, du hast mich überredet’, and the sermon is one of the most dramatic examples concerning the theme of biography, calling and suffering in our research.

From the outset, the sermon is characterised by aggressive language and violent metaphors: God’s calling is portrayed as God’s hunt. ‘Jeremias hat sich nicht dazu gedrängt, Prophet Gottes zu werden. Er ist zurückgeschauert, als ihn plötzlich der Ruf traf, er hat sich gewehrt, er wollte ausweichen – nein, er wollte dieses Gottes Prophet und Zeuge nicht sein – aber auf der Flucht packt ihn das Wort, der Ruf; er kann sich nicht mehr entziehen, es ist um ihn geschehen, oder, wie es einmal heisst, der Pfeil des allmächtigen Gottes hat das gehetzte Wild erlegt. Jeremias ist sein Prophet.’ Jeremiah did not have any intention to become God’s prophet, Bonhoeffer writes, he even resisted the call and tried to flee from it. But God was like a hunter, using arrows to shoot and to catch Jeremiah, forcing him to obey. ‘Der Pfeil des allmächtigen Gottes hat das gehetzte Wild erlegt’. This

18 Bonhoeffer, D., ‘Predigt zu Jeremia 20, 7’, pp 347-351.

violent tone continues to dominate the whole sermon. Later, Bonhoeffer will use the image of God as a cowboy, having a lasso, and with this lasso he forces his catch to follow him: 'Dem Menschen ist ein Lasso über den Kopf geworfen und nun kommt er nicht mehr los. Versucht er zu widerstreben, so spürt er erst recht, wie unmöglich das ist; denn das Lasso zieht sich nur enger und schmerzhafter zusammen und erinnert ihn daran, dass er ein Gefangener ist. Er ist ein Gefangener, er muss folgen. Der Weg ist vorgeschrieben.'

In this sermon, a human being is struggling with his calling, a struggle that is interpreted as a conflict with God, a conflict ending with a macabre kind of doxology of scars: 'We are God's prisoners, he binds us to his chariot, as prisoners we take part in God's victory'. Now we use this fragment to illustrate what we call interiority: the dispute with destructiva resonates in the interior life of the preacher. The preacher is personally, biographically, and theologically present in this struggle. It is our intuition that in the prophetic moment of preaching, the existential quest of preacher, congregation and the broader context coalesce. The act of preaching itself seems to become a moment in which this trying to come to terms with God's calling is actually taking place. Bonhoeffer describes Jeremiah as a contemporary, he writes as if he himself, as a preacher in 1934, has an existential affinity and continuity with the same *Sache* that is disturbing Jeremiah. The way Jeremiah is described as an ecclesiastical and societal dissident is identical with the profile of dissidents in 1934, who did not support the 'German awakening under the National Socialists': 'Ein verlachter, verachteter, für verrückt erklärter, aber für Ruhe und Frieden der Menschen äusserst gefährlicher Narr – den man schlägt, einsperrt, foltert und am liebsten gleich umbringt – das ist dieser Jeremias eben weil er Gott nicht mehr loswerden kann.'

Several interpreters of Bonhoeffer's life, preaching and theology have intuited that this sermon may have functioned as 'prophetische Berufungsgeschichte Bonhoeffers'.¹⁹ Notably, in the act of preaching itself, insight may have emerged about Bonhoeffer's own life and fate, about how to understand the German societal, political and ecclesial context.²⁰ What happens in fragments like these is a kind of 'sachgemäße Subjektivität' between what is at stake in the scriptural passage, in the life of the preacher and in his context. That is what we mean by the blending of biography, context and calling. When Bonhoeffer

19 See especially Peter Zimmerling, who cites Bethge, Dzudsus, Glenthoj and Kallen. Zimmerling: 'Die Predigt besitzt also einen hochbrisanten zeitgeschichtlichen Hintergrund. Dieser bildet einerseits die Folie, auf der Bonhoeffers prophetische Selbstverständnis Kontur gewinnt; andererseits bietet er ihm die Möglichkeit, Einblick zu geben in die tiefer liegenden Motive, die ihn zur Teilnahme an der Kirchenkampf geführt haben. Dadurch wird die Predigt zu einem klassischen Beleg für den Zusammenhang von Theologie und Biographie bei Bonhoeffer.' Zimmerling, P., *Bonhoeffer als Praktischer Theologe*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2006), p 94.

20 Zimmerling writes that Bonhoeffer tried to 'understand, to get a grip on' what was happening in his context and in his own life, with the help of theology and preaching: 'Schließlich machen gerade die Londoner Predigten deutlich, dass Bonhoeffer mit Hilfe der Theologie sein Leben bewältigt hat. Im Horizont des Wortes Gottes fand er Orientierung und Halt. Daran gab er seinen Hörerinnen und Hörern Anteil.' Zimmerling, P., *Ibid.* p 83.

writes about the lament of Jeremiah, there seems to be no distance any longer, between then and now, between the I of the prophet and the I of the preacher': 'Gott, du hast es mit mir angefangen. Du hast mir nachgestellt, hast mich nicht loslassen wollen, bist mir immer wieder hier oder dort plötzlich in den Weg getreten, hast mich verlockt und betört, hast dir mein Herz gefügig und willig gemacht, hast zu mir geredet von deiner Sehnsucht und ewigen Liebe, von deiner Treue und Stärke; als ich Kraft suchte, stärktest du mich, als ich Halt suchte, hieltest du mich, als ich Vergebung suchte, vergabst du mir die Schuld. Ich hatte nicht gewollt, aber du überwandest meinen Willen, meinen Widerstand, mein Herz, Gott du verführtest mich unwiderstehlich, dass ich mir hingab. Herr, du hast mich überredet, und ich habe mich überreden lassen. Wie einen Ahnungslosen hast du mich gefasst – und nun kann ich nicht mehr von dir los, nun schleppst du mich davon als deine Beute, bindest uns an deinen Siegeswagen und schleift uns hinter dir her, dass wir geschunden und zermartert an deinen Triumphzug teilnehmen. Konnten wir es wissen, dass deine Liebe so weh tut, dass seine Gnade so hart ist?' Zimmerling wrote that when we read this intense and dramatic passage in retrospect, from the perspective of Bonhoeffer's death, 'dann drängt sich der Eindruck auf, als habe er selber in der Predigt prophetisch weggenommen, was einmal im Rückblick auf sein Leben zu sagen sein wird'.²¹

The example shows how in Bonhoeffer's sermon 'das Wort der Predigt und die Existenz des Predigers untrennbar verbunden sind'.²² We analyse the same connectedness between preaching, biography and calling in King's sermon 'Why I am opposed to the war in Vietnam' (3.3.b).

3.4.a Iconography: Epitomising destructiva in sermons

A final aspect of exposing destructiva: In the data of our study, we regularly come across incidents in which all the properties of our concept of exposing destructiva crystallise. Preachers select and discuss in their sermons occurrences, persons, or concrete developments through which the essence of what is happening in the broader context is made visible and tangible for the hearers. What is happening on a meta level in society, is exposed on the micro level of a single occurrence, a single life, a single incident. These crystallisations are used as explicit moments of exposure and of visibility. We call these moments 'iconic fragments'. In an iconic way, something of the hardly visible processes within a certain context are infused into the consciousness of the hearers. These fragments can also be iconoclastic: There are various incidents in our data in which highly respectable persons or institutions are exposed to be the contrary of their public image.

In these iconic/iconoclastic fragments all the properties of our concept function. The fragments are concentrations of visibility and particularity, the ability to see

²¹ Zimmerling, P., *Ibid.* p 96.

²² Zimmerling, P., *Ibid.* p 105.

these iconic fragments requires *Urteilkraft* and the iconic quality can be seen as a crystallisation of the specific *Gegenwart* we analysed in 3.1.a. The fragments are moments in which the obscurity of *destructiva* is both exposed and lifted (3.2.a). The iconic fragment can also be seen as an ‘embodiment’, in which, in a single fragment, the core issues at stake in a context are embodied (3.3.a). We show in paragraph 3.4.b how Desmond Tutu, in his sermon at the funeral of Steve Biko, sketched Biko’s life in an iconic way. In Biko’s life, according to Tutu, something became visible of the dignity and the truth of a life given for justice, while at the same time the brute murder of Biko is an epitome, a visible manifestation of the powers in South Africa that oppose this justice.

In this epitomising of *destructiva* a final characteristic can be formulated, a feature that is present, in various degrees, in all of the properties of this concept, namely the lament. In the prophetic dimension of preaching, *destructiva* are not only exposed, they are also lamented. The term ‘*destruivum*’ may be abstract, the reality of pain and suffering is concrete.²³ In the sermon, this pain is absorbed in the language that is used. This public lament in the sermon is a form of substitute speech, in which the preacher articulates the effects of the *destruivum* on all kinds of people. The suffering is expressed as being a reality for the hearers and at the same time it is communicated to God in the sermon. We generated the term ‘breathing space’ for it. The sermons contain porous zones, through which the suffering of the hearers is opened up to God, offering the hearers a liturgical opening in their lives, in which pain is honoured, ventilated, and mediated to God. In these instances, the prophetic moment is a public place of refuge, a place where humiliation and defeat is shared. We show how this lament functions in Tutu’s sermon at Steve Biko’s funeral and how the sermon becomes a breathing space through it (3.4.b).

A homiletical miniature on iconography and iconoclasm: In his last sermonic speech, held at the night before he was assassinated, Martin Luther King spoke to garbage workers on strike, at the Bishop Charles Mason Temple in Memphis (3 April 1968).²⁴ This speech is full of iconography and iconoclasm and we present an interesting example of it. In this fragment, King makes the strike of the garbage workers a moment in the epic march to freedom: ‘We aren’t going to let any mace stop us. We are masters in our nonviolent movement in disarming police forces. They don’t know what to do. I’ve seen them so often. I remember in Birmingham, Alabama, when we were in that majestic struggle there, we would move out of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church day after day. By the hundreds we would move out, and Bull Connor would tell them to send

23 See on the place of lament in liturgy: Ommen, L. van, *Human Tears, Divine Tears: A Narrative Analysis of Anglican Liturgy in Relation to Stories of Suffering People*. (Leuven: PhD Dissertation ETF Leuven 2015).

24 See for the text the Stanford archives: www.kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/ive_been_to_the_mountaintop.

the dogs forth, and they did come. But we just went before the dogs singing, "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around." [Applause] Bull Connor next would say, "Turn the fire hoses on." (Yeah) And as I said to you the other night, Bull Connor didn't know history. He knew a kind of physics that somehow didn't relate to the trans-physics that we knew about. And that was the fact that there was a certain kind of fire that no water could put out. [Applause] (...) And we just went on before the dogs and we would look at them, and we'd go on before the water hoses and we would look at it. And we'd just go on singing, "Over my head, I see freedom in the air." (Yeah) [Applause] And then we would be thrown into paddy wagons, and sometimes we were stacked in there like sardines in a can. (All right) And they would throw us in, and old Bull would say, "Take 'em off." And they did, and we would just go on in the paddy wagon singing, "We Shall Overcome." (Yeah) And every now and then we'd get in jail, and we'd see the jailers looking through the windows being moved by our prayers (Yes) and being moved by our words and our songs. (Yes) And there was a power there which Bull Connor couldn't adjust to (All right), and so we ended up transforming Bull into a steer'. [Applause]

This imagery has proven to have a tremendous power. The images of Eugene 'Bull' Connor, the epitome of the 'cruel white policeman', allowing dogs to attack black youth, the images of bleeding black children in the streets of Birmingham, all these images influenced the public opinion about the civil rights movement. These images have become iconic, opening a window on the hidden reality of violence, brutality, and racism. In this sermon, King applied the technique of vilification: Eugene Connor is made a villain, a symbol of the hidden racist motives of many white citizens in the United States, according to King, an embodiment of the brutal violence the police and the state were willing to use. In passages like these, a 'majestic battle' is framed, a battle between 'the fire of guns and the fire of the Spirit', between armed police officers and innocent children, between 'the water of canons and the water of baptism'. According to King, there is a fire that cannot be 'put out by water canons', there is song that cannot be silenced by imprisonment. King makes the struggle for civil rights a 'majestic struggle', and this portrayal of the epic battle is full of iconoclastic and iconographic elements. See for instance the iconoclastic satire on 'Bull' Connor: 'and so we ended up transforming Bull into a steer'. A steer is a castrated bull calf. The brute and violent police officer Bull Connor is, so to speak, castrated, made powerless, by unarmed Afro-Americans singing spirituals and praying. This might be framed as the construction of iconography. King designs these images as being a window on what he says that is going to happen in the whole United States. In some way or the other, the 'stripping off' of 'Bull' Connor is meant to be something more than just individual satire. Richard Lischer interpreted it as having the power of a sign, maybe even of a *Zeichenhandlung*: as 'Bull' Connor is made powerless, the system he represents is going to fall, at least, that is the communicative

intention of iconic and iconoclastic fragments.²⁵ Interestingly enough, this iconographic mechanism does not only occur in the sermon. In the reception history of the sermon, this specific sermon (*I've seen the promised land, Mason Temple*, Memphis 3 April 1968) became part of an iconic dynamic itself. An entire monography has been written about it.²⁶ The sermon King held, is about Moses not entering the promised land, and in the sermon, King expressed the lines that later would become famous, about 'I may not get there with you'. The next morning King was assassinated and with retroactive force, the sermon became part of an iconographic process of its own. In paragraph 3.4.b, we continue to reflect on iconographic processes in and surrounding prophetic speech.

25 Lischer, R., *The Preacher King. Martin Luther King, Jr. and The Word That Moved America*. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995), p 183.

26 See for instance: Miller, K.D., *Martin Luther King's Biblical Epic. His Final, Great Speech*. (Jackson: University of Mississippi 2012).

II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part

Summary: In this second, empirical-analytical part, the concept is studied in concrete sermons, to show how the concept is grounded in a selected sermon. In the subsequent analysis, there is room for a more detailed, contextual study of both sermon and concept. Each sermon will be analysed through a similar format of introduction (1), summary (2) and analytical notes (3). The sermons in this part are all illustrations of the concept of exposing destructiva.

In 3.1.b, we discuss a sermon from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, held in Berlin in 1932, in which he tried to expose the crisis he perceived in the communal life of both church and nation. The sermon contains fierce and excoriating speech, Bonhoeffer vehemently and repeatedly tries to shatter the self-deception that, according to him, prevents the hearers to see their present spiritual malaise and an approaching destructive drama. In paragraph 3.2.b, we turn to the dark potential of language. In our reconstruction, the damaging power of destructiva is often not evident to the hearers, and one of the recurring mechanisms through which destructiva are obscured, is the perversion of language. Language may become inflationary, it may even degenerate to stimulating or facilitating destructiva. The deconstruction of this false or dead language is an integral moment in the exposure of destructiva. In all these facets of exposing destructiva, we sense the conflictuous nature of exposing destructiva. In 3.3.b, we discuss Martin Luther King's 'Vietnam sermon'. The sermon is not only marked by candid political statements, in it we also encounter the vocational dilemma of a preacher over keeping silent or speaking out. King felt obliged to speak, because of the suffering of the youth, both in Vietnam as well as in the ghettos in the United States, because of the faltering moral integrity of his society, he spoke 'because of my commitment to Jesus Christ' (in his own words). But, King also felt troubled and burdened to speak, and in the sermon, he discussed these themes. He called this obligation a 'vocation of agony'. Finally, in 3.4.b, we discuss a more homiletical-technical feature of exposing destructiva. In the sermons, we encounter, what we call, iconic and iconoclastic fragments. Preachers recognise in persons, incidents, or occurrences what is essentially going on in their society. In this paragraph, we analyse the way Desmond Tutu portrayed Steve Biko in the sermon held at Biko's funeral, and how Tutu claimed that Biko's life had a theological meaning for the present.

3.1.b Sermon illustrating ‘Exposing destructiva’ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Revelation 2.4. f7 (Berlin, 1932)

1 Introduction of the sermon

The political and societal circumstances in which Bonhoeffer held this sermon, held in an academic service at the Dreifaltigkeitskirche in Berlin in November 1932, were tumultuous and explosive.²⁷ Dudzus spoke of a *Massenhysterie* that captured Germany during those months. In the newspapers of the week preceding this sermon, there were reports about ‘Terrorakte in alle Stadtteilen’ of the city of Berlin, and predictions about an upcoming state of emergency. On this specific Sunday, there were elections for the *Reichstag*. Already in July 1932, there had been previous elections, which had resulted in a *Reichstag* composition dominated by extremists, both on the left side and the right. In the following months, the political violence in Germany increased. Von Papen, the *Reichskanzler*, tried to dissolve the *Reichstag*, but the communist block resisted. Then, new elections were set for Sunday 6 November 1932. The direct context of the sermon is this escalating political conundrum, widespread fear and anger, the atmosphere of crisis so endemic to the final years of the Weimar Republic. Salient detail is the remark of Albrecht Schönherr that *Reichspräsident* Von Hindenburg was present in the church as Bonhoeffer preached.²⁸

This was also the Sunday the church commemorated the Reformation, traditionally an ecclesiastical, cultural, and national celebration in Germany. In her study on Barth’s homiletical *Vorlesungen*, held in the same semesters of 1932-1933, Hancock characterised the ecclesiastical atmosphere in the last years of the Weimar Republic.²⁹ Within the church, the societal crisis was also interpreted as a *kairos*.³⁰ The conservative and nationalist-oriented church positioned itself, more or less, as a servant of the ‘spiritual and political mission of das Volk’. During the Great War, a passionate concern for the mystical collective of the German *Volk* had become a major factor in the *Geistesleben* of the German people, and this subject would dominate the coming decades of the 1930s and the 1940s. Accordingly, the preaching of the church should be ‘pastoral care for

27 See on the contextual specifics of this sermon the annotated version of the sermon in: Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, ‘Predigt zu Apokalypse 2.4. f. 7. Berlin Reformationsfest, 6. 11. 1932’, in: Bonhoeffer, D., *Berlin 1932-1933*. (DBW. Band 12), pp 423-424, and: Dienhart Hancock, A., *Karl Barth’s Emergency Homiletic, 1932-1933. A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2013), pp 194-195.

28 Schönherr, A., ‘Die Predigt Bonhoeffers’, in: Schönherr, A., *Horizont und Mitte. Aufsätze, Vorträge, Reden. 1953-1977*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1979), p 179.

29 See especially chapter 2: ‘Theological Existence in the Weimar Years: Three Lenses’ (political and social, ecclesiastical and academic), pp 38-91, and chapter 4: ‘Theological Existence and Protestant Proclamation in Weimar’, Dienhart Hancock, A., *Ibid.* pp 137-192.

30 See on the prominence of this *kairos-concept* in the Weimar-era, especially in the theology of Paul Tillich and Emmanuel Hirsch: Christophersen, A., *Kairos. Protetstantische Zeitdeutungskämpfe in der Weimarer Republik*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008).

the *Volksgemeinde*, and theologians like Hirsch, Althaus and Dibelius pleaded for a church that strengthened the opposition against the ‘threats to this German *Volkseele*, threats like materialism, secularism, cosmopolitanism and ‘the Jewish spirit’: ‘It must preach the gospel in solidarity with the embattled *Volk*’.³¹ In this period, ecclesiastical optimism emerged, even some kind of triumphalism. After the dire spiritual crisis following the ‘defeat of 1918’, many in the German church at the end of the 1920s, thought the church had recovered itself. In 1926, Otto Dibelius had published his *Das Jahrhundert der Kirche*, a book with confidence in the church’s relevance for *das Volk*, and her position in ‘the *Reich* to come’. There was ‘self-satisfaction regarding the church’s success’ of not being beaten by atheism and communism. The abiding future for the church was viewed with optimism.³²

2 Summary of the sermon

Contrary and even subversive to all kinds of optimism and self-confidence in the church, Bonhoeffer opens his sermon with a robust statement, claiming that ‘we know or should know that we live in the final hour of our church’. Soon, he claims, it will be clear whether ‘the church is over’ or ‘a new day will start’. Bonhoeffer characterises the church as ‘dying’. In the opening paragraph, he uses provocative and sarcastic metaphors. He evokes the image of a *Fanfare at a funeral*, loud music intended to cover up the sadness of the mourners, he evokes the image of children whistling and making noise in the dark to shout down their fears, and he uses these images to characterise the church in Germany celebrating the Reformation. In these present celebrations, this church tries to cast out her ‘tiefinnere heimliche Sterbensbangigkeit’, Bonhoeffer argues. The church secretly knows about this *Abgrund*, and she shivers under ‘der Hand des Todes’, but in the meantime, she suppresses and tries to silence these fears with noisy music and firm language. Then the core text from Apocalypse 2.4 functions for the first time in the sermon, and it functions as a wrecking ball: ‘Wir singen: “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott”. “Gott ist für uns, wer mag wider uns sein?” Gott aber spricht: “Aber ich habe wider dich!”’ The Word of God for the present, in Bonhoeffer’s claim, is extremely critical and interruptive. He even continues the sermon by urging the church to abstain from Luther’s words: ‘Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders’, to ‘let Luther rest in peace’, because these words do not fit us. Luther’s words are from a man in

31 Characterising Althaus’ address at a *Königsberger Kirchentag* in 1927, Diencock writes ‘The preaching Althaus has in mind, then, is a species of modern preaching in its postwar transformation: *zeitgemäß*, close to the (*Volk*) life, ethically oriented, apologetic, relevant.’ Dienhart Hancock, A., *Ibid.* pp 168-169.

32 Hancock also writes about Karl Barth’s critical article *Quousque Tandem?* from 1930, in which we recognise the same motives as in Bonhoeffer’s sermon. Hancock: ‘It was a direct critique of the reigning Protestant nationalist ecclesiology, which congratulated itself that it had triumphed over the atheists with its dexterous leadership, delighted in the natural appetite for religion in the soul of the German people, and reading God’s vindication of the German Protestant Church in this turn of events. Barth attacked the complacency, arrogance and self-centeredness of such a perspective, as if the church’s institutional power and prosperity was the point and as if God’s will could be so easily discerned in history’. See: Dienhart Hancock, A., *Ibid.* pp 66-67.

extremis, 'he really had no other option'. 'But none of us has taken such a final position yet, Bonhoeffer says. 'Wir können und sollen anders. Tausende Malen wird es heute von den Kanzeln geklungen haben: "Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders". – Gott aber spricht: "Aber ich habe wider dich...". The scriptural word functions as a refrain, continually reiterating the preacher's claim that God is in a severe dispute with this church.

In the second paragraph, this critique of the church is deepened. According to her own self-understanding, the Protestant church is called to protest, Bonhoeffer states sarcastically. She protests against secularism, Catholicism, the decline of morality and faith in society. 'Welch herrlicher Tag. "Wir protestieren!", schreien wir; Gott aber spricht: "Aber ich habe wider dich..." d.h. ich protestiere, Gott protestiert, gegen wen? Gegen uns und unser Protest! Hören wir's denn nicht? Protestantismus heißt nicht unser Protest gegen die Welt, sondern Gottes Protest gegen uns: "Aber ich habe wider dich...". Bonhoeffer assumes that the church knows very well that Reformation day means 'der stärkste Feldzug Gottes gegen uns', but that she is afraid to face it and to admit it. 'Wir haben Angst, wir sind diesem Angriff, diesem Protest nicht gewachsen; wir haben Angst wir blamieren uns vor Gott und der Welt wenn wir das eingestünden. Und darum machen wir solchen Lärm um diesen Tag, darum hämmern wir am 31. X. tausenden von Schulkindern falsche Dinge ein, nur damit sie unsere Schwäche nicht merken, ja, damit wir sie selbst vergessen.' To put it positively, Bonhoeffer continues, this day means listening to the Gospel and reading Scripture. When he quotes for the fifth time the words from the Book of Revelation, he adds a cynical word: 'Wenn ich doch jetzt dies Wort so zu sagen vermöchte, daß es uns wirklich weh tut'. The preacher longs for the ability to speak the word in such a way that it hurts the hearers, meaning, that it will finally reach them.³³

At this moment in the sermon, Bonhoeffer moves to the second part of the verse, 'Aber ich habe wider dich, daß du die erste Liebe lässest'. According to him, this 'first love' is the 'only love there is'. It is the love 'from God and to God, and besides this first love there is only hatred'. To leave the 'first love', Bonhoeffer explains, is 'leaving God and leaving one's brother', the two being related, and then only hatred remains, both towards God and towards the world. Nonetheless, Bonhoeffer continues, this verse means that 'there once was love'. The sermon continues with an existential plea to the hearers to remember. 'There has been something, between God and you, you have prayed, uttered your pain to God, you once loved him, didn't you?'. The style of the sermon becomes conversational: 'Es ist doch damals auch in deiner Umgebung etwas geschehen, wirklich geschehen, du hast die anderen, die dir

33 The exclamation is to be understood as Bonhoeffer's observation or intuition that the hearers are somehow *untouchable* or *unreachable* for the word that is spoken in the sermon. Directly after the exclamation, he continues: 'Aber ich sehe, wie ihr schon jetzt, wie bei einem schlechten Roman zuerst das glückliche Ende der Geschichte lest, um von dem Vorangehenden nicht zu sehr aufgeregt zu werden, um immer sagen zu können, es geht ja noch alles gut ab. "Aber ich habe wider dich, daß du die erste Liebe lässest"'. Bonhoeffer, D., 'Predigt zu Apokalypse 2.4. f. 7', pp 426-427.

oft so ärgerlich sind, dir so viel Mühe machen, einmal geliebt, weil du dabei an Gottes Liebe dachtest'. Remarkably, even a passage like this is closed by citing once again, for the seventh time, 'Ich habe aber wider dich...'

Bonhoeffer applies the same rhetorical strategy when he addresses the church as a *collectivum*. Quoting the verses from Acts 4.32ff, about the unity and faith of the earliest congregation, he asks where this congregation is: 'Wo ist diese Gemeinde, die, weil sie um das eine Wunder Gottes, um den Auferstehung vom Tod zum Leben weiß, alles für möglich hält für den, der glaubt, in der Kraft der Gnade, in der Kraft der Liebe zu Gott, sogar das, daß er nun den anderen liebt, daß er in die Not des anderen herabsteigt und demütig hilft.' Again, this thought is closed with a negative conclusion: 'Aber gewiß, was hilft dies Erinnern an das Vergangene. Es ist verloren.' In the sermon, this is not simply a verdict of the preacher, but an assumed thought of the hearer. Bonhoeffer assumes the hearers think like this, that this 'first love' was something of their childhood years, essentially something illusionary. 'I have come to see that the world is evil, and not all things are possible, that we should make compromises and be modest', that is the way the church talks and thinks, Bonhoeffer assumes and shares in the sermon.

Bonhoeffer responds to this assumed thinking of the hearer, by referring to the experiences of the first Christians and the reformers and their congregations. 'They saw their Lord being crucified', 'they knew a thousand times better than we, that this world is evil'. They even knew something decisively deeper, Bonhoeffer adds, namely the source of this evil: 'The hatred towards God and towards the brother, and the innate human love for oneself'. That is the source of evil, he states. 'But they also heard and saw that God has overcome this hatred, in the centre of this concrete world, through Jesus Christ and his cross and his resurrection'. Again, the preacher appeals to the hearers to remember that faith. 'Sie haben an das Wunder der Liebe Gottes in der Welt geglaubt und haben darum Gott und den Bruder geliebt.' Bonhoeffer applies these thoughts directly to the individual hearer: 'Didn't you also once believe that hatred has been overcome and that love is right?' Then another of these eerie moments occur during the sermon, a strange mixture of proclamation and accusation. Bonhoeffer proclaims that it is *not* an illusion, but that it is true, and that God confirms this truth with his own words, and then, abruptly, the verse from the Apocalypse is quoted again, as an accusation: 'Ich habe wider dich, daß du die erste Liebe – daß du mich – verlässest'. The concept of remembering is essential in these paragraphs. Remembering is the core act in celebrating the Reformation, but it should be a remembering of 'how deep we have fallen'. It is exactly that 'awareness', of how deep the church had fallen, that has driven Luther, Bonhoeffer says: 'Gedenke, wovon du gefallen bist, tu Buße'. With a rhetorically inventive passage, the preacher urges the hearers to be *repentant*. 'Du solltest brennen und du bist kalt, du solltest wachen und du bist träg, du solltest hungern, und du bist satt, du solltest glauben, und du hasst Angst, du solltest hoffen, und du greifst nach der Macht, du solltest lieben, und du

kommst nicht von dir los, du solltest Christus den Herrn sein lassen, und du fällst ihm ins Wort, du solltest in ihm wunder tun, und du tust nicht einmal das Alltäglichsste. 'Gedenke, wovon du gefallen bist, tu Buße.'

It is important to notice that, according to Bonhoeffer, these apodictical and accusatory passages are intended to bring the church back to the only theological and spiritual position possible for her. It is in acknowledging God's accusation, and the correlative attitude of being repentant, the church allows God to be God. 'Die Reformationskirche ist die Kirche derer, die sich diesem Ruf aussetzen, die hier Gott Gott sein lassen, die weiß, daß der, der steht, zusehen mag, daß er nicht falle, daß er sich also seines Stehen nicht rühme. In Gottes Wort allein steht unsere Kirche und in seinem Wort allein sind wir die Gerichteten.' Here we come to the theological core of the sermon. The preacher is exposing the church in her continual strategies of escaping God's Word, God's critique, God's judgment. To face this Word is her real fear, Bonhoeffer assumes. The strategy of the sermon is an attempt to show how the church tries to flee this reality.

According to Bonhoeffer, the opposite of this spiritual attitude is happening in the church of Germany in the early 1930s: The church is trying to preserve herself, feverishly searching for an identity of her own in what she is doing, in how she might still be relevant. As he moves to the fourth clause of the scriptural word, 'do the first works', he discusses what that might mean. The church is busy enough, Bonhoeffer remarks. 'Die Kirche tut unendlich viel, auch mit viel Aufopferung und Ernst; aber wir tun alle eben so viel zweite, dritte und vierte Werke, und sie tut nicht die ersten Werke. Und eben darum tut sie das Entscheidende nicht.' According to Bonhoeffer, all this business lacks an attitude in which 'everything is put at stake for the sake of the love of God'. The proof of such an attitude would be that 'decisive breakthroughs' would happen. But they do not, and we cannot force these breakthroughs, he hastily adds, because only God can do that.

The closing paragraph of the sermon is threatening. Bonhoeffer quotes verse 6, about 'God coming soon, and taking the candle away, when you do not repent'. He returns to the opening lines of the sermon, about the 'dying seconds of the church'. God has had much patience with us for a long time. And we do not know the hour, but 'sie kann im Nu über uns hereinbrechen und alles dahinfegen. Schon regt sich's überall. Gott hat schon die wunderlichsten Werkzeuge in den Dienst seines Zerstörungswerkes genommen. Die Geschichte der Zerstörung Jerusalems durch die Ungläubigen beginnt furchtbar nahe Bedeutung für uns zu bekommen. Wie es kommen mag – wir wollen heute lieber keine großen Worte über unsere Heldentate in einem solchen Zusammenbruch machen – Gott sei der Herr.' There is an apocalyptic intuition in these lines. In the sermon, the threatening future is related to the attitude of the church. This possible *Zusammenbruch* is God's judgment on her lack of penance, Bonhoeffer states. The sermon ends with a question, a specific

consolation and a paraenesis. Bonhoeffer says: 'Der zerstörende Herr, dem wir uns beugen, ist der Herr der Verheißung'. He knows who it is, that has 'ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the congregations'. The question is: 'Werden wir's sein, werden wir überwinden, werden wir glauben können bis ans Ende?' 'The future frightens us', Bonhoeffer concludes, 'but the promise consoles us. Blessed is he whom is called to that consolation.' And when you go home, do not evaluate the *Reformationstag* sermon as 'nice or miserable', but let us go and do soberly the 'first works'. 'Gott helfe uns. Amen'.

3 Analytical remarks

What does exposing destructiva mean in this specific sermon? There are essentially, and at least, two realities that Bonhoeffer wants to expose in this sermon. The first is the religious self-deception of the church. The sermon is an attempt to show the surreal quality of church life in the early 1930s, especially visible, according to Bonhoeffer, on the day when the church 'celebrates herself' on Reformation day. The second reality Bonhoeffer wants to expose is a possible *Zusammenbruch* he sees approaching, a judgement of God as response to this self-deception.

1 The first theme, omnipresent in the sermon, is ecclesiastical self-deception.³⁴ The hearers do not see the contradictions in their lives, do not want to see it. But below the surface of the celebrations, Bonhoeffer claims, there is a reality that is known, but suppressed and drowned. The structure of the sermon is a continuous exposing of all kinds of discrepancies between what the hearers in the church outwardly say, sing, and learn their children and what they inwardly think, feel, and believe. Bonhoeffer says that the hearers know about the contradictions and the danger that may be at hand, but that they are afraid to acknowledge and to confess it. That is what they try to drown in these celebrations. 'Wir wissen ganz gut...' Bonhoeffer says, 'aber wir wollen es nicht wahr haben...' This discrepancy is to such a degree, that Bonhoeffer qualifies the celebrations as a *farce*. Exposing, as homiletical concept, means bringing that hidden reality to the surface, and by portraying the celebrations as grotesque, Bonhoeffer wants to show their inner emptiness. This example shows the conflictuous nature of the concept of exposing

34 Bethge also observed the importance of the motive of ecclesiastical self-deception in Bonhoeffer's Berlin-years. Bethge: In Berlin, Bonhoeffer's preaching 'acquired an urgency vibrant with his own questioning and demanding action. There must be no self-deception, no use of religion as an opiate, he insisted, for 'the living Jesus wishes himself to tell the world from the pulpit that in those in whom he enters, fear vanishes' Bethge, E., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Theologian – Christian – Contemporary*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp 174-175.

destructive.³⁵ There is something in the hearers that resists the acknowledgement of what Bonhoeffer sees as reality.

For Bonhoeffer, on a deeper level, there is a theological dimension at stake in this self-deception. The ecclesiastical self-deception, as Filipi argued, is seen by Bonhoeffer as a *Flucht*.³⁶ On a spiritual level, Bonhoeffer suggests, the church deceives herself in order to escape something. In the fundamental crisis of the nation and the church, Bonhoeffer presumes God's judgement approaching, but the church refuses that insight by fleeing into an idealised religious self-image. What Bonhoeffer tries to expose is how, through this attitude, the church avoids God. The oppugnant tone can be understood because of the high theological stakes of this self-deception, according to Bonhoeffer. In essence, he claims that this self-deception causes the church to lose contact with the theological fundamentals of her own tradition, with the signs of an abiding disaster, and, ultimately, that it causes the church to lose contact with God. Borrowing a term from Brueggemann, we may say that exposing in this sermon intends to 'shatter' something. It tries to 'shatter' an idealised and inaccurate way of seeing the church, society, the future, and God. By 'shattering' that perception, the preacher tries to make the hearers see another reality. Here, exposing essentially is a *Streit um Wirklichkeit*, a dispute about which perceptions of reality and of God are true and which of them are deceptive.

We selected this sermon, because it shows how exposing is often a grim act. We already cited Flannery O'Connor, who said that 'to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures' (1.2.4), and in a similar way, Bonhoeffer is 'shouting' in this sermon and 'drawing large and startling figures'. We see the aggressiveness in his use of satire. Comparing the church celebrations with a 'fanfare at a funeral' and comparing the celebrants with

35 Brueggemann has written about this conflictuous nature in the Hebrew classical prophets. 'Prophets shock hearers in their conventional perceptions of reality', he writes, and he proposes the terms 'shattering old worlds' and 'evoking or forming new worlds': 'We have said that Jeremiah's call is to *shatter* old words (bring them to an end) and to *form* and evoke new worlds (cause them to be). The shattering and forming of worlds is not done as a potter molds clay or as a factory makes products. It is done as a poet redescribes the world, reconfigures public perception, and causes people to reexperience their experience. To do that requires that speech must not be conventional, reasonable, predictable; it must shock sensitivity, call attention to what is not noticed, break the routine, cause people to redescribe things that have long since seemed settled, bear surpluses of power before routine assessments.' Brueggemann, W., *Like Fire in the Bones. Listening for the Prophetic Word in Jeremiah*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2006), p 7.

36 'In aller polemischen Schärfe lehnt Bonhoeffer jeden Versuch ab, die Krise mit Hilfe der christlichen Botschaft – oder gar der christlichen Weltanschauung – zu verharmlosen und auf diese Weise dem Menschen ein Flucht vor dem Zorn und Gericht Gottes zu ermöglichen. Diese Versuche hält er für typisch religiös. "Nicht das ist Ungehorsam, daß wir so wenig religiös sind, sondern daß wir eigentlich so gerne religiös waren.... Je frommer wir sind, um so weniger lassen wir uns sagen daß Gott gefährlich ist". Die große Gefahr der Predigt sieht Bonhoeffer darin, daß sie zu einer Art Existenz-erklärung werden will, die den Menschen einer Gottesgeborgenheit versichert, ohne ihn mit Christus sterben zu lassen.' Filipi, Pavel, 'Gott ist gefährlich'. Dietrich Bonhoeffer als Prediger'. In: Schönherr, A. (Hrsg.) *Bonhoeffer-Studien. Beiträge zur Theologie und Wirkungsgeschichte Dietrich Bonhoeffers*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1985), p 158.

‘frightened children making noise in the dark’ is provocative and satirical. The satire Bonhoeffer uses, is, in our analysis, a device in the dispute about what is real. More specific, it is an exposing of what is unreal, according to the satirist. Bonhoeffer’s satire makes the present celebrations a parody. Thomas Jemielity, in his monograph on the use of satire by the Hebrew prophets, pointed to the parasitic function of satire.³⁷ The satirist intends to weaken or shatter something, something that in his opinion is surrogate, deceptive or unreal. He called satire a grim ‘attack of laughter’, an attack aimed at something or someone that is powerful, greedy, dangerous, or stupid.³⁸ By making a parody of the ecclesiastical optimism of the early 1930s, Bonhoeffer tries to expose and subvert the self-deceptive power he sees operative in the church.

2 Secondly, the aggressiveness is also reflected in the *Kampf-metaphorik* in the sermon.³⁹ Bonhoeffer speaks of ‘der Hand des Todes’ under which the church shivers, about Reformation day as ‘der stärkste Feldzug Gottes gegen uns’, he wishes for the capacity to speak in such a way ‘daß es uns wirklich weh tut’, and in the closing paragraph, he refers to the ‘zerstörende Gott’. Rhetorically and theologically, these are aggressive utterings, intended to shock the hearers out of their routine perceptions, opening a window on a reality Bonhoeffer sees approaching. The exposing of destructiva in this sermon also has an anticipatory dimension. It can be said that the *unterirdisches Beben* of the early 1930s, is present in this sermon.⁴⁰ Prophets anticipate on judgement ‘wie die Sturmvögel dem heraufkommenden Unwetter’, as Hans-Joachim Kraus defined.⁴¹ Something

37 Jemielity, T., *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), p 60. Interestingly enough, Jemielity sees both satire and prophecy as hard to define, as ‘generically indefinite’, because of their communal ‘parasitic function’ (p 15).

38 ‘Satire is a literary discourse uniquely concerned with power and with directing that power against the “foolish, corrupt, greedy, stupid and dangerous”, the recurring targets of prophetic power’. Jemielity, T., *Ibid.* p 42.

39 According to Wendel’s analysis, Bonhoeffer has a small number of ‘beliebte Metaphern’, that can be discerned in all his sermons, one of them being ‘Kampf’: ‘Besonders seit Beginn der Berliner Zeit 1931-1933 rückt die Kampf-Metaphorik mehr und mehr in den Vordergrund’. The concept of a ‘Kampf’ is also traceable in his understanding of preaching (‘ein Kampf mit Dämonen’, ‘Arbeit in der Verkündigung ist Kriegsdienst’), of discipleship, of the struggle with sin and with the ‘powers that be’. Wendel, E.G., *Studien zur Homiletik Dietrich Bonhoeffers. Predigt – Hermeneutik – Sprache*. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1985), p 220-223.

40 ‘Intuitiv nimmt Bonhoeffer das unterirdische Beben wahr, das den Zusammenbruch seiner Welt ankündigt, der Kultur, in der er selbst erzogen wurde. Ausdrücke wie ‘Krise’, ‘Abgrund’, ‘Bodenlosigkeit’, ‘Chaos’, häufen sich in den Predigten dieser Jahre, und ihr Emotionspotential ersetzt das logische Argument. Auch die Moderne Kunst mit ihren Dissonanzen und ihrer Exzentrizität wird zum Zeugen gerufen. Aber das primäre Interesse des jungen Predigers gilt nicht die welt- oder kulturgeschichtlichen Lage. Er analysiert sie auch gar nicht, erregt konstatiert er sie einfach, sich auf die Erfahrungen seiner unsicher gewordenen Hörer berufend. Er will in die situation des 20. Jahrhundert hinein das Wort Gottes predigen, das die Tragik der Moderne erst in ihrer ganzen Tiefe offenbart: es handelt sich um das Gericht Gottes.’ Filipi, P., ‘Gott ist gefährlich’. Dietrich Bonhoeffer als Prediger’, pp 157-158.

41 Kraus, H.-J., *Prophetie heute! Die Aktualität biblischer Prophetie in der Verkündigung der Kirche*. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1986), p 14.

of the extremely destructive decade, in 1932 yet to come, is already forefelt in this sermon.⁴²

In the next paragraph, we discuss the way destructiva are concealed for the hearers. In a sermon, Tutu addressed the prostitution of language, through which the destructivum of apartheid is obscured. Bonhoeffer and Tutu speak about a similar reality, about ‘not-seeing things’, about self-deception and about the deceptive role language can have. In the next paragraph, we focus on this dubious role of language.

3.2.b Sermon illustrating ‘Deconstructing the concealments of destructiva’ Desmond Tutu, sermon after a banned rally (Cape Town, 1988)

1 Introduction of the sermon

Desmond Tutu became a public figure by a widely publicised open letter to prime minister Vorster, six weeks before the Soweto uprising in 1976. Tutu warned, wrote about his ‘growing nightmarish fear’ of ‘bloody confrontation’ if apartheid was not abandoned.⁴³ ‘A people made desperate by despair, injustice, and oppression will use desperate means. I am frightened, dreadfully frightened, that we may soon reach a point of no return, when events will generate a momentum of their own, when nothing will stop their reaching a bloody dénouement which is “too ghastly to contemplate”, to quote your words, Sir.’⁴⁴

In 1988, the year the sermon ‘You will bite the Dust’ was held, the situation in South Africa had deteriorated. The successor of Vorster, prime minister P.W. Botha, had designed a ‘complex attempt to adapt to changing circumstances without sacrificing Afrikaner power.’⁴⁵ Due to national and international pressure, there were limited, almost cosmetic, changes in the political power structures, but especially in areas like education, labour rights, health and welfare services, housing and forced migration, apartheid remained a disruptive, humiliating reality for black and coloured South Africans. In the 1980s, the country entered a decade of growing and gruesome violence, and in 1986, the state of emergency was being declared and annually renewed: ‘The emergency regulations gave every police officer broad powers of arrest, detention, and interrogation without

42 Both Filipi and Wendel have called the preaching of Bonhoeffer in these Berlin-years ‘Gerichtsverkündigung’. See Filipi, P., *Ibid.* p 158, and: Wendel, E.G., *Ibid.* p 38.

43 See J. Allen in: Tutu, Desmond, *God is not a Christian. Speaking Truth in Times of Crisis.* (London: Rider Books 2013), pp 141-142.

44 Tutu, D., ‘A growing nightmarish fear. An open letter to Prime Minister B. J. Vorster’, in: Allen, John (ed.), *Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Rainbow People of God.* (London: Doubleday 1994), p 11.

45 Thompson, L., *A History of South Africa (Fourth Edition. Revised and updated by Lynn Berat).* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), p 224.

a warrant; they empowered the police commissioner to ban any meeting; and they prohibited all coverage of unrest by television and radio reporters and severely curtailed newspaper coverage. The government had resorted to legalised tyranny⁴⁶

These backgrounds are important to understand the sermon we analyse here. Because of the exile and detention of many anti-apartheid leaders, the banning of all kinds of political and societal organisations and the severe censorship on free speech and free press, the 'church and its clergy were thrust into the fore of the struggle against apartheid'.⁴⁷ The pulpit as *locus* of free speech, the liturgies and sermons held at funerals, the non-violent demonstrations organised by clergy, they all became a power to be dealt with by the government. This also meant that a growing conflict between church and state was constantly on the brink of escalation, that is: a conflict with the churches that criticised apartheid. As in Germany, during the 'church struggle', the church in South Africa was divided. In February 1988, a month before this sermon, the government issued new restrictions on funerals: it forbade hymns, songs, and sermons at funerals, and limited its attendance to those who held tickets issued by the police. Other regulations prohibited public participation in any campaign calling for the release of detainees, and the decrees made it de facto illegal for churches to hold special services for the release of people held without trial.⁴⁸

This growing conflict between church and state is traceable in Tutu's sermon. It may even be its central theme. In the sermon, Tutu refers to a specific incident of harassment of church workers.⁴⁹ While in February a demonstration of several hundreds of armed members of the *Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging* was condoned,⁵⁰ a demonstration by clergy in the same year was broken up. The demonstration was 'a protest against a decree of the government to outlaw the operations of seventeen anti-apartheid organisations and to restrict trade unions in their political activities. Part of the decree was also the restricting of eighteen leaders, including a former president of the Methodist Church'.⁵¹ John Allen reported about the demonstration: 'Church leaders decided to protest by converging on Cape Town on February 19 by marching to the Parliament buildings in defiance

46 Thompson, L., *Ibid.* p 235.

47 Thompson, L. *Ibid.* p 239.

48 Walshe, P., 'Christianity and the Anti-apartheid Struggle: The Prophetic Voice within divided Churches', in: Elphick, R. and Davenport, R., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997), p 394.

49 Borer, T.A., 'Church Leadership, State Repression and the 'Spiral of Involvement' in the South African Anti-apartheid Movement', in: Smith C. (ed), *Disruptive Religion. The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism*. (New York: Routledge 1996), p 137.

50 Thompson, L., *Ibid.* p 238.

51 See John Allen's introduction to the sermon 'You will bite the Dust', in: Allen, J. (ed.), *Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Rainbow People of God*. (London: Doubleday 1994), pp 135-136.

of the law. As the marchers, numbering about 150, left St George's Cathedral in rows with arms linked, they encountered a contingent of police who ordered them to disperse. When they knelt on the pavement and began to sing, police moved in to arrest the leaders and take them to waiting vehicles. (...) James Robbins, BBC-correspondent in South Africa, reported: "South Africa entered a new era of protest today. The church has unmistakably taken over the front line of anti-apartheid protest."⁵² On March 13, Tutu and his colleagues organised another protest rally at the University of Western Cape, but the rally was banned. Tutu, Boesak and Naidoo responded by organising an interfaith service in St George's Cathedral to replace the banned rally. The sermon Tutu held on that occasion, is discussed here.

Tutu's sermon can be seen as *Kasualpredigt* of a particular kind. As the *Friedensgebete* in the former DDR or the impromptu prayer gatherings in bombed and burned churches during the civil rights struggle in America, in a similar way Tutu and others organised an interfaith service in St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, the 'people's church' as it was called.

2 Summary of the sermon

The opening of Tutu's sermon is a reflection on the meaning and the aim of the gathering: 'We are gathered today to pray for our country facing a deepening crisis, to reflect on what is taking place and our role as believers – as Christians, as Muslims, as Jews, whatever.' The service, and the sermon, originate in the praxis, and the concrete praxis permeates the sermon. Besides prayer and reflection, a third motive is named, namely to oppose evil: 'In the enveloping darkness, as the lights of freedom are extinguished one by one, despite all the evidence to the contrary, we have come here to say that evil and injustice and oppression and exploitation – embodied in the very essence, the very nature of apartheid – cannot prevail.' Exposing destructiva in this sermon means explicating how injustice and oppression are present in the core of the apartheid system. For Tutu, the proprium of a religious gathering is giving spiritual qualifications to what is happening (further 5.3 'Theologically qualifying the present'), as well as in deepening spiritual resistance against those damaging power structures. In the opening paragraph, he quotes a verse from the Gospel of John to make this point: 'In the Bible we are told to speak of spiritual things. St John says, "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness did not overwhelm the light". We come to sustain our hope that this is so.' The liturgy and the sermon function as a form of resistance. Tutu stresses that the goal of this gathering is to speak about 'spiritual things'. Though Tutu does not feel restrained to address political and economic injustices, he also tries to name the spiritual reality this system is embodying.

52 'Introduction', in: Tutu, D., "You will bite the dust!" Extracts from a sermon held at a service held to replace a banned rally', in: Allen, J. (ed.), *Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Rainbow People of God.*, pp 135-136.

Directly after this opening, this spiritual background of the conflict is translated in a ferocious confrontation with 'the rulers of this country': 'We must say to our rulers, especially unjust rulers such as those in this land, "You may be powerful, indeed, very powerful. But you are not God. You are ordinary mortals! God – the God whom we worship can't be mocked. You have already lost! You have already lost. Let us say it nicely: You have already lost, we are inviting you to come and join the winning side. Come! Come and join the winning side. Your cause is unjust. You are defending what is fundamentally indefensible, because it is evil. It is evil without question. It is unchristian. Therefore, you will bite the dust! And you will bite the dust comprehensively!"

This is one of the most confrontational passages in our research. The sentences are short, there is repetition in the words, the acceleration in the sentences underlines the indignant pathos of the incident. The result is a cumulation of aggression. The confrontation is rooted in the charge of totalitarianism, that, according to Tutu, is operative in this system, and he qualifies it as blasphemous. That is a spiritual and theological qualification. This regime is blasphemous. According to Tutu, the system makes false claims on human beings, acting as if they own them, as if they can label them and do with them whatever they decide. But, 'you are not God', and 'you cannot mock God like that'. Tutu theologises from the conviction that 'this is God's world', and that human beings are 'God's children', and because of that, he is convinced that this concrete evil will not prevail. A form of *prophetic perfectum* even emerges in the sentences: 'You have already lost'. The apartheid system may have been in a crisis in 1988, but the fall of the system was not visible. Yet, Tutu proclaims, it 'has already lost'. In the sermon, a proclaimed future is already present in words. The sermon is filled not only with threats and warnings, it also contains a summons to conversion, 'to join the winning side'. We develop this interruptive dimension in the second concept we generated: Interrupting a dominant discourse (4.1). We develop the cathartic dimension of a victory not yet visible, but already experienced in sermon and in liturgy, in our fourth concept: Overcoming destructiva (6.1).

In this chapter, we focus on the first concept, namely exposing destructiva, and especially on the property of deconstructing the concealments of destructiva. Directly after the confrontational passage, Tutu continues: 'Now in this land we have prostituted language, making words mean something other than their original meaning ...' Tutu tries to show that the destructive essence of apartheid is concealed in the way language is used. 'Things are called by the wrong name.' In the language of public discourse, especially in governmental vocabulary, these destructiva are obscured. Tutu tries to make his hearers aware of this, showing and deconstructing the ingenious ways by which people and public perception are deceived. He calls this deceptive language the prostitution of language. To make this point, Tutu gives the example of the conditional reflexes of Pavlov's dog: Initially, the dog was shown meat, a bell was rung and the dog salivated. Finally, the meat was taken away, the bell

still rang and the dog still salivated. The dog was conditioned to have specific reflexes, though the reality behind it, the meat, was already long gone. In a similar way, Tutu argues, the public sphere in this country is conditioned: Words are used that pretend to cover a specific reality, while the reality to which the words refer, is already gone. The words deceive.

A concrete example of this prostitution of language, according to Tutu, is the official reason that was given to ban the rally, namely for the sake of 'public safety'. What follows is a satirical comment on deceptive language: 'Now, in this country we have what are called conditional reflexes. When the Government uses certain words, they know that many people will react in the kind of way that they have conditioned people to react. So, they say "public safety". Do you know what "public safety" means? Public safety means you can walk safely in public. The police exist to ensure that you can walk. Ha, ha! What happens in this country? People say: "We want to protest peacefully against pass laws." The police ought to be around to see that those people have "public safety". But what do the police do? They shoot people protesting peacefully! The laughter of the preacher is taken up in the script of the sermon. Tutu's point is that false language conditions people to such a degree that they think this language reflects reality, and thus confuse the deceptive for the real. Deconstructing the deceptive aims to reclaim reality.

Between the satirical moments in the sermon, Tutu also adopts the role of a teacher of morality. Tutu acknowledges the importance of laws for a society, laws having the intention to prevent chaos and anarchy. But there are restrictions, Tutu explains. 'Rulers cannot be arbitrary in the exercise of their power. For their power is not absolute! And, as a second restriction, 'the law must embody morality'. Breaking the law is illegal, but when the law is fundamentally immoral, obeying the law may be immoral too. Referring to the disruptive policies of that moment, concerning labour, housing, migration and the pass laws, Tutu sarcastically comments: 'South Africa is the only country in which it is a crime for a woman to sleep with her husband if her husband happens to be a migrant worker and she has not received permission to be where he is'. Paragraphs full of angry pathos are followed by a paragraph with a more didactic character, in which the logic and the legitimacy of protest is explained.

In the flow of the sermon, the didactic tone turns again to rage and satire, still related to the theme of justice and prostituted language: 'Justice is blindfolded because justice must be even-handed. Ha, ha! Even-handed.' In the sermon, Tutu gives the example of how prejudiced *Justitia* in South Africa is. A demonstration of Afrikaners in Pretoria, offering a petition to plead for a 'traditional Boer state without blacks', is allowed, whereas the demonstration Tutu and others had organised was broken up and forbidden. 'The conservative Afrikaners walk in uniforms. And they look like Nazis. They've got a thing on their uniforms that looks like a swastika. And they shout anti-

black slogans. They march against you. They march to the Union Buildings, and when they get there, do you think they get water-cannoned? I don't. The policemen there shake hands with them. The only things we had in our hands were our Bibles (You know, this government is not quite as stupid as we think. We know how explosive the Bible is). Didn't we say long ago that apartheid is as evil as Nazism? We said that long ago. And they said, "That Tutu character and all those others, they like to exaggerate. They are melodramatic". Now you see that they can take action against people who are dressed like priests! We had nothing. We just linked our hands and we tried to pray. In fact, at the police station we said: "We would like to pray". A policeman replied: "This is a police station. You don't pray here!"

This fragment is about visibility. A racist demonstration is condoned and friendly received, as Tutu frames the incident, and a non-violent, religious march to question new tightened emergency regulations, is water-cannoned and all the participants arrested. It is interesting to consider the optical and iconic force of these images in the act of preaching (3.4: 'epitomising destructiva'). Here, we stress the importance of making hidden things visible: in this passage Tutu tries to communicate in a satirical way a spiritual truth, and this communication serves the deconstruction of deception.

The third linguistic deconstruction Tutu gives, is the word 'revolution'. Tutu redefines the word as 'radical change', and he interprets it as struggling for a South Africa where people with all kinds of backgrounds can live together. The recurring logic and goal in the sermon is the reclaiming of language. Tutu reclaims words by defining what they mean for him, and thus he tries to give back the words their proper strength and dignity. It is exactly in this theme of the 'defining power of language' another clash occurs. It is related to the core theme of the sermon: Who has 'defining power' over human beings, over the organisation of society and human lives, over words and language? The clash is about Tutu's observation that the government even wants to use this 'defining power' over the church, and over Tutu as a minister in the church:

'I am willing to say to Mr Adriaan Vlok [Minister of Law and Order] that I am going to continue saying the things that I have said and am saying today. Mr Vlok, you have got all the laws that you can use if you want to use them. But I am not going to be told by you what the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ must be. If preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ is going to lead me into any kind of trouble with you and your sort, tough luck! Tough luck...! Tutu sees the totalitarianism of apartheid even entering the atmosphere of the church, trying to dominate the church in defining what she should say that the Gospel is. In exposing these conflicting parties and interests, Tutu turns to the confessional modus: 'I finish, my friends, by saying: if they want to take on the Church of God, I warn them. Read a little bit of history and see what happened to those who tried to take on the Church of God. Don't read all history. Just read your own history. I just warn them that even if they were to remove this,

that, or the other person, the Church of God will stay. Our Lord and Saviour said, "Even the gates of hell will not prevail against the church of God." Tutu speaks remarkably robust about the church: She is a locus of resistance that even the gates of hell cannot overcome, and she is trans-individual to such a degree that even the enjoinment or assassination of leaders will not stop her resistance and her victory.

In the final paragraph, Tutu turns to an unexpected lyrical style, a form close to chanting. There is aggression in the sermon: in satire, confrontation and warning, there is logic/wisdom in the sermon: in teaching morality, guarding humanity, and reclaiming language, but the sermon ends with the style of a religious chant: 'And so we say: Freedom is coming! Freedom is coming, because that is God's will for us. Freedom is coming, because God did not make us doormats on which people can wipe their dirty boots. Freedom is coming, because God has created us for freedom. Freedom is coming. And we can all walk hand in hand, black and white together, proudly, holding our heads high in a new South Africa. A South Africa where people count because they are created in the image of God. A free South Africa where all of God's people will share equally the good things that God has given us! We develop this cathartic dimension in our fourth concept: Overcoming (6.1), but here we focus on exposing. In many sermons, the exposure of destructiva and the deconstruction of its concealments tilts over to the exposure of the salutary contrast of the destructive. In this incident, the sermon turns over to a melodious song about inclusive freedom.

3 Analytical remarks

The term that triggered us in the initial line-by-line coding of this sermon, is the term 'prostitution of language'. With this term, Tutu means that hearers, in their emotions and judgements, are conditioned, directed in their perception, that something is made obscure by this false language. There is a language operative in public discourse that obscures the suffering of people, the injustices of a system and the damaging power of apartheid, Tutu claims. When language is prostituted, it is perverted in becoming ancillary to these destructiva. Deconstructing the concealments of destructiva means: exposing this mechanism, with the aim to make the camouflaged destructiva, visible again. In our analysis of this sermon, we focus on language, on its power and its weakness, a theme that we encountered in several sermons. We discuss three observations, namely 1 the reason to mistrust words, 2 the contrast between living speech and dead language and 3 the emergence and function of *non-negotiable experiences of suffering* by which the truth of language is measured.

1 Dissidents living in totalitarian contexts have often stressed the Janus-faced dimension of language. 'Words create worlds', Heschel wrote, and words can be

salutary for human living, but they can also suffocate human living.⁵³ Václav Havel reflected on the same ambivalent character of language. On the one hand, he wrote, words can have a mysterious power, they can intervene in dangerous developments of a society or even in the course of history and this power of words is paradoxically acknowledged by the censorships of dictatorial authorities.⁵⁴ But he wrote simultaneously about the essential ambivalence of the word and about the weakness of the word, susceptible as it is to all kinds of misuse. Havel called it the ‘schwarze Magie des Wortes’: Words can deceive, have fanatical, hypnotising and destructive effects.⁵⁵ Because of this treacherous ambivalence, he pleaded for a principal mistrust of words, for a sensitivity to the dark potential that might be slumbering in certain words, and thus he pleaded for preciseness and a fastidious use of words, because, ‘alles wichtige Geschehen der realen Welt – das Schöne und das Scheuliche – hat nämlich immer sein Vorspiel in der Sphäre der Worte.’⁵⁶ Tutu’s sermon *You will bite the dust* is an example of this propagation of a mistrust to certain words. Tutu gave concrete examples why certain governmental terms, like ‘public safety’, ‘maintaining the public order’ or ‘separate development’, must be mistrusted. In examples like these, language turns out to be the ‘articulation of a life world.’⁵⁷ It is Tutu’s aim in this sermon to expose the mentality and the life world that is operative in the dominant public discourses of his context. Words, in this case, do not expose these destructiva, but facilitate them. Tutu’s critique of language is a deconstruction of this linguistic facilitation of the destructive.⁵⁸

2 Seen from another angle, the apartheid vocabulary is not only deceptive language, but also ‘dead language’. In a discourse on propaganda and the commercialisation of language, James Boyd White wrote about ‘dead language’, characterising it as language filled with ‘slogans and sentimentalities, falsities and denials, trivialisations, and dehumanisations.’⁵⁹ No longer does the relationship of the words to what they refer to in reality count, but it is the agenda of certain

53 Heschel, A.J., *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity. Essays edited by Susannah Heschel.* (New York: Farrer, Strauss and Giroux 1996), Introduction p viii-ix.

54 Havel, V., *Ein Wort über das Wort. (Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels 1989. Laudatio by André Glucksmann).* (Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels 1989). See also Zantovsky, M., *Václav Havel. A Life.* (Antwerpen: Bezige Bij 2014), p 239.

55 ‘Neben dem Wort, das die Gesellschaft durch seine Freiheit und Wahrhaftigkeit elektrisiert, gibt es auch das hypnotisierende, trügerische, fanatisierende, rasende, betrügende, gefährliche, todbringende Wort. Das Wort – ein Pfeil. Ich glaube, daß ich gerade Ihnen (Havel writes for a German audience, CMAE) nicht ausführlich die schwarze Magie des Wortes erläutern muß, weil Sie am eigenen Leib vor verhältnismäßig kurzer Zeit erlebt haben, zu welchen unaussprechlichen geschichtlichen Schrecken unter einer bestimmten politischen und sozialen Konstellation das hypnotisch-verzaubernde und zugleich unwirklichwahn sinnige Wort eines durchschnittlichen Kleinbürgers führen kann.’ Havel, V., *Ein Wort über das Wort*, pp 18-19.

56 Havel, V., *Ibid.* p 21.

57 Fishbane, M., *Sacred Attunement. A Jewish Theology.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2008), p 10.

58 See for a recent elaboration of this danger of language, applied to homiletics, Rijst, R. van der, *De uitzaaiing van het Woord. Homiletiek in het spoor van Derrida.* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic 2015), pp 57-89.

59 White, J.B., *Living Speech. Resisting the Empire of Force.* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2006), pp 26-49.

powers and interests that dominates this language. In this agenda-filled speech, a manipulation of instincts is going on: A public atmosphere is manipulated in its primal fears, its fear for disorder, anarchy, the loss of wealth, the fear for the 'stranger' or the 'other'. Manipulative language, in White's understanding, uses and feeds these primal fears. In the use of this language, he observed the 'death of the subject', as he called it. Propaganda and slogans intend to mould the users of language to such a degree, that they no longer test the language to their own experiences and feelings, to what they themselves see and hear in their context. The persons who adopt this language are themselves *absent*, have no 'voice of their own', they just repeat and reiterate the slogans and propaganda they are conditioned to. According to White, unjust totalitarian systems do not only rule by means of military, economic and juridical power, but also by means of inhabiting the mind of people by the language they use, and thus they manipulate the perception of reality.⁶⁰ That is an important warning in the prophetic moment: Whose language are you using?, and thus: Whose mind, whose worldview, whose rationality?

White contrasted 'dead language' with 'living speech'. The function of slogans and propaganda is to 'suppress independent thought and judgement'.⁶¹ He contrasted this language with 'living speech', speech that is principally *dialogical*, 'facilitating the engagement of one mind with another',⁶² *independent*, as it is the result of the working of the individual mind and imagination,⁶³ *experiential*, the fruit of personal interpretation of own experiences.⁶⁴ Living speech is original and independent language aimed at dialogue and truth. We might say: The sermon is potentially a specimen of this living speech. It is meant as speech originating in an honest and independent conversation with the context, Scripture, tradition, and one's biography. It is speech aimed at dialogue, at the *vivificatio* of the subject, aimed at a communal truthful perception of reality, especially honouring the experiences of those who suffer. Intrinsic to this kind of speech is the possible clash with all kinds of false speech. In Tutu's case, false speech is speech that trivialises, legitimises, or denies the suffering of the weak and thus facilitates the continuation of injustice.

60 White, J.B., *Ibid.* p 67.

61 White, J.B., *Ibid.* p 38.

62 White, J.B., *Ibid.* p 9.

63 White, J.B., *Ibid.* p 16.

64 White, J.B., *Ibid.* p 89.

3 We selected Tutu's sermon to discuss here, because in it false and dead language is exposed.⁶⁵ Van der Ven did not merely stress the inductive character of Tutu's sermons,⁶⁶ (meaning that his preaching happens in close contact with the suffering of people), but he also wrote about the non-negotiable, negative experiences that play a foundational role in Tutu's theology and preaching. Tutu was 'truly open to the negative experiences he and his people are going through', and these experiences are 'non-negotiable', they function as a basic point of departure for theology, exegesis, preaching, societal commitment and action.⁶⁷ They are, to use a term from Brueggemann, examples of a reality that is 'irreducible', a reality that has a 'holy ultimacy'.⁶⁸ It is exactly from this ultimate perspective, of the suffering of black people under apartheid, Tutu tested and judged the language in public and ecclesiastical discourse, and when this suffering was denied or legitimised, he exposed the language as deceptive and deconstructed it as being false. It is our observation that this is a generic factor in prophetic speech: This speech stems from specific moments of 'non-negotiable, negative experiences'.

Interestingly, according to Van der Ven, this inductive character of his preaching 'does not mean Tutu does not start off with a biblical theme'. In one way or the other, 'his biblical images seem to stem from the concrete circumstances of time and place, from the here and the now'.⁶⁹ The same truth that is known from praxis and from the concrete suffering of people is recognised in Scripture, and vice versa: through the biblical traditions, the suffering is recognised in reality. These biblical traditions help to 'recognise evil'.⁷⁰ Van der Ven, like Lischer, called this moment of recognising evil a 'mercy'. In specific moments of *Geistesgegenwart*, the truth of scriptural texts and concrete societal realities coalesce, the one illuminating the other (further chapter 5: Recognising the Word).

In Bonhoeffer's *Reformationstag* sermon (3.1.b), as well as in Tutu's sermon after the banned rally (3.2.b), we see how preachers, in exposing destructiva, enter a

65 In their empirical analysis of Tutu's sermons, Pieterse, Scheepers and Wester selected 'exposing the contemporary political reality' as one of the crucial themes in Tutu's preaching. This *exposing* conveys several aspects: 1 Exposing the political nature of the system, 2 Exposing the effects of governmental policies on society as a whole and 3 Exposing the practical consequences of the system and the policies in the suffering of black South Africans. See Pieterse, J.C., Scheepers, P. and Wester, F., 'Structure of Thought', in: Pieterse, J.C. (ed.), *Desmond Tutu's Message. A Qualitative Analysis*. (Leiden: Brill 2001). pp 40-42.

66 Van der Ven, J.A., 'The Moral and Religious Self as a Process', in: Pieterse, J.C. (ed.), *Desmond Tutu's Message. A Qualitative Analysis*. (Leiden: Brill 2001). p 76.

67 Van der Ven, J. A., Ibid. p 77.

68 Brueggemann, Walter, *Reality, Grief, Hope. Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2014), p 37.

69 Van der Ven, J. A., Ibid. p 77.

70 'The biblical and christian traditions form a kind of incentive to have a clear picture of the massive immorality that is spreading among his people. These traditions recognise the evil that people can do to each other interpersonally and structurally. They provide images, symbols and terms to observe, point out and define evil and guilt. They prevent one from skipping the structural lie of any kind of regime.' Van der Ven, J.A., Ibid. p 77.

zone of conflict. In these instances, we feel the pressure brought on preachers. Vocation can indeed be an ‘agony’ (King). In the next paragraph, we show how the theme of ‘calling as a burden’ functions in a sermon from King.

3.3.b Sermon illustrating ‘Being called to expose’ Martin Luther King Jr., sermon on the Vietnam War (Atlanta, 1967)

1 Introduction of the sermon

The theological motive of calling is recurringly present in our data, and often in a troubled way. To speak of inconvenient truths, to call into question all kinds of strategies of denial and trivialisation is a burden. In the sermon discussed in this paragraph, Martin Luther King speaks of a ‘vocation of agony’, and what he meant by the term is recognisable in the other sermons of our study. First, we introduce and summarise the sermon.

The ‘Vietnam sermon’, held at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, is dominated by the theme of breaking silences.⁷¹ The sermon has a complex trajectory of several preparatory phases. Michael Eric Dyson has written that it took King two years to condemn the war in public, but that during these years, King’s pacifist views became ‘progressively more militant.’⁷² He interprets King’s public opposition to the war in Vietnam as ‘a dramatic, but heartfelt gesture of moral independence.’⁷³ King’s public criticism of the war cost him sympathy and friends, ecclesiastical support and political influence.⁷⁴ The pressure on King *not* to oppose this war, and to remain silent on the subject, was huge. His most vital political ally for the cause of the civil rights movement, president Lyndon Johnson, was deeply offended by King’s anti-war stance. The two became alienated because of it. In retrospect, King’s moral opposition to the war in Vietnam has been interpreted as a kind of political suicide.⁷⁵ Also within the Afro-American community, there was a reservation to King’s growing urge to oppose this war.⁷⁶ A moral compromise or an enduring

71 We use the transcript of the sermon of Gary Handman, taken from the UC Berkeley Media Resources Center, 2006.

72 Dyson, M.E., ‘As I Ponder the Madness of Vietnam’: The Outlines of a Militant Pacifism’, in: *I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (New York: Touchstone 2000), p 52.

73 Dyson, M.E., *Ibid.* p 52.

74 Hansen quotes a poll in May 1967, in which 73 percent of all Americans and 48 percent of black respondents disagreed with King’s opposition to the war, and 60 percent of all Americans believed that King’s stance on Vietnam would hurt the civil rights movement. See Hansen, D.D., *The Dream: Martin Luther King Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers 2003), p 268.

75 Miller, K.D., *Martin Luther King’s Biblical Epic. His Final, Great Speech.* (University of Mississippi Press, Jackson 2012), p 14; Hodgson, G., *Martin Luther King*, (London: Quercus 2009), p 189

76 Many in this community were ‘extremely loyal to Johnson because of his profound commitment to civil rights, a commitment that in action and scope far exceeded the achievements of his predecessor, John F. Kennedy. It made little sense to many of these ministers to antagonise the man who had arguably done more for black folk, than any other president since Abraham Lincoln.’ Dyson, M.E., *Ibid.* p 55.

silence on the subject seemed more opportunistic. Because of the harsh attacks by black leaders, white politicians and the national press, King initially chose to be hesitant in public about the subject.⁷⁷ In the sermon we analyse, he called this withdrawal on the subject, in retrospect ‘the betrayal of my own silences’.

In the first months of 1967, King began to speak and to preach on the subject.⁷⁸ He gave his first speech devoted exclusively to the subject of Vietnam, entitled ‘Casualties of the War in Vietnam’, at a conference sponsored by the *Nation Magazine*, on February 25, 1967.⁷⁹ At a lecture in New York, at Riverside church (4 April 1967), he spoke again on the subject, in his lecture ‘A Time to Break Silence’. Hodgson commented: ‘The Riverside speech was among King’s most carefully wrought and emotionally powerful. It was also one of the worst received.’⁸⁰ Three weeks later, King made his case again in a sermon at Ebenezer in Atlanta. In this sermon, he was reusing material from the Riverside speech, and this is the sermon we analyse. According to Hodgson ‘the Ebenezer sermon was less political, but just as intransigent as the lecture at Riverside.’⁸¹

It took a full measure of moral guts and theological independence to deliver these speeches and sermons. On the other hand, it is a myth, as Dyson has underlined, to portray King as a ‘lone voice crying in the wilderness’. King was one of the most prominent black voices demanding an end to this war, but certainly not the only one. Alongside the urge of his own conscience, there was moral and political pressure from key black colleagues to speak out. An important source for King himself, was the strong anti-war sentiment in poor black communities. We show how in the sermon this voice of suffering, explicitly heard by King in the experiences of disillusioned youth in the ghettos, was a major impetus for him to deliver this sermon.⁸² King’s sermon is a homiletical expression on a national forum of a sentiment that was virulently present on the ghetto grassroot-level.

77 Dyson, M.E., *Ibid.* p 57.

78 Hodgson writes that during a holiday in Jamaica, in January 1967, King’s conscience was triggered by an article on ‘The children of Vietnam’, illustrated by ‘terrifying pictures of children being killed by American weapons – mutilated, burned, napalmed’. From then on, King pledged his alliance ‘to do everything I can to end this war’. Hodgson, G., *Martin Luther King*, p 187.

79 Dyson, M.E., *Ibid.* p 67.

80 Hodgson: ‘The *Washington Post* said his speech contained “sheer inventions of unsupported fantasy”. The *New York Times* charged him with recklessly comparing American military methods to those of the Nazis’. President Johnson’s new adviser, John Roche, called King ‘ambitious and stupid’, commenting that he had “thrown in with the commies”. *Life Magazine* said that the speech “sounded like a script for Radio Hanoi”. Hodgson, G., *Ibid.*, pp 190-192. Dyson has commented that Vincent Harding, a prominent historian, minister and Spelman College professor, was ‘the key figure behind King’s analytical genius’. Harding prepared a memo on Vietnam for King, ‘providing the historical basis on what he had to say about Vietnam’. Dyson, M.E., *Ibid.* p 68.

81 Hodgson, G., *Ibid.* p 192.

82 Dyson, M.E., *Ibid.* p 53.

2 Summary of the sermon

Referring to its political background, King starts his sermon by calling it 'not the usual kind of sermon'. It is a sermon in which King will discuss 'the most controversial issue confronting our nation'. King begins with a statement: 'Now let me make it clear from the beginning, that I see this war as an unjust, evil and futile war. I preach to you today on the war in Vietnam, because my conscience leaves me with no other choice. The time has come for America to hear the truth about this tragic war. In international conflicts, the truth is hard to come by because most nations are deceived about themselves. Rationalisations and the incessant search for scapegoats are the psychological cataracts that blind us to our sins. But the day has passed for superficial patriotism. He who lives in untruth, lives in spiritual slavery. Freedom is still the bonus we receive for knowing the truth. "Ye shall know the truth", Jesus says, "and the truth shall set you free". Now, I've chosen to preach on the war in Vietnam because I agree with Dante, that the hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in a period of moral crisis maintain their neutrality. There comes a time when silence becomes betrayal.'

In this opening paragraph, all the dominant concepts of our study emerge: deception and blindness, destructiva being obscured and the mechanisms that hinder to speak out: 'The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in times of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing, as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we're always on the verge of being mesmerised by uncertainty. But we must move on. Some of us already begun to break the silence of the night, have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony. But we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak.' Here the term vocation of agony is expressed.

King continues: 'Yes, we must stand, and we must speak. [tape skip] ...the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam. Many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns, this query has often loomed large and loud: "Why are you speaking about the war, Dr King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent?" Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. And so, this morning, I speak to you on this issue, because I am determined to take the Gospel seriously. And I come this morning to my pulpit to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation.'

The opening paragraph of the sermon is momentous, and it is crystallised in the statement: 'Yes, we must stand and we must speak'. The motive King gives

to speak out is thoroughly theological: 'I am determined to take the Gospel seriously'. After this opening, the sermon is structured by giving seven reasons to oppose the Vietnam war. The first two reasons King gives, are directly related to our concept of exposing destructiva. They concern the question of what kind of destructiva, according to the preacher, are being obscured, and need to be exposed.

1 The first reason is about poverty: 'There is a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I and others have been waging in America. A few years ago, there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed that there was a real promise of hope for the poor, both black and white, through the Poverty Program. (...) Then came the build-up in Vietnam. And I watched the program broken as if it was some idle plaything of a society gone mad on war. And I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. And you may not know it, my friends, but it is estimated that we spend \$ 500.000 to kill each enemy soldier, while we spend only fifty-three dollars for each person classified as poor, and much of that fifty-three dollars goes for salaries to people that are not poor'. This war is an 'enemy of the poor'.

King deconstructs the logic of this war and shows its costs. He uses theological qualifications, gives a moral and spiritual diagnosis of a 'society gone mad on war', and the core of the lament is that earlier commitments to the poor now seem just 'an idle, political plaything': The financial means that are used for this war are deducted from budgets intended to fight poverty in America. King portrays the war as a 'demonic, destructive suction tube that draws men and skills and money out of society'. The reality of this war exposes specific characteristics of this society, King claims.

2 The second reason for King's opposition comes from a sarcastic truth he realised in his contact with youth: A relatively high number of black youth served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam, and according to King many of them died 'eight thousand miles away from home to guarantee liberties in South East Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem'. 'So, we have been repeatedly faced with a cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same school room. So, we watch them in brutal solidarity, burning the huts of a poor village. But we realise that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago or Atlanta. Now, I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor'. King is exposing the reality of this war from the perspective of poverty and he is exposing the manipulation of the poor and black young men that is happening in this war.

3 The third reason King gives, is concerned with violence. The passage is bitter. King tells of his non-violent strategies in his struggle for civil rights, how he

tried to convince desperate and angry young men in the ghettos that violence would not solve their problems, and how he was 'applauded in the press' for that non-violent message and attitude. But now these youth ask him: 'So what about Vietnam?' Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos, without first having spoken to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of those hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent'. This argument deals with the moral integrity of a society, with the message this war is communicating to citizens and with its effects on the moral atmosphere in society. How can the national discourse on human rights and poverty be resolved with a commitment to non-violence, when in international affairs there is such a brutal choice for violence? In this paragraph, we also see, as in Tutu's sermon, how this preaching is inductive, in close contact with the experiences of those who suffer under destructiva. This moment is one of King's non-negotiable, negative experiences, from which he theologises.

4 + 5 In the fourth and fifth reason to speak out against this war, King focuses on vocational motives. It is not only the Nobel Peace Prize that commissions him to speak out for the 'brotherhood of man', he explains, but it is especially 'my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ'. King wants to replace the venomous debate in society by an inclusive vision, rooted in his understanding of what it means to follow Jesus: 'To me, the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against this war. Could it be that they do not know that the Good News was meant for all men, for communists and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the One who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them?' King's argumentation is not only about the moral integrity of his society and about the humanitarian motive of transcending hatred and caricatures, there is also this recurring explicit motive of his being called by Jesus Christ.

6 + 7 In the final two reasons against this war, King deepens and broadens this theological motive, by trying to give a voice to the suffering people of Vietnam. King offers in this sermon a form of public speech that humanises the 'enemy' and that depoliticises and demilitarises a poisoned societal discourse. King does not only expose the violence present in policies, language and imagination concerning the war in Vietnam, he also aims at sanitising this discourse. One of the means is self-critique: King gives a short review of the recent political history of Vietnam, and the dubious role the American government played in it. He closes the paragraph with an interesting remark: 'Oh, our government and the press generally won't tell us these things, but God told me to tell you this morning. The truth must be told'. Here, the three motives coalesce: Exposing destructiva, deconstructing the deceptive and

being compelled to speak. The governmental discourse on this war is in a fundamental way prejudiced and manipulative, according to King, and the national press seems to be domesticated by this agenda. There are hardly any voices to be heard that tell other stories. This is a major motive for King, and he makes it a theological motive: 'God told me to tell you this morning'. The failure of journalism is an incentive to preach. One of the things that is suppressed in public discourse, is America's own compliance to the drama of the present political situation in Vietnam.

The critique on failing journalism is an example of what we mean by *Streit um Wirklichkeit*. Through the deceptive portrayals of governmental speech and 'the failing national press', King suggests the risk of a 'loss of reality'. In a chilling passage, he pictures the reality of this war, as he sees it. The passage is deeply iconoclastic: A national discourse that legitimises and glorifies this war is shattered by a gruesome picture of the reality of war: 'Now they languish under our bombs and consider us, not their fellow Vietnamese, the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps, where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move or be destroyed by our bombs. So, they go, primarily women, and children, and the aged. They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas, preparing to destroy their precious trees. They wander into towns and see thousands and thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers. We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops.'

In the passage, King speaks about 'we', and through it, he creates a form of collective responsibility. King broadens this triggering of consciences by questioning the fundamental choices 'we' as a society make in this war: 'This way of settling differences is not just. This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defence than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.' In this example of exposing, King tries to trouble the consciences of the hearers, make them dissatisfied by making them see what this war is and what it means.

The sermon ends with a warning, a reflection on the costs of discipleship and with a cathartic passage about 'speeding up the day of justice'. First, there is a warning with an apocalyptic echo: 'It is time for all people of conscience to call upon America to come back home. Omar Khayyam is right: "The moving

finger writes, and, having writ, moves on". I call on Washington today. I call on every man and woman of good will all over America today. I call on the young men of America who must make a choice today to take a stand on this issue. Tomorrow may be too late. The book may close. And don't let anybody make you think that God chose America as his divine, messianic force to be a sort of policeman of the whole world. God has a way of standing before the nations with judgment, and it seems that I can hear God saying to America: "You're too arrogant! And if you don't change your ways, I will rise up and break the backbone of your power, and I'll place it in the hands of a nation that doesn't even know my name. Be still and know, that I'm God". In a passage reminiscent to Bonhoeffer's apocalyptic intuition in the early 1930s and to Tutu's confrontation with the apartheid regime, this sermon too brings the hearers, and a society in general, suddenly in a vis-à-vis with a threatening God. As the classical Hebrew prophets theologise about God judging the nations, thus King portrays God as standing in front of America, threatening to break 'the backbone of her power' if she does not repent.

In a passage like this, it becomes clear what King means by the 'vocation of agony'. After this judgment passage, he explains: 'Now, it isn't easy to stand up for truth and justice. Sometimes it means being frustrated. When you tell the truth and take a stand, sometimes it means that you will walk the streets with a burdened heart. Sometimes it means losing a job, ... means being abused and scorned. It may mean having a seven, eight-year-old child asking a daddy: "Why do you have to go to jail so much?" And I've long since learned that to be a follower of Jesus Christ means taking up the cross'. In this biographical passage, King urges hearers to 'stand up for truth, seek justice and peace and to be prepared to take up their cross, regardless of the costs'.

This last passage on cross-bearing turns over to a lyrical passage, filled with specific lines from spirituals, quotations, and verses from Scripture, all serving the conviction of King that 'with this faith, we shall overcome'. The passage could be analysed as a small compendium of spiritual resources in service of victory: 'We shall overcome', because Carlyle was right: "No lie can live forever". We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant was right: "Truth pressed to earth will rise again". (...) We shall overcome because the Bible is right: "You shall reap what you sow". (...) With this faith, we will be able to speed up the day when justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream. With this faith, we will be able to speed up the day when the lion and lamb will lie down together and every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid because the words of the Lord have spoken it. With this faith, we will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we're free at last!". King speaks in language drenched in scriptural idiom and filled with verses from his theological and spiritual-liturgical tradition, an ecstatic passage with the claim that the discipleship of hearers, may 'speed up the day of redemption'.

3 Analytical remarks

Why is in our data, and in this sermon in particular, the theme of calling often such a troubled theme?

A first reason is that in prophetic speech, preachers enter the zones of the unresolved tensions and conflicts of their society. In a way, these are forbidden or tabooed zones, but in prophetic speech, preachers feel compelled to enter these zones, and often in a critical way. In these moments, they regularly question the myths of their days. Bonhoeffer questioned the myth of ecclesiastical self-confidence and optimism in the early 1930s, Tutu questioned the myth of 'public safety' and 'separate development' in South Africa, Krusche questioned the myth of freedom in the DDR, and in a similar way, King questioned the myth of America as a 'messianic force', the myth of America's societal commitment to non-violence and to the case of the poor, the myth of the spiritual integrity of this society. One of the competences in this critical attitude is the ability to remember, or to *re-memory* as Toni Morrison called it. Watson called this a *prophetic skill*: to be a witness bearer, to be able to remember, especially the iniquities of history, to be able to show how this former history moulds the present, to show the reach of complicity, that is the skill of prophecy.⁸³ The prophetic moment, according to Watson, exposes, and resists the collective amnesia to a community's own sins.

In Georg Taxacher's vocabulary this is *Geschichtsschreibung gegen sich selbst*. He has observed that the art of writing history in Israel has a unique origin, namely not in self-justification or propaganda, but in self-critique. The Deuteronomist, one of the major theological writers of history in the Old Testament, presents the history of Israel from the Exodus to the Exile as an 'anhaltende Schuldgeschichte, die dementsprechend in der Katastrophe mündet'.⁸⁴ Israel's history is written by a 'Dialektik von Gericht und Heil und einer Dramatik zwischen Gott und Israel', and it is exactly in 'epochengeschichtlicher Erschütterungen' that the biblical theology of writing history found its origins.⁸⁵ One of the 'burdens' of prophetic speech is this capacity of self-criticism.

A second reason why preachers feel their calling as a burden, related to the first one, is the societal pressure for stability in times of crisis. Johan Cilliers has explained the pressure on and the temptation for preachers in times of crisis, to make their sermons instruments of stabilisation and even legitimisation of society's self-images. Cilliers analysed Dutch Reformed preaching during the apartheid

83 Watson, K.T., *Literature as Prophecy: Toni Morrison as Prophetic Writer*. (English Dissertations. Paper 50). (Atlanta: Georgia State University/Digital Archive 2009), p 26.

84 Taxacher, G., *Apokalyptische Vernunft. Das biblische Geschichtsd Denken und seine Konsequenzen*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2010), p 63.

85 Taxacher, G., *Ibid.* p 70

years, and his results show how this preaching functioned not in questioning, but in stabilising a troubled community.⁸⁶ 'A combination of political, economic and social factors resulted in experiences of anxiety amongst a section of especially the whites, who felt that their identity and continued existence were threatened'. The sermons Cilliers analysed were aimed at offering consolation for them, and resulted in a type of preaching that can be called 'pastoral preaching for the people'.⁸⁷ Cilliers calls these sermons 'anti-prophetic'.⁸⁸ In order to preserve, to stabilise and to legitimise a mythical narrative, ahistorical sermons emerged, characteristically escapist toward the disturbing facets of contemporary societal realities, functioning in a self-justifying way, stabilising the hearers by some kind of *justificatio populi*, externalising guilt by projecting it onto scapegoats.

Cilliers' reconstruction of the mechanism of self-deception is of specific interest. Cilliers reconstructed how in 'apartheid preaching', the act of preaching itself can become 'imprisoned', degenerating into a function of a certain myth.⁸⁹ Cilliers: 'In this context, preaching was no longer an alternative, critical and therefore liberating word, but it became a sanctioning and stabilising word'.⁹⁰ Cilliers claimed this mechanism can lead to the 'imprisonment of God'. We learn from Cilliers that *myth building*, be it about the German *Volk*, the assumed messianic calling of America or an *Afrikaner* identity, can lead to 'nothing but a group-fabricated system of lies', as he called it, and that preaching can become an instrument of this *mythical narrative*. This is exactly what prophetic preachers resist.

But, this is a 'vocation of agony', as King called it. Nobody wants to be called a *Volksfeind*. It is a striking feature in our data that when preachers come to question the mythical narratives of their own society, they refer to the theological motive of their calling. Krusche could talk in a sermon about the personal and biographical costs of being a minister of Jesus Christ in the DDR, Bonhoeffer's Jeremiah sermon is entirely about the strange grip God's Word could get on an individual and the grim character of it, and in his Vietnam sermon too, King's ulterior motive for 'breaking the betrayal of his silence' is his calling and his 'taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ seriously'. We discovered in our analysis an interference between biography, context, calling and God. These different realities

86 Cilliers, J., *God for us? An analysis and assessment of Dutch Reformed preaching during the apartheid years*. (Stellenbosch: Sun Press 2006).

87 Cilliers, J., *Preaching between Assimilation and Separation: Perspectives on Church and State in South African Society*. (Paper delivered at the Homiletics Seminar for Danish Pastors, Copenhagen, June 2008), p 2.

88 Cilliers, J., *God for us?* p 23.

89 Cilliers, J., *Ibid.* p 28.

90 'Preaching itself is misunderstood as a medium to realise and deepen certain national ideals. In my opinion, the analysis convincingly indicates this: Preaching here no longer functions as an alternative, critical and therefore liberating word of God in the nation's situation, but merely as a sanctioning and stabilising word. The nation's myth(s) thus take over the preaching to such an extent that the inner group's convictions are confirmed and strengthened in their contrasts to the external group.' Cilliers, J., *Ibid.* p 78.

influence and enforce each other. In the sermons, we see an interiority happen in the existence of the preacher. The crisis of the context is resonating in the interior life of preachers, and they become personally, biographically, and theologically deeply involved in it. In other words: the costs of their vocation enter the texture of the preachers' lives. In these moments, there is a peculiar dialectic between *Wort und Leib*, between calling, embodiment and physical repercussions.⁹¹

There may be a reverse mechanism too. The specific kind of interference between biography and calling may also enable these preachers to discern dimensions in their context that others do not see. Abromeit, reflecting on Bonhoeffer's life, argued that the relationship between *Erkenntnis und Existenz*, is not only about the existence of the preacher being 'captured' by the Word, but that it may also be the other way around, that 'eine spezifische Existenz erst eine entsprechende Erkenntnis ermöglicht'.⁹² Maybe it is exactly through concrete human lives in which biography, *Zeitgenossenschaft*, vocation and *Nachfolge* interfere, prophetic insight emerges, 'aus ihr erwächst'. In this way, 'interiority' is not only about existentiality, about the personal, experiential aspect, but it also has *epistemological* dimensions. It may be the case that the prophetic moment is an alternative *Weltwahrnehmung* emerging in and out of these specific lives.⁹³ The clarity of mind that informs the prophetic moment may be caused by this specific interference between biography, calling and God.

We now turn to the final paragraph. In the course of this chapter, our insight in how and why preachers expose destructive (3.1) how and why these destructiva are concealed (3.2) and how and why it can be a burden to deconstruct the mythology by which people and communities live (3.3), deepened gradually. The final aspect we turn to is iconography and iconoclasm (3.4). In the sermons we studied, preachers see in specific persons, developments, or occurrences, crystallisations of what is going on in their context. We call these crystallisations iconic or iconoclastic fragments, and we show the mechanism of it in the next paragraph, in Desmond Tutu's sermon at the funeral of Steve Biko.

91 See the interesting paragraph on the 'Verhältnis von Wort und Leib bei den Propheten Israels', in Marquardt's theology and also in his subsequent understanding of Christology. The interference of the Word of God and the existence of the prophet facilitates a specific kind of 'prophetic existence'. Marquardt, F.-W., *Das christliche Bekenntnis zu Jesus, dem Juden. Eine Christologie. Band 2* (2., durchges. Aufl.). (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1998), pp. 116-134.

92 'Für Bonhoeffer gilt aber nicht nur daß eine Erkenntnis Folgen für die Existenz hat – oder besser haben kann -, sondern eben auch umgekehrt, daß eine spezifische Existenz bestimmte Erkenntnisse provoziert'. Abromeit, H.-J., 'Die Beziehung zwischen Erkenntnis und Existenz bei Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Herausforderung zu einem anderen Verhältnis von Theorie und Praxis'. In: *Pastoraltheologie. Wissenschaft und Praxis in Kirche und Gesellschaft*, 75 (1986)/1, p 288.

93 See Campbell about the major intention of prophetic passages to change the 'Weltwahrnehmung' of the hearers, to enhance their 'Wahrnehmungssensibilität'. Campbell, C., 'Predigt, die die Welt verändert!? – Ein Ausrufezeichen und eine Fragezeichen', in: Deeg, A. and Dietrich S. (Hrsg.), *Evangelische Predigtkultur. Zur Erneuerung der Kanzelrede*. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2011), p 79.

3.4.b Sermon illustrating ‘Epitomising destructiva’ Desmond Tutu, sermon at the funeral of Steve Biko (King Williams’ Town, 1977)

1 Introduction of the sermon

Steve Biko, then a student of medicine, was a leading figure in the founding of the South African’s Students’ Organisation (SASO), an organisation promoting black self-awareness, political debate, and defiance in the face of oppression. The leaders of the movement were harassed, restricted and detained.⁹⁴ On 18 August 1977, Biko was imprisoned without a trial, near Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, where he also died. After years of public pressure, finally, the circumstances of his death in a prison cell were revealed: Biko was put in a cell, naked, and kept in solitary confinement for nearly three weeks. On September 6, he was interrogated, (read: tortured), and within half an hour, he was weakened by extensive brain injuries. ‘They shackled him hand and foot to a grille and kept him chained for a day before calling a doctor, falsifying records to hide the delay.’⁹⁵ With brain injuries, he was transported in a police van to Pretoria, 1000 kilometres away, an unnecessary trip, where he died on 12 September, ‘a miserable and lonely death on a stone floor in a prison cell’, in the words of his lawyer.⁹⁶ Though the mourners at his funeral did not yet know the gruesome details of his death, they knew Biko was killed in police custody, and that he was not the first one. By then, he was the tenth political prisoner to die in custody that year. His death and funeral deepened the national upheaval that had already begun in 1976, with the Soweto uprising, and now it also triggered international attention. Diplomats of the major Western democracies attended the funeral. Donald Woods, a journalist, would later reconstruct Biko’s story in his book *I Found My Brother: Steve Biko*, and Richard Attenborough would release the film *Cry Freedom*, about this friendship between Biko and Woods. Twenty years after his death, the interrogators of Steve Biko were denied amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The funeral service, held on September 25, in the sports stadium of King William’s Town, Biko’s hometown, was the first big political funeral in South Africa. There were severe tensions, massive police presence, people being hindered to attend the funeral, the continual danger of mourning turning into riots and violent escalation, or otherwise, the police presence turning to violent action towards the mourners. More than 15,000 people attended the funeral, and the singing and the eulogies lasted for hours. Desmond Tutu was one of the many speakers at the

94 See John Allen’s introduction on ‘O God, how long can we go on?’ in: Allen, J. (ed.), *Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Rainbow People of God*, pp 15-16.

95 Allen, J., *Desmond Tutu: Rabble-Rouser for Peace*. (London: Ebury Publishing 2006), pp 163-164. See also: Thompson, L., *Ibid.* p 213.

96 Allen, J., *Ibid.* p 163.

funeral.⁹⁷ He had been asked to replace Bishop Alphaeus Zulu as a speaker, and thus had to write his contribution at a short notice.⁹⁸

2 Summary of the sermon

Tutu's sermon starts with an expression of dismay, anger and bereavement: 'When we heard the news "Steve Biko is dead", we were struck numb with disbelief. No, it can't be true! No, it must be a horrible nightmare and we will awake and find that really it is different – That Steve is alive, even if it be in detention. But no, dear friends, he is dead and we are still numb with grief and groan with anguish, "Oh God, where are you? Oh God, do you really care? How can you let this happen to us?" Tutu finds language that penetrates and mirrors the destructivum of this reality, of this murder: 'It all seems such a senseless waste of a wonderfully gifted person struck down in the bloom of youth, a youthful bloom that some wanted to see blighted. What can be the purpose of such wanton destruction? God, do you really love us?'

This is an example of a situation where language is hardly equipped to express what is felt. Tutu speaks of being struck numb with grief, but he also expresses the anger burning beneath the grief. The anger and the numbness are drawn into the reach of language (and thus made communicable and less destructive and explosive).⁹⁹ After having drawn the emotions into the reach of language, Tutu expresses them to God. In a form of a provocative intimacy, he expresses his sense of betrayal to God. The rawness of the language is not smoothed when God is addressed. The identification of the preacher with the mourners is direct: It is hardly possible to distinguish between the preacher engaged in a personal dispute with God and his role in leading a public lament (think of the coalescence of biography, context and calling, 3.3). In this passage, it is clear that all emotions of the hearers, without any taboo or restriction, can be expressed to God, through the words of the preacher. The preacher's identification and language facilitate this mediation of anger and pain to God. In this passage, preaching has porous zones to prayer.

Tutu ends this first part of the sermon, not with an apocalyptic passage about justice and revenge, but with an eschatological one: 'Oh God, how long can we go on? How long can we go on appealing for a more just ordering of society where we all, black and white together, count not because of some accident of birth or a biological irrelevance, where all of us, black and white, count because

97 Tutu, D., 'Oh God, how long can we go on?' in: Allen, J. (ed.), *Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Rainbow People of God*, pp 15-21.

98 Allen, J., *Desmond Tutu: Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, p 163.

99 See on the experience of the loss of language because of the apartheid violence, Antjie Krog's *Country of my Skull*. She recalled a session of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were a victim of violence, Nyameka Goniwe, started to cry, and could not continue. The session was paused, and when it was to be continued, the chairman Tutu, began to sing, *Senzeni na, senzeni na...*, *What have we done wrong?* Krog reflected on this moment as touching the essence of the TRC: Revisiting memories that are so painful, that *language stops*, and at the same time: whoever is capable of *finding words* for those memories is *inventing new language*. Krog, A., *Country of my Skull*. (Parklands: Random House South Africa 1998), p 64.

we are human persons, human persons created in your own image'. Note that this passage is still *coram Deo*: Tutu recapitulates the legitimacy of the political struggle before God's eyes. Here, it is not a political statement, but part of a dispute with God. Note also that the passage contains inclusivity. The preacher does not polarise and feed the enmity and explosive tension of the moment, but seeks to transcend it. This is what may be called theological and spiritual leadership (we develop this notion in chapter 4.2 'Attuning').

Then, a crucial moment in the sermon happens. Tutu says: 'In our grief and through our tears, we recall. Let us recall...'. Out of his identification with the mourners' anger, Tutu calls his hearers to another reality. At this point, the preacher surpasses his identification with the hearers. He is not only a friend with burning anger, he is also an ordained minister 'called to recall'. In moments of disorientation like this, somebody has been called to recall the memory of Israel and of Jesus Christ. Tutu proceeds by recalling the life and death of Jesus Christ. The recollection is remarkable, because on one level it can be read as the profile of Jesus Christ, but at the same time, fragments of Steve Biko's life are woven into this christological anamnesis:

'Let us recall, my dear friends, that nearly 2000 years ago a young man was done to death and hanged like a common criminal on a cross outside a city where they jeered at him and made fun of him. Let us recall how his followers were dejected and quite inconsolable in their grief. It all seemed so utterly meaningless, so utterly futile. This young man, God's own son, Jesus Christ.' The echo of the similarities resonates in the words: the young man, the torture, the making fun of a prisoner, the place outside the city, the mourning friends, 'this act so utterly meaningless'. There is a continuous interplay between two stories and through retelling the story of Jesus Christ in terms reminiscent of Steve Biko's murder and of the present situation of mourners, Tutu draws the present into the meaningful cadre of the past, of Jesus' death. That is what he means by 'let us recall' (We develop this mechanism in chapter 5: 'Recognising the Word').

After passages of inclusivity, Tutu proceeds with the theme of partiality, proclaiming that 'God takes sides', that 'God is no neutral sifter on the fence'. Inclusivity does not lead to neutrality or indifference, he explains. Recapitulating Israel's history, Tutu prevents the position of a sectarian claim of God, while he underlines his belief that God 'took the side of the oppressed', 'not because they were holier or morally better than their oppressors. No, he was on their side simply and solely because they were oppressed.'

Tutu places Jesus in this history, embodying the proclamation of this partiality of God: 'Yes, this was the good news Jesus came to proclaim – that God was the liberator, the one who set free the oppressed and the poor and the exploited.' Tutu then returns to the anticlimax and the experience of disillusion because of the death of Jesus: 'This young man in his thirties who had said, "I have come that all might have life and that they might have life in all its fullness,"

look at him dead, and all our hopes, said his followers, lie shattered with his death.' When the preacher proceeds by recalling the resurrection of Christ, he begins to evoke hope: 'The grave could not hold captive such a gloriously free life. Jesus burst the very bonds of death itself – for Jesus Christ lives for ever and ever.' This victory has implications for the mourners in South Africa in 1977: 'We too, like the disciples of Jesus, have been stunned by the death of another young man in his thirties. A young man completely dedicated to the pursuit of justice and righteousness, of peace and reconciliation. A young man completely committed to radical change in our beloved country. Even his worst enemies and detractors knew him as a person of utmost integrity and principle. (...) God called Steve Biko to be his servant in South Africa, to speak up on behalf of God, declaring what the will of this God must be in a situation such as ours, a situation of evil and in justice, oppression and exploitation.'

There is authority in this passage: This tortured and murdered man of integrity was God's servant, Tutu says, and he spoke on behalf of God. What we mean by iconic fragments, is that persons (or occurrences) can become a sign, a window on a transcendent reality and conversely, that a transcendent reality is present in the sign. In this sermon, Tutu makes Steve Biko's life a sign, an epitome of what he sees as God's intention for the present. As malign destructive powers crushed the life of Jesus, in a similar way and by analogous dark forces, Steve Biko's life was struck down. But as the power of the grave could not hold Jesus captive, in a similar way that power, which has empowered Steve Biko too, will continue, Tutu proclaims. Tutu explicates what, according to him, God was saying in Biko's life: 'God called him to be the founder father of the black consciousness movement, against which we have had tirades and fulminations. It is a movement by which God, through Steve, sought to awaken in the black person a sense of his intrinsic value and worth as a child of God, not needing to apologise for his existential position as a black person, calling on blacks to glorify and praise God that he created them black. Steve, with his brilliant mind that always saw to the heart of things, realised that until blacks asserted their humanity and their personhood, there was not the remotest chance for reconciliation in South Africa. For true reconciliation is a deeply personal matter. It can only happen between persons who assert their own personhood and who acknowledge and respect that of others. You don't get reconciled to your dog, do you?'

In this passage, Tutu bends the emotions of hatred and revenge to the theme of reconciliation. Without denying the injustice of this murder, and while sharing the bereavement, Tutu still focuses on reconciliation, Biko's principal commitment. In this passage, we hear the plea for personhood and self-worth, crucial ingredients for reconciliation. Passages like these contain forms of what we could call *homiletical exorcism*. Tutu saw the demonic effects of apartheid first of all in the spiritual damage it caused among black South Africans, as if they were inferior and had to doubt their intrinsic value, as if they were dogs or doormats, as if they had to doubt their being a child of God, as if they had to

feel ashamed about the colour of their skin.¹⁰⁰ In the sermon, as in Steve Biko's life, the effects of such a damaging interiorisation are exposed and withspoken. The poisonous working of apartheid in the soul of black South Africans is disputed and driven out by an alternative message of personhood and self-worth, of the 'joy of being a black child of God'. It is this aim that characterised Biko's life and it is because of that, Tutu calls him a 'servant of God', 'called by God to tell us what God's will must be in our situation'. During his entire vocation, Tutu has stressed this spiritual core of his struggle with apartheid.

After stressing reconciliation, Tutu turns to warning. 'We are in grave danger', Tutu claims. The hope for reconciliation is eroded by the violent and undermining measures of government and police. 'For whilst we speak of peace and non-violence we have the quite inexplicable action of the authorities in stopping those coming to mourn at Steve's funeral, an action that is most provocative. Why? We are answered by bulldozers which destroy the homes of squatters, leaving them without shelter in the rain. (.....) I want to say with all the circumspection and sense of responsibility that I can muster, that people can take only so much.... I have seen too much violence to talk glibly about it, but I do want to issue a serious warning, a warning I am distressed to have to make..... Please, please for God's sake listen to us whilst there is just a possibility of reasonably peaceful change. (.....) For God's sake let us move away from the edge of the precipice. We may, all of us, black and white, crash headlong destruction. Oh God, help us! We cry for our beloved country which has been so wanton in wasting her precious human resources.' The fruits of the destructive present will be disaster, for all of us, Tutu explains. He begs to be heard, to be taken seriously. At the end, the cry is directed to God: 'Oh God, help us!'

In this sermon, Tutu is in dialogue with all kinds of addressees. God is addressed, again and again, the governmental powers are addressed, as well as on a more abstract level 'the powers of injustice, oppression and exploitation'. Ntsiki, Steve Biko's widow, is addressed and his family. The mourners in the stadium are addressed but also 'our fellow white citizens and our fellow Christians'. It may even be said that the 'demons of apartheid' in the interior life of the hearers are addressed. To analyse the *homiletische Situation* of these sermons only from the perspective of the direct interaction between preacher

100 See on this theme of 'agents of exorcism', Michael Battle, quoting Tutu: 'You end up interiorising the definitions others have given to you', (...) 'that's what racial injustice and oppression actually do. So, you keep needing agents of exorcisms who will keep proving that blacks can indeed do it in all kinds of ways'. Battle, M., *Reconciliation. The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu (Revised and Updated)*, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press 1997, 2009), p 25.

and hearers is too narrow.¹⁰¹ All kinds of listeners, powers and influences are present, either physically, or spiritually. All kinds of dangers and risks are also present in the situation: The risk of escalation and bloodshed, the risk of offending, as well as the risk of harmonising what needs to be opposed, the risk of fuelling aggression and the risk of denying it. In this dense and dangerous field of force the sermon is held and the right word is sought for (further 4.2 'Attuning').

In the final paragraph of the sermon, Tutu develops the theme of the certainty of hope and of the 'unstoppability' of the reversal (see also our observations on the cathartic element in the prophetic moment, chapter 6.1). 'Because, you see, Steve started something that is quite unstoppable. The powers of injustice, of oppression, of exploitation have done their worst and they have lost. They have lost because they are immoral and wrong and our God, the God of the Exodus, the liberator God is a God of justice, liberation and goodness. Our cause, the cause of justice and liberation, must triumph, because it is moral and just and right. (...) There is no doubt whatsoever that freedom is coming. Yes, it may be a costly struggle still. The darkest hour, they say, is before the dawn. We are experiencing the birth pangs of a new South Africa, where all of us, black and white together, will walk tall.' Not just in 1988, as we read in his sermon *You will Bite the Dust* (3.2.b), but already in 1977, Tutu talks in the form of the prophetic *perfectum*, of the powers of apartheid that have already lost, of the present situation being the unstoppable birth pangs of renewal and freedom. After a final plea for communality ('Let us all, black and white together, not be filled with despondency and despair'), Tutu ends his speech by quoting Romans 8, 'If God is on our side, who can be against us?' In the quotation, he does not omit the passage about 'we are being treated like sheep for slaughter', but he ends with the following verse 'and yet in spite of all, overwhelming victory is ours through him who loves us'.

3 Analytical remarks

What do we mean by iconographic fragments in our analysis, and why do we understand it as a property of the concept of exposing destructiva? The keyword to answer these questions is *visibility*. In the prophetic moment, as we reconstructed it, destructiva are first of all made visible, and iconography/iconoclasm is a specific instrument in fostering this visibility and insight.

101 In several works, Manfred Josuttis has called attention for the importance of 'atmospheres' as crucial factors in the analysis and understanding of the 'Gottesdienst'. There is a presence in these gatherings, that transcends those who are 'visibly present'. Josuttis spoke of 'erwachende Atmosphären' in these moments, which he called an 'eigentümliche Macht'. In the text of Tutu's sermon we get a glimpse of his awareness of this non-visible presence of 'important others'. See: Josuttis, M., 'Erfahrungen mit dem Göttlichen in der Praxis der Kirche', in: Blume, A., *Was bleibt von Gott? Beiträge zur Phänomenologie des Heiligen und der Religion*. (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2007), pp 172-186. See also: Josuttis, M., *Ich bin ein Gast auf Erden. Eine pastorale Lebensgeschichte*. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus 2016), p 37.

Let us first turn to iconography. ‘An icon’, Rowan Williams wrote, ‘has a way of bringing you into a new place and a new perception.’¹⁰² In their visual form, icons show something in and beyond the visible reality. That is the mystery of the icon: in its visible form, it points to something transcendent. Secondly, quoting Williams again, the icon intends to capture and change the person looking at it: ‘As the perspective “bears down” upon the beholder’s eye, the eye of the iconic figure acts, searches, engages. The skill of looking at icons, the discipline of “reading” them, is indeed the strange skill of letting yourself be seen, be read.’¹⁰³ To summarise: Icons have the ability to deepen perception, to make conscious of the unseen in the visible reality, and to change the observer. Williams writes about icons in the literal sense, but in our study, we mean iconography as a specific way in which things are portrayed in sermons, specific characterisations of persons, incidents and developments, a way of describing things through which ‘something extra’ is communicated.

In the sermon held at Biko’s funeral, Tutu makes Steve Biko an icon, a sign, a window on a transcendent reality. The theologically daring aspect in this sermon, is Tutu’s portrayal of Biko’s life and death through a *christological* lens. That is the ‘something extra’ or the iconic quality that is communicated in this sermon about Biko. Biko’s biography is remembered in ‘Jesus-like characteristics’, the meaning of his life and death is said to contain a message for the hearers (‘God started something through Steve’) and there is the implication that the mourners at the funeral can identify themselves with the disillusioned mourners after Christ’s death. According to Tutu, there is a transcendent truth being communicated in this life and death, and this truth is ‘unstoppable’. As malign destructive powers crushed the life of Jesus, in a similar way and by analogous dark forces, Steve Biko’s life was struck down. But as the power of the grave could not hold Jesus captive, in a similar way, the power that inspired Steve Biko will continue, Tutu says.

In this iconographic fragment, as we call it, visibility is essential. In the life and death of Steve Biko, something becomes visible.

First of all, destructiva become visible. Before their own eyes, the hearers see the violent power of the apartheid regime. In the murder of this man of integrity, the raw violence of the regime comes to the surface. Biko was murdered in the hidden mangle of a police cell, but in the sermon this obscurity is made visible and public. Brueggemann remarked that ‘the work of the prophetic is to trace the

102 Williams, R., *Lost Icons. Reflections on Cultural Bereavement*. (London: T&T Clark 2000), p 184. See also: Kleppe, M., *Canonieke Icoonfoto’s. De rol van (pers)foto’s in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*. (Delft: Eburon 2013), p 22.

103 Williams, R., *Ibid.* p 185,

inescapable connections between personal pain and public, systematic practice'.¹⁰⁴ In this fragment, this hidden connection is made visible. Steve Biko's death is caused by the same destructive system under which the hearers suffer themselves and through his death, these destructive powers become visible.

Secondly, visibility is important here, because Biko's life is a visible sign of hope. In iconic fragments, suffering and martyrdom are often present, while at the same time, the hearers are changed and empowered by these iconic lives, to follow their example. Van der Ven observed how Tutu, in several funeral sermons, portrayed the deceased persons as 'examples for his audience because of the exemplary, virtuous lives they led'.¹⁰⁵ The icon is a window on an alternative reality and an alternative way of living. Meditating on this iconic life may change the hearers.

Thirdly, this visible life points, in one way or the other, to a transcendent truth. Tutu does not make his hearers freeze their gaze in admiration on Steve Biko's life, but he tries to make the hearers see something more.¹⁰⁶ There is a mysterious presence in this specific life: 'God, through Steve, sought to awaken in the black person a sense of his intrinsic value and worth as a child of God'. The sign that is present in Biko's life refers to God's intention for all black South Africans and the sermon explicates that sign. Richard Lischer, reflecting on iconic mechanisms in sermons, has written about the preacher's 'gift of seeing signs': the iconic fragment is not meant 'to magnify the importance of an occasion or a person', but to enable the audience to see the full magnitude of what transcendent truth is operative in this fragment.¹⁰⁷

Theologically daring as this specific example may be, we often encounter in the data this type of theologically qualifying someone or something in the data. In iconic fragments, real-life examples are given an explicit theological purport. The usage of iconography and iconoclasm, in our reconstruction, is the visual analogy of the verbal act of exposing destructiva.

104 Brueggemann, W., *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination. Preaching an Emancipating Word*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012), p 42.

105 For instance, in the sermon at the funeral of Robert Sobukwe, a few months after Steve Biko's death, and at the funeral of the white Afrikaner reverend Frikkie Conradie. Van der Ven commented on Tutu's sermon on Steve Biko: 'Tutu identifies him with Christ himself, who like Steve Biko gave his life as a martyr for the good of his friends'. See Van der Ven, J.A., 'The Moral and Religious Self as a Process', pp 86-87.

106 See also Brown, D., *God & Mystery in Words. Experience through Metaphor and Drama*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), pp 66-67.

107 Lischer, R., *The Preacher King. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word that moved America*. (New York: Oxford University Press 1995), p 122.

CHAPTER 4 | INTERRUPTING DOMINANT DISCOURSES

The intervening dimension

Summary: The second concept we generated, is called ‘interrupting dominant discourses’ and addresses the intervening dimension in prophetic speech. We concluded that in their interruptions, preachers attune different interests, like What can be said?, What must be said? and What is effective to say? Through integrating these aspects, mature and decisive interventions happen. Prophetic preachers are not simply naysayers, one-dimensional troubleshooters that oppose something but refuse to take responsibility or to come with alternatives. Our empirical research shows that the interruptive moment in prophetic speech is far more paradoxical, constructive, and intelligent. It may be this rich complexity *in* the interruptions that makes the interventions generative.

In the first paragraph (4.1), we discuss the empirical data. In the sermons, we encountered a great variety and multiplicity of interruptive moments and forms, often in one and the same sermon. We therefore prefer to speak of interruptive *strategies* than of interruptive *incidents* (4.1.a (1)). We explain that the theological rationale of the interruptive moment is in the juxtaposing of worldviews. That is the basic architecture of the interruption (4.1.a (2)). A third observation concerns the generative tensions we see operative within interruptions, tensions between continuity and discontinuity, between criticism of others and self-critique, between dissent and transformation. It is the richness of these tensions *in* the interruptions, that make them mature and generative (4.1.a (3)). In the second paragraph (4.2), we explore this generative power further. We designed the term ‘attuning’ to explain how preachers search for integrity in their interruptions. In their interventions, they search to integrate different interests and concerns, like necessity, responsibility, contextuality and strategy (4.2.a).

I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part

4.1.a (1) Variety and multiplicity of interruptive moments

We start with the formal characteristics of the interruptions in our data. In the sermons we analysed, interventions happen in a broad variety of expressions. That is a first conclusion: there is no uniformity in interruption, neither rhetorical nor theological. We hear preachers warn, threaten, seek confrontation, banter, ridicule, seduce, try to convince, sometimes even beg hearers to avert something destructive, to repent or to make other choices.

An interesting observation from our data is that it is not only through confrontation that interruptions happen. Interrupting is wider and deeper than simply confronting. The data show a variety and graduality of interrupting moments: a variety in rhetorics, theology, homiletical strategies, and cultural modes of expressing dissent. Interruption can also happen through velvet means of influencing hearers, for instance through troubling their consciences, through making hearers discontent with their present life, through picturing salutary alternatives, through acts of prayer in the sermon. In contexts marked by enmity, the proclamation of grace can even be interruptive. The interruptive moment in preaching should not be reduced to a single form and should not be equated with specific, often more aggressive, forms of rhetorics.

Another formal observation concerns the multiplicity of interruptions. In a single sermon, various moments of interruption may occur. When we analyse a sermon, we should not isolate certain confrontational incidents in it, but we should make an analysis of the entire interruptive strategy traceable in the sermon. Through such a more comprehensive approach, the intrinsic layeredness of the concept of interruption will come to the fore. In our analysis, this interruptive strategy is filled with paradoxical tensions. In the interruptive strategies, there are moments of discontinuity and continuity, of critique of others and self-critique, of rejecting things but thereby stimulating transformation and renewal. Interrupting is a complex and often paradoxical moment in preaching, filled with these generative tensions. In our conclusion, interventions in sermons become powerful when solidarity, self-critique and a transformative aim are not absent but integral to the way a preacher intervenes.

4.1.a (2) Quality of interruptive moments: the juxtaposing of worldviews

Given this multiplicity and diversity of forms, is there nonetheless a common theological rationale observable in the various interruptive moments? The basic

theological tension we discovered, underlying the different forms, is the juxtaposing of worldviews. The theological core of the interruptions is this fundamental opposition of dissimilar and competing worldviews that forms the infrastructure of the interruption. In the prophetic moment, competing worldviews collide. To be more precise: In the sermons, a driving force is operative, a pushing factor we call ‘catalytic dynamic’. In the interruptive moments, the sermon catalyses into dispute. In this regard, the prophetic moment can be seen as a *fluid* moment. Exposing destructiva, our first concept, catalyses into the interruption of dominant discourses, our second concept. Interrupting is the active side of discerning and exposing. In a lecture on the prophets, delivered to a congregation in Barcelona, Bonhoeffer spoke about ‘das Böse deutlicher machen und heraustreiben’¹ and in our data, we recognise this dual moment of discerning (read: *deutlicher machen*) catalysing into interruption (read: *heraustreiben*).

The sharpest interruptions, accordingly, happen in sermons where different worldviews tend to become monolithic opposites. In the dispute with national-socialism, with apartheid, with the denial of civil rights to black citizens, in confrontations between church and state, and between perseverance and apostasy, sharp homiletical clashes occur in our data. In these incidents, the interruptive moments come close to being ruptures. Preachers do sometimes approach this extreme form of confrontation, predominantly in the form of a threat. ‘If you do not repent, God will break the backbone of your power, America’, Martin Luther King exclaimed in his sermon on Vietnam and Bonhoeffer could speak about the ‘zerstörende Gott’ and evoked anticipatory images of the destruction of Jerusalem. Qua content, qua rhetorical strategy and qua theology, a frontal joust happens in these fragments with incendiary words.

4.1.a (3) Generativity of the interruptive moments

But there is *graduality* in our data. There are also examples where this confrontation of worldviews is less categorical, more tentative, and rather inclusive. We see forms of interruption in the mode of a communal, societal ‘searching discourse’. In these instances, the theological rationale of continuity functions alongside the mode of discontinuity and critique. Preachers can still pose disturbing questions, but through a, what we could call, *Wahrheitsfindung per Diskurs*.² In a fragment from Rowan Williams’ Christmas sermon from 2011 (see below), we show how Williams, in a critical, interruptive mode, reframes public discourse, how he interrupts, but in continuity with his context. This generative tension between

1 ‘Die Tragödie des Prophetentums und ihr bleibender Sinn’, in: Bonhoeffer, D., *Barcelona, Berlin, Amerika. 1928-1931. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke. Bd 10)*, (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1991), p 290.

2 Kuhlmann, S., *Martin Niemöller. Zur prophetischen Dimension der Predigt*. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2008), p 106.

continuity and discontinuity is important. In the same sermons where preachers come near to moments of rupture, moments of continuity occur as well. Passages expressing serious threats, are alternated by passages of inclusivity and communal hope. Tutu could express harsh critique on prime minister Vlok and the apartheid regime, but he could end the same sermon with a doxological fragment on reconciliation and freedom for all. These are interruptions in which continuity and discontinuity are held together in a generative tension.³

In our reconstruction, interruptions in these sermons are filled with paradoxical tensions. When we analyse, 'unravel' the interruptions in our data, we see the internal fizzling tensions *in* the interruption coming to the surface. There is the tension between discontinuity/critique and continuity/taking part in a shared discourse (see above). There is also a second tension, between interrupting and being interrupted. It is a question to be analysed in each sermon apart, about who is the interrupter and who is the interrupted. Is, in the sermon, God the interrupter, or the scriptural text, or the preacher? On whose side is the preacher and the congregation? Is the preacher, and the congregation, just as interrupted by this God or by this text? Is the church on the interruptive side, as a kind of *kritiese kollaborateur* to its context?⁴ Or is the church not critical at all, but all too collaborative, and thus in need of being interrupted? In our data, the interruptive moments in sermons meander through these different tensions: Critique is alternated by solidarity, or: dissent turns out to be filled with the motive of communality and shared pain. Critique addressed to others is alternated by self-critique, or: *others* are not blamed for a crisis, but in the sermon, the blame is *internalised*, and addressed to the church herself.

A final, third internal tension we observed in interruptive moments is between dissent and transformation. The paradox is that the *veto* in interruptions intends to serve the renewal of the shared discourse. In systematic terms: interruptive moments have a kind of *elenctic* quality. Preachers expose and analyse what damages human life and faith in God. We call this the pole of dissent, or even reprobation. But when we analyse these rebuttals in the entirety of the sermon, the *transformative* aim becomes visible. In the same sermon, where Tutu can

3 See the informative definition of Boeve: 'Interruption signifies an intrusion that does not destroy the narrative but problematises the advance thereof. It disturbs the anticipated sequence of sentences following one after another, and disarms the security devices that protect against disruption. Interruption refers to that 'moment', that 'instance', which cannot occur without the narrative, and yet cannot be captured by the narrative. It involves the intrusion of an otherness that only momentarily but nonetheless intensely halts the narrative sequence. Interruptions cause the narrative to collide with its own borders. They do not annihilate the narrative; rather they draw attention to its narrative character and force an opening toward the other within the narrative.' Boeve, L., *God Interrupts History. Theology in a Time of Upheaval*. (London: Continuum 2007), p 42.

4 Cilliers, J., 'Skribbeskouing en Oorredings-retoriek: Perspektiewe op Performatiewe Prediking', in *Acta Theologica* 2009: 1, p 6.

interrupt his hearers by exposing the damage that apartheid causes in society, the church and in their own lives, he can convince his hearers of the salutary effects of *koinonia*, making them discontent with separateness and enmity, inviting them to alternative ways of believing and living. The focus is principally on transformation. In the interruptive moment, this rejection and transformation are related, intertwined, interruption being the negative side of a transformational aim. Through this analysis, we have come to understand the interruptions as dialogical moments in the sermons with paradoxical strength. The paradox is that interruption intends to *serve* the community.⁵ The paradox is that the interrupter, through being critical, acts in solidarity with the interrupted.

It seems to be counterintuitive to expect interruptions in a Christmas sermon, but in Rowan Williams' Christmas sermon of 2011, we encounter them in an original and generative way.⁶ As we learn from our analysis: there is a dialogical logic in interventions. When we unravel the interruptive incidents in this sermon, a fascinating world of tensions and paradoxes comes alive, and the richness of the interruptions becomes evident. The story behind this sermon: In the summer of 2011, disruptive riots, starting in Tottenham, troubled the major English cities. Riots with a background in poverty, joblessness, and huge societal and racial tensions. 2011 was also the year in which it was still unpredictable how the economic crisis in Europe would develop. This crisis posed serious questions concerning the ethics and the accountability of the financial sector, and maybe even about the structure and integrity of a whole society.

In this year, Williams, the archbishop, preached at Christmas about answerability. In Christ, the Word, 'things are held together,' Williams says, and in this specific life, 'a question is addressed to us,' a question asking for a response. In this homiletical move, the interruptive strategy of the sermon begins, a strategy that meanders through the entire sermon: 'In how you respond to this question, it is shown who you really are, what is deepest in you, what means most.' Williams creates a tension of alternatives: 'The truth is still an uncompromising one: if you cannot or will not respond, you are walking away from reality into a realm of trackless fogbound falsehood.' 'Are you on the side of the life that lives in Jesus, the life of grace and truth, of unstinting generosity and unsparing honesty, the only life that gives life to others? Or are you on your own side, on the side of disconnection, rivalry, the hoarding of gifts, the obsession with control?' In this juxtaposing of alternatives, we recognise both reprobation/dissent and transformation. It is reprobation *serv*ing

5 See for a parallel concerning the paradox of interruption serving continuity, Jörg Jeremias' paragraph on the prophets, in which he claims that the continuity of the uniqueness of Israel's faith and 'Gottesvorstellung' is hardly thinkable without the interruptions of the prophets: Jeremias, J., *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2015), p 123.

6 In the edited collection of sermons, the sermon is called 'The Words of Life, the Words of Prayer.' Williams, R., *Choose Life. Christmas and Easter Sermons in Canterbury Cathedral*. (London: Bloomsbury 2013), pp 89-97.

transformation. The sermon is intended to be a mirror, showing, and rejecting the damaging features of a society that runs the risk of falling apart and it is exactly that disintegration that wants to be interrupted and transformed. There is critique and even anger, but it is part of a communal quest for societal well-being.

The search for a communal 'language to respond' is dominant in the sermon. Williams reflects on the Book of Common Prayer, (of which the 350th anniversary was to be celebrated in 2012), and characterises it as a 'Book that shaped the minds and the hearts of millions, a Book with the ambition to define what a whole society said to God together'. Williams does not deny the possible flaws of the Book, but also points to the salutary interruptive effects it has had on society: 'Those who prayed the Prayer Book, remember, included those who abolished the slave trade and put an end to child labour, because of what they had learned in this book and in their Bibles about the honour of God and God's children'. The theme of the sermon is about finding a public and societal response to God's question.

The sermon ends with the concentration of all these themes in a confrontational question with a prophetic echo: 'The most pressing question we now face, we might well say, is who and where we are as a society. Bonds have been broken, trust abused and lost. Whether it is an urban rioter mindlessly burning down a small shop that serves his community, or a speculator turning his back on the question of who bears the ultimate cost for his acquisitive adventures in the virtual reality of today's financial world, the picture is of atoms spinning apart in the dark. And into that dark, the Word of God has entered, in love and judgement, and has not been overcome; in the darkness, the question sounds as clear as ever, to each of us and to our church and our society: "Britain, where are you?" Where are the words we can use to answer?'

Throughout this sermon, Williams exposes the centrifugal forces, that damage a society. He makes aware of the complicity of guilt in this crisis, a complicity of both the urban rioter and the banker, as they both damage their community. This exposure catalyses into interruptive questioning: 'Where are you?, Who are you?, Who are we?, How do we respond to God?' Also, the axis of 'interrupting and being interrupted' shows interesting features: There is a broad sense of addressability in the sermon. It is society as an inclusive community that is addressed and questioned. Remarkably, the preacher does not explicitly position himself as interrupter. The pronoun 'I' does not occur once in the sermon, whereas the pronoun 'we' occurs over thirty times. Through this rhetorical structure, it is left open who exactly poses the interruptive questions. The effect is that the sermon becomes a resonating space, in which the focus is not on the interrupter but on the interruptive questions that are posed.

Thus, we see in these interruptions the generative tensions operative we earlier detected: between critique and solidarity, between interrupting and being interrupted, between reprobation/dissent and transformation. The interruptive stream in this Christmas sermon meanders alongside the poles of these different tensions. In the next paragraph, we elaborate on this observation. Instead of meandering, we may also use the word 'attuning'. What happens in these sermons is that a, conscious or subconscious, process of attunement is operative, through which preachers make choices about what must be said, about what is wise to be said, about what is possible to be said and about how things should be said. The richest interventions integrate all these dimensions (4.2.a).

4.2.a Attuning: Necessity, responsibility, sensorium, and strategy

In this paragraph, we focus on the inductive character of interruptions and on their particularity, that is: on the particular, circumstantial story that interruptions have. In the interruptions, preachers respond to a cluster of conflicting interests and responsibilities, that are characteristic of their contextual situation. They respond to it and in their interruptions, they also integrate these characteristics. We selected four factors that compose the particular character of interventions: necessity, responsibility, disposition, and strategy.

1 Necessity. We start with an example from Desmond Tutu's life. We already cited Johannes van der Ven, who wrote about the non-negotiable negative experiences that lie at the core of Tutu's preaching. Seen from that specifically inductive angle, Tutu's preaching has grown out of particular, empirical experiences in his own biography, in his office as minister and archbishop, in his experiences as a *Zeitgenosse*. Through these experiences, a conviction grew of 'what must be said, now', of what is the 'necessity of this time and moment'. This 'necessity' is not *static*. We see it change. For instance, when violence among black South Africans reached dramatic climaxes, new 'necessities' for Tutu arose to address that type of violence too. It is our observation that interruptions in all the sermons grow out of similar experiences. We could make a similar reconstruction of Bonhoeffer's development and experiences, out of which his urgent preaching developed, especially in Berlin in the early 1930s. The interruptions in our data can be analysed and understood in the way how they respond to the particular destructiva of their context. More poignantly put: In our data, we see that the mode of the interruption is correlative to the nature of the destructiva. In totalitarian contexts, when the relationship between church and state is under huge pressure, but also in situations where the church is internally weakened, where apostasy is a real threat, stronger antagonistic confrontations tend to happen in the sermons. Preachers feel a strong necessity to speak out in these contexts. This is one of the basic coordinates in the interruptive moment: necessity. But there are other coordinates that decisively influence the shape of each interruption.

2 Responsibility. A second coordinate concerns the responsibility of the preacher: What can be said? What is responsible to say, given the specific situation? Can outspokenness and candour in sermons have destructive effects? While totalitarian threats can provoke outspoken forms of homiletical resistance, these contexts simultaneously limit the communicative freedom of preachers in serious ways. Who will have to bear the costs of explicit or aggressive words spoken in the church? Aggressive words may satisfy the inner demands of the preacher as ‘being prophetic’, but they can have disastrous consequences. When Tutu spoke at the funeral of Steve Biko, surrounded by thousands of enraged listeners, how could he express their legitimate grievance and anger, without fuelling it to such a degree that it might cause more bloodshed? What was ‘possible and wise’ for bishop Krusche to say, in religious services where the words were recorded by Stasi informants? The modes of the interruptions in the sermons of our study are not only determined by ‘what must be said’, but also by ‘what can be said’. These two coordinates, necessity and responsibility, play a fundamental role in each interruption in our data.

3 Disposition. The third coordinate we see operative in the interventions, is the coordinate of the theological *sensorium* of the preacher, the hearers, and their tradition. It is our observation that the sermons we studied are grounded in, and nurtured by particular theological, homiletical, and cultural traditions, all with their own *sensorium*. All these traditions have particular theological focuses and allergies, originating stories and dominant theological themes. These traditions sharpen the preachers’ insight, as well as limit it. These traditions also enable specific forms of interrupting, while they problematise or even prohibit others. Richard Lischer, to give an example, called Martin Luther King’s preaching ‘an electrifying moment, but only a moment in which he merged his voice with the tradition’s continual cry.’⁷ It is impossible to understand the sermons of King, and his often raucous interruptions, without acknowledging this defining role of his and his hearer’s tradition, Lischer argued. King’s understanding of Scripture, for instance, was mediated to him by this tradition, the sensitivity to the societal themes of racial, economic, and political injustice, he inherited from this tradition. It is a fascinating observation to be developed, that every homiletical-theological tradition has ‘its own cry’, its own historical and theological disposition. In the interruptions, these dispositions of each particular tradition play a formative and traceable role.

4 Strategy. A fourth coordinate in the process of attuning is the factor of strategy. In the Afro-American homiletical tradition, there is an interesting illustration concerning this motive of strategy. Sustainers and Reformers, in their struggle with

7 Lischer, R., *The Preacher King. Martin Luther King Jr. And The Word That Moved America*. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995), p 37.

racism, applied different strategies of protest and interruption.⁸ In the 19th century, Sustainers were aware that public protest might in fact worsen the situation of many black parishioners in their daily lives, and thus they communicated through forms of layered language. At a cursory reading, it was language that condoned the situation, but on a deeper level, the injustice of the circumstances was acknowledged and the spiritual resistance of the hearers was nurtured and strengthened. Reformers opted for a more overtly and explicit strategy of dissent and protest, more aggressively pushing for reforms, while at the same time running the risk of worsening their hearers' societal position. 'Sustainers' always ran the risk of being too assimilative, while 'Reformers' balanced on the dangerous edge of escalation. We see in this example the strategic considerations that preachers have to deal with. The interruptions are not only about truth and audacity (1), about responsibility and wisdom (2), about disposition, that is: being able to see and to say (3), they are also about effectiveness, about considering what kind of interruptions may be counter-productive (4). It is about 'catching a fish without stirring the water', as a Javanese dictum says, or about 'raising a storm to enforce changes', as an Afro-American spiritual reads.

The analytical point we want to make here is that in interruptions a conscious or subconscious process of *attuning* is taking place. Preachers integrate in their interruptions the different constituent factors in their search for the right 'tune', for the right balance in their interruptions. Factors like necessity, contextual responsibility, disposition, and rhetorical strategy are adjusted to each other, and through it a dialogical strategy of intervention emerges. We see preachers on the one hand stretch for the limits of their communicative freedom, being urged to speak the truth and bear the costs of it, while on the other hand, they are aware of the delicacy and the danger of the contextual situation, for their hearers and themselves, and in it, they search for an effective and wise mode. The interruptive moment is not an 'oracular moment', it is not an isolated moment of critique or anger, but the interruptions are part of a sermon, spread out over the entire sermon, integrated in it, and attuned to other factors. Maybe the format of the sermon itself forces the interruption to become integrated in a multi-dimensional act of communication and dialogue, in which truth-telling has its place, besides motives of effectiveness, transformation, and hope. Attuning is the act of synchronising these often conflicting factors into interruptions that have theological integrity, because of their correspondence to truth, wisdom, tradition, and strategy.

In the next two paragraphs we show how these theoretical observations function in two concrete sermons, namely a sermon from Rowan Williams, held in Zimbabwe (4.1.b), and a sermon taken from the DDR context, from Werner Krusche, held in Magdeburg (4.2.b).

8 Lischer, R., *Ibid.* p 31.

II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part

Summary: In this second part of the chapter on the intervening quality in prophetic moments, we summarise and analyse a sermon from Rowan Williams, held in Zimbabwe, in a context marked by political tension and by societal divisions (4.1.b). We analyse William's interruptive strategy in this specific sermon and we show how in the entire sermon a juxtaposing of rival narratives and of rival practices is functioning. We explicate how the exposure of destructiva catalyses into interruptions, and how there is a meandering movement discernible in the sermon from confrontation to self-critique, from a critical call to change to the inclusive hope of transformation. In the second paragraph, we discuss a sermon from Werner Krusche, held in the context of the DDR (4.2.b). In this sermon on Jeremiah 29, held on the occasion of the 40th commemoration of the destruction of Dresden by the allied forces, (a delicate public moment of anger, pain, and soul-searching), we analyse how Krusche interrupted several dominant discourses. We show how the layers of necessity, responsibility and effectiveness are traceable in the interruptions, and how they are attuned to each other in the sermon. We argue that in their interruptions, preachers search for theological and contextual integrity and that the power of the interruption is in the attunement of these several tensions. In this paragraph, we also develop our thoughts on the disposition/*sensorium* of theological traditions. Theological traditions influence preachers in how they perceive and interpret realities, in how they response to it, and when, why, and how they intervene in it.

4.1.b Sermon illustrating 'Interrupting dominant discourses' Rowan Williams, sermon on Matthew 22.1-14 (Harare, 2011)

1 Introduction of the sermon

There was a hostile atmosphere in the days preceding Rowan Williams' visit to Zimbabwe.⁹ Williams, in his office as archbishop of Canterbury, was visiting Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and had requested a meeting with president Mugabe, but for a long time, it was uncertain whether he would be received by him. Since its independence in 1980, the former British colony was ruled by the political party of the ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic

9 Butt, R. and D. Smith, 'Rowan Williams takes Mugabe to task in Zimbabwe sermon', in: *The Guardian*, 9 october 2011; Butt and Smith called Williams' sermon a 'brave and possibly career-defining appearance'. See also: Laing A., 'Archbishop Rowan Williams warned over meeting with Mugabe', in: *The Telegraph*, 8 october 2011. See also 'Archbishop commends displaced Anglicans', in: www.anglicanjournal.com. For the text of the sermon see: www.rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org: 'Archbishop's sermon to the Anglicans in Zimbabwe', Sunday 9 october 2011.

Front), with Mugabe as its leader. Since the independence, complex political and societal decades had followed: Attempts for democracy were alternated by violent set-backs by ruling forces, attempts for forms of racial reconciliation were followed by periods of new racial tensions. Since the March 2002 elections, the United States, the Commonwealth, and the European Union had imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe, for serious violations of human rights. In 2009, after the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) under Morgan Tsvangirai had won a parliamentary majority, an agreement was reached to form a unity government between ZANU-PF and the MDC (with Mugabe as head of state and Tsvangirai as prime minister). When Williams held his sermon in 2011, new elections were ordered for the following year, elections that were feared for the intimidation and possible military interventions involved.

Mugabe's violent, factional politics had infiltrated the heart of Anglican ecclesiastical life in Zimbabwe. In 2007, the main Anglican Province of Central Africa and the worldwide Anglican Church had banished bishop Nolbert Kunonga from his office. Kunonga had been bishop of the Diocese of Harare since 1997 and had become progressively expressive of his support for Mugabe. He promoted a campaign for 'decolonising the church', preaching hatred against whites and promoting partisan politics from the pulpit. Kunonga had been calling Mugabe a 'prophet of God' and allegedly incited to pro-Mugabe violence during the chaotic presidential and parliamentary elections of 2008. According to Kunonga himself, his banishment was due to his protest against same-sex relationships in the Anglican church. The banishment caused a schism, politicising, and dividing the church in Zimbabwe, effectively giving rise to two Anglican churches in Zimbabwe: one loyal to the worldwide Anglican community, one loyal to Kunonga. Prior to Williams' visit, Kunonga effectuated a court ruling, giving him the right to evict school heads, teachers, and nursing staff at several Anglican institutions. The schism caused serious havoc for parishioners and clergy. There had been violence and intimidation. Worshippers loyal to the Anglican church had been beaten on their way to services, their places of worship, schools and bank accounts had been confiscated by Kunonga, tear gas had been fired into congregations critical of Kunonga. While Williams visited Zimbabwe, Kunonga organised a demonstration in the streets of Harare, calling the visit a 'crusade for gays', and Williams a 'civil servant of Britain', a 'representative of neo-colonialism'. When Williams tried to visit the Anglican Cathedral in Harare, he and his team were obstructed to enter the church property.

The same insulting tone was audible in the statement of Mugabe's spokesperson, George Charamba, when he made public that Williams was allowed to meet the president. His statement illustrates the tensions. The spokesperson said the

president ‘would want to know why the church of the British state has remained so loudly silent while the people of Zimbabwe were suffering from the illegal sanctions.’ And: ‘The second issue is that the president wants this man of God to clarify why the Anglican church thinks homosexuality is good for us and why it should be prescribed for us. The president thinks the archbishop will be polite enough to point to him that portion of the Great Book that sanctions homosexuality’. The tone was set for a tensed visit. During the visit, after the sermon we discuss below, Williams handed over to Mugabe a dossier with precise reports of the violence against Anglican parishioners and clergy and abuses of human rights in Zimbabwe.

The sermon was held at the Harare City Sports Centre, an old home for basketball matches, packed with more than 15,000 worshippers. Scripture readings were taken from Isaiah 25.6-12, notably verse 9 (‘When it happens, everyone will say, He is our God! We have put our trust in him, and he has rescued us’), and from the parable of the wedding banquet (Matthew 22.1-14, with accents on verse 10 ‘So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find).

2 Summary of the sermon

‘Jesus’ parable of the marriage feast is one of the most joyful and one of the most challenging of his stories’, Williams starts to say in the sermon, ‘and it speaks very directly to us as we gather today’. The parable gives ‘a picture of a great monarch who wants nothing but to invite people freely to feast with them’. This opening of the sermon is daring and promising. ‘The text speaks directly to us in our situation’, Williams promises his hearers, and it is daring statement, as it speaks in this volatile context about a certain ‘monarch’, and about a feast that is spoiled. The language in the opening of the sermon is, on the other hand, abundant. There is generosity and joy to be shared: ‘All the king wants is that his gifts should be received and that they should create joy’. This is a characterisation of God, Williams continues: ‘He pours out his gifts in the world – the gifts of natural resources, the gifts of human skills, the gifts of human love and understanding – and he invites us to use them so that together we may find joy, together we may grow in maturity, together we may be glad and grateful for each other’. Williams interprets God’s creation as an abundant resource, in which God prepared all the means for all human beings to flourish together.

But God’s purpose is not only joy, growth and communality, Williams adds, also justice: ‘Not an abstract idea of fairness, but a situation where every person has the fulfilment God desires for them, without interference from others who want – in Jesus’ own words – to shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against them’. Then Williams cites a grim and confrontative verse from Jesus: ‘“You lock the door to the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces, and you yourselves don’t go in, nor do you allow those who are trying to enter!” says Jesus to his enemies

in Mt 23.13'. In the opening paragraph, Williams created tension between generosity and greed, between hospitality and 'locking doors'. Consequently, in the development of this juxtaposition of virtues, Williams addresses the concrete circumstances of the Anglicans in Zimbabwe: 'You know very well, dear brothers and sisters, what it means to have doors locked in your faces, by those who claim the name of Christians and Anglicans. You know how those, by their greed and violence, have refused the grace of God, try to silence your worship and frustrate your witness in the churches and schools and hospitals of this country'.

This is, in our concepts: exposure catalysing into interruption. A preacher acknowledges and exposes suffering and destructiva, while at the same time he aims to intervene in it. The passage is filled with hope: 'But you also know what Jesus' parable teaches us so powerfully – that the will of God to invite people to his feast is so strong, that it can triumph even over these mindless and Godless assaults. Just as the Risen Jesus breaks through the locked doors of fear and suspicion, so he continues to call you and empower you in spite of all efforts to defeat you. And in the Revelation to John, the Lord proclaims that he has set before us an open door that no-one can shut. It is the door of his promise, the door of his mercy, the door into the feast of his Kingdom'. Williams develops the powerful metaphor of the 'open door' theologically and in a pastoral way. He recognises the power of this concept for this moment (further chapter 5: 'Recognising the Word'). He addresses hearers whose church buildings have been confiscated, the door of their church literally being locked for them, but the sermon talks about an 'open door no-one can shut'.

The interruptive mode in the sermon is crystallised in a direct appeal to 'our enemies and persecutors', to change. It is an interruptive, invitational and even inclusive call: 'In your faith and endurance, you have kept your eyes on that open door, when the doors of your own churches have been shut against you. You have discovered that it is not buildings that make a true church but the spiritual foundations in which your lives are built. And as we together give thanks for the open door God puts before us, we may even find the strength to say to our enemies and persecutors: "The door is open for you! Accept what God offers and turn away from the death-dealing folly of violence!"

In these first two paragraphs, Williams has positioned the basic theological and contextual coordinates of his sermon: generosity versus violence, a royal monarch versus guests who try to spoil the celebration. In the third paragraph, in a critical and dialogical passage, he develops the theme of God's generosity and human sin. The interruptive dimension in the sermon continues, but in the form of questioning: 'God has poured out his gifts in abundance: why must we human beings wreck and spoil these gifts by our sinfulness? God has given us the promise and hope of his mercy in Jesus Christ: Why is it so hard to admit mistakes and sins? How strange it is that we often behave – yes, even we who are Christians – as though we cannot survive unless we silence all voices of

challenge and criticism?': Williams is principally conversational in his style, in his preaching, theologising and leadership. Here we see a conversational/dialogical style of *interruption*. It is inclusive, including the speaker, it is pondering about a dark mystery nobody is excluded from: sin. There is sadness and lament in the conversation: 'God has given so many gifts to this land. It has the capacity to feed all its people, and more. Its mineral wealth is great. But we have seen years in which the land has not been used to feed people and lies idle; and we have begun to see how this mineral wealth can become a curse – as it so often has been in Africa, as people are killed and communities destroyed in the fight for diamonds that will forever be marked with the blood of the innocent'.

There is a kind of 'prophetic melancholy' in this passage, about the 'land lying idle', about blessings becoming a curse, about an abundant continent 'marked with the blood of the innocent'. The rhetorical style remains dialogical, but the confrontational questions are sharp: 'A few months ago, I was in Congo and saw and heard some of the tragedies that arose out of a war fuelled by greed for minerals. Can we hear the voice of our Creator crying to us – like the blood of Abel out of the ground itself – "Why will you turn my gifts into an excuse for bloodshed? Why will you not use what you have for the good of a community, not for private gain or political advantage?'. In the last sentences, the good hearer hears the questions for the 'monarch in residence', who is not mentioned by his name in this sermon: 'Do you use what you have, for the good of the community, or for private gain and political advantage?'

In the following paragraph, Williams deepens the critical atmosphere of the sermon, but first by becoming self-critical: 'No European can say these things without being aware of what one of my predecessors, Michael Ramsay, said about "the debt we owe to Africa" after generations of white rule. For a long period in this country, an anxious ruling class clung on to the power they had seized at the expense of the indigenous people and ignored their rights and their hopes for dignity and political freedom'. But Williams is not willing to be side-tracked by this compromising history, and he proceeds with a renewed attack and interruption: 'How tragic that this should be replaced by another kind of lawlessness, where so many live in daily fear of attack if they fail to comply with what the powerful require of them. As we together give thanks for the gifts of nature that God has given to us and the gifts of solidarity and the gift of freedom from foreign exploitation, can we stand together to say to all our political leaders and rulers, "Listen! Not only to the voice of those who suffer but to the voice of God himself, grieving over the way we ruin his creation, the voice of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, longing for his people to open their hearts to justice and peace and mercy". This is unconventional interruption: It is a question, a request to leaders and rulers, to 'listen', both to the voice of suffering people, but in and through that, to the voice of the suffering of God and Jesus. The preacher uncovers in this moment where, according to him, the voice of God can be heard in the present.

The final paragraph of the sermon is about the Eucharist, 'a feast in which all are fed with Christ's new life, in which there is no distinction of race, tribe or party'. Williams offers the Eucharist as a healing alternative, able to transcend divisions that violently tear communities apart. In this sermon, Williams defines the Eucharist as 'God's No to violence': 'What the church has to say to the society around it, whether here or in Britain, is not to advance a political programme but to point to the fact of this new creation, this fellowship of justice and joy, this universal feast. It is on the basis of that vision that we urge all people to say no to violence, especially as the next election approaches in this country; to discover that deep reverence for each person that absolutely forbids us from treating them as if their welfare did not matter, from abusing or attacking them'. The interruption is marked both by reprobation/dissent and by transformation: 'We need to feed ourselves and most specially to feed our young people with such things, to hold before us that great new possibility opened up by God for our minds to be transformed, to be excited not by the false thrills of violence and bloody conflict, by the overheated language of party conflict, but by the hope of joy and reconciliation'.

The sermon ends with an example of what this Eucharistic community means: by a sharing of gratitude for what God has given in the other, and by sharing the lament of suffering and injustice that the 'other parts of the body are experiencing'. The gratitude Williams expresses, is mainly concerned with the dignity of every human being, according to him shown by the Zimbabwean church, especially in the catastrophe of the AIDS epidemic. 'You have also been faithful to those who suffer from the HIV pandemic, which has ravaged a whole generation; and, like Christians elsewhere in Africa, you have been at the forefront of challenging the stigma that can make the suffering so much more bitter and can prevent people from facing the problem honestly. You know that the truth will make you free. To tell the truth about the sufferings and fears people endure, but also to tell the truth about their value in the sight of God – this is the most effective way of banishing stigma and prejudice and superstition'.

In the final words of the sermons, Williams shares in the suffering of the hearers ('Day by day, you have to face injustice and the arrogance of "false brethren" as St Paul would call them'), he thanks for the example they have set for the worldwide church, an example of patience, generosity and endurance, and he anticipates on the future celebration of the great banquet, which can be foretasted in the communal Eucharist to which he invites the hearers, closing with the prayer: 'What can we say or pray except to cry out with our Lord, "Whoever has ears, let them hear!"

3 Analytical remarks

In the theoretical part of this chapter (4.1.a), we defined that in the interruptions a juxtaposing of worldviews takes place. In the interruptions, rival narratives collide, two worlds of practices, virtues and beliefs are shown in their contrariness

and incompatibility. Juxtapositions are spread out over Williams' entire sermon: the contrast between joy and greed, between generosity and 'shutting the door in your face', between colonial violence and the suffering of earlier generations, between inclusivity and partisanship, between marking HIV-patients as being cursed versus showing them God's love.

We selected this sermon to show three things: 1 The multiplicity of perspectives discernible *in* the interruptions, 2 the generative character of the interruptions, and finally 3 how the joy of the Eucharist can have an interruptive effect, how prophetic moments can also originate in joy.

1 In an early phase of this research, we decided not to study *incidents* in sermons, but to analyse sermons in their *entirety and unity* (2.3.2). Our focus in this research is on the rhetorical strategy of the entire sermon, on theological and homiletical patterns, on 'moves and structures' as David Buttrick called it. When it comes to analysing the interruptions in sermons, this decision turned out to be fruitful. Interruptions are not isolated incidents, they are spread out over sermons in various forms and in various degrees and they are intrinsically related to the other parts in the sermon.

In Williams' sermon, this multiplicity of interruptions is obvious. First of all, Williams tries to interrupt the 'mindless and Godless assaults' on Anglican worshippers, and subsequently, he tries to expose and interrupt the economic injustices of those 'who refuse to share the fruits of the land'. In all these interruptions, the 'monarchs in residence', read: Mugabe and Kunonga, are never absent. This is a clear front in the sermon. But besides these concrete addressees, the sermon moves to the broader theme of God's generosity and human sin. The preacher begins to talk about 'we' ('Why must we human beings wreck and spoil these gifts by our sinfulness?'). The preacher is not only an interrupter, but he acknowledges the communal and inclusive need to be interrupted too. The interruptive strategy moves from concrete confrontations with 'certain others', to all the hearers, to 'we, human beings'. In the next section, the interruption meanders to another dimension again, namely to being emphatically self-critical. Williams quotes his predecessor Ramsey about the debt 'we owe to Africa'. Here, we notice another interesting change of 'we', likely to refer to a collective of colonial, and British, supremacy. But the self-critique does not hinder Williams to return to his earlier overtly confrontational mode. The sermon then moves again to a new intervention: 'How tragic that this should be replaced by another kind of lawlessness, where so many live in daily fear of attack if they fail to comply with what the powerful require of them'. In the final paragraph, another fascinating form of interruption occurs. Williams praises the Zimbabwean believers for

interrupting the societal stigma on sufferers of HIV/AIDS: 'Telling them about their value in God's eyes is the most effective way of banishing stigma and prejudice and superstition,' Williams remarks.

When we consider the several interruptive modes in the sermon, we see the complex and multifarious character of the concept of interruption in this sermon. As we have shown, the complexity of interruptive moments lies in their ability to *integrate* discontinuity/dissent *and* continuity/solidarity, critique *and* self-critique, reprobation *and* transformation. To put it differently: in this cluster of interruptions, a multiplicity of perspectives is operative. The sermon is not a single-minded requisitory, it is not an apodictic argument of someone against something (without any form of self-critique or historical consciousness). This sermon is not *partisan* in that way, but deeply aware that no participant in this discourse is excluded from critique. In the second phase of our research, we selected a sermon from a pluralistic context, because we were interested to see how a pluralism of perspectives would (or would not) influence the modes of the interruptions. What we see in this sermon, is that a multiplicity of perspectives broadens the interruptions, but does not soften them.

In this concrete instance, the sermon develops out of a *parable*. In Williams' understanding, parables are mini narratives containing patterns of challenge and change, loss and recovery. Parables invite listeners to discover how these themes of change and challenge apply to their lives. In Williams' own words: Parables 'crystallise how people decide for or against self-destruction, for or against newness of life, acceptance, relatedness.'¹⁰ Parables are miniatures containing the tension of conversion, containing the contrast between greed and joy, or: between violence and inclusivity. This sermon can be seen as an extrapolation of these theological themes from the parable into the context of the hearers. The sermon is a searching and discovering movement of where and with whom these themes may resonate. Consequently, critique or judgment is not a simple matter of condemnation or affirmation, but it is a complex process of interaction and reflection, searching where the 'crisis in the parable' becomes the 'critique in the sermon'. Because of this principal priority of *Krisis* over *Kritik*, the interruption in the sermon meanders to different fronts.¹¹

10 See Jensen, M., 'Krisis? Kritik?: Judgment and Jesus in the Theology of Rowan Williams', in: Russell, Matheson (ed), *On Rowan Williams. Critical essays*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers 2009), pp 78-79

11 'Williams thus offers what might be described as a 'judgment Christology', a Christology that is offered as an ever critical and unsettling point against which human persons and cultures – and even the church itself – are to be measured, and by which they are to be opened up to the new. The person of Jesus is the eye of the storm, as it were.' Jensen, M., *Ibid.* p 72.

2 A second observation on this sermon is the generative character of this interruptive speech. Critique is not the end of a discourse, but a catalyst for renewal. Contexts are to be opened up to the new. It is even in the reprobational incidents, when Williams harshly condemns the assaults on church-goers and when he expresses his disgust over violence, the rejection is still transformational in intention: 'The door is open for you! Accept what God offers and turn away from the death-dealing folly of violence'. Williams' intention is not only to interrupt the persons who assault, he also wants to interrupt the self-destruction and the refusal of God's grace *in the assaulters themselves*, inviting them to change. The whole sermon, in all its dimensions, is infused by this priority of the generosity of God, and the interruptions serve to make that joy available. The interruptive moment resists something, in order to make room for alternatives and the reprobational aspect is a function in the regenerative goal of the sermon.¹² A destructive narrative that rules a context is interrupted to make room for an alternative narrative and for alternative ways to approach communal life. In this dialectical dynamic of interruption and being interrupted no one stays unchanged.¹³

3 As a final observation, we notice the importance of the Eucharist in this sermon. In Williams' explanation of what the Eucharist means, we recognise the earlier analysis of the juxtaposing of worldviews and its practices as the essence of the interruptive moment. The main contrast in this sermon is between an Eucharistic mode of communal living versus narratives and practices of greed, violence, and sectarian thinking. This contrast is at the heart of the parable and the sermon. The Eucharist is the 'sign of God's purpose for us all', Williams stresses, 'in which there is no distinction of race, tribe, or party', in which 'there is no place for violence or retaliation', 'it is not to advance a political programme', and 'even our bitterest enemies still have a place in this peace if they will only turn and be saved'. Note Williams' stressing that both violence as well as the counter-violence of retaliation, (which was a potential risk for the hearers), do not have a place at this table. Interestingly, the joy of the Eucharist functions as the impulse for transformation. In his enthronement sermon, Williams had already said that the priestly and prophetic function of the church originate in this joy: 'The church of the future, I believe, will do both its prophetic and its pastoral work effectively only if it is concerned first with gratitude and joy; orthodoxy flows from this, not the other way around, and we don't solve our deepest problems just by better

12 DeWet has written about prophetic speech as a 'regenerative event', see DeWet, F.W., 'The DNA of prophetic speech', in: *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological studies*, vol 70/2 (2014).

13 'For Williams, when the church comes to interpret the world through its foundational narratives, the very act of interpreting affects the narratives as well as the world. This kind of reflection is generative in a further sense: namely, as we discover what the text may become and as we also discover the world afresh through that text'. (...) Thus, the church is exposed to a judgment, even as it holds out a judgment. In judging the world, by its confrontation of the world with its own dramatic Scripture, the Church also judges itself. Jensen, M., *Ibid.* pp 74-75

discipline, but by better discipleship, a fuller entry into the ultimate joy of Jesus' life' (further 7.2.b).¹⁴

Applied to the theme of our study: Prophetic speech can also originate in joy. More precisely, the interruptive moment in this sermon grows out of a reality of joy and abundance. There are also non-negotiable *positive* experiences. It is from the perspective of joy and God's generosity, the contrasts of greed and violence become non-negotiably negative. Rhys Bezzant stressed that Williams' ecclesiology is a 'fascinating rehearsal of the theological themes of gift and process, with the sacraments as their conjunction.'¹⁵ In this sermon, we see that theology operative, in placing the Eucharist at the core of the life of the church, the Eucharist as a regenerative practice that has its effect on the life of hearers.

In the next paragraph, we turn to a second way of characterising interrupting. In our research journey, we were not only interested in how interruptions happen in pluralistic contexts, but also if and how they were possible in contexts where voicing critique is hardly possible. In the next paragraph, we turn to the context of the DDR with the question of 'how a preacher in that specific context can (or cannot) interrupt dominant discourses.'

4.2.b Sermon illustrating 'Attuning: Necessity, responsibility, strategy and sensorium': Werner Krusche, sermon on Jeremiah 29.4-14a (Magdeburg, 1985)

1 Introduction of the sermon

Interruptions in sermons have their own story, logic, and architecture. Before analysing this specific sermon,¹⁶ we make it more accessible by explaining the contextual circumstances, and by introducing the preacher. In 1954, after he had finished his dissertation on the Holy Spirit in the theology of John Calvin, Werner Krusche and his wife Muchi Stoevesandt heard the plea from East German bishops to young West German ministers, to join and serve the church in the DDR. They, Krusche and his wife, responded to the call: 'The bishop called and so we came', Krusche discloses in the sermon below. 'It was a decisive moment in my life', he later explained in an interview.¹⁷ In the same year, he was ordained as minister in

14 See also: Shortt, R., *Rowan's Rule. The Biography of the Archbishop*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton 2008), p 261.

15 Bezzant, R., 'The Ecclesiology of Rowan Williams', in: Russell, M. (ed), *On Rowan Williams. Critical essays*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers 2009), p 24.

16 'Predigt am 10. 2. 1985 (Sexagesimae) in der Kreuzkirche zu Dresden', in: Krusche, W., *Und Gott redete mit seinem Volk. Predigten aus den achtziger Jahren*. (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag Stuttgart 1990), pp 66-75.

17 Findeis, H. /D. Pollack. *Selbstbewahrung oder Selbstverlust. Bischöfe und Repräsentanten der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR über ihr Leben. 17 Interviews*. (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag 1999), p 214.

the *Auferstehungskirche* in Dresden. The years to come were industrious, complex, and burdened, both on a personal and ecclesiastical level. In the early 1950s, the attacks on the 'young church' were fierce. The church was seen as a 'Spionage-Organisation', leading church figures were harassed, Christians were ostracised in schools and in their working environment.¹⁸ Krusche became a leading theologian in the *Evangelische Kirche* in the DDR. In 1966, he became a lecturer in the theological seminary of Dresden, later in Leipzig, and in 1968, he was ordained as bishop of the church province of Saxony. In the period 1981-1983, Krusche was president of the BEK (*Bundes Evangelischer Kirchen in der DDR*) and in this function, spokesperson of the church in meetings, discussions, and confrontations with state officials. Krusche, his wife and children, learned what it meant to live under the various degrees of pressure and intimidation. This would leave none of them unscathed.¹⁹

Krusche was in his mid-thirties when he came to Dresden, but he was no *rookie* to life. The incisions in the German history of the 20th century were inscribed in his own biography. As a youth, he had felt the pressure to join the *Hitlerjugend*, he had served in the Wehrmacht as an *Ostfront Flakartillerist*, he got shot and was wounded, his hand was barely saved from amputation and his recovery took until the end of the war. In the post-war years, as a student of theology, he found himself in the midst of a complex societal mood, the first troubled steps of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* of a severely traumatised nation. He heard Niemöller preach, was highly impressed by his claim that only the confession of guilt would open up the future for Germany, he had oecumenical experiences of both disdain to Germans as well as of evangelical gestures of renewed communality of Christians in Europe. All these experiences, combined with his academic abilities, qualified him to take part in the leadership of the church. Krusche, for example, was important in developing the notion of the 'ideological diaspora' of the churches in the DDR,²⁰ he worked hard to make it theologically understandable what 'Kirche im Sozialismus' could and should imply, and later he would take part

18 Ratzmann, W., *Diaspora als Leitbegriff der ostdeutschen Landeskirchen. Ein praktisch-theologischer Blick in die kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*. (Theologisches Forschungskolleg, Universität Erfurt 2011).

19 Krusche, W., *Ich werden nie mehr Geige spielen können. Erinnerungen* (Vorwort Richard von Weiszäcker). (Stuttgart: Radius-Verlag 2007), see especially pp 233-253.

20 Krusche, W., 'Die Gemeinde Jesu Christi auf dem Wege in die Diaspora.' Vortrag vor der Synode der Kirchenprovinz Sachsen. In: Krusche, W., *Verheißung und Verantwortung. Orientierungen auf dem Weg der Kirche*. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1990), pp 94-113. Ratzmann writes about this lecture: 'Der Vortrag von Werner Krusche hatte eine ausgesprochen starke Wirkung. Das mag schon an der Person des Magdeburger Bischofs gelegen haben, auf dessen theologische Kompetenz und politische Haltung sich viele Christen gern verließen. Aber es lag wohl auch an dem gegebenen Kairos dieses Zeitpunktes, dass die 'Diaspora' als hilfreicher theologischer Deutebegriff verstanden wurde, der die forsch missionarischen Töne sinnvoll zu ergänzen schien.' See: Ratzmann, W., *Diaspora als Leitbegriff der ostdeutschen Landeskirchen. Ein praktisch-theologischer Blick in die kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*. (Erfurt: Theologisches Forschungskolleg Universität Erfurt 2011).

in the *Montaggebete* in Dresden and Leipzig, prayer meetings that ultimately had their significance in the implosion of the DDR.

Beatrice de Graaf, in her study on the relationship between churches in the DDR and the Netherlands, called Krusche (whom she also interviewed), ‘independent, a man of strong faith, (...) seen by the authorities as reactionary and recalcitrant.’²¹ In the turbulent post-DDR discourse on the role of the church, there have been critical debates about the role of church leaders in the DDR.²² Krusche, though, has been widely recognised for the faithful manner in which he searched for a route for the church in these compromising circumstances.²³ Eberhard Jüngel expressed his admiration for this sincere, audacious leader of the church.²⁴

2 Summary of the sermon

The sermon we selected to illustrate the attuning competence of preachers in their interruptions, was held in Dresden, in 1985. Krusche opens the sermon by referring to a remembrance of the destruction of Magdeburg, on February the 13th, 1945, commemorated that year. In Dresden, similar remembrance ceremonies were planned. For Krusche, the ruined churches are symbols: The ruins of the *Johanniskirche* in Magdeburg and the *Frauenkirche* in Dresden ‘erinnern uns an erlittenes Leid und an begangene Schuld’. These ruins remind us of suffering and of guilt, Krusche begins. But, he continues, the cities are rebuilt, sometimes even for their improvement, and Krusche uses this theme of ‘rebuilding the city’, as the theme for the sermon: How do we live in our city? Are we at home in this city or are we strangers? ‘Und wo sehen wir als Gemeinde in ihr unsere Aufgabe?’

Before explaining the four major points of his sermons, Krusche makes two preliminary remarks. First, he points to a striking similarity of the two mentioned churches: in front of both of them is a statue of Luther with an opened Bible in his hand. Krusche calls the Bible the book ‘in dem die Geschichte Gottes mit seinem Volk und mit der Welt und die Erfahrungen

21 Graaf, B. de, *Over de muur. De DDR, de Nederlandse kerken en de vredesbeweging*. (Amsterdam: Boom 2004), p 78.

22 See Rendtorff, T. (Hg.), *Protestantische Revolution? Kirche und Theologie in der DDR: Ekklesiologische Voraussetzungen, politischer Kontext, theologische und historische Kriterien*. (Vorträge und Diskussionen eines Kolloquiums in München, 26.-28.3.1992). (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1993).

23 After the fall of the DDR, before the historical reunification of the Evangelical Churches of the DDR and the BRD in 1991, on the last synod meeting of the Bundes der Evangelische Kirchen in der DDR, it was Krusche who was asked to give a theological and historical reflection on the recent history. Krusche made a verse from I Corinthians his motto: ‘Denket daran, dass im Herrn eure Mühe nicht vergeblich ist’ (1 Kor. 15.59), and summarised his intentions as ‘Gott hat uns zugemutet, an dem uns von ihm zugewiesenen gesellschaftlichen Ort im Hören auf sein Wort den schmalen weg zwischen Opposition und Opportunismus, zwischen totaler Verweigerung und totaler Anpassung zu gehen in kritischer Solidarität und mündiger Mitverantwortung’. See Schultze, H., ‘Nachruf Bischof dr. Werner Krusche (1917-2009)’, in: *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* 136/ 2009 (1), p 217.

24 Jüngel, E., ‘Kirche im Sozialismus – Kirche im Pluralismus. Theologische Rückblicke und Ausblicke’, in: Rendtorff, T. (Hg.), *Ibid.* p 346.

seines Volkes mit ihm in der Welt bezeugt sind'. Those statues in front of the ruins of both churches are a *Hinweis*, that we, with our own questions and search for orientation today, may hear anew to this opened Bible. The second remark is about the choice of the text. The church has decided to read, in the wake of the 13th of February, from Jeremiah 29, about people 'die eine schwere politische Katastrophe hinter sich und eine ganz und gar ungewisse Zukunft vor sich hatten'. Jeremiah had seen disaster coming, he had warned and called for *kampflosen Unterwerfung*, but he was a 'Gottesmann, noch dazu mit einer pazifistischen Lösung', and thus he was seen as 'politically incompetent'. But disaster had come, 'und nun war die gesamte Führungsschicht mitsamt der ganze technischen Intelligenz und den entsprechenden Spezialisten und Handwerkern von Jerusalem nach Babel abtransportiert worden, umgesiedelt, würde man heute sagen'.

Krusche explicitly states that the two realities, of Jeremiah 29 and the present situation of the hearers in the DDR, are not identical. 'Die Geschichte wiederholt sich nicht.' But there are similarities. What God's prophets once said, still contains insights from which later generations, in different circumstances, may profit: 'It may disclose their reality too', as Krusche explains. He defines the theme of the sermon as: 'In welcher Stadt wir auch Leben, Gott hat Gutes mit uns im Sinn', he makes us free to 1 accept our situation, 2 to serve the *Gemeinwohl* in solidarity, 3 to pray for the city, and 4 to peacefully wait for its future.

What Krusche means with the first point, 'willig unsere Lage annehmen', is not docility or 'Gelassenheit'. No, it is far more active and spiritually demanding what he means: in this catastrophe, Israel was dealing with God himself, Krusche says. The first thing these exiles had to understand, in all the turmoil they were experiencing, is that, in this deportation, they were dealing with God himself. 'Nicht die bösen Sieger, nicht ein Dolchstoß von Verrätern im eigen Lager, nicht die unzuverlässigen Verbündeten haben sie in diese elende Situation gebracht, sondern Gott selber'. With language taken from German political history, like the *Dolchstoß*, Krusche explains the theological pit of the political disaster, *die harte Wahrheit*: 'Uns hat Gottes verdientes Gericht getroffen'. Those exiles may have been at the end of their energies and spiritual strength, these 'tough words' had to be told, because 'there is no new beginning, when the hard truth has not been acknowledged': 'Uns hat Gottes verdientes Gericht getroffen'.

This is delicate and daring speech: At a commemoration of destruction and suffering in Dresden, the preacher addresses German guilt. How does Krusche approach this theme? He gives a subtle but sharp example, taken from the remembrance service in Magdeburg, a few days earlier. In that service, a Dutch minister had been invited, and in his greeting words, he had reminded the congregation to the fact that one of the commanders of the bombing squad that destroyed his own city Rotterdam, was from Magdeburg. 'Bevor

Magdeburg and Dresden in Trümmer gingen, ist Rotterdam und Coventry von uns in Trümmer gelegt'. This is an example of what Gregor Taxacher called *Geschichtschreibung gegen sich selbst*, and what Toni Morrison called 'to re-memory'. It is an interruptive passage. The destruction of our cities, Krusche explicates, should not bring us to accuse the Americans and British, but it should remind us of our own guilt'. 'Sicher gibt es auch deren Schuld – aber es ist ihre Sache, wie sie mit ihren Schuld umgehen, und nicht unsere Sache, sie ihn vorzuhalten und vorzurechnen'. The thing that should occupy 'us', as Germans, is our own guilt, Krusche reiterates. 'Die gewaltsame Aussiedlung, die Enteignung, die Behandlung der Kriegsgefangenen und Internierten – soviel Unrecht dabei geschehen ist, es steht im Zusammenhang mit unserer Schuld'. The suffering of Germans in and after the war is not denied, it is recapitulated and acknowledged, while at the same time related to Germany's own guilt.

Theologically there is something at stake here: 'Only when we do not deny this complicity and guilt, we will be free': 'Wenn wir wissen, daß nicht die Willkür der Siegermächte, sondern Gott uns in diese Situation gebracht hat, in der wir leben, dann sind wir dazu befreit sie anzunehmen und nicht nur widerwillig hinzunehmen. Gottes Gerichte sind immer Gerichte seiner Gnade; sie enthalten immer die Chancen zu neuen Anfängen'. The interruptive dimension is first of all theological in its aim: In our present situation, we are dealing with God, Krusche implies. But at the same time, the passage has an explicit edifying character: It has the aim of empowering the congregation in her present situation of 'exile', preventing her to flee from the present in nostalgia, urging her to accept the present as a God-given situation: 'Eine Gemeinde, die sich im Gericht der Gnade weiß, will nicht mehr zurück in die verfehltete Vergangenheit, sie muß sich nicht mehr empören gegen die oft so beschwerliche Gegenwart, und sie flüchtet nicht in eine erträumte Zukunft'. The recognition of God's present judgment prevents nostalgia.

The second major point Krusche brings forward, deepens this acceptance. The exiles in Babylon, are called to rebuild their lives, to build houses and new families, because, Krusche explains, this new situation is there to stay, it will not be a 'short Intermezzo'. The exiles should not listen to false prophets who did not speak about complicity and 'own guilt', but only about the guilt of others. Through that attitude, Krusche explains, false prophets made the present situation despicable, as they could only talk about a swift return to the old situation. The present is only an 'interim', they said, and the exiles should not engage with it. Krusche recognises this attitude in the recent church history of the DDR, and he recalls a situation, in which he himself was involved. 'In 1954 when I, with my wife and our child, migrated to Dresden, together with a series of *Pfarrerehepaare* – the bishop called and so we came'. Back then in those years, there was talk of *die Zwischenzeit überstehen, Zurückhaltung, abwarten*'. There was a strong longing for *die Wiedervereinigung*, and the slogans of the day talked about *überwintern*. But when 'spring' did not come, the slogans turned into complaints: 'Life is impossible here', 'how about the future of

our children,' it makes no sense to stay here: Let's leave'. This is an important passage in the sermon. Krusche is biographically present in this passage. This calling has cost him and his family a lot and we know from other sources how betrayed Krusche had felt, when other ministers left the DDR, after their initial communal calling. Krusche implicitly compares those who left, and those who produced the failing parables of *überwintern*, with the false prophets in Jeremiah 29. An indignant and confrontational passage follows, in which the preacher claims to have heard God's directive for today: 'Gottes Gegenparole lautet: Hierbleiben! Richtet euch bewußt darauf ein, daß ihr, eure Kinder und deren Kinder in der DDR leben werden und leben können.' Also: Weder äußere noch innere Emigration. Dient dem Gemeinwohl!

This interruptive passage serves a transformational goal: Stay and strive for the humanity of the city where you live, Krusche urges his hearers. 'Haltet euch nicht vornehm oder verbittert zurück, sondern seht zu und hilft mit, daß das Leben in eurer Stadt und eurem Land so menschlich wird, daß es so gerecht zugeht, daß hier ein Klima herrscht, so daß jeder gern hierbleibt und keiner auf den Gedanken kommt, weggehen zu wollen'. But Krusche is naive nor optimistic. He knows and exposes the humiliations that living as a Christian in the DDR may entail, but he refuses to make those circumstances legitimate reasons to 'emigrate', spiritually or physically. On the one hand, Krusche tries to take away the 'hosophobia' that may arise among Christians, the attitude by which Christians, in order to strengthen and safeguard their own identity, keep their distance to any Marxist project: 'Ich denke die Berührungssängste vor den Marxisten haben wir inzwischen abgebaut. Wenn sie etwas Gutes vorhaben und tun, wie sollten wir uns da aus Angst vor Identitätsverlust nicht beteiligen? Wer der Stadt Bestes sucht, stabilisiert natürlich das System, aber er dynamisiert es auch'. That is exactly the tension: Constructive engagement may stabilise a dubious system, but it may also change it for the better.

And then, right after this sentence in which constructive engagement is promoted, an excoriating passage follows. Krusche tells about an elder in a Christian congregation 'who lives in a lie', meaning: who is contaminating himself by spying on the congregation. Everything that is discussed in the church council is forwarded to the Stasi. Krusche laments and attacks the system that undermines communal living like this: 'Wo Menschen auf andere angesetzt werden, um sie zu beobachten und über sie zu berichten, da geht im Menschlichen etwas unheilbar kaputt und da wird jede Gemeinschaft in der Tiefe zerstört'. When you search the best for the city, you should say no to these practices. This is a strikingly overt, critical passage. The inhumanity of the DDR system, where people are forced to spy on each other is exposed and lamented in public. A system said to search for the ideal human community is deconstructed in an iconoclastic way as having damaging and inhuman elements. A reality everybody knows, but nobody dares to express in public, is exposed in the sermon. And though the preacher biographically knows of the intimidations and pressures on people to contaminate oneself, he pronounces

a *theological veto* here. 'Der Stadt Bestes' suchen heißt hier ganz schlicht: sich jedem solchen Ansinnen verweigern. Ich sage das mit großem Ernst. Wo immer wir Schäden wahrnehmen, wo Unrecht oder Unsinn geschieht, da sollen wir dazu helfen, daß das abgestellt wird, und nicht aufgeben bis es abgestellt ist. Ich denke, ich brauche jetzt nicht weiter konkret zu werden'.

In the third point of his sermon, the preacher reflects on prayer for the city. The *proprium* of Christians is not 'searching for what is best for the city'; Krusche explains. 'We share that motive with many others.' The *proprium* of the church is her *prayer* for the city: 'Hier sind wir schlechterdings unvertretbar'. When we fail in our prayers, nobody will substitute us and an absence of prayer is not 'what serves the city'. 'Das Gebet ersetzt nicht das Tun, aber es ist selbst ein Tun, das durch kein anderes zu ersetzen ist.' The city and its citizens are entitled to our prayers for them: 'The church is the mouthpiece of the city to God.' This prayer has implications for the attitude of believers: 'With those, for whom you have asked God to be merciful and to grant them peace, you cannot live in enmity, even as they burden your life'. Praying for the city, Krusche explains, means asking God to have mercy on the city and to be patient with it. The preacher includes in this passage the motif of conversion: Praying for the city is not simply praying for her *Wohlfahrt*, but also for the *Heilwerden* of the people in the city, and that implies the prayer that 'as many as possible' will turn to Jesus Christ to receive from him 'real life': 'Für den Schalom der Stadt beten heißt auch: um Erweckung beten'.

The final point of the sermon is about 'peacefully waiting for the future of the city'. The exiles in Babylon live under a promise: God shows to the exiles that his judgment is really merciful, that God is having 'merciful thoughts' about them. According to Krusche that means, that the future of the Israelites is not in this 'strange city', but in the 'holy city', in Jerusalem. After '70 years', God will bring them home. Krusche calls this promise a *Hoffnungshorizont*: 'Diese Verheißung entleerte die Gegenwart nicht zum Wartesaal der Zukunft, sondern bildete den Hoffnungshorizont tätiger Erwartung'. The preacher applies this to the hearers in their own situation: 'Wir haben als Gemeinde Jesu Christi in der irdischen Stadt keine Verheißung für eine Wendung in der Geschichte, wohl aber für eine Vollendung der Geschichte'. In the closing lines of the sermon, Krusche combines the celestial and the historical, the Eucharistic and the practical. 'As we hope for the new Jerusalem, we build our city, hoping that something of the coming *shalom* may be reflected in our earthly cities. Then he invites the congregation to come and celebrate the Eucharist, as a celebration of that *futurum* in the present, as a communion with the present and coming Christ. This *Hoffnungshorizont* of the promise, is comforting and celebrative, but also stimulating and inspiring for Christian citizenship.

3 Analytical remarks

In our brief analysis, we focus on the integrity of preachers in the way they intervene. In the sermons analysed in our study, we see preachers search for theological and

contextual integrity *in* the way they interrupt dominant discourses. Preachers can lose their integrity in remaining silent (when they should have spoken), but preachers can also lose their integrity in the way they criticise. Critique in sermons can become *hitlerisch*, as Barth once pointed out to a vicar who had written a sermon ‘against the *Deutsche Christen*’. In becoming *hitlerisch*, the preacher’s credibility and integrity was at stake.²⁵ In this paragraph, we show how ‘attuning’ works, a term we generated in 4.2.a. We show in Krusche’s sermon, how, through the mechanism of attuning, factors of what must be said, what can be said and what is wise/effective to say are integrated.

1 Necessity. The interruptive moment is first of all driven by urgency, by a *necessitas temporum*. According to Krusche, there are specific points that must be made, for the sake of the integrity of the church, the integrity of himself as a bishop, the integrity of believers together and also for the sake of the integrity of a society. This necessity is correlative to what is seen as destructive. The sharpest interruptions in the sermon happen in confrontation with damaging realities, like the organised mistrust in society, like betraying the body of Christ, as the elder in this sermon did. Krusche decides that it is necessary to expose and withspeak this destructiveness *in public*. In a similar way, we can explain Krusche’s critical interruptions of the defeatism among Christians and the tendency of an inner and/or outer migration from the DDR context. This attitude weakens the church in her identity and mission. Krusche develops a theology in which the present situation is seen as a ‘God-given situation’, and when Christians withdraw themselves from their responsibilities, by inertia, fear, or migration, they flee from what God expects of them and what society may hope to receive from them. For Krusche, the integrity of the church is at stake, and thus it is necessary to interrupt that spiritual and/or physical withdrawal.

2 Responsibility. It is our assumption that qualitative and accurate interruptions are not only informed by what *must* be said, but also by what *can* be said. The necessity is *attuned* to the responsibility of the interrupter. Krusche’s ministry is an excellent example to show the tension between what is necessary to say and what is possible to say. Krusche has written about his ministry as a learning process, and one of the things he learned was the factor of responsibility. Krusche served local communities in Dresden and later, as a bishop, he visited the congregations and the clergy in the province of Saxony, he listened to their experiences of arbitrariness and loneliness, of pressure and betrayal. He also knew these realities by own experience: the atheistic propaganda that made Christians feel outsiders in their own society and that made their children doubt their faith, the ostracising

25 Barth, K., *Briefe des Jahres 1933* (Hrsg. von Eberhard Busch), (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich 2004), pp 454-458.

strategies in schools and in factories that made them feel lonely, the obstructions for developing a career that disillusioned them.

In the first decade of his ministry, Krusche was known for his outspoken and militant resistance. When the SED regime decided for the obligatory *Jugendweihe* for all East German children at the age of fourteen, he had sharply opposed it, pressing members of his church to refuse it, even making their choice a case of the *status confessionis*.²⁶ But along the way, Krusche also saw the risks and the costs of this antagonistic strategy. It is a paradoxical truth, he learned, that aggressive opposition could also lead to a kind of resignation and even assimilation among the hearers. A strategy of strong antithesis is vulnerable for creating a mode of 'living in two worlds'; the antithesis is hardly 'liveable', and thus it can fuel fantasies about migration and leaving, romanticising daily life in other societies. The antithesis could also confirm and strengthen the suspicion of socialist contemporaries, claiming the church to be essentially strange to socialism, more at home in capitalist societies, indeed a *Spionage-gemeinschaft*. Bishop Krusche's ministry is an example of participating in a learning process, basically a process of attuning. Through it, a preacher and bishop emerged who stretched for the limits of where communality and solidarity are possible, while at the same time drawing lines of where integrity and faithfulness is at stake. The paradigm of the *diaspora* community that joins to build the city from her own resources and identity, is an example of this search for integrating self-consciousness and solidarity, of being 'not at home in this world' and of 'building a communal place to live'. This sermon is an example of how the critical and the responsible are attuned to each other in an interruptive strategy.

3 Strategy. The third factor in this attuning process we call strategy. The interventions in the sermons of our research are not impromptu, incidental, or individual, they often are the fruit of long-term dialogical discourses. It is our observation that the prophetic is far more *communal* and *diachronic* than often thought to be, and that in the interventions in sermons, *many kinds of voices participate* (think of Lischer speaking of 'a tradition's continual cry'). In this

26 In an honest review, Krusche remembers the call of a minister, that questioned and criticised the huge pressure Krusche had developed on families and children: 'Es gab keine Gegenmeinung, nur einen für mich unvergeßlichen Zwischenfall. Der Weixdorfer Pfarrer Wolfgang Caffier rief mit eindringlicher Stimme in die versammelte Pfarrerschaft hinein: "Seid barmherzig!" Ich wußte damals noch nicht, daß er die ganze infame Drangsalierung der Juden unter Hitler in der eigene Familie miterlebt hatte und also zu ahnen vermochte, in welche Drucksituation Wehrlose – es handelte sich hier ja um Vierzehn- oder Fünfzehnjährige! – geraten könnte. Ich hielt also diesen Zwischenruf für den Schwächeanfall eines Ängstlichen und habe mit Eifer und Entschiedenheit das Entweder-Oder vertreten.' Krusche continues his review by questioning the wisdom of his earlier position: Was it wise to fixate on the 'Jugendweihe', in what way has it *overcharged* ordinary families and youth, in what way has it even stimulated the 'Kircheaustrittswelle', estranged young people and families from the church? See Krusche, W., *Ich werden nie mehr Geige spielen können*, pp 188-193.

sermon, the communality is made explicit in the first paragraph. Krusche explains in it that in ‘all the churches in Dresden’, on the Sunday before the commemoration of the destruction of Dresden, Jeremiah 29 is read. And this pericope, about ‘building the city’, is part of a larger discourse of ‘living as Christians in the DDR’. In a demanding, difficult discourse, the church in the DDR sought for biblical themes and metaphors that could help the church to be church in the DDR. The core question in this search, was a question of attuning: How do we integrate the various conflicting interests and considerations of being church in the DDR? The biblical metaphor of the *diaspora* turned out to be generative.²⁷ In this sermon, we even see it function as a frame to assess both the present as well as the previous decades of the church in the DDR. Krusche compares earlier ecclesiastical parables in the DDR that predicted a rapid change, to the parables of the false prophets in Jeremiah 29. The point we want to make here is that the interventions in this sermon are not merely individual or impulsive, but that they are tributary to broader theological and ecclesiastical discourses. In these communal discourses, the questions that matter are not only of what must be said and of what can be said, but also of what is effective, strategic, and wise to be said.

This effectiveness is intrinsically related to the contextual and political circumstances. We know from other sources, that the SED regime in the early 1950s had a confrontational, Stalinist strategy towards the church, using arbitrary violence. In the 1970s and 1980s, this strategy changed to infiltrating in churches, to what was called the *bearbeiten* of persons, to the venomous strategy of trying to dissolve communities and to compromise key figures.²⁸ Sermons, and interruptions in it, are also strategic in how they respond to these developing, changing circumstances. In this sermon, for instance, we see Krusche responding to the shrewd infiltrating policies of the 1970s and 1980s.

4 Disposition. The final dimension we want to explicate is the *sensorium* or disposition of the preacher and of his tradition, a sensorium that is operative in the interventions. A sensorium, a sense-organ, refers to the part of the brain that is concerned with the reception and the interpretation of sensory stimuli. We use it as a metaphor for theological traditions. The more we compare the sermons in our research, (in their theological, cultural, and historical diversity), the more aware we become of the own theological and spiritual sensitivities or dispositions operative in each tradition. Each tradition has a unique ‘sense organ’, a distinct

27 One of the reasons Krusche opted for this theological concept of the *diaspora*, was to diminish the pressure a too optimistic and demanding focus on ‘mission’ and ‘being church for others’ had caused among Christians in the DDR. The *diaspora* motive was more capable of acknowledging the suffering and the self-doubt that being a minority caused. The *diaspora* paradigm also gave room to intuitions of judgment among Christians, of being placed by God in this situation, and it gave room to the power of the promise: The *diaspora* is a burden, but not without a promise from God, Krusche explained.

28 Graaf, B. de, *Ibid.* pp 69-70, 280.

way of perceiving and interpreting of what is happening in its context, an alertness for specific themes, an amalgam of defining stories, spiritual allergies, theological specifics, and cultural influences. This sensorium of a tradition enables preachers to see and to intervene in specific ways. At the same time, these traditions limit perception. It is our observation, that the necessity of what ‘must be said’, the responsibility of what ‘can be said’ and considerations of ‘effectiveness’, are embedded in the sensorium of what preachers are ‘dispositioned’ to see.

To give a few examples from this sermon. Krusche’s sermon is a sermon in the *Sächsische Predigttradition*, a tradition marked by rhetorical sobriety. Sermons in this tradition are preferably well-ordered and rhetorically plain; a tradition, not of rhetorical prowess but of didactic clarity. This tradition is reflected in Krusche’s format of interrupting. His interruptions do not happen through a grand, emotional narrative, as for example in King’s sermons, but via a didactic format of making three or four clear points. Krusche theological ‘sense organ’, to give another example, is marked by the Reformed tradition, for instance in its sensitivity to the relation between church and state, and their communal responsibility. ‘Wir sind keine Kultkirche, sondern eine Kirche der Reformation, in der öffentliche Verkündigung des Wortes zentral ist und damit die Verpflichtung, in das politisch-gesellschaftliche Leben hineinzureden.’²⁹ The interruptions in this sermon are tributary to this tradition. Another factor of interest: this type sermon is embedded in the tradition of a *Volkskirche*. In 1960, 70.7 percent of the people in Saxony were member of the *Evangelische Kirche* in Saxony. The *Volkskirche* thought of herself as being part of the history and the culture of the German people. The tension between ‘belonging together as a people’ and ‘being different as church’ is traceable in this sermon. But the *Volkskirche* was in decay. In 1980, membership had declined to 42.3 percent, and this dramatic *Kirchenaustrittswelle* is another major factor in understanding the sermons of this period. The church had to reconsider her own self-understanding. How is the historical connection with the culture and the people of Saxony to be continued, meanwhile making church members resistant in the situation of SED strategies? Finally, the sensorium of this tradition is markedly German, and markedly ‘20th century’. In the sermon, we hear about Luther, about an understanding of Scripture through which the present can be enlightened, and when we hear Krusche talk about ‘there is no new beginning, when the hard truth of our own guilt has not been acknowledged’, we hear Martin Niemöller and the *Stuttgarter Erklärung* resonate in his words.³⁰

29 Findeis, H. /D. Pollack. *Selbstbewahrung oder Selbstverlust. Bischöfe und Repräsentanten der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR über ihr Leben. 17 Interviews.* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag 1999), p 225.

30 See on Niemöller’s thoughts of the confession of German guilt as a pre-requisite for the future, and its influence on Krusche: *Ich werden nie mehr Geige spielen können. Erinnerungen*, pp 117-129.

All these factors function, consciously and/or subconsciously, when Werner Krusche writes a sermon filled with various interruptions. Through personal reflection and communal discourse, through a specific theological and contextual sensorium, Krusche decides for what must be said, why it must be said, how it can be said, how it is wise to say it and how it can be effective. Mature interventions are clear and sharp when it comes to necessity, they are thoughtful and considerate when it comes to responsibility and they are shrewd and determined when it comes to strategy.

CHAPTER 5 | RECOGNISING THE WORD

The illuminative dimension

Summary: In our third concept, we move from the expository and the interruptive, to the more *epiphanic* layer in our data. In the sermons, there is an illuminative dynamic going on, in which Scripture plays a pivotal role. We generated the term ‘recognising the Word’ to explicate the religious dynamic in these moments (5.1.a). By this, we mean that specific words from Scripture are recognised by preachers as words that have the capacity to diagnose their context, theologically and spiritually. These words gain a specific kind of momentum, they have a certain *Urteilkraft* that is able to illuminate the present. Prophetic preaching can be called, with a term from Leo Baeck, ‘derivative prophecy’: A word from Scripture is ‘excarnated’ in the present and somehow participates in the initial authority of that scriptural word. We show how this dynamic of scripturality and orality is integral to the prophetic tradition and continued in the sermon. Interestingly, this illuminative dynamic is not without inductive aspects. In the second paragraph (5.2.a), we show that the epiphanic moment in preaching does not only happen through listening to Scripture, but also by absorbing all kinds of impressions and truths: from contemporaries, in cultural and historical developments, from living in solidarity with those who suffer. We generated the term ‘absorbing competence of the preacher’ to capture this underlying attitude of the preacher. Finally, we explain the homiletical effect this illuminative dynamic has in the sermon. Through these illuminative mechanisms, the present situation of the hearers is theologically qualified. That is a principal effect of the prophetic moment: the theological qualification of the present (5.3.a).

I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part

5.1.a Recognising the Word

In the first two concepts of our study, we reconstructed how preachers expose and interrupt destructive realities in their context. In our third concept, we focus on another specific quality in the sermons, namely the interplay between the scriptural text and the contextual reality of the hearers. In the sermons, an illuminative dynamic is going on: Preachers recognise their own reality in a specific pericope from Scripture, and vice versa, they recognise what is at stake in a pericope in their contemporary context. This is the basic level of our concept of recognising the Word: the acknowledgment of an analogy, a similarity, or a presumed identity between these two 'worlds'. Through the recognition of this correlative reality, forms of continuity are created in the sermons. Theologically and homiletically seen, the present situation is presented as participating in the same redemptive drama that is going on in Scripture, and vice versa, the redemptive drama is recognised as being operative in the present.

What we see in the data, is that through specific *instant identifications* in the sermons, this coalescence of worlds is made explicit. In it, an often heavy loaded contemporary word is used in the redescription of the scriptural passage, and as a result, a *coalescence of worlds* happens in the sermons. In his Jeremiah sermon, for instance, Bonhoeffer explained that Jeremiah was called a *Volksfeind*, and through that specific term an instant identification occurs between two different contexts.¹ Through this identification, Bonhoeffer implicitly claims that the animosity against Jeremiah is comparable to the contempt against contemporary Germans who refuse to join the National Socialist movement. Through this illuminative dynamic, certain words from Scripture gain an immediate relevance, they 'rise to the occasion' and obtain a powerful performativity in the present. Through terms like these, the hearers of the sermon suddenly inhabit the world of Jeremiah, while at the same time Jeremiah's world is presented as being similar to their own.² Consequently, the drama that happens in the two worlds is presented as being in continuity with each other.

1 'Und diese Weg führt mitten in die Tiefste menschliche Schwachheit hinein. Ein verlachter, verachteter, für verrückt erklärter, aber für Ruhe und Frieden der Menschen äußerst gefährlicher Narr – den man schlägt, einsperrt, foltert und am liebsten gleich umbringt – das ist dieser Jeremias eben weil er Gott nicht mehr loswerden kann. Phantast, Sturkopf, Friedensstörer, Volksfeind hat man ihn gescholten, hat man zu allen Zeiten bis heute die gescholten, die von Gott besessen und gefaßt waren, denen Gott zu stark geworden war.' See: 'Predigt zu Jeremia 20, 7. (London, 21. 1. 1934)', in: Bonhoeffer, D., *London 1933-1935.*, p 348.

2 See on the term 'inhabiting the world of Scripture': Brown, D., *God & Mystery in Words. Experience through Metaphor and Drama.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), pp 113-114. See also Boonstra's concept of 'contemporiseren van de Bijbeltekst en de hedendaagse context', Boonstra, P., *Omgang met de Bijbeltekst in de preek. Een empirisch homiletisch onderzoek.* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic 2016), pp 149-170.

In these instances, we see a process of ‘texts coming alive’. The primal accent in these moments is on texts. Bernhard Lang, in his analysis of the development of the sermon in the Christian liturgy, called Judaism a ‘textual community’ with an unprecedented focus on texts: ‘In the ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern world, only the Jews compiled sacred scriptures and instituted a ritual that featured their recitation, translation, explanation and homiletic elaboration.’³ In the post-exilic developments of Judaism, this intellectual orientation on texts, and likewise on the intellectual activities of interpretation and understanding, became stronger and stronger. Just as the performance of the rituals was superseded by the study of ritual texts, so the living prophetic utterances were replaced by the study of oracular texts.⁴ Lang considered Christianity as a ‘dissenting textual community’, a result of the fact that ‘the Book invited ever new interpretations’.

What Lang underlined in these historical developments is that salvation was considered as depending on *knowledge*, and thus practices like studying, preaching, and listening obtained a ‘salvific quality’. Seen from this perspective, it is not surprising that *preaching* became a major ritual expression in Christianity, with the essential claim that preaching ‘contributes to the audience’s salvation.’⁵ Preaching is concerned with redemption, and consequently, it is thought of as redemptive speech. This dynamic is important to notice for our study: There is a principal focus on *texts* in the liturgy, (Lang wrote that ‘sacred texts form the ritual infrastructure of Christian liturgical worship’),⁶ while simultaneously, the explanation of these texts and their elaboration for the present, enacted through oral acts of new speech, play a crucial role in the faith and the salvation of the hearers. According to Lang, this dynamic of translating the text in the present, is essentially a *prophetic* activity. In his description of the preaching of Jesus in Luke and of the apostles in Acts, Lang called these moments ‘continuations of a prophetic ministry’, in which ‘God’s salvation is announced for a contemporary generation.’⁷

We use this small detour to clarify what is happening in our concept of recognising the Word. Textuality, interpretation, elaboration of the texts for the present and orality, that is: moments of new speech, are all insightful coordinates to sharpen our description of what is happening in prophetic preaching. In a sermon, a text from Scripture is read and explained for the present and through it, preachers recognise forms of continuity between Scripture and their own context, and this continuity is understood as a continuity in the drama of redemption. This is the

3 Lang, B., *Sacred Games. A History of Christian Worship*. (London: Yale University Press 1997), p 139.

4 Lang, B, *Ibid.* p 144.

5 Lang, B, *Ibid.* p 149.

6 Lang, B, *Ibid.* pp 139-140.

7 Lang, B, *Ibid.* p 154.

basic *trouvaille* in the homiletical act of recognising the Word, this epiphanic moment of seeing the continuity between these different worlds. But there is more to it. There is also newness in this redemptive speech, the sermon is also a new word. Based on the recognition of similarities between Scripture and context, a new word is crafted in the sermon. The mystery and the power of the sermon are that this new word somehow participates in the authority of the original scriptural words. There is continuity: the sermon is based on an initial recognition. But there is also *newness*. The similarity is translated into a *new context*, in *new words*, maybe even addressed to new *fronts*. In paragraph 5.1.b, while analysing a sermon from Werner Krusche, we develop the term ‘excarnating Scripture’.⁸ With the term, we mean that what is at stake in a specific pericope is ‘excarnated’ in the sermon into a new context. In the sermon, preachers recognise the similarity and ‘travel’ with this similarity into their contemporary reality.

For these reasons, we generated the term *recognising the Word*, an important term in our research. Because of its centrality, we give some further reasons for our choice. First of all, recognising the Word is a concept applicable to both the ‘dialectical and the sacramental imagination’, two major strands in the theology of the 20th century.⁹ In the ‘dialectical imagination’, Hilkert wrote, there are accents on the discontinuity between creation and redemption, on the consequences of sin and the absolute distance between God and man. It is in this tradition that there is a principal focus on the power of the Word of God to break through these obstacles. Sermons in this tradition have a focus on specific scriptural words to illuminate the present. ‘Aber ich habe wider dich’, is a word from Revelation, but it dominates Bonhoeffer’s sermon in 1932, becoming a word that embodies the actual dispute between Christ and the German church and people. In sermons from this tradition, specific words are recognised by preachers as illuminative words of God for the present. But there is also the ‘sacramental imagination’, Hilkert wrote, with its stress on the mystery of the incarnation, the graced character of reality, the discernibility of the Spirit in the church, in culture and in individual human beings. The concept of recognising the Word is applicable to this tradition too. In this tradition, ‘signs of grace’ are recognised in reality and made explicit in the sermon. As a result, our concept has a theological broadness. In our own study,

8 See on the term ‘excarnation of Scripture’: Lux, R., “Und auf die Seher folgen die Prediger”. Erwägungen zum Verhältnis von Prophetie und Predigt, in: Alston, W.J., C. Möller, H. Schwier (Hg.), *Die Predigt des Alten Testaments. (Beiträge des Symposiums ‘Das Alte Testament und die Kultur der Moderne’, anlässlich des 100. Geburtstags Gerhard von Rads (1901-1971), Heidelberg, 18-21. Oktober 2001)*. (Münster: LIT Verlag 2003), pp 43-64. See recently: Boonstra, P., *Omgang met de Bijbeltekst in de preek*, especially chapter 7: ‘Contemporiseren van de Bijbeltekst en de hedendaagse context’, pp 149-170.

9 See Hilkert, M.C., *Naming Grace. Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*. (New York: Continuum 1997), see especially § 1: ‘The Dialectical Imagination: The Power of the Word’, pp 19-29, and § 2 ‘The Sacramental Imagination: Grace Enfleshed in Word and Action’, pp 30-43.

performed in the discipline of practical theology, we try to get a conceptual grip on the empirical processes that we see operative in both traditions.

There is a second background in our choice for this concept of recognising the Word. The concept can also be applied to explore the pre-exegetical process in the crafting of sermons. In the analysis of Bonhoeffer's preaching, for example, we develop the notion of *pre-exegetical illumination* (5.2.b: sermon illustrating 'Absorbing'). Bonhoeffer did not preach from lectionaries, but made his own choices about the texts for his sermons. The interesting homiletical question is: What made him select, for instance, Luke 13, to be preached on the Sunday after the Röhm-Putsch? Is the subsequent sermon strictly flowing from the exegesis of Luke 13? Or is there already some form of recognising of the Word operative in his initial choice for this specific text, an intuition preceding exegesis? The same observation can be made for the Jeremiah sermon and the sermon 'Aber ich habe wider dich': What is exactly the illuminative dynamic through which these texts are recognised as being fit for these specific Sundays? In this research, we suggest that in these pre-exegetical moments, a kind of absorbing competence is operative: preachers are able to absorb impulses from their context, society and biography, impulses from their knowledge of Scripture and their theological and homiletical tradition, and before they start to explain Scripture, there already seems to be something active that makes them select a specific pericope. Maybe there is an intuitive recognising of the Word preceding exegesis and preaching?

The third and final argument for our choice of the concept of recognising the Word is concerned with the hearers, or rather with the reception history of prophetic speech. Not only preachers are able to recognise the Word, but hearers as well. The main purpose of preaching is making *hearers* recognise the Word. Interestingly, prophetic incidents are predominantly *not* recognised at the actual moment of their utterance, but *a posteriori*. Just like the truth of the words of the classical Hebrew prophets was recognised in due time, just like the words of Jesus were only understood through the subsequent developments of his death and resurrection, in a similar way the veracity of contemporary prophetic speech is acknowledged in retrospectivity only. We study the sermons of Bonhoeffer and King, because the truth of their words is acknowledged in the light of the assessments we now make of their historical contexts. Now we see what they saw. The veracity of their words and their lives is recognised afterwards. In this sense, the recognising of the Word takes place in the subsequent *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of the sermons. We can speak of the *retroactive* dimension of the concept of recognising the Word.

These observations open up an interesting theological discourse. Though belatedly, the fact that preachers are recognised as being prophetic, points to

the capacity of hearers to recognise the Word in former instances of preaching. Johann Baptist Metz, spoke of an elementary *Gottbegabung* of human beings, a capacity he called ‘die theologische Ehre des Menschen’, a capacity that should never be dismissed.¹⁰ Metz wrote that ‘when it concerns God, nobody should be excluded from joining the conversation about Him and that everybody should be heard.’¹¹ In the deferred, often posthumous, recognition of the Word by all kinds of people and cultures, maybe something of this gift and capacity of being able to recognise a Word from God can be discerned.

A miniature from our data on ‘recognising the Word’: When Martin Luther King held his final sermonic speech, on the night before he was assassinated, he spoke to garbage workers on strike, in Memphis.¹² The final passage of the speech is ecstatic, (and we conceptualise the cathartic dimension in these moments in chapter 6). Here, we focus on how a word is recognised by King in this moment. The final passage goes as follows: ‘Well, I don’t know what will happen now; we’ve got some difficult days ahead. (Amen) But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because I’ve been to the mountaintop. (Yeah) [Applause] And I don’t mind. [Applause continues] Like anybody, I would like to live a long life—longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. (Yeah) And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. (Go ahead) And I’ve looked over (Yes sir), and I’ve seen the Promised Land. (Go ahead) I may not get there with you. (Go ahead) But I want you to know tonight (Yes), that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. [Applause] (Go ahead, go ahead) And so I’m happy tonight; I’m not worried about anything; I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. [Applause].’

What King is doing in this fragment, is, first of all, making the garbage workers ‘inhabit Israel’s covenantal story’.¹³ As Israel marched to the promised land, so these garbage workers are marching to freedom, King claims. They will get to the point where the colour of their skin is not a reason any longer for discrimination and economic injustice. King re-imagines this strike as being part of the same redemptive drama, though in a different ‘costumes’. Miller pointed to the *entelechiial hermeneutic* that is operative in these sermons:

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- 10 ‘Es geht zozusagen um das Menschenrecht der Gottbegabung des Menschen, auch des sogenannten modernen Menschen. Denn Gott, ich wiederhole mich im Sinn K. Rahners, ist entweder ein Menschheitsthema, oder er ist überhaupt kein Thema.’ Metz, J.B., *Memoria passionis. Ein provozierendes Gedächtnis in pluralistischer Gesellschaft*. (Freiburg: Verlag Herder 2006, 2011), p 114.
- 11 ‘Das, wovon das Christentum in seinem Zentrum spricht – auch heute im anhaltenden Prozess der Aufklärung und in den angesagten Diffusionen der Postmoderne, der Gott also, von dem sie redet, ist eine Angelegenheit, bei der grundsätzlich alle mitreden können und bei der deshalb auch alle gehört werden müssen. (...) Kirche und Theologie müssen bereit sein in Sachen ihres Gottes mit allen zu sprechen, auf alle zu hören, mit allen zu streiten, denen sie nicht von vornherein Vernunft und guten Willen absprechen können, die also nicht von vornherein als dumm oder böse gelten sollen.’ Metz, J.B., *Ibid.* p 113.
- 12 The speech was held on 3 April, 1968, and can be found, including the transcription of the hearers’ responses, at the website of the *MLK Research and Education Institute* of Stanford University.
- 13 Miller, K.D., *Martin Luther King’s Biblical Epic. His Final, Great Speech*. (Jackson: University of Mississippi), p 31.

themes in Scripture, like creation, Exodus, Exile and resurrection, are not 'frozen events', but they are part of a transformative drama. These scriptural texts are 'waiting to gravitate' in new experiences of people who live by these texts and who believe in the God who still acts.¹⁴ What Assmann called 'excarinating Scripture' (see below), Miller, following Kenneth Burke, called the entelechial hermeneutic in Scripture. This strike of garbage workers is the latest act in the liberatory drama of the Exodus.¹⁵

In a unique moment of interference of biography, calling and the crisis of the context, King recognized himself in Moses, who was invited by God to go up to the mountaintop and see the promised land. In analogy to that scriptural moment, King claims to have seen the promised land too, while at the same time, he saw that he himself would not enter it. King draws the hearers into the analogy, and in the transcribed responses of the hearers, we hear them follow him. They too recognise the power of this word for this moment. Through this recognition of a scriptural word, something new is crafted. King travels with this word into the present, and applies the promises to the hearers in the America of the late 1960s. The old promise is renewed under different circumstances. Another newness that arises from this identification, is a new absence of fear. Through this experience, King testifies that 'he is not worried about anything', that 'he doesn't fear any man, because his eyes have seen the glory of the Lord'.

In this fragment, we see King craft a new text by merging older texts: He cites Deuteronomy 34, about Moses seeing the promised land, but he also cites from Julia Ward Howe's 'Battle Hymn of the Republic': 'Mine eyes have seen the Glory'. These texts are recognised in the present, elaborated and applied to garbage workers in dire circumstances and to the troubled preacher himself, who tries to overcome his own fears and depression. The text 'gravitates' into a new moment of release. The passage is in itself impressive, but gained a new meaning when King was killed a few hours later. In retrospectivity and in due time, the coalescence of worlds in this vision of the mountaintop, was recognised and acknowledged by many as a prophetic moment.

14 Miller, K.D., *Ibid.* pp 87-88.

15 'As King asks his audience to revisit Scripture from Exodus to Revelation, he constructs himself as a biblical prophet who depicts the garbage strike not as a mere local squabble, but as nothing less than the latest enactment of the centuries-old clash between good and evil. (...) [T]he Bible is not a frozen testimony to God's mighty deeds in the dusty past. He contends, in effect, that the Bible is only incidentally a book. Instead, he claims the Bible is an ongoing drama that engulfs all human life in Memphis and everywhere else. In his view, a labor conflict in a mid-sized city amounts to nothing less than the newest manifestation of a titanic biblical struggle and God's newest opportunity to rejuvenate those crushed by American pharaohs'. Miller, K.D., *Ibid.* p 26.

5.2.a Absorbing

Texts come alive. In the prophetic moment of preaching, as we reconstruct it, we see what Rosenstock-Huessy called: 'a word which fully rises to a specific occasion, transforming the situation from an accident to a meaningful historical event.'¹⁶ A specific scriptural word gains a new relevance and a new performativity, and through it, contemporary realities are seen in another perspective. In our data, we regularly hear preachers speak about this dynamic, about scriptural words 'rising to the occasion'. When Rowan Williams preached in Zimbabwe, he said that 'this scriptural word speaks directly to us, as we gather today'. When Werner Krusche recapitulated the suffering of the earliest congregation in Acts 12, he remarked that 'it is good for us that these words are in Scripture'. In Bonhoeffer's sermon, held directly after the assassinations in the Röhm-Putsch (see below 5.2.b), he even exclaimed: 'Für uns ist das geschehen, zu uns redet Gott, wir sind gemeint.'¹⁷ In the miniature below, we shortly discuss a sermon from Williams held in Nagpur, India, with the theme of 'listening to the voice of the good Shepherd', a sermon about distinguishing between 'strange voices' and the 'voice of Jesus', about how the latter can be recognised in the present. In these moments, preachers switch to another register in language, namely the language of illumination, of a transcendent perspective breaking through in the sermon, explicitly aimed at the present reality of the hearers. In these moments, preachers claim that through Scripture God is talking to the hearers. These moments have a mysterious quality, something that resists conceptualisation, a mystical or epiphanic quality occurring in the act of preaching. In this paragraph, while respecting the limitations of the theological analysis of these moments, we try to reconstruct these epiphanic moments.

Following Rosenstock-Huessy, Richard Lischer suggested that 'right speech for preaching' is not merely in the originality of composition or content, but primarily in the timing. 'Originality' is a complicated and even disputed term in the history of preaching. The sermons in the New Testament, Lischer remarked, are in a way 'unoriginal', they contain 'old words' and they explain already existing language taken from the Old Testament. The originality is markedly in the *kairos*: these old words are announced to be true for today.¹⁸ Timing in this way is a fundamental feature in preaching. In an analogous way, *dixit* Lischer, the strength of King's preaching is not in the originality of its content. 'Tradition' is a far more dominant factor in his preaching than 'originality', and the monographs of Keith Miller

16 Rosenstock-Huessy, E., *Speech and Reality*. (Norwich: Argo Books 1970), cited in Lischer, R., *The Preacher King. Martin Luther King, Jr. and The Word That Moved America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995), p 116.

17 See: 'Predigt zu Lukas 13.1-5. (London, 8. 7. 1934)', in: Bonhoeffer, D., *London 1933-1935*, p 370.

18 Lischer, R., *Ibid.* p 116.

on King's preaching and its sources, prove that point.¹⁹ 'It was King's use of the tradition that made all the difference in his preaching style.'²⁰

In this paragraph, we elaborate these observations into a term we generated, namely the term 'absorbing.' We earlier observed that the genius of prophets is in their *timing*, in their heightened sensitivity to what a *kairos* is, for which words to be spoken. In addition, we propose to say that this genius is also in the way preachers can *absorb*. We developed the notion of an 'absorbing competence', to express the 'active receptivity' of the preacher through which he recognises the Word. Note the paradox in the term 'active receptivity'. A searching and active spirit is operative in prophetic preachers, both on an intellectual and a spiritual level, while at the same time, decisive moments of insight are received or discovered. In moments of insight, we assume the inductive to be integrated in the illuminative, the active in the receptive and the analytical in the mystical. To put it differently, on a textual, semantic level, sermons may be dominated by scriptural words and by an exegetical discourse, while an archaeological-empirical analysis of the same sermon, would show how all kinds of inductive processes have helped shaping the specifics of the sermon. The inductive can be integrated into the illuminative processes at work in the sermon.

A miniature on the absorbing competence: At the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Church of North India, Rowan Williams preached on the theme of 'listening to the voice of the Shepherd' (All Saints Cathedral, Nagpur, 2010). Several times in this sermon, Williams showed how inductive processes can becoming illuminative, can be recognised as coming from God.

We show one example from the sermon, and it concerns suffering. In it, Williams questions in a shrewd way the division between churches: 'The unity of the flock is grounded in the communal recognising of the Shepherd's voice. If the flock is divided, the sheep are not listening to the same voice, but they are listening to strange voices too.' Williams explicates in the sermon the 'strange voices' that cause division within and between churches, like the voice of our own culture and our own past. Then he explains the paradoxical fact that through suffering, churches can go searching for unity. 'In the dark days of the 1930s in Europe, different Protestant churches in Germany came together in the Confessing church to resist the tyranny of Hitler. Through the terrible challenge of this tyranny, the voice of the Good Shepherd summoned

19 Miller, K.D., *Voice of Deliverance. The Language of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Its Sources*. (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 1992, 1998), Miller, K.D., *Martin Luther King's Biblical Epic. His Final, Great Speech*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi 2012).

20 Lischer, R., Ibid. p 117. Brueggemann called King's preaching a 'fresh subversive utterance shot through with ancient imagination'. Brueggemann, W., *The Practice of Prophetic Preaching. Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012), p 18-19.

his people to be faithful not only to him but to each other'. In an inductive way, read: through rough suffering, 'the voice of the Shepherd was heard'.

This same illumination, Williams says, happened in India: 'Less dramatically but very importantly, when the church here in India woke up to the fact that divisions in the Christian community were in the eyes of many a major argument against the credibility of the Christian faith itself, it was the voice of Christ that the Church heard, a voice that for a moment sounded more clearly than the voices of human tradition in this or that denomination'. In instances like this, the transcendent is not in opposition with the inductive. 'In the face of this pressure, Christians come to see more clearly in each other, beyond all local and traditional divisions, a real faithfulness to Jesus and a real capacity for endurance and forgiveness, not giving way to dreams of revenge'. It is in and through these instances 'the voice' is heard: 'Mysteriously, through the fearful experience of persecution, the voice of the Shepherd speaks, calling believers together to find their nourishment in fellowship and mutual support, in faithfulness to each other'.

This is what we mean with 'absorbing competence': Being able to listen to a cluster of realities (like societal circumstances, suffering, Scripture, experiences of other Christians, history) and to recognise what God may be saying through it. Williams says the same thing about listening to 'the voice that comes to us through the experience of the poor and marginalised'. He proposes to let this voice guide our prayers and dominate our ecclesiastical discourse: 'When they call to us, once again, the Shepherd speaks.' Jesus, Williams claims, may speak to us in the cry for help of the poor.

5.3.a Theologically qualifying the contemporary situation

In the first concept that was generated in this study, exposing destructiva, we conceptualised the obscurity that surrounds destructiva. Evil things are hardly ever called by their right name. Apartheid is framed as 'separate development', to give an example. Destructiva are obscured by this language, while at the same time there is something operative in these destructiva that resists clarity. In our first two concepts, we conceptualised a major motive in the prophetic moment: to break through this obscurity, to expose destructiva, to deconstruct its concealments and to intervene in its effects. In our third concept, we conceptualise a reverse moment that is present in our data too. One of the major effects of recognising the Word, is the clarity that follows from it. Things are now called by their proper name. The circumstances in which the hearers live, are qualified, are given a characterisation, are drawn into a different narrative and imagination. The dictum of Rosenstock-Huessy on 'right speech' did not only mention a 'word that rises to the occasion', but it formulated the effects of it as well, namely that 'situations are transformed to meaningful events' through these words. A grim local conflict on unjust wages and poor security circumstances for black garbage workers is transformed to being

part of the redemptive drama, operative in the history of mankind for justice. In the recognising of the Word and in the application of that word to the present situation, a moment of theological qualification emerges. The reality of the hearers is assessed and qualified in a spiritual and theological way, it is incorporated into another imagination. The illuminative dynamic that happens through scriptural words entails a spiritual and theological qualification of the present.

Karl Rahner, in his monograph on visions and prophecy, wrote about this search for meaning. 'In turbulent times, the minds of men are agitated not only by the events themselves, but they also seek an interpretation of present events and a promise for the future.'²¹ In these circumstances, he continued, believers hope for 'an enlightening and auspicious word of God'. Our concept concerning the illuminative dimension of the sermon can be seen as such an 'enlightening and auspicious word of God'. Contrary to the destructive words that obscure reality, there is a promise in this auspicious word, a promise of disclosure.

The theological qualifications we encounter in the data, have a judgemental character, on the one hand. Something is *judged*. A word from Scripture or the confessional tradition of the church is, in a dense and critical way, applied to a contemporary situation. In Latin-American theological discourse this 'judging', this theological qualifying, is also explicated. Hilkerter quoted Boff, who said that 'in the prophetic moment the church is being a judge', judging and qualifying situations: 'In the light of the revealed word, the church proclaims God's design and denounces anything that opposes it.'²² In the analysis of sermons, we observed the presence of an implicit or explicit theological and spiritual qualification of the context. On the other hand, it is not merely an analytical or diagnostic qualifying, but predominantly a *making sense of things*. Situations full of complexity, obscurity and danger, contexts in which centrifugal forces are operative that potentially may disintegrate entire societies, are addressed in the sermons in such a way that a specific form of clarity and understanding arises. In these incidents, meaningful interpretations are given, through which an element of direction and hope is crafted. What we mean by *making sense*, is exactly the crafting of the 'auspicious word' Rahner talked about, a word that that is able to overcome destructiva.

21 Rahner, K. *Visions and Prophecies*. (London: Burns & Oates 1964), p 7.

22 Hilkerter, M.C., *Naming Grace. Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*. (New York: Continuum 1997), p 40.

II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part

Summary: In the second part of this chapter, we give detailed analyses of how the concept of recognising the Word functions in three different sermons. In the first paragraph, we summarise and analyse a sermon from Werner Krusche, held at a synod meeting, meditating on the text about the imprisonment and the liberation of Peter (Acts 12.1-7). We illustrate how Scripture is excarnated in this sermon. In it, Krusche observes parallels between how the Gospel is hindered in its progress by worldly rulers, in the Jerusalem setting of the earliest congregation but also in the DDR context. Krusche draws the hearers into these parallels. But there is also a *new word* in this sermon. Recognising the Word is about seeing the drama of redemption continuing in the present, and this also means the possibility of seeing new hindrances in the present, other than those at hand in the scriptural pericope. Krusche's sermon transforms into critical speech, not only aimed at worldly rulers that hinder the gospel, but also to the defeatism in the church itself, (according to Krusche an even more fundamental hindrance for the progress of the Gospel). We explain with a term from Leo Baeck, why this speech may be called 'derivative prophecy', or *nachschaffender Beredsamkeit* (5.1.b).

In the second paragraph, we discuss Bonhoeffer's sermon on Luke 13.1-5, a sermon held at the Sunday after the Röhm-Putsch. We show how in this sermon the political reality of the actual moment is alluded to, and how Bonhoeffer, in a phenomenological overture, reads into Luke 13 all kinds of reactions to the assassinations of the present moment. This is an important part of the absorbing competence of preachers. But this similarity in circumstances, between two episodes of assassinations (namely in Luke 13 and in Germany 1933) is still initial. What Bonhoeffer is searching for is another *Gegenwart*, the reality of the *Du Gottes* that speaks into the present reality. The sentence 'und nun Jesus' is a turning point in the sermon, in which Bonhoeffer shows to have found a distinctly theological and spiritual perspective on the present reality. In the sermon, he claims to know what Jesus says to all the different reactions on the assassinations, and what the only fruitful and faithful reaction is, according to him: 'Hier ist Gott – darum tut Buße' (see 5.2.b).

In the third paragraph, we explain that it is an innate aim and effect of the prophetic moment that the context of the hearers is theologically and spiritually qualified. When destructiva are exposed and interrupted, and when illumination happens through scriptural parallels, then, unavoidably, a spiritual qualification is given to the contemporary situation. We show this effect through discussing an Advent sermon from Gerhard von Rad, a rather difficult sermon on an obscure text from

Isaiah. The issue at stake is *Gottesfinsternis*, not only in the Isaian text but also in Von Rad's progressively secularising, post-war European context. We show how Von Rad absorbs all kinds of voices in his sermon (Goethe, Nietzsche, Buber, and Nelly Sachs), we show how an illuminative dynamic happens between Isaiah 29 and Von Rad's context and we show how the preacher draws his hearers and context into a theological narrative, a specific *Geschichtsdiagnostik* that intensifies the tensions between God and human and crafts an unthought potential of hope, both for individuals and for a culture (5.3.b).

5.1.b Sermon illustrating 'Recognising the Word' Werner Krusche, sermon on Acts 12.1-17 (Halle, 1982)

1 Summary of the sermon

This sermon is held during a synod meeting of the BEK (Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR) and the preacher introduces the text, taken from Acts 12, first of all as a text about mission.²³ Krusche starts by defining the horizon of the earliest church. In the commission of Jesus to be a missionary church, the earliest believers were not 'an einer Winkelsache beteiligt', but they worked *im Welthorizont*. Jesus did not announce a slogan like 'a decade of mission', but he called a congregation into being to be missionary 'zum Ende der Welt'. It is good for us, Krusche continues, to read in the text that this was no *Triumphzug*, but a story about people searching their way through experiences of defeat and losses as well as through miraculous experiences of the power of the Risen One. Through both experiences, the Gospel made progress. Faithful to the didactic *Sächsische* homiletical tradition (4.2.b), Krusche explains that the sermon is structured around three points. The Lord will cause the Gospel to make progress through 1 the suffering of his people, 2 through the liberation of his people and 3 through the prayer of his people.

First about suffering. Maybe the liberation of Peter still rings in our ears, Krusche suggests, maybe we hardly noticed the other verses that we just read: "Um diese Zeit", so heißt es, "legte der König Herodes Hand an einige von der Gemeinde, sie zu mißhandeln". It is good for us that these verses are not absent in Scripture, Krusche says. And then he continues by retelling the incident from Acts in 'DDR-language': 'Da werden ein paar Leute aus der Gemeinde von den Sicherheitsorganen des Königs ergriffen und fertiggemacht'. The term 'Sicherheitsorganen' causes an instant identification between the DDR context and Acts 12. This identification continues: 'Den hatten sie kaltgemacht. Und es war offenbar kein Engel gekommen. Das muß die Gemeinde des Gekreuzigten Herrn wissen, daß er seinen Boten eben auch dies zumuten kann: daß sie fertiggemacht werden – durch brutale Mißhandlung oder indem man sie

23 'Predigt am 26. 9. 1982 (16. Sonntag nach Trinitatis)', in: Krusche, W., *Und Gott redete mit seinem Volk. Predigten aus den achtziger Jahren* (Hrsg. Rudolf Landau). (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag 1990), pp 145-152.

nervlich garkocht, bis sie am Ende sind'. The church of the Crucified One must know about these experiences, Krusche says, they must also know about the absence of angels, about brute violence against Christians, even until the point where they reach the end of their powers. There may be times that this is expected from the servants of the Crucified One.

The rationale of this suffering, Krusche explains, is that it contains a witness: 'Das Leben, das uns das Evangelium zugebracht hat, ist uns mehr wert als alles. Das geben wir nicht mehr her. Nie mehr. Um keinen Preis. Das kann uns auch keiner mehr nehmen. Auch wenn man uns ums Leben bringt. Um das Leben das er uns gebracht hat, kann uns keiner mehr bringen. Die Freude, die durch das Evangelium in unser Leben gekommen ist, bleibt, auch wenn uns das Lachen vergeht'. Notice the 'us' in the sentences. Experiences from early Christians merger with experiences in the DDR. In these sentences, suffering transforms to *kerygma*: 'We will not abnegate this life we received'. More poignantly even: 'It is not possible that this life we received through the Gospel is taken away from us. It will stay with us, even if we are killed for it'. Krusche recognises in this reality the truth of a word that Jesus once said: 'Es stimmt, was er gesagt hat: "Eure Freude soll niemand von euch nehmen"' (Jh 16.22).

The paragraph is concluded by a reference to the recent church history, a reference to the diachronic communality that exists between believers that know intimidation and suffering: 'So haben sie es uns bezeugt: die Geschwister Scholl, Paul Schneider, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, James von Moltke. Wenn das Evangelium Menschen so viel wert ist, daß sie dafür alles hergeben, wenn es ihnen hilft, so getrost, so ohne Haßgefühle zu sterben, dann muß doch etwas dran sein.' The point that the preacher will make several times in this sermon is: This suffering is a testimony by which other people are being made attentive to the truth and the power of the Gospel. It is a paradoxical truth that 'every Christian who bears his or her own suffering bravely, draws attention to the power of the Gospel'. Notice the critical shadow in Krusche's closing of the paragraph: The contrast of the willingness to suffer is the attitude of avoiding it. What does that avoidant attitude tell? 'Eine Sache, für die keiner mehr etwas auf sich zu nehmen bereit ist, kann nicht viel wert sein'.

But sometimes it is not through martyrdom, but through liberation that other people are made attentive to the Gospel. This second point is developed by a strong but implicit critique of 'the king'. The king is portrayed as opportunistic: 'Der König hat gemerkt, daß es ihm offenbar Pluspunkte bei der Bevölkerung einbrachte, wenn er gegen die Christen vorging'. And then the preacher again rewrites the imprisonment of Peter in 'DDR-vocabulary': 'The king had taken their leader into custody, and he had done it 'properly': with sixteen guards.' Peter's case was absolutely hopeless: 'An zwei Bewacher gekettet, Zellentür verschlossen, auf dem Gang zwei patrouillierende Wachen, und dann das eiserne Gefängnistor.' (...) 'Und dann kam die Nacht vor dem öffentlichen Verhör, vor dem schon feststand, wie es ausgehen würde.' Peter would be

executed, because he was a Christian. 'Herodes hätte ja doch geradezu Trottel von Staatsanwälten haben müssen, wenn sie nicht irgendeinen Paragraphen gefunden hätten aufgrund dessen sie ihn anklagen konnten – Majestätsbeleidigung, Zugehörigkeit zu einer konterroyalen Vereinigung oder so.' In this passage, the preacher rewrites the imprisonment of Peter in terms of an 'evangelical *Pfarrer* in a DDR prison'. The corruption of the court, the lawyers ('Staatsanwälten') finding some obscure paragraph to plead guilty, the arbitrariness of it all, the iron celldoors, the 'patrouillierende Wachen', the desperation of the imprisoned ones. The description is about Herod, Peter and his imprisonment, while at the same time it is a complaint about the corrupt and unjust character of the DDR system in the present.

'Und da kam Gottes Blitzaktion'. When Peter found himself freed, suddenly walking in some 'lonely alley' ('auf einer einsamen Gasse'), he must have been thinking that an angel had liberated him. When Krusche reflects on this angel, we hear a theological reflection on the character of angels, combined with another contemporisation of the scriptural text: 'Angels cannot be detained', he playfully starts ('Engel lassen sich nicht festhalten'). They are simply there, fulfil their assignment and then just leave. Every effort to determine or to capture them, fails. "Sie sind dienende Geister, ausgesandt, um denen zu helfen, die das Heil erben sollen", heißt es im Hebräerbrief (1, 14). Keineswegs unmöglich, daß der Bote Gottes, der Petrus befreit hat, ein oppositioneller Offizier war, einer, der es mit den Christen gut meinte. Wer weiß. Wir sollten nicht dahinterkommen wollen. Bei Engeln darf man seiner Phantasie Spielraum lassen.' (...) 'Engel haben keine Flügel. Sie können durchaus einmal eine Uniform anhaben.'

What is happening here, is that the experience of the unexpected liberation of Peter is translated in how similar liberations could happen in the DDR context. Angels cannot be fixated or arrested, Krusche says, they perform what they are told to do by God and then they disappear again. When it concerns angels, we may give room to our phantasy, Krusche imaginatively continues: 'Angels do not have wings, but they may just as well wear a uniform'. What the preacher is doing here, is translating, or: excarnating, Acts 12 in such a way that the hearers may become receptive to the possibility of miraculous openings in their own context. God can be present through all kinds of means and occurrences: 'Er verschafft sich Zutritt, wo er will. Er macht Menschen oder Naturkräfte zu seinen Dienern, wenn er den Seinen zur Freiheit verhelfen will.' In a prison in Philippi, it was an earthquake that lifted the cell doors from its angles and freed two prisoners. It may be a political landslide or an unexpected amnesty, or – as in the last war – an aerial bomb that tore a prison wall open. I remember how Wolfgang Staemmler told us, with a smile on his face, how American soldiers freed him from his prison cell and made him, being a BK minister, the director of the prison, in which his former guards were now imprisoned'. In passages like these, the preacher creates hope. He is interrupting discourses of despair, perceptions of reality in which the political powers, with their propaganda and military means, dominate and dictate the interpretation of reality. In a

suffocating closed atmosphere like that, the preacher talks about a God who can change political systems overnight.

This second point ends with a chilling note of critique on the church. Earlier, we noted the confrontation in the sermon with 'the king, his lawyers, his violence, his prisons, his opportunism'. Now we hear a confrontation with the church. It is *Selbstkritik*. The earlier note ('Eine Sache, für die keiner mehr etwas auf sich zu nehmen bereit ist, kann nicht viel wert sein') now becomes explicit, and in this passage, we learn what the preacher sees as the major threat for the church: Not merely the external threat of terror and intimidation, but more prominently the threat of cowardice: 'Die schwerste Hindernis für das Vorankommen des Evangeliums sind nicht Machthaber vom Schläge Herodes, sind nicht Einschüchterungsmaßnahmen gegen die Gemeinde – das schwerste Hindernis ist eine Gemeinde, die vor dem Leiden ausweicht, die nichts hergeben will und darum dauernd nachgeben muß'. Peter, Krusche continues, did not 'take it easy' after his liberation, he did not 'retreat to a quiet, personal life', he did not say: 'Now, be cautious and stay out of danger'. No, he continued to live out his calling to spread the Gospel, 'until he authenticated the truth of the Gospel with his own blood, praising God in his death'. This is a discerning passage in the sermon: The attention is moved away from Herod and his intimidations, it is even said that rulers like him are not the real threat for the Christian congregation. The real threat, according to Krusche, is the avoidance of suffering by the church, the unwillingness to pay the costs for their faith in Jesus.

In the third point about prayer, Krusche prolongs these critical reflections. The assassination of James and the imprisonment of Peter did not drive the early Christians apart or made them hesitant: 'Als Jakobus hingerichtet und Petrus verhaftet worden war, da lief die Gemeinde nicht auseinander, keinen anderen Gedanken im Kopf als: Jetzt bloß untertauchen, jetzt bloß um Himmels willen nicht auffallen. Jetzt erst einmal warten, bis bei Herodes wieder eine weiche Welle kommt'. There is no resignation or fatalism in this congregation, but the circumstances triggered them into prayer. There was something catalytic in the circumstances that pressed them to communal prayer. During the sermon, Krusche asks what the content of their prayer would have been. Were they praying for the liberation of Peter? But even if they were, considering the surprise and disbelief they felt when Peter was actually liberated, maybe they hardly believed God would answer that prayer. 'Dann wären sie uns sehr ähnlich, die wir auch so zaghaft und kleimütig beten und uns meist gar nicht zu hoffen getrauen, daß das wirklich eintreten könnte, worum wir gebeten haben'. But maybe they did not pray for his release at all, the preacher continues, maybe they prayed God to strengthen Peter in his hour of need and in his approaching death, and maybe they prayed for themselves that 'uns nicht die Angst packt und uns den Mut verschließt, sondern gib uns Mut und Unerschrockenheit, und daß wir unsere Verfolger nicht hassen, damit das Evangelium durch uns vorankommt'.

It is clear that the preacher reconstructs this possible prayer of the Jerusalem congregation as a proposal for the current hearers, and in this mode, he ends the sermon: 'Und vielleicht haben sie zum Schluß noch gebetet: Und wenn du willst, Herr, daß wir selber um des Evangeliums willen leiden sollen, so gib, daß wir dem Leiden nicht ausweichen und es nicht wehleidig tragen. Bewahre uns vor der Bitterkeit gegenüber denen, die uns Unrecht tun, und auch vor der Selbstmitleidung, sondern hilf uns, die Freude im Herzen zu bewahren, die wir in dir haben. Daß wir dein sind, das ist uns genug. Amen.' Krusche ends the sermon with a prayer for the courage not to avoid suffering, for perseverance and joy. 'Make it enough for us, that we are yours.' Throughout the entire sermon, we notice a continuous identification between the Jerusalem congregation and the DDR Christians. The preacher never says explicitly, 'that means today', but in his description of the scriptural passage it is clear that, according to Krusche, it is about the same reality as hearers in the DDR have to deal with. It is the same redemptive drama, the same discipleship of following the Crucified One, the same terror and intimidation, the same possibility of liberation and release, the same call to prayer.

2 + 3 Introduction of the sermon and analytical remarks

In our analysis, we focus on how Scripture functions in this sermon, more specifically on how Krusche crafts a specific interplay between the 'world of Acts 12' and his own DDR context. We use and explain the term 'excarnating Scripture' to show what happens when a preacher 'travels' with the text and the kerygma of Acts 12 into his own context. The point is that through this mechanism a new authoritative word emerges in the sermon.

It is, first of all, important to notice the particular context in which the sermon is held: a synod meeting in the DDR in 1982. The reading and explanation of Scripture here is explicitly not an *individual* exercise, but part of a communal ecclesiastical process of discernment and decision-making. The questions at stake are part of a broader discourse, and this influences the explanation of Scripture. A world of ecclesiastical considerations, questions and impasses comes along when Scripture is read in this setting. In the sermon, this is traceable. From the beginning, the preacher explicitly draws the 'us' of the hearers into the sermon, more particularly, their suffering and defeats. Krusche underlines the absence of a 'triumphant tone' in Acts 12, and 'this is helpful for us', he says. From the beginning, the own experiences of the church in the DDR are recognised in the text. This initial recognition is further developed and elaborated in the sermon. The imprisonment of Peter is re-imagined and re-told using contemporary language and images. What Peter, and the congregation surrounding him, experienced, is presented as analogical or even identical with current experiences of Christians in the DDR.

We could reformulate what is happening here, by saying: Acts 12 is ‘excarnated’ in the DDR context. Rüdiger Lux applied this moment of ‘excarnation’ to understand the prophetic dimension of preaching.²⁴ The sacred texts of the Bible, Lux argued, originate in *oral* events. For instance, the canonical prophetic texts in Scripture are inscriptions of earlier prophetic encounters with God. The inscriptions of these experiences became part of a canonical scriptural tradition, in which the texts were read and conserved, interpreted and explained. Lux underlined that this is a living continuing tradition. These texts became the sources for new moments of preaching in which the texts were ‘excarnated’ in new oral moments of living speech. In these texts, as well as in the textual communities surrounding them, an ongoing dynamic between orality and scripturality is active. In acts of preaching, the old inscriptions ‘come alive again.’ ‘Der Text wird, wie Aleida und Jan Assmann das bezeichnet haben, “excarniert”. Er wird zum Machtwort, zu einer performativen Sprachhandlung, die nicht nur etwas mitteilt, sondern den Anspruch erhebt, das Mitgeteilte auch durchzusetzen, zu bewirken. Eine prophetische Predigt partizipiert an diesem Anspruch.’²⁵ When we apply this to the sermon: A text from Scripture, Acts 12, is recognised in the present, and the recognition functions as a spin-off for a new word in the context of the hearers, and something of the authority and power present in the canonical text, jumps over to the contemporary context. According to Assmann, a prophetic sermon participates in the original *Anspruch* of the text, and that power makes the new sermon a new *Machtwort*.

How does this happen in this specific sermon? In our analysis, the sermon develops into a new authoritative word in the present. Based on the similarities with Acts 12, Krusche develops several observations and imperatives for his church. These are *new* judgements, formulated by Krusche. We show three of these new, contextual elaborations. 1 The power of testimony in suffering, 2 openness to God’s intrusions in this reality, and 3 a reproach against ‘avoiding suffering’.

1 Testimony. In this sermon, Krusche first of all theologises on suffering. The suffering is recognised in the text and homiletically developed for the present: Imprisoned Christians can be tortured, mentally abused, and killed, and in many of these instances ‘no angels appear at all’. Christians must know about this, Krusche underlines. As a bishop/pastor in the DDR, he develops the potential spiritual meaning of it: ‘In this suffering they cling to the life that the Gospel has given them.’ In the sermon, a doxological passage is newly crafted: ‘Das geben wir

24 Lux, R., ‘Und auf die Seher folgen die Prediger.’ Erwägungen zum Verhältnis von Prophetie und Predigt’, in: Alston, W.J., C. Möller, H. Schwier (Hg.), *Die Predigt des Alten Testaments. (Beiträge des Symposiums ‘Das Alte Testament und die Kultur der Moderne’, anlässlich des 100. Geburtstags Gerhard von Rads (1901-1971), Heidelberg, 18-21. Oktober 2001)*. (Münster: LIT Verlag 2003), pp 43-64.

25 Lux, R., *Ibid.* p 54.

nicht mehr her. Nie mehr. Um keinen Preis.' 'Nobody can take this life away from us, the life he brought us. The joy that has come into our lives through the Gospel, will stay even if our laughter will perish.' This doxology of scars is developed through a kind of diachronic communality: This joyous perseverance is testified to us by Paul Schneider, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and many others, Krusche explains. We could argue: This is a new word. Literally we do not read in Acts 12 about Peter's joy or confidence in prison. Krusche *crafts* this as a new word for DDR Christians, developed out of a congeniality with that which is at stake in Acts 12: perseverance and testimony.

2 Openness to God's intrusions. We show in this analysis how in the sermon an initial recognition with realities in Scripture is developed for contemporary situations. The sermon is not a repetition, but an elaboration of realities, recognised in Scripture, for the present context. The second example of this mechanism is Krusche's reflection on angels. In this sermon, the small angelology of Krusche, is essentially about *contingency*, about resisting an atmosphere that totalitarian regimes create. Theologically, Krusche tries to make his hearers receptive to God's unexpected intrusions in this world. Technically, he crafts an identity between the two contexts, through forms of instant identifications. Specific contemporary terms are used in the retelling of the scriptural passage: 'Keineswegs unmöglich, daß der Bote Gottes, der Petrus befreit hat, ein oppositioneller Offizier war, einer, der es mit den Christen gut meinte.' That is Acts 12 in DDR language. Through the term 'ein oppositioneller Offizier', the hearers are transported to the setting of Acts 12, and vice versa: the imprisonment of Peter is re-imagined in a DDR setting. The effect is that the hearers are enabled to inhabit the same world as the world of Scripture: The two 'worlds' meet in the same drama.²⁶ This merger of worlds facilitates the possibility of similar experiences, in this case, with angels. Krusche takes the subject of angels from Acts 12, to explore with some phantasy, the possible presence of angels in the context of the hearers: 'Bei Engeln darf man seiner Phantasie Spielraum lassen.'²⁷ Angels cannot be arrested, they serve and leave, they do not have wings, but they may wear a uniform. Through his angels, God 'verschafft sich Zutritt wo er will'. Krusche recalls several unexpected changes, in Scripture and in recent history. Unaware of what would happen seven years from then, in 1989, Krusche considers the unexpected possibility of

26 Brown, D., *God & Mystery in Words. Experience through Metaphor and Drama*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), pp 113-114

27 See the interesting parallel on phantasy in the sermon, in Bohren's paragraph on 'Apokalyptische Predigt': 'Die Phantasie datiert unsere Gegenwart zurück und projiziert die Geschichte in unsere Gegenwart. Auf diese Weise bricht sie die Gegenwart auf und betrachtet das Wirkliche als veränderbar'. In this way, 'wird der Verzicht auf Phantasie bezahlt mit einem Verlust an Wirklichkeit'. What Bohren sketches is exactly what Krusche is doing: Pointing to the similarities of the present in former, scriptural circumstances, projecting this 'sacred history' again to the present, and thus portraying the present as changeable. The loss of this 'phantasy' paradoxically means a loss of reality, a loss of the awareness of contingency and of God's strange intrusions. See: Bohren, R., *Predigtlehre*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1980), pp 274-275

a 'political landslide' that can change a society overnight. All these reflections are intrinsically related to his context: One of the major threats of the *Geistesleben* under totalitarian regimes is defeatism, to capitulate to the ideological pressure and propaganda claiming that nothing is to be expected from outside or beyond the ruling regime. The reflection on angels in this sermon is a new *Machtwort* against these oppressive atmospheres.

3 Avoiding suffering. The sharpest reproaches in this sermon are aimed at the church. While Krusche underlines the *kerygma* that may come to the fore when persecuted Christians cling to the Gospel as the deepest joy in their lives, he also refers to the contrast of this attitude, namely the avoidance of this suffering and the spiritual reality behind that attitude: 'Eine Sache, für die keiner mehr etwas auf sich zu nehmen bereit ist, kann nicht viel wert sein.' And also, the second point of the sermon is bended to its contrast. In miraculous ways, God can open closed systems, but the toughest impediments for the progress of Gospel in this world, Krusche says, are not rulers like Herod, no 'das schwerste Hindernis ist eine Gemeinde, die vor dem Leiden ausweicht, die nichts hergeben will und darum dauern nachgeben muß'. Now it is important and interesting to notice that this atmosphere of defeatism and cowardice is *not* explicitly traceable in Acts 12. It is Krusche's inductive assessment of the spiritual attitude that threatens Christians in the DDR: accepting defeat without struggle. Krusche brings up this defeatism, when he explains Acts 12, and he incorporates it in the sermon in a contrapuntal way.

What bothers Krusche in this defeatism? To understand this, some observations on the history of the church in the DDR are helpful. In retrospectivity, it can be stated that the fierce dispute with the SED state (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland) concerning the *Jugendweihe* in 1954, caused a traumatic experience, especially to the leaders of the church. In the early 1950s, the intimidations and restrictions from the state were explicitly aimed at the *Bildungssektor*, more specifically at young people, at protestant youth in public schools, at student pastors in universities and also at the church's own internal youth activities. Eberhard Jüngel recently recalled how he was expelled from school before his exams and how there was a public ceremony in his school where he was publicly

humiliated.²⁸ The confrontation between state and church concentrated on the SED introduction of the *Jugendweihe* in 1954. This *Jugendweihe* was a ritual of transition from childhood to young adulthood, in which youth were initiated into Socialism, promised to fight for its well-being and to adhere to its 'scientific worldview'. The ceremony was for youth around 14 years old, held around Easter and Pentecost, in a pseudo religious atmosphere. It was the State's *Gegenentwurf* of the church's *Konfirmation*, an attempt to dismantle the *kirchliche Jugendarbeit* and to sabotage the 'confession of faith'-moment of young people in the church. Officially, the *Jugendweihe* was voluntarily, but factually, schools, universities, factories, and the government pressed parents to participate in it. This mixture of threat and enticement had its effect. According to Henkys, within a few years the *Jugendweihe* had merely superseded the *Konfirmation*.²⁹

The traumatic experience of this period for Krusche is that the leaders of the church had explicitly urged their members *not* to participate in this *Jugendweihe*. They even made it a *status confessionis*: All the youth of the church that decided to follow this *atheistischen Gegenritus*, would not be accepted for confirmation in their church. *Jugendweihe* and *Konfirmation* were labelled as irreconcilable. But the majority of the church members thought differently.³⁰ In retrospectivity, it is said that with this *Jugendweihe* the SED state broke, with a single blow, the 'seit Jahrhunderten im durchweg protestantischen Gebiet der DDR verankerte volkskirchliche Sitte der Konfirmation'.³¹ In Henkys' analysis, *Volkskirche* turned out to be different from *Bekennniskirche*, and the leaders of the church learned

28 'Die 'junge Gemeinde' wurde als 'Verbrechersonorganisation' bezeichnet und bekämpft. Ich habe die damalige Vorgänge am eigenen Leibe erfahren und werde den Tag nicht vergessen, an dem ich in der Aula der Magdeburger Humboldt-schule vor der versammelten Lehrer- und Schülerschaft als 'Feind der Republik' gebrandmarkt und als solcher – unmittelbar vor Beginn des Abiturs! – aus dem Gymnasium ausgeschlossen wurde.' Jüngel, E., 'Kirche im Sozialismus – Kirche im Pluralismus. Theologische Rückblicke und Ausblicke,' in: Rendtorff, Trutz (Hg.), *Protestantische Revolution?*, p 331. Notably, it is in the same period that Jüngel was struck by the experience of *parrhêsia* in the church. The church was the only place in the DDR where he had the 'Urerlebnis' of witnessing people who had the freedom to speak the truth. See: Jüngel, E., *Die Leidenschaft, Gott zu denken. Ein Gespräch über Denk- und Lebenserfahrungen* (Hrsg. Fulvio Ferrario), (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich 2009), pp 12-13.

29 Henkys, R., 'Kirche im Sozialismus – Knotenpunkte im Verhältnis von Evangelischer Kirche und Staat in der DDR,' in: Rendtorff, Trutz (Hg.), *Protestantische Revolution?*, p 19. See also Krusche, W., *Ich werde nie mehr Geige Spielen können. Erinnerungen*, p 191.

30 In Krusche's own recapitulation: 'Die Erfahrung des Zerbrechens und die, daß die Gemeinden uns im Stich ließen, das war ein Schock. Es ist eine so schwerwiegende Erfahrung gewesen: da haben wir einmal gewagt, Widerstand zu leisten, da haben wir einmal den status confessionis markiert. Wir haben damals gekämpft wie die Berserker, doch wir mußten Loch für Loch zurückstecken. (...) Diese Erfahrung ist für meine Generation ganz entscheidend gewesen. Wir haben danach nie mehr gewagt, die Gemeinden vor solch ein Entweder-Oder zu stellen, zum Beispiel bei der Einführung des Wehrkunde-unterrichts. Das hat uns also tief geprägt und Ängste in uns hervorgerufen, die wir nie mehr ganz los geworden sind,' Krusche, W., 'Die Kirche war die belagerte Burg, von der aus auf Leben und Tod gekämpft wird,' Interview in: Findeis, H. und D. Pollack (Hg.), *Selbstbewahrung oder Selbstverlust. Bischöfe und Repräsentanten der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR über ihr Leben*. (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag 1999), pp 216-217.

31 Henkys, R., 'Kirche im Sozialismus – Knotenpunkte im Verhältnis von Evangelischer Kirche und Staat in der DDR,' in: Rendtorff, T. (Hg.), *Protestantische Revolution?*, p 19.

that they could not count on a 'konfliktbereites Volk'. The case is illustrative, firstly for the totalitarian power the SED state could develop, but secondly, it is illustrative for the paralysing mood of resignation that quickly and epidemically arose in this society. This defeatism, this almost premature resignation without any fight, developed into forms of apathy, of 'inner migration', both amongst church members as in society in general.³²

When we return to Krusche's sermon, we now see how this defeatism dominates the entire sermon. 'Eine Sache, für die keiner mehr etwas auf sich zu nehmen bereit ist, kann nicht viel wert sein.' Or: 'The main hindrance of the progress of the Gospel is not in the restrictive measures 'kings' may take, but it is in the avoidant attitude of a church to the suffering that Christian faith may entail'. Krusche reads something of this defeatism in the 'surprise' of Rhode when Peter is actually liberated. Maybe the congregation did not pray for his release, and maybe they found it hard to believe that God would act in such a way. 'Dann wären sie uns sehr ähnlich, die wir auch so zaghaft und kleinmütig beten und uns meist gar nicht zu hoffen getrauen, daß das wirklich eintreten könnte, worum wir gebeten haben.' Though Krusche sees traces of this resignation in the text, it is more likely that, in an inductive way, he takes this resignation from the empirical experiences in his own context of the DDR into the text. The scriptural text mainly functions in a contrapuntal way: God causes the Gospel to make progress through the suffering, the liberation and the prayer of his people, and these realities function as a mirror, as *paraenesis*, for Christians in the DDR. Krusche addresses the risk of inner migration explicitly and repeatedly: 'Petrus wird nicht dazu befreit, um noch ein paar ruhige Jahre in irgendeinem stillen Winkel zu verbringen. Er verschwindet zwar von der Bildfläche, er entzieht sich dem Zugriff des Herodes, aber er zieht sich nicht ins Privatleben zurück, er sagt nicht: "jetzt bloß vorsichtig sein, jetzt bloß sich nicht noch einmal gefährden!", er ist weiter im Dienst, damit das Evangelium vorankommt, bis auch er mit seinem Blut die Wahrheit des Evangeliums überzeugend bezeugt und Gott mit seinem Tod preist.'

The point we want to make is that Krusche does not literally read this critical sermon on defeatism in Acts 12. This sermon is new, contemporary speech derived

32 'Aufgrund der Machtfülle, die die SED-Führung besaß, breitete sich in der Bevölkerung jedoch ein Gefühl der Ohnmacht und Resignation aus. (...) Die Einseitigkeit der Macht- und Ressourcenverteilung hatte demotivierende Folgen. (...) Die Mehrheit der Bevölkerung unterwarf sich zwar den Zumutungen des Systems und paßte sich nach außen hin an. Innerlich zog sie sich aber aus der Gesellschaft weitgehend zurück, und wollte mit dem politischen System wenig zu tun haben.' Pollack, D., 'Der Umbruch in der DDR – Eine protestantische Revolution? Der Beitrag der evangelischen Kirchen und der politisch alternativen Gruppen zur Wende 1989', in: Rendtorff, T. (Hrsg.), *Ibid.* pp 45-46.

from Acts 12.³³ The preacher approaches the scriptural text from his own context, and subsequently makes the scriptural text travel into this contemporary context. Lux calls this mechanism, with a term from Baeck, *nachschaffender Beredsamkeit*. A *bleibende Differenz* remains between contemporary prophetic preaching and the prophetic texts in the biblical canon, but there is indeed contemporary speech (*Beredsamkeit*) derivative (*nachschaffend*) from these canonical texts. This contemporary speech is not a repetition of these former words, nor necessarily a repetition of the former fronts, but in this speech the preacher ‘wandert mit dem Wort der Propheten in neue Zeiten ein, in denen sich neue Fronten bilden können, die dann auch ein neues Denken, neue Worte, und – wenn es an der Zeit ist – eine neue Sprache erfordern. Beständigkeit und Variabilität sind Voraussetzungen für jeden fruchtbaren Traditionsprozess’. Krusche incarnates the text of Acts 12 in a new context, and this is not a repetition of the text, but new fronts emerge, a new discourse, a new sensitivity to what must be addressed in this contemporary situation.

In the next paragraph, we turn to a sermon from Bonhoeffer, on Luke 13. As we already saw in this paragraph: prophetic sermons are *zeitbezogen*, and the more detailed our analysis and the more comprehensive our information about the context of a sermon, the sharper we see how preachers respond to their context, and how there is something of an epiphanic quality in these responses. In the next paragraph on the absorbing competence of the preacher, we continue our analysis on both the inductive, contextual factors that influence the sermon, as well as on the illuminative quality in it.

5.2.b Sermon illustrating ‘Absorbing’ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Luke 13.1-5 (London, 1934)

1 Introduction of the sermon

From June 30 to July 2, 1934, a purge took place in Nazi-Germany: in an internal power struggle, Hitler crushed opponents of his policies, predominantly from the circles in the SA, the Sturm Abteilung. Through a series of extra-judicial executions, covering between eighty to several hundreds of opponents, Hitler

33 See Ernst Lange about this ‘new word’ crafted by the preacher: ‘Denn was er über die Relevanz der Überlieferung im Hic et Nunc sagt, das steht nicht im Text. Freilich muß er zeigen können, inwiefern seine Aussage überlieferungsgemäß ist, wie sie in der Überlieferung vorbereitet, ermöglicht, angestoßen, aufgegeben ist, wie sie mit der Intention und der Struktur der Überlieferung übereinstimmt. Auch für diese Übereinstimmung ist er haftbar, er ist Zeuge als Interpret und Interpret als Zeuge. Aber als Aktualisierung dieser Überlieferung für eine bestimmte, in ihrer Weise einmalige homiletische Situation ist seine Aussage *neues* Wort, nicht Repetition, sondern verantwortliche Neuformung der Überlieferung.’ Lange, E., ‘Zur Theorie und Praxis der Predigtarbeit’, in: Lange, E., *Predigen als Beruf. Aufsätze zu Homiletik, Liturgie und Pfarramt*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1982), pp 28-29.

violently shut up the critical voice of prominent, conservative anti-Nazis. The occurrence has been called the ‘Night of the Long Knives’, the ‘Röhm-Putsch’ or the ‘Reichsmordwoche’. Calling it a revolt or a conspiracy, allowed Hitler to frame the executions as a pre-emptive strike. On the next Sunday, in many churches this propaganda was followed as many preachers thanked God for empowering Hitler to prevent the nation for a great danger.

Bonhoeffer was stationed in London at that moment, but he was highly involved in what was happening. ‘Die Morde des 30. Juni 1934 waren ihm düsteres Menetekel für das, was von diesem Regime auch innenpolitisch noch zu erwarten war.’³⁴ Bonhoeffer read these occurrences as signs, expressions of the dark potential of this regime and a preview to what could be expected of it. In the week after the executions, he wrote to Niebuhr: ‘Die letzten Ereignisse in Deutschland haben ja nun unzweideutig gezeigt, wohin die Fahrt geht.’³⁵ In the Sunday after the ‘Putsch’, Bonhoeffer preached in London on the pericope of Luke 13, about Pilate executing ‘some Galilees’, a pericope Bonhoeffer selected himself. We first give a summary of the sermon and then analyse it, with a focus on how contemporary realities are absorbed in the sermon.

2 Summary of the sermon

Already in the first line of the sermon, a noteworthy moment occurs.³⁶ Bonhoeffer opens the sermon by saying: ‘Maybe you are startled about this text and think it is too up-to-date for today and thus dangerous for a religious service’. Literally: ‘Vielleicht erschreckt ihr über diesen Text und meint, er sei doch gar zu aktuell und darum gefährlich für einen Gottesdienst’. Bonhoeffer assumes that the hearers make a, so to say, pre-sermonic intuitive connection between what has happened in the Röhm-Putsch and the text of Luke 13: ‘Maybe you think the text is too actual’. That Bonhoeffer refers to the political occurrences is clear in the following lines. The ‘danger’ he refers to, is the danger of preaching being dominated by ‘die Welt der Zeitungen und der Sensationsberichten’. ‘Isn’t it the aim of a religious service to get away from this world?’, Bonhoeffer asks, slightly ironic, slightly affirmative. ‘Yes’, he answers, ‘darauf kommt es wohl an, diese Welt wirklich loszuwerden, d.h. doch aber eben sie so loszuwerden, daß sie uns nicht kaum, daß wir aus der Kirche kommen, wieder überfällt und gefangennimmt und knechtet, sondern so, daß wir sie überwunden haben, wenn wir aus dem Gottesdienst kommen’. Bonhoeffer affirms the hesitation his hearers may have in addressing the actual political situation in the sermon, but he adds another kind of danger to it: It may be by making the *Gottesdienst* a place to flee from the ‘world of the newspapers’, we paradoxically may be subjugated by that world. We may

34 See the introduction of the sermon in: Bonhoeffer, D., *London 1933-1935. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke. Bd 13)*. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1994), p 3.

35 Bonhoeffer, D., *London 1933-1935*, p 170.

36 Bonhoeffer, D., *Ibid.* pp 365-372.

try to forget it in our religious gatherings, but when we leave the church 'it will capture us again, imprison us and oppress us'. We must not try to get away from this world, we must 'overcome' it, we must know how to live in it as Christians. 'Nicht darauf allein kommt es an, daß wir diese Dinge loswerden, sondern wie wir sie loswerden.' The principal aim of the sermon should be in overcoming this world.³⁷

After this compact opening, in which the main tension of the sermon is sketched, Bonhoeffer turns to an example, through which he indirectly continues the principal theme. 'There are people who cannot bear to attend funerals', he continues. They fear the immediate presence of the dead, they refuse to see this side of human existence and they think that by this denial they can cast away these realities. There are even people who think this is a pious attitude, to 'not to see this dark side of life', 'sich vor den Katastrophen dieser Welt zu verschließen und in friedlichem Optimismus sein eigenes selbstbeschauliches frommes Leben zu führen'. But, it can never be good to deceive oneself about the truth, Bonhoeffer quickly responds. And: whoever deceives himself about his own life, deceives himself too about the truth of God. Note that the theme of *self-deception* occurs again. Bonhoeffer is indirectly addressing the attitude of not acknowledging what is happening in the political reality of the day, avoiding the catastrophes that are developing with a self-constructed, religious, optimism.

After this example of 'looking away', Bonhoeffer turns to another defective form of dealing with reality. Now it is not the attitude of denial, but of 'blaming others'. 'When an accident happens before our eyes, we are shocked and struck numb for a second, but then we ask: who is to blame?' Bonhoeffer sees that attitude occur to a greater or lesser extent: When something *Entsetzliches* happens to us, to us personally, as a family or as a people ('Volk'), then the question through which we are woken up out of our *Besinnungslosigkeit* is: 'Wer ist schuld?' 'Der Mensch ist ein Moralist von Grund auf. Er will den einen anklagen können und den anderen freisprechen. Er will Richter sein über das was geschieht. Und er will dadurch mit einem furchtbaren Unheil fertig werden, daß er dem einen recht und dem anderen unrecht geben kann.' Through these phenomenological examples, Bonhoeffer comes to a fundamental point: in blaming others, people try to deal with the fearful *Unheil* that has come over them. Through that attitude, they try to become the 'judge' of what is happening. 'Look at how we deal with major catastrophes like the war, the revolution', Bonhoeffer exclaims: 'Es ist überall dasselbe. Der Mensch will selbst Richter sein. – Und nun halten wir einen Augenblick inne.'

In the structure of this sermon Bonhoeffer first 'circles around something'. In the first line, he has alluded to a political drama that has just happened, but only alluded, and he then circles around that allusion. Is the text not too much

37 We develop this theme of 'overcoming destructiva' in chapter 6, and the theme of 'equipping the congregation' in chapter 7.

tied up with the world of the newspapers? Should we not get beyond that world in a *Gottesdienst*? Bonhoeffer qualifies that attitude as self-deceptive and dangerous. Then he turns to another attitude, namely of blaming others, and he qualifies it as an attempt to become the master, the judge of what is happening, especially of dramas and catastrophes. These are all examples of false and defective strategies of 'overcoming this world'. Then Bonhoeffer comes to the point where he wants his hearers to be, ('Und nun halten wir einen Augenblick inne'), and then he turns to Luke 13. Interestingly, just as in the examples we gave from Krusche and Williams, Bonhoeffer also remarks about this pericope, that it is of 'immeasurable value for us' that Luke has written about this incident. 'Es ist nun für uns von unermeßlichem Wert, daß Lukas – als einziger übrigens – uns einen Bericht aufbewahrt hat darüber, wie Jesus eine solche Nachricht von einer Katastrophe, die über sein Land hereingebrochen ist, sagen wir ruhig: eine sensationelle Zeitungsnachricht, aufnimmt und was er dazu zu sagen hat'. Here, the illuminative dynamic happens in the sermon: Two 'sensationelle Zeitungsnachrichte' are linked to each other, though in an alluded form: the Röhm-Putsch and the assassination of some Galilees by Pilate. Here, the excarnation of Scripture happens: What is at stake in Luke 13 is translated into terms of the 'Germany of 1934', and in the sermon, the hearers inhabit these two worlds.

Through Bonhoeffer's specific language, it is clear that he sees an analogy between these two worlds. He characterises the assassinated Galilees as 'Aufrührer und Staatsfeinde' and Pilate has had them 'hinrichten lassen'. These are the 'instant identifications' that connect the two worlds. And it is also in Bonhoeffer's sketch of the societal mood after the assassinations, that the hearers will recognise their own context: 'Wahrhaftig eine Nachricht, die über alle Maßen die Gemüter erregen mußte, die Meinung und Gegenmeinung hervorrief und die das politische Gespräch mächtig in Gang brachte'. 'How did people react to the murders?', Bonhoeffer continues. Some will definitely have called Pilate a 'tyrant', others will have suggested that he may have had his reasons, 'maybe the killed Galilees were to blame for something?' 'Otherwise God would not have allowed this to happen', the pious would have said. Bonhoeffer speculates on the variety of reactions of those days, with the confusion of his own days in his mind. Is Hitler the 'tyrant', or maybe the assassinated Germans were really 'Aufrührer und Staatsfeinde'. And the pious reaction was not absent in his days either: The good God will have had his reason to allow these things to happen. The point Bonhoeffer moves to, is that these are all reactions to deal with *Unheil*, and meant to 'get over it'. 'So wurde man mit dem Vorfall fertig.'

Then, the turning point in the sermon happens: 'Dies ist die offizielle Ansicht, sagen wir die Tagespresse über diese Ereignis. Und nun Jesus.' The rhetorical strategy of the sermon is geared for this pivotal, central moment. As Bonhoeffer has made the connection between the two worlds, the way

Jesus deals with this 'assassination' in Luke 13 gains a specific relevance for the hearers. Bonhoeffer makes room in his sermon for this voice: 'Und nun Jesus'.

The first thing he says about Jesus' perspective on these murders, is that Jesus points to God. It is ultimately not Pilate who is acting here, but God, the *Alleinwirksame*, who acts in good things as in bad things. 'Und nun Jesus – er knüpft offenbar an den Gedanken an, daß allerdings Gott selbst hier mit diesem furchtbaren Geschehnis zusammengedacht werden müsse, daß es letzten Endes nicht Pilatus sei, der hier handle, sondern daß im Guten wie im Bösen Gott selbst als der Alleinwirksame in dieser Welt handle.' But Bonhoeffer explains in the sermon, that the way in which Jesus points to God is something completely different from how in the 'öffentliche Meinung' people refer to God. To make that point, he reiterates the sentence 'Jesus sagt 'Nein'. 'Kein Wort über Pilatus', whether he was right or not. 'Kein Wort des politischen Urteils, kein Wort des moralischen Urteils'. Jesus did not agree with the pious either: 'Jesus sagt 'Nein' zu ihnen.' 'Do you think these Galilees were more sinful than the other Galilees because they suffered this fate?', he asks them. '*Ich sage: Nein*'. Jesus interrupts their attitude to become 'judges' of this occurrence, to their attempt 'diese Dinge so abzutun'. What Bonhoeffer fundamentally is doing, is making room for 'Gottes Geheimnis': 'Hier ist Gott selbst am Werk... Ich sage: *Nein*... das heißt hier ist *Gottes Geheimnis*, in das der Mensch nicht vorwitzig eindringen soll' (italics DB). Through his incantatory 'No', Jesus is constraining the bystanders and forcing them to an attitude of silence and awe, and in it he even attacks them with their harsh judgements: 'Meinet ihr... Nein! sondern so ihr euch nicht bessert, werdet ihr alle auch also umkommen ... Siloah...'

According to Bonhoeffer, Jesus is doing here the same thing he did all of his life, namely: calling for penance: 'Hier ist Gott – darum tut Buße.' For Jesus, the catastrophe about which Luke tells us, is nothing but a renewed, unmistakable call from God to conversion. This political drama becomes a lively illustration of Jesus' preaching that before the mystery of God and before God's power, human beings must humble themselves and acknowledge God over their lives.

It is exactly at this point the text becomes 'dangerous' for us, Bonhoeffer says. 'Nun wird die Sache gefährlich.' Bonhoeffer draws the hearers and the present situation into this exact point: of conversion, of humbling oneself before God: 'Nun sind wir nicht mehr Zuschauer, Beobachter, Richter dieser Geschehnisse, nun sind wir selbst die Angeredeten, die Betroffenen. Für uns ist das geschehen, zu uns redet Gott, wir sind gemeint.' In these moments, a new present (*Gegenwart*) is enacted in the sermon. Bonhoeffer transforms the hearers from spectators into persons that are involved, from people who are judging the political occurrences of their day into people who are called to conversion. He makes them participants in this pericope, giving the 'old story' a new kairos, even claiming that the scriptural pericope is aimed at 'us', even: 'it has happened for us': 'Für uns ist das geschehen, zu uns redet Gott, wir sind gemeint.'

What kind of implication does this have for us?, Bonhoeffer explicitly asks. The first implication is: 'Richtet nicht, auf daß ihr nicht gerichtet werdet.' Do not think you are better than others, but pray: 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' Jesus also addresses the question of guilt, but he answers it differently. 'Nicht Pilatus oder die Galiläer trifft sie, sondern uns, uns selbst trifft sie.' When catastrophes happen, Christians do not take the attitude of spectators, but they confess: 'Das ist meine Welt, in der das geschehen ist, die Welt in der ich lebe, in der ich sündige, in der ich Haß und Lieblosigkeit säe Tag um Tag, das ist die Frucht, dessen was ich meine Brüder gesät haben – und diese Betroffenen, die Galiläer und Pilatus, sie sind meine Brüder, meine Brüder in der Sünde, im Haß, in der Bosheit, in der Lieblosigkeit, meine Brüder in der Schuld. Was sie trifft, sollte mich treffen, sie sind nur der Fingerzeig des Zornes Gottes, der auch über mich steht. Darum laßt uns Buße tun und unsere Schuld erkennen und nicht richten.' Christians, Bonhoeffer says, absorb and transform catastrophic moments into moments of penance for themselves: We ourselves are involved in this world, we are participating in this world with our own unkindness, hatred, and sin. Both the offenders and the victims are 'meine Brüder in der Sünde'. Bonhoeffer makes the hearers participate in the crisis of their context in a fundamental and theological way.

When Bonhoeffer moves on, he shows that this is not merely a moralistic effort to promote servitude among hearers, he shows that this penance has a redemptive, transformative power. It is exactly through this attitude the church may 'overcome this world': 'Es ist schwer, so zu denken, es ist noch schwerer zu glauben – was doch geglaubt werden muß – daß diese Haltung allein die Welt überwindet, daß durch die Buße allein die Welt neu werden kann.' Bonhoeffer defines that it is only through this attitude of penance, grace can find its way again to us. Through this openness, as opposed to attitudes of denial, arrogance or being judgemental, we become attainable for the renewing power of God's grace.

To underline and to illustrate this fundamental point in Christian spirituality, Bonhoeffer turns to Ghandi, to 'ein großer Mann unserer Zeit, ein Nichtchrist – aber man ist wohl versucht zu sagen, ein heidnischer Christ'. Ghandi dedicated himself to young people in the ashrams he led, and Bonhoeffer tells about an incident. *Erschütterndes Unrecht* happened in one of the schools, and what did Ghandi do? Did he interpret it as a moment calling for retaliation and judgement? No, he detected in it 'a call for penance' for himself. Ghandi retreated in fasting and prayer, doing penance for his own shortcomings and guilt in this incident. 'Was bedeutete das? Es bedeutete erstens, daß er in der Schuld seiner Schüler seine eigene Schuld, seinen Mangel an Liebe, an Geduld, an Wahrhaftigkeit erkannte.' 'Ghandi knew that only in the penitent attitude of confessing one's sins, the Spirit of God is given room again. He knew that only penance gives new faith, love and hope.' Bonhoeffer illustrates the redemptive power of this spiritual attitude, in which, in the guilt of the other, my own sins

are mirrored to me. There is a kenotic power in this attitude, as Bonhoeffer theologises about it, a strong impulse for solidarity and conversion: 'Wir haben noch nicht genug geglaubt, wir haben noch nicht genug geliebt – Können wir Richter sein: Jesus spricht: *Ich sage: Nein!*' (italics DB).

The sermon ends in a mystagogical way, as maybe the entire sermon can be seen as an initiation of the congregation in 'the way of the Lord in the present'. In the sermon, the hearers are initiated into a specific reality, into a zone of speech where the living voice of Jesus can be heard, but also, in a zone of speech where the way of the Lord can be detected and followed in the present. It is in knowing, admitting, and following this specific 'way'; this hard and slow way, that the 'world can be overcome' indeed. Thus, Bonhoeffer answers the opening quest of his sermon, about how we can truly 'overcome this word': 'Es ist ein stiller, ein wunderlicher und ein langsamer Weg, der Weg, der durch Buße zur Erneuerung führt. Aber es ist allein Gottes Weg. Und wenn wir mit dieser Erkenntnis aus der Kirche heimgehen und mit ihr Ernst machen wollen, dann allein haben wir die Welt der Zeitung, die Welt der Schrecken und die Welt des Richtens überwunden. Herr, führe dein Volk in die Buße und fange bei uns damit an. Amen.'

3 Analytical remarks

In retrospectivity, it is fascinating to observe how incisive political moments and developments in the early 1930s in Germany are addressed and assessed in sermons of Bonhoeffer.³⁸ Bonhoeffer explains Scripture in such a way that the actual political and societal realities are present in it, integrated in it, but always in a qualified way. Wendel has observed that when you do not know the political circumstances surrounding these sermons, for instance on Luke 13, you cannot distillate them from the sermon. No name is mentioned in the sermon, no place, no date.³⁹ But when you do know the circumstances, everything in the sermon becomes *gegenwartsbezogen*. In this paragraph, we shortly analyse how this relationship between context, Scripture, preaching and preacher functions in this sermon.

38 See, for instance, the sermon on II Chronicles 20, 12 ('Wir wissen nicht, was wir tun sollen, sondern unsere Augen sehen nach dir', Berlin, 8. 5. 1932), the two sermons on Colossians 3.1-4, (directly related to the Von Papen-Antritt, Berlin 12. 6. 1932 and 19. 6. 1932), the sermon in January 1933 on 'die Furcht ist im Schiff' ('Predigt zu Matthäus 8.23-27, Berlin 15. 1. 1933), the Daniel sermon after the take-over of Hitler ('Predigt zu Richter 6.15f; 7,2; 8,23', Berlin 26. 2. 1933), the sermon on the 'Moses- und Aaronskirche' ('Predigt zu Exodus 32.1-8, 15f., 18-20, 30-35', Berlin 28. 5. 1933), the Jeremiah sermon in London, held just before a meeting of church officials with Hitler ('Predigt zu Jeremia 20, 7., London 21. 1. 1934'), the sermon on Luke 13, held directly after the Röhm-Putsch ('Predigt zu Lukas 13.1-5, London 8. 7. 1934').

39 'Der Bezug auf dies Ereignis (die Röhm-Revolution) ist jedoch dergestalt, daß einer, der den zeitgeschichtlichen Anlaß der Predigt nicht kennt, kaum erraten kann, auf welches bestimmte politische Ereignis die Predigt sich bezieht: Es fällt kein Name, kein Ort oder Datum wird genannt. Er wird die Predigt vielmehr unter dem grundsätzlichen Aspekt lesen, wie wir in der Kirche 'die Welt der Zeitungen und der Sensationsnachrichten' los werden, d.h. überwinden können.' Wendel, E.G., *Studien zur Homiletik Dietrich Bonhoeffers. Predigt – Hermeneutik – Sprache*. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (P. Siebeck) 1985), p 42.

We developed the notion of ‘absorbing’ to show how preachers integrate in sermons all kinds of inductive factors from their context. In explicit or alluded form, the realities of the hearers, (their political, societal, and personal circumstances), resonate in the sermon. In this specific sermon, the ‘Reichsmordwoche’ is resonating in every fibre of the sermon. Already in the opening line, Bonhoeffer explicates the fact that the hearers will intuitively connect the executions of the previous week with the assassinations in the pericope of Luke. It seems legitimate to suppose that the preacher himself made similar connections: he personally selected this pericope for this Sunday. In our reconstruction, it is fair to assume that the contextual factors have been *interiorised* by the preacher and have generated a specific form of insight. In the sermon, all the turmoil the hearers have been reading in their newspapers, is traceable: the pious voices that want to ignore the political conundrum, the voices that question the violence of the ‘tyrant’, the voices that legitimise it. These inductive processes are likely to have played a formative role in the coming to be of the sermon. Bonhoeffer uses these aspects mainly as a phenomenological overture. He brings all the confused voices into a conversation with a specific pericope and assumes an analogy in circumstances. This absorbing competence is crucial in making the sermon *gegenwartsbezogen*.

Analytically seen, the choice of the pericope plays a fundamental role.⁴⁰ In our terms: in the preacher, an *absorbing process* has been going on, in which the occurrences of that week have been linked with this specific scriptural passage. At some elusive point, the preacher has recognised a Word, a word with the capacity ‘to rise to this occasion.’ We call this a pre-exegetical moment of illumination. Bethge made the similar observation: ‘Die Textwahl bei Bonhoeffer ist schon ein Stück Predigt in die Situation.’⁴¹ Later, in his *Vorlesungen über Homiletik* in Finkenwalde, Bonhoeffer would nuance these processes, but according to Wendel in his preaching practice of the 1930s, the *Bewegtsein* by a text from Scripture played a huge role: ‘In dem Bewegt- und Gepackt-sein vom Text sieht Bonhoeffer eine Wirkung des Heiligen Geistes.’⁴² For us, this is part of the absorbing competence of the preacher: The preacher is *Zeitgenosse*, and as contemporary, he is theologian, a scribe and, in a way, a mystic searching for traces of God. With absorbing competence, we mean that preachers allow these faculties to be triggered and to be troubled, to search for direction and illumination in it. These factors constitute the mechanics of illuminative moments. It is our intuition that all these inductive factors contribute to the possibility of discernment.

40 ‘Das Mittel, das konkrete politische Ereignis in der Predigt zur Sprache zu bringen, liegt wiederum primär in der Wahl von Lk 13, 1-5 als Predigttext und der Schilderung des damaligen Ereignisses: “Es wird Jesus von Augenzeugen mitgeteilt, daß und wie Pilatus einige Galiläer, also Landsleute von Jesus, hat hinrichten lassen, offenbar als Auführer und Staatsfeinde....”’ Wendel, E.G., Ibid. p 42.

41 Cited by: Wendel, E.G., Ibid. p 282.

42 Wendel, E.G., Ibid. p 25.

The factors may be called indispensable factors of illumination, but on the other hand they are still preliminary and initial. The *Gegenwartsbezogenheit* is part of a searching process that continues to search for another *Gegenwart*, for another qualified sense of the presence of God. The preacher does not merely duplicate in the sermon what he absorbed from his context, but in it, he searches for another insight, for direction. We turn for a moment to Bonhoeffer's later theoretical reflections, especially the *Vorlesung über Homiletik* (1935) and a lecture on the *Vergegenwärtigung* of texts from the New Testament (also from 1935). In it, Bonhoeffer is concerned with this question of what *Gegenwart* is in the sermon. There is a fundamental choice in homiletics, he writes, namely whether the scriptural text (and Christianity in general) must 'justify itself before the present', that is: whether the text must 'prove itself to be relevant' for contemporaries, or, conversely, whether the present situation must justify itself before the scriptural texts.⁴³ Bonhoeffer then develops an interesting relation between *Gegenwart* and Scripture, with a dominant focus on, what he calls, the 'Verharren im Schriftwort'. The concrete reality of the hearers is not denied in the sermon, it plays an important yet qualified role. But the Archimedean point to discover what *Gegenwart* means today, lies in 'remaining in Scripture', Bonhoeffer writes. 'Der Akt der Vergegenwärtigung, sofern er von uns methodisch überhaupt vollzogen werden kann, ist die strenge und exklusive Bezugnahme auf das Schriftwort. Also, nicht geht die Bewegung vom Schriftwort zur Gegenwart, sondern sie geht von der Gegenwart zum Schriftwort und verharnt dort! Also scheinbar weg von der Gegenwart, um von der falschen Gegenwart zur echten Gegenwart zu kommen.'⁴⁴

That is exactly what we call absorbing competence: the preacher comes to Scripture with everything of his context, and consequently, the preacher should 'remain in that pericope' until the present is 'opened up' by it, until illumination happens, an epiphanic moment through which a new *Gegenwart* emerges.⁴⁵ In Bonhoeffer's terminology, this means waiting and letting 'the text become the subject'. For Bonhoeffer, this *Vergegenwärtigung* in the sermon is the 'zur Sache kommen der Text'.

In the specific sermon we analysed, Bonhoeffer marks this exact moment. After the phenomenological overture, filled with questions and observation from the context, he says 'Und nun halten wir einen Augenblick inne'. He translates the

43 Bonhoeffer, D., 'Vortrag über Vergegenwärtigung neutestamentlicher Texte. Hauterode, 23. 8. 1935', in: Bonhoeffer, D., *Illegale Theologen-Ausbildung Finkenwalde 1935-1937*. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke. Bd 14). (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1996), p 400.

44 Bonhoeffer, D. Ibid. p 404.

45 See also on this moment: Filipi, P., "Gott ist gefährlich! Dietrich Bonhoeffer als Prediger.' In: Schönherr, A., und W. Krötke (Hrsg.), *Bonhoeffer-Studien. Beiträge zur Theologie und Wirkungsgeschichte Dietrich Bonhoeffers*. (Im Auftrage des Bonhoeffer-Komitees beim Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR). (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1985), pp 162-163.

German context to the context of Luke 13, and then, the turning point in the sermon is reached: 'Und nun Jesus.' From that point, a new *Gegenwart* arises in the sermon, a new perspective on the reality and on the 'false strategies' of the hearers. Here, in Bonhoeffer's view, the text comes 'zur Sache'. Then the tenacious rhythm in the sermon occurs, of Jesus repeatedly saying 'Nein'. In these moments, Bonhoeffer has 'recognised the Word'. As in the sermon on Reformation day, the dictum 'Aber ich habe wider dich' is presented as a direct dialogue from Christ with the hearers, in a similar way, the 'Nein' of Jesus is directly addressed to interrupt false strategies of the hearers. After this interruptive part, Bonhoeffer develops his thoughts about the redemptive power of being penitent, of being reachable for God's grace. In this way, Bonhoeffer's sermon is about truly understanding the present time in which the hearers live. Wendel, (in a paragraph on an early sermon of Bonhoeffer in Barcelona, called 'Dienet der Zeit' (Rom 12.11), a sermon which he interpreted as 'programmatisch'), quotes several lines from it, to explicate this dynamic: 'Der Christ, der unter der Not der Gegenwart die 'tiefen Schächte der Ewigkeit' aufspürt, versteht die 'reine Gestalt dieser Zeit', indem er 'mitten in dieser Zeit auf die heilige Gegenwart Gottes stößt.'⁴⁶ The absorbing competence is aimed at 'bumping into Christ' in the present reality, discovering and uncovering the presence of Christ amidst the reality of the hearers. In this way, *Gegenwart* is the moment in which 'das Du Gottes begegnet ist', and the sermon can be seen as making room for that 'Thou of God' concretely addressing the hearers.⁴⁷ 'Zu uns redet Gott', Bonhoeffer says in the sermon, 'wir sind gemeint'.

Although Bonhoeffer speaks in massive theological language about these processes, we should not underestimate the role of the preacher himself in it. It is in an empirical analysis, this role especially comes to the fore. The term 'absorbing' refers to that central role of the preacher. Schönherr, in his reflections on Bonhoeffer's preaching, also pointed to this mysterious but important role of the preacher, writing about a 'divinatorisch, besser prophetisch Element' in the preparation process of the sermon. Schönherr is reflecting on the moment in the preaching process which cannot be supplied by exegesis on its own. After all, the scriptural texts give room to various kinds of interpretation of the present: 'Die Texte lassen oft recht verschiedenartige Beziehungen zur Gegenwart zu. Nicht nur in der Textwahl, sondern auch in der Zielrichtung der Anrede, in der Beziehung des Gegners und in der Angabe des Zieles bleibt ein divinatorisch, besser prophetisch Element, das die Exegese als solche nicht liefern kann. Hier steht der Prediger, den Text vor Augen, allein vor Gott. Und doch nicht allein. Die Situation der Kirche, der Zustand der Gemeinden, der Rat der Brüder, all das

46 Wendel, E.G., *Ibid.* p 54.

47 Schönherr, A., 'Die Predigt Bonhoeffers', pp 24-28, 138-140.

sind Momente, die die fällige Konkretion nun wahrlich auch bestimmen.⁴⁸ In the choice of the text, the role of the preacher is crucial. But that moment is in a way still 'initial'. After studying the text, another crucial, maybe even more defining, moment comes, namely the moment where the preacher 'excarnates' this text to a concrete direction, to a concrete *paraenesis*, to concrete fronts, to concrete proposals of spiritual orientation. Schönherr calls this a 'divinatorisch, besser prophetisch Element'. Interestingly, he adds, that at this moment, the absorbing capacity also plays a formative role: The situation of the church, the need of the congregations, the counsel of the brethren. It is through all these inductive elements specific illuminative moments are prepared and *Urteilkraft* potentially happens in a sermon.

An important effect of this *Urteilkraft* is coherence, orientation and meaning. In the last paragraph of this chapter, in discussing a sermon from Gerhard von Rad, we show how contemporary reality is qualified theologically in prophetic moments of preaching.

5.3.b Sermon illustrating 'Theologically qualifying the present' Gerhard von Rad, sermon on Isaiah 29.9-14 (Heidelberg, 1966)

1 Introduction of the sermon

In an essay on Gerhard von Rad's sermons in the *Nachkriegsjahre*, especially since the 1960s, Kurt-Victor Selge wrote about the 'seismographic sensorium' with which Von Rad theologised about the 'Gesamtstimmungen und Grundfragen seiner Zeit'. According to Selge, these sermons can be characterised as having an 'indirekte, nicht frontale Aktualität'.⁴⁹ What is happening in these sermons is what we call a tentative qualification of the present. First, we summarise a sermon from this period, and consequently we develop our own homiletical concept through it.⁵⁰

2 Summary of the sermon

The opening of Von Rad's Advent sermon on Isaiah 29.9-14, (a pericope about God 'pouring out on you the spirit of a deep sleep', 'closing your eyes, namely the prophets, and covering your heads, namely the seers', a text about 'the

48 Schönherr, A., *Ibid.* pp 177-178.

49 Selge, K-V., 'Predigten als historische Zeugnisse. Die Predigten Gerhard von Rads', in: Meinhold, A., A. Berlejung, (Hg.), *Der Freund des Menschen. Festschrift Georg Christian Macholz*. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 2003), pp 333-366. See also Hauger, M., *Gerhard von Rads frühe Predigten. Eine historische-homiletische Untersuchung. (Arbeiten zur Praktischen theologie Band 51)*, (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2013), p 45.

50 'Predigt zu Jesaja 29.9-14. 1. Advent, 27. November 1966' (zuerst veröffentlicht in: *Evangelische Theologie* 6/1978), in: Von Rad, G., *Predigten (Hrsg. Ursula von Rad)*, (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1972, 1978), pp 148-153.

vision that has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed'), is a reflection on obscurity, on the strangeness of scriptural texts. The Bible text is a 'schwer und dunkelsinnig' prophetic word from Isaiah, says Von Rad, 'and as we read it, we may discontentedly ask if it gives us any reason at all to celebrate Advent'. But according to the preacher, it is a 'fruitful experience for us' to be confronted with our own inability to understand it. In Von Rad's hermeneutics, the strangeness of the text is a critical sign to our limited understanding of God, our world and ourselves. But it is exactly this distance that may give us an opportunity to come closer to the mystery of God.

Von Rad initially deepens the obscurity of the text: 'Ja, ihr habt schon richtig gehört: Nicht davon redet der Prophet, daß die Menschen leider so verblendet sind, sondern daß Gott sie in Wahn und Verblendung hinausstoßt. Nicht davon, daß sie leider Gottes alle religiöse Schlafmützen sind, sondern daß Gott über sie einen Geist des Tiefschlafs ausgegossen und ihre Augen verhält hat.' Von Rad does not soften the text, but sharpens it, bringing its strangeness to a climax. Isaiah does not lament about the religious shallowness and sleepiness of contemporaries, but he speaks about God himself actively causing and creating blindness and delusion among his people. Von Rad admits that this primarily concerns Isaiah and his situation, and that we only listen from a distance, but the continuity with today is in 'what is religiously at stake in the text': 'Aber was wäre es, wenn wir zunächst nur das einmal begreifen würden, daß es zwischen Gott und den Menschen auch um solche Dinge geht, daß das sozusagen die Einsätze sind, um die da gespielt wird: um eine Betörung und Gottesblindheit, vor der jede Bekundung Gottes zu einem versiegelten Buch wird'. What is at stake in this dispute is still at stake in the present, according to Von Rad, it is something of the ultimate seriousness in the relationship between God and humans. In Von Rad's understanding, we are 'approaching a deep mystery' in these texts. In the Holy Scriptures of Israel, we are drawn into the ultimate secrets between God and humans, and Advent, Von Rad says, is a similar deep mystery.

Now there is a huge risk we must avoid bravely, Von Rad continues, namely the cherished theme of contemporary poets, 'daß wir hinweggeflicht sind von jener tragfähigen Wahrheit; daß wir Ausschau halten, bis uns die Augen schmerzen, um nur so viel Boden zu finden, auf dem wir wenigstens eine Weile stehen können'. Von Rad says that contemporary poets know the 'song of despair': In their poems, they write that we are losing the ground beneath our feet. Von Rad cites a word from Nietzsche, 'die Wüste wächst', and 'die Welt – ein Tor zu tausend Wüsten stumm und kalt', and he adds a fiercely critical note: How would our contemporaries come back to our churches if we would confirm them in those Nietzschean feelings. And though this text might provoke thoughts like that, it is exactly the risk we have to avoid: 'Nichts gegen eine ehrliche Solidarität mit jenem 'hoch betäubten Heer' der Verzweifelten. Da fehlt es oft weit. Aber wir würden dieses Prophetenwort total mißverstehen, wenn wir aus ihm nur etwas von der Schwermut jener von der Wahrheit Ausgeschlossenen heraushören wollten. Jesaja denkt ja gar nicht daran, sich

zu diese Irrenden, Taumelnden und Schlafenden zu rechnen. Er steht unter einer Wahrheit, die ihm sonnenklar geworden ist, und diese Wahrheit – es ist wohl eine grelle Wahrheit – war es gerade, die ihm so ungeheure Horizonte aufgerissen hat'. Isaiah would never have counted himself among the blinded and despaired contemporaries to which he prophesied, he knows nothing of the dark melancholy of those who are estranged from the truth, Von Rad claims. Isaiah has a different and contrasting experience, namely of seeing something very clearly. Von Rad explicates in the sermon a Nietzschean undercurrent in his own German context, and he assumes that the church would become popular again if she would confirm her contemporaries in those feelings. But Von Rad speaks about these poets as 'Irrenden, Schlafenden, Taumelnden', as 'those who are excluded from the truth'. The church should not confirm their thinking, but interrupt it. We see how in this passage exposure and interruption contain acts of qualifying: Von Rad explicitly gives theological and spiritual qualifications to a Nietzschean societal mood he discerns among his contemporaries.

Von Rad continues, by underlining how God is said to be present in this delusion, in this 'Irren und Taumeln': 'Jesaja redet zu solchen, die von Gott einmal mehr gewußt, die sich seiner Führung anvertraut haben; aber jetzt 'führen sie ihn nur im Munde, aber ihr Herz ist fern von ihm'. Und denen sagt er: O freilich, Gott ist schon bei euch gegenwärtig: er handelt auch an euch, nämlich in eurem Nichtverstehen, in eurem Wahn, in eurem Tiefschlaf ist er am Werk! Und – und damit wird seine Predigt zur Adventspredigt! Paßt auf, es wird noch ganz anders kommen'. The people Isaiah prophesies to, once knew God and trusted their lives to him, but now, though the word 'God' is still on their lips, their hearts are far away from him. In an intriguing way, their 'Irren und Taumeln' is interpreted as a sign of Gods 'negative, strange' presence and working. At the same time, something of the *Hoffnungsstruktur* breaks through: 'This will change', 'es wird noch ganz anders kommen!' This promise of change makes the text *Adventspredigt*.

How does Von Rad apply these dimensions to the present situation? The word that bridges the two contexts is: 'Auch bei uns führt man Gott im Munde'. It is a quotation from Isaiah as well as an observation of the present. Von Rad qualifies the present situation (Germany 1966) as seemingly sympathetic towards Christianity: 'Auch bei uns führt man Gott im Munde'. 'Der liebe Gott und die Kirche haben eine gute Presse'. If you would apply for a public position, you should not express too publicly and too vociferously your *Unbehagen* with God and Christianity. 'So ist heute scheinbar alles voller Wohlwollen für Gott und die Kirche.' But then comes the interruption and the exposure of the present: 'Und was für eine Steinhärte der Herzen liegt dahinter'. Beneath the visible but superficial sympathy, the preacher sees a stone-cold heart in the inner life of his contemporaries, or maybe even: in the soul of his culture. Von Rad makes these observations existential, bringing it home to the hearers. Instead of some name-calling and polarisation, about who might

be responsible for these societal and theological developments and in whom it may be personified, Von Rad stresses the *Demut*: 'Wer hier vom Besitz der Wahrheit aus polemisiert, sehe zu, daß sich die Rollen nicht schnell vertausen! Unser Herr sagt von seinem letzten Advent: 'Zwei werden auf dem Felde sein; der eine wird angenommen, der andere wird verlassen werden. Zwei werden an einem Mühlstein arbeiten, die eine wird angenommen, die andere wird verlassen.' Je näher wir dem Herrn kommen, um so unheimlicher wird die Grenze zwischen Wahrheit und Wahn quer durch unsere Mitte laufen'.

Now this sovereignty, this awe and this confusion, is not something marginal or eccentric, he adds, it is something lying at the core of God's mysterious presence: 'Das aber müssen wir unbedingt von Jesaja lernen und auch nach Hause nehmen: daß das was Buber die Gottesfinsternis genannt hat, nicht eine betrübliche religiöse Randerscheinung ist, sondern daß dieses Unverstehen Gottes, dieses Taumeln, dieser Tiefschlaf unmittelbar von Gott kommen, daß das zusammenhängt gerade mit seiner Näherkommen'. Through this passage, Von Rad's initial reflection on obscurity, gains a distinct theological edge: when God comes closer, human beings lose their grip on all kinds of easy understandings and distinctions and become positioned in an existential dependency to God. Von Rad explains that it is through experiences of 'not understanding God any longer', new kinds of disclosure about him may emerge.

In this passage, Von Rad stresses God's transcendence and sovereignty and the dependency of human beings on God's acting. This accent is aimed at interrupting a kind of presumptuous naivety that Von Rad sees among his contemporaries, about their own presumed sovereignty, about God being dependent on their decisions, about their own considerations 'to decide themselves for or against God'. 'Als ob wir so oder so nicht Ton in seinen Händen wären', Von Rad exclaims, 'as if we are not, in both instances, like clay in his hands'. Then he turns to Goethe, to a line from his poem 'Braut von Korinth', in which a young love couple decides to leave Christianity: 'Wenn der Funke sprüht, wenn die Asche glüht, Eilen wir den alten Göttern zu'. This poetic verse is one of the most 'sovereign refusals' Christianity has ever experienced, Von Rad comments in a sinister note. What it actually says, according to Von Rad, is something like 'Heraus aus der Knechtschaft dieses düsteren Glaubens! Zurück in die Freiheit und in das Licht der alten Götter'.

But that is precisely the point Von Rad wants to question. Is it possible to decide these things for yourself? Is it possible, for instance, to return to the 'old gods'? 'Steht ihnen dieser Rückweg wirklich offen?' Is it possible, he asks, for someone who has been baptised, who has belonged to Jesus Christ, to 'return to the old gods'? Von Rad denies this: You cannot simply return, you can only leave Christ by 'going forward', possibly on a way of 'Irren und Taumeln'. And then, an intense passage follows: 'Wer einmal sich diesem Gott anvertraut hat, wer einmal dem Herrn Christus angehört hat, der bleibt gezeichnet. Zurück

kann nie mehr. Er hat eine Grenze überschritten; er hat einen Kreis betreten, aus dem er nie mehr entlassen wird, in dem etwas ganz neues zwischen ihm und Gott begonnen hat. Jetzt kann er nur noch vorwärts, nie mehr rückwärts. Aber wohin vorwärts? Wenn es nicht der Weg ist auf den Advent des Herrn hin, könnte es auch der Weg eines Irrens, einer gottgewirkten Finsternis sein, die viel schrecklicher ist als die Blindheit der Heiden, die ihren Göttern dienen, denn das Stigma dieser Blindheit ist das totale Unvermögen, noch irgendwelche Offenbarung zu vernehmen oder gar zu verstehen. 'We should not foolishly speak of *Neuheidentum*, he specifies, because the blindness of those who knew God is something different than the blindness of 'heathens'. Von Rad sees a new 'geistesgeschichtliche Disposition' arising in the inner life of contemporaries who are leaving Christianity, a new blindness he sees, characterised by the Isaian dictum of the 'sealed book': 'Darum, sagt der Prophet, wird euch diese ganze Offenbarung wie die Worte eines versiegelten Buches'. We have enough people among us who know how to read books, but do they not almost all say: 'Das kann ich nicht lesen, nicht verstehen, es ist mir versiegelt'? Von Rad asks.

In this passage, we encounter an early and profound spiritual theological reflection on 'Europe after Christendom'. Von Rad senses something of the liberation people feel in leaving the church and the 'düsteres Glauben', to turn again to the 'old gods'. But he fears that a spiritual change is taking place in it. What Von Rad fears is exactly what he reads in Isaiah, about blindness, a new inability to perceive something from God, the Bible becoming like a 'sealed book'. In this sermon, Von Rad formulates tentative thoughts about a new kind of spiritual immunity.

At the end of the sermon, Von Rad calls this text one of the 'aufregendste Adventstexte' in the Bible. How is that possible? Von Rad answers: In the text, we can also read God saying: 'darum will ich mit diesem Volk wunderbarlich umgehen, aufs wunderbarlichste und seltsamste, daß die Weisheit seiner Weisen vergehe und der Verstand seiner Klugen sich verbergen müsse'. Von Rad claims that Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, has understood this prophetic text as *Weissagung*: 'Dieses seltsam wunderbare Handeln Gottes ist in der Erscheinung Christi ans Ziel gekommen'. Again, Von Rad repeats, we encounter something of the difficult mysteries in God: The foolishness of God breaks down the wisdom of human beings. Paul has thought hard to describe this mystery in God. And we, Von Rad continues, we should, like Paul, give our best energies to understand the Advent of Christ rightly, otherwise we may end next to 'that man from Isaiah', who said: 'I cannot read it, it is sealed'. The closing of the sermon is devoted to the serious calling to be able to 'read the book', to be able to understand something of the mysteries of God. Do not think the calling for today is about finding 'new, modern words', Von Rad says, because new words will soon become tedious and dreary too. It is better to concentrate on Scripture, to try to 'read yourself into' the style and format in which the Bible talks about God, to learn the language of prophets and apostles. Of

course, when we read these difficult texts from Isaiah, we feel like amateurs, Von Rad admits, but on the other hand, when we try to understand something of it, as we are doing now, something other and more is given to us than the predictable Advent celebrations usually give.

Suddenly, we understand what is happening in this sermon: This is an interruption of the *routine* of Advent. The strangeness of the text is rooted in the otherness of God, in his unexpected dealings with Israel: People who saw, go blind, people who could read, are obstructed in their understanding of words, an 'open book' becomes a 'sealed book'. It is a strangeness comparable to what Paul said about God destroying the wisdom of the wise, making them foolish. But in these disturbing thoughts, we are drawn into the mystery of God. When Advent celebrations *tame* this God, making him predictable and cosy, it needs to be interrupted by strange *schwere Texte*, it needs believers who are willing to give the best of their concentration to find clarity in this dark complexity. The sermon ends with a Rembrandtesque picture of the shepherds of the Christmas narrative, and the passage is focused on: clarity. From these shepherds it is said, that 'the clarity of the Lord enlightened them'. Von Rad pictures them as standing aside, 'and the dark night was still in the creases of their robes', but they turned to the light and their faces were enlightened. The preacher prays that hearers may be given this clarity, in the 'streng Form' that was encountered in the sermon of today. The hearers are surrounded by many forms of darkness, as the shepherds were, the current forms of darkness being 'Wahn, Tiefschlaf and Irren'. It is a darkness that, in ever new forms, reaches out for us. Von Rad prays for clarity, as a necessary protection against this darkness, 'daß wir nicht verloren gehen. Amen'.

3 Analytical remarks

A final quality in the concept of recognising the Word, is the theological qualification of the present that happens alongside it. In this sermon, in which the *geistesgeschichtliche* effects of secularism on the European mindset are intuited and tentatively formulated, the concrete historical reality in which the hearers live is theologically qualified. In our reconstruction, this is an intrinsic effect of recognising a Word from Scripture: the qualification of the present in the specific scriptural pericope is applied to the contemporary situation of the hearers.

What is the spiritual qualification that Von Rad gives in this sermon? In the initial coding process, there were several aspects that attracted our attention. A first one is that Von Rad emphasises that the church should *not* confirm her contemporaries in their 'Nietzschean mood'. The church should not seek popularity in her culture by sharing a specific, fashionable 'mood of the times'. The church is not 'blinded' and should not act like she shares this cultural idea of God's absence or death. Von Rad stresses that the church has alternative perspectives, and should not share but rather *interrupt* this dark mood among contemporaries. A second observation

concerns Von Rad's critique on a more presumptuous feature he notices amongst contemporaries. They act as if they themselves are the masters of their fate and faith, as if they themselves can decide, in sovereign freedom, whatever they wish to decide and to believe, as if God is dependent on them. A third observation is about Von Rad's intuition that beneath the 'friendliness' of contemporaries 'toward the church and *der liebe Gott*', there may be a 'stone-cold heart'. This observation is deepened: Will the future bring forth a new type of Europeans, for which the Bible has become 'a sealed Book', and who seem to have lost a receptiveness for God's revelations? Here, Von Rad approaches a phenomenon that Amy-Jill Levine, in another context, has called 'auditory atrophy'.⁵¹ The sermon can be assessed as a tentative attempt to envision the spiritual effects of what it means to a society when massive numbers of Christians lose access to the Bible and faith in Christ.

In a way, these are all 'effects of Isaiah 29'. Von Rad uses the concepts, the language, and the qualifications from Isaiah 29 to give words to developments in Europe that he finds alarming.⁵²

In the sermon, we notice the absorbing competence of the preacher. Von Rad cites the poet Nelly Sachs several times and she plays a defining role in formulating the experience that 'being drawn closer to God, is being drawn into a "scarily intimate" mystery'. Von Rad cites Goethe and Nietzsche, and in their dense expressions he recognises an important mood of his contemporaries. In the *Kircheaustrittswelle* of the 1960s, in the growing, though still sniggering, contempt for church and Christianity, Von Rad senses the atmosphere of Goethe's 'Braut von Korinth'. At the same time, he assumes an emptiness accompanying this 'leaving Christ behind'. Finally, Von Rad employs Buber's term *Gottesfinsternis*, and places it at the heart of his sermon: When God comes closer, all smooth templates, all easy distinctions and all smug self-righteousness is embroiled by a specific *Finsternis* that accompanies God's mysterious presence. Through this absorbing mechanism, all kinds of voices and influences in a specific culture resonate in the sermon.

But now we must return to the essential question: What is the spiritual qualification that Von Rad makes in this sermon, concerning this present time? What happens in this sermon is, according to us, theologically identical to what happened in

51 Levine, A.-J., *Short Stories by Jesus. The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*. (New York: HarperOne 2014), p 20.

52 A focus on the specific 'Sprache und Sprachwelt' of the Bible is a principal and continuous feature of Von Rad's own sermons too, throughout his whole preaching life. 'Von der Sprache und Sprachwelt der Bibel geht eine korrigierende und kritische Kraft aus', thus Martin Hauger summarises Von Rad's implicit hermeneutics. Hauger, M., *Gerhard von Rads frühe Predigten. Eine historische-homiletische Untersuchung. (Arbeiten zur Praktischen theologie Band 51)*, (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2013), p 448. See for the further thoughts in our analysis in this paragraph, especially chapter 10, pp 435-462.

Krusche's sermon on Acts 12, namely that a concrete, contemporary reality is qualified as being accessible for God. 'God can act in our reality', these preachers claim, 'though maybe in a different mode than you think.' In Krusche's case, a totalitarian regime, like the SED regime, made contemporaries believe that this world is 'closed', 'but, just like Peter's prison, God can open our world, whenever he wants', Krusche proclaims. In different cultural circumstances, Von Rad makes the same theological point: 'Es wird anders werden.' Von Rad attempts to reclaim a sense of awe for God, among hearers, the God who acts in ways that human beings cannot calculate, a God who even may work through confusion. The *Geschichtsdialektik* applied in this sermon, is that the 'sealing of the book' for contemporaries of Isaiah, just as the mocking of the wisdom of the wise by the foolishness of the cross in Corinth, are part of a dialectical but redemptive divine strategy. Therefore, in this sermon, there is this sanguine undertone, that Von Rad's context too, however confusing and frightening, nihilistic or secular it may be, is part of this redemptive *Geschichtsdialektik*. 'Es wird anders werden', and therefore Von Rad keeps emphasising that this difficult text is a *wonderful text* to read during Advent. 'Ja, vielleicht sind diese Worte wirklich der seltsamste und vielleicht auch der aufregendste Adventstext in der Bibel'. What is religiously happening in this sermon is that an overly cosy celebration of Advent is interrupted by an obscure text, in order to shake contemporary hearers out of their routine and tamed thoughts about God and themselves, to bring them face to face with the mystery of God who gives himself to them, and to stimulate a new kind of awe in them. It can be said that the *Geschichtsdialektik* of Isaiah and Paul, in Von Rad's understanding, is translated, and applied in this sermon to hearers in Heidelberg, in the restless decade of the 1960s.

The analytical point we want to make in this specific paragraph concerns the theological and spiritual qualification of the present that is given in these sermons. Alongside this liberating word in the sermon, (that God works redemptively through all kinds of confusion and opposition), the concrete reality of the hearers is qualified in many ways. Is there a kind of boredom with Christianity amongst them? Is this boredom the result of a calculative, overly predictable notion of God? Has their 'sense of awe' been tempered? Is there too much expectation of 'modern, new words' in preaching, whereas the vocabulary of Scripture itself is neglected? Do hearers themselves recognise something of the 'Book being sealed'? It is an *intrinsic* effect of the illuminative dynamic happening between Scripture and context, that the present context is qualified in several ways. Gregor Taxacher explained this 'theologische Qualifikation der Gegenwart' as a principal moment in the 'prophetic instincts' in the Bible.⁵³ We recognise this 'instinct' in our own

53 Taxacher, G., *Apokalyptische Vernunft. Das biblische Geschichtsdenken und seine Konsequenzen*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2010), see especially c 2: 'Gegenwartsdeutung in Israel', pp 33-58.

data: In the sermons we studied, history and what happens in it, is taken seriously in a spiritual and theological way by preachers. What is happening is diagnosed, is given a theological qualification, is elaborated in the sermons and 'brought home' to the hearers.

An important effect of this diagnosis, and a good link to the next chapters, is *orientation*. What happens in these moments is that seemingly chaotic realities in the context of the hearers are given coherence. Seemingly meaningless events are framed into a fresh, theological narrative. What is happening in these incidents can be summarised in the term 'making sense', giving spiritual and theological insight to hearers. Walter Brueggemann defined it as one of the prophetic tasks of preachers, to 'give spiritual qualifications' to what is happening in society. In these theological qualifications, according to him, it is shown that 'the world is not autonomous, but lives in a realm where the force and the will of YHWH is definitive'.⁵⁴ These aspects will be developed further in the next chapters, where the notions of catharsis and edification are explained.

54 Brueggemann, W., *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination. Preaching an Emancipating Word*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012), p 60.

CHAPTER 6 | OVERCOMING DESTRUCTIVA

The cathartic dimension

Summary: Prophetic speech is not only expository, interruptive, and illuminative, it is also cathartic. In the sermons, we trace a redemptive power developing itself, a power aimed at overcoming destructiva. In this catharsis, the perceived reality of destructiva is intensified, while at the same time, a healing counter reality is evoked. The prophetic dimension is a word 'in time', and 'for the sake of the times in which hearers live', but it is also 'out of step with the times'. We may even say that in this speech 'another dimension of time' emerges, a zone in which the strangling effects of destructiva on hearers are broken down and overcome. This side of the visionary dimension in prophetic speech will be developed in the present chapter. The core of the concept is in the fact that preachers discern God in their context. That is the explicit or implicit claim in their sermons. In the prophetic moment, preachers try to draw hearers into that presence, trying to make them 'see God' too. A surprising result of our research is the fact that healing is such a central dimension in the sermons. In our vocabulary: There is an exorcistic layer in the prophetic. Preachers see the soul of hearers endangered, poisoned, and damaged, and their sermons have the intention of reclaiming, redeeming, and resetting this soul.

In this sixth chapter, we make a distinction between actual (6.1.a) and anticipated (6.2.a) forms of God's presence. In the second paragraph, we reconstruct the dimension of hope in the sermons. In the data, a specific future is foreseen or, forefelt by the preachers. This future may have dangerous aspects, (and we make a case for the legitimacy of danger in sermons and in theology), but there is also a dominant perspective of *Hoffnung*. We apply the term 'maieutic power' to formulate what we see developing in the data. A future is born, 'opened up' in the sermon, a future that is, on the one hand, beyond all evidence, but on the other side already proclaimed as a present reality. Interestingly, the practices of the church (like prayer, the Eucharist and preaching), can be seen as embodiments of this anticipation. In these practices, the future is anticipated and through these practices, a distinct power for the present becomes operative. Hope, in this sense, is practising the anticipation of God.

I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part

6.1 Introduction

In our reconstruction, prophetic speech is primarily a confrontation with evil, 'destructiva' as we call it. Abraham Heschel defined the purpose of prophecy as lying in the 'conquering of callousness'. 'It is the numbness and insensitivity to evil that prophets bewail', he wrote.¹ In the sermons of our research, we recognise a similar strong occupation with and sensitivity for destructiva. In the first three concepts, we conceptualised these accents: destructiva are *exposed* (concept 1), *interrupted* (concept 2) and spiritually and theologically *qualified* (concept 3). In the final concepts, our study tilts over to two other dominant features present in the data. In this prophetic speech, we also see the development of a salutary power. We consider this a surprising result of our research: analytical and critical speech becoming redemptive speech aimed at overcoming destructiva. The analytical and critical are fundamental ingredients of the prophetic, as we have shown, but these 'negative' dimensions are not enough to overcome destructiva. 'Darkness cannot drive out darkness', as King explained regularly.² Alongside the critical and the interruptive, we see another kind of power becoming operative in the data. In this chapter, we describe this releasing power in the sermons.

In these moments, when 'destructiva are overcome', a dimension emerges of what we could call 'non-contemporaneity'. A prophetic word, Robert Vosloo suggested, is a word 'in time, out of step with the times, for the sake of the times'.³ When Tutu, at the funeral of Steve Biko, in the midst of anger and pain, urges his hearers to 'let us recall', he effectively invites them to 'step out of time', for a moment, to recall that which is 'non-contemporaneous', namely the suffering, death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this recollection, a different 'time in our time' occurs. The hearers of the sermon are drawn into another dimension of time. It is important to notice that this is not a 'timeless word'. This 'non-contemporaneous word' is traced and discerned in the specifics of the time and context in which the hearers live and through the earlier moments of exposure, interruption, and qualification. There is no catharsis without these preceding moments. What preachers claim to be the core of their redemptive speech, is a *Gotteswahrnehmung*, a form of tracing God's presence in the concrete reality in which the sermon is held. It is about

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- 1 Kaplan, E.K., *Spiritual Radical. Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940-1972*. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press 2007), p 211.
 - 2 Miller, K.D., *Voice of Deliverance. The Language of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Its Sources*. (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press 1992, 1998), see especially c 5: 'Darkness cannot drive out Darkness', pp 86-111.
 - 3 Vosloo, R., *Time in our Time. On Theology and Future-oriented Memory*. (Inaugural lecture, University of Stellenbosch 2015), p 11.

‘Gott in der Zeit entdecken’, as Odil Hannes Steck called it.⁴ Paradoxically, this ‘non-contemporaneous word’ about God, *transcends* time but is also discovered *in* the time and *in* the context of the hearers. In Tutu’s sermon at the funeral of Steve Biko, for instance, the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ is not only remembered and celebrated as a historical recollection, it is also discerned in Steve Biko’s life. That is another daring aspect in the prophetic speech: Speaking of God’s presence in the lamented realities, crafting hope amidst lives and societies endangered or crushed by destructiva.

As we said earlier, the principal moment in this redemptive speech concerns a *Gotteswahrnehmung*. Preachers speak about ‘God *praesens*’. In this chapter, we show two modes of this presence, namely the mode of a presently experienced reality (6.1.a) and the mode of an anticipated reality (6.2.a). In the first dimension, we show how the theme of ‘God *praesens*’ brings along the themes of ‘calling back’, ‘restoring’, ‘redeeming’ and ‘healing’. The presence of God has a specific restoring effect on the hearers. In the second paragraph, we develop the theme of hope as a spiritual force that emerges in the sermons. Here, hope can be defined as a reality *in anticipation of God*. Even when God is not yet experienced as an actual reality, the hope for his presence or the promise of it, can change hearers in the present. We develop an understanding of Christian practices as communal commitments to and embodiments of that hope, practices in which God is anticipated.

6.1.a Seeing the Lord: The cathartic power of God *praesens*

In one way or the other, in all sorts of theological vocabulary and in varying degrees of explicitness, in all the sermons we studied, preachers make a claim about God’s presence, about God being actively present. In the current paragraph, we make the distinction between referring to that presence in the concrete reality of the hearers, so to say: ‘outside the sermon’, and the sermon itself becoming a venue of God’s presence. ‘I see God working in this period of the 20th century’, Martin Luther King exclaimed in his Vietnam sermon, and with this remark, he referred to concrete societal changes. But he refers to it *in* the sermon. While explaining in the sermon where he discerns God, the sermon itself becomes an avenue through which that presence can be experienced and celebrated. In these moments, we see a specific quality developing in the sermon which we call ‘cathartic power’.

4 Steck, O.H., *Gott in der Zeit entdecken. Die Prophetenbücher des Alten Testaments als Vorbild für Theologie und Kirche*. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag 2001). Steck proposes a reading of the prophetic books in Scripture that can function as a bridge between contemporary theological disciplines and theological practices. The contribution of the prophetic books, he sees in their demand of a theology that comes ‘as close as possible to real life’. Another fruit of the prophetic is their sensitivity to changes and to the contingency of the times (‘die theologischen Sensibilität für den Wandel, Wechsel von Lebenskonstellationen, von Wissen und Erfahrung’), and in the importance of ‘Gotteswahrnehmung’ in these changing times.

We use the term catharsis on purpose. In her study on the Apocalypse of John, called *Crisis and Catharsis*, Adela Yarbro Collins has explained that Aristotle's term catharsis was initially a medical term. 'In its medical sense, it refers to the removal from the body of alien matter', a painful but salutary moment 'aimed at the restoration of the system to its normal state.'⁵ In Collins' study, 'crisis' is related to 'catharsis'. In the Apocalypse of John, she observes, a tension is explicated between 'what is' and 'what ought to be', or: 'what is promised to be'. The crisis of the hearers is the collision of these conflicting realities. In the Apocalypse, this conflict is intensified, she explains, and subsequently 'overcome through an act of literary imagination'. It is this 'intensification and overcoming' that we seek to conceptualise in the present concept.

What we recognise in the data, is the observation that catharsis does not happen aside of the reality of destructiva. The uncovering of God's presence, emerging in our data, happens in the reality of the hearers. Catharsis is not escape, but inscape.⁶ It is not a turning one's face away from this reality, but it is looking in a different way at the same reality and discerning God's presence in it. In our data, there is an intensification of the awareness of evil. In the first concepts of the study, we showed this sensitivity to destructiva. But there is more to it. In our data, preachers have the discernment to trace redemptive and hopeful developments in this same context and they have the audacity to speak of hope in the midst of a reality in which hope is scarcely found. This salutary punch of the sermon is profoundly present in the data we studied. The destructiva, a prominent theme in the prophetic, may even push the need for redemptive speech to a climax, both for the congregation as well as for the preacher. Preachers see the enormous power destructiva have on the lives of hearers and in the sermons, a counterforce is searched for and developed, through which preachers seek to break the grip these destructiva have on the hearers. This is what we call the 'releasing power' in the sermons.

But we use the term catharsis not only for this releasing power, but also because of the medical perspective that, according to Collins, originally resounded in the term. It was essentially a term about *healing*. It was surprising for us to see the importance of the perspective of healing in the critical and often grim sermons we analysed. We generated many codes with terms like 'exorcism', 'restoration', 'recovery', 'rehabilitation', 'redemption'. In the sermons, preachers warn about the reach and the effect of destructiva on the hearers: on their minds, their practices, their dignity, their faith, on the integrity of their church, on the spiritual atmosphere

5 Collins, A.Y., *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press 1984), see especially c 5: 'The Power of Apocalyptic Rhetoric – Catharsis', pp 141-164.

6 See on 'inscape' Theo Pleizier's use of the concept: Pleizier, T., *Religious Involvement in Hearing Sermons. A Grounded Theory Study in Empirical Theology and Homiletics*. (Delft: Eburon 2010), p 263.

in their society. Destructiva damage these realities, preachers claim. Poverty and racism damage the soul, Tutu said, and the prostitution of language endangers the integrity of an entire society. The continuous spying in the DDR erodes any healthy sense of living together, Krusche assured. The prophetic moment is thus an exposure of this damaging reach. But there is also a sanitising and healing perspective operative. Preachers search for the reversal of this damage. In essence, they are *recalling* their hearers: recalling the church to repentance and reformation, recalling society to the values they are meant to embody, recalling individual believers to God, recalling greedy bankers to humanity and sobriety. Or, to use another term from our codes: in these moments preachers *reclaim* something. They reclaim faith among the hearers or dignity for people who are discriminated, they reclaim the church to its essence or they reclaim the notion of humanity in poisoned times. This dimension in the prophetic moment is about recalling and reclaiming, about resetting the soul of hearers, about ‘the removing from the body of alien matter’, as Collins defined catharsis. In this way, there is something of a cleansing and detoxicating power in the prophetic moment, sometimes with the force of the exorcistic. In Tutu’s example, the sermon is an attempt to exorcise the demons of apartheid from the soul of the hearers, of restoring in their inner life the assurance of being children of God (Tutu, further 6.2.b). In all these instances, there is the homiletical attempt to overcome destructiva.

In our empirical codes on this ‘cathartic healing dimension’, there are two additional observations. First, there is the relationship with the liturgy. In the cathartic moments, we regularly see psalms, poems, or spirituals from the congregation’s hymnal tradition play an interesting role. It is in cathartic moments that preachers often reach the end of discursive analytical language, and switch to the language of spirituals and poetry. Through reciting that spiritual tradition, the congregation is also connected to earlier struggles and breakthroughs in their own tradition. In these spiritual traditions, there may be an ‘inherited rage’ as we noticed earlier (Lischer), but there is also a releasing power present in traditions, (often in the spirituals and the hymns of a tradition), with the capacity to facilitate and accompany contemporary cathartic experiences.

Secondly, in our analysis, there are many codes that underline the *authoritative* character of speech in the sermons. This authority is traceable in many forms. There is authority qua content, qua theological and spiritual qualification of the present. There is a mystagogical authority, qua disclosing God’s presence. There is moral authority, including the threatening of the congregation and society for an impending doom when hearers persist in injustice. All these forms of authority create a specific form of rhetorics. Without denying the many risks of

this authoritative and authoritarian speech,⁷ *analytically seen*, it is speech arising out of the collision with destructiva. The temperament of the speech is correlative to the destructive power that is opposed in this speech. The criterium to which this authoritative speech should be judged, is its *redemptive* aim. The rhetorical power to oppose destructiva is part of the same power with which God's actual redemptive presence is proclaimed and promised. In the authoritative speech, there is a dual aspect of opposing destructiva and making room for the redemptive. 'God sent us here today to say to you, that you are not treating his children right', King could say authoritatively. The power of that speech is intended to make room for people being crushed by less-salutary powers.

We propose to understand this redemptive dimension of the prophetic as a form of 'resetting the soul'. In paragraph 6.1.b, we show how this functions in a sermon from Martin Luther King (in the sermon 'Why Jesus called a man a fool'; see below), here, we first give a miniature on how 'resetting the soul' functions in a sermon from Gerhard von Rad.

In Von Rad's sermons, there is a concern for the soul of the hearers. Selge called this a sensitivity for the 'innere Geistesverfassung der Gegenwart'.⁸ Von Rad is a scholar and a preacher who witnessed the turmoil of the 20th century, who observed and experienced different kinds of malevolent imaginations capturing the soul of a culture, of a church, and of individual believers. This may have caused a certain *Prägung* in Von Rad, a specific spiritual and theological disposition.⁹ It was, for instance, not only in the 1930s he expressed this concern for the soul of his hearers, but also in the 1950s and 1960s. In the midst of the widespread euphoria of the post-war *Wirtschaftswunder*, Von Rad posed the question of how in this modern, mechanical, and prosperous world, people could still experience *Trost*.¹⁰ Von Rad knew that the soul of human beings could be haunted by destructive and irrational forces. In a sermon from 1963, on Isaiah 26.20-21, he said: 'Merkwürdige Situation. Mit einem der alten Griechen könnten wir jetzt wohl leichter in ein Gespräch kommen als mit vieler unserer Zeitgenossen. Sie wußten noch mehr von rätselhaften Mächten, die den Menschen sich selber entfremden, von einem ungeheuren Wahn, von dem

7 See on this risk: Rijst, R. van der, *De uitzaaiing van het Woord. Homiletiek in het spoor van Derrida*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic 2015), especially chapter 3, pp 57-89.

8 Selge, K-V., 'Predigten als historische Zeugnisse. Die Predigten Gerhard von Rads', in Meinhold, A. and Berlejung, A. (Hrsg.), *Der Freund des Menschen. (Fs Georg Christian Macholz)*. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag 2003), p 342.

9 'Es ist vielleicht so, dass sich hier eine mentalitätsgeschichtlich Identifizierbare Prägung und eine innere Haltung durchhält, die gleichwohl den veränderten Zeitumständen angepasst und auf diese übertragen wird. Es ist m.E. erkennbar, dass gerade in den Gegenwartsanalysen der Universitätspredigten kultur- und gesellschaftskritische Denk- und Empfindungsmuster angegriffen wurden, die in jugendbewegten Erfahrungen und Haltungen wurzeln und sich bei G. v. Rad bis ins Alter durchhalten. Dass dies bei einem hermeneutisch so geschulten Geist wie G. v. Rad keineswegs unkritisch geschieht ist zu erwarten.' Hauger, M., *Gerhard von Rads frühe Predigten. Eine historische-homiletische Untersuchung*. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2013), p 452.

10 Selge, K-V., 'Predigten als historische Zeugnisse. Die Predigten Gerhard von Rads', p 348.

gerade königliche Menschen nicht ausgenommen sind und in dem sie sich bis zur Selbstzerstörung verstricken.¹¹ Von Rad is concerned about the soul: How can we human beings understand our own lives without acknowledging these strange irrational powers that surround us and inhabit us, that can hijack the soul and obscure it?

It is important to notice that this critical observation serves something constructive, or even: redemptive, namely the essential theme of *Trost*. Von Rad theologises in this sermon about estrangement. He relates the growing estrangement in his society to God's judgement. When God gives us over to our own will, we may become prisoners of our own desires, drifts, and fears, he says, and we may become estranged from God, from ourselves and from 'the good world for which God has created us'. That is our predicament, Von Rad says, and that may be a form of judgement. But the *Trost* is, that 'God wants to give us a shelter under his fatherly hands'. And then, a cathartic passage follows, aimed at overcoming this destructive estrangement: 'Und nun kommt alles darauf an, daß wir aussprechen und es immer wieder aussprechen, daß es das gibt, eine solche Geborgenheit. Was wäre denn unser ganzer Christenstand, wenn es diese Kammer nicht gäbe, diese Geborgenheit, in der wir alles abwerfen dürfen und all das Unbegriffene und Ungelöste und Unbewältigte Gott befehlen dürfen?' There is this 'room', Von Rad proclaims, a 'shelter for the soul', in which we can throw off all our fears, all the things we do not understand, all the unresolved entanglements of our lives. This 'shelter' is the Eucharist, he continues, but also 'the Word'. It can happen in the church, but also when you wander through the streets, that suddenly a word becomes 'bezwingend gegenwärtig'. 'Es kann im Gewühl der Straße sein, wo sich uns ja unsere Verlorenheit oft schwer auflegt, daß uns ein Jesuswort oder ein Psalmwort trifft, daß es uns bezwingend gegenwärtig wird und uns, gerade mich meint, - so waren wir schon in der Kammer'.

Von Rad describes this experience as a *Wiedergeburt*: We receive ourselves anew from God's hand, he said, and 'wo Gott derart nach uns greift, derart zu uns redet, da ereignet sich etwas Wunderbares'. The essence of this experience is that our 'sealed souls' are being 'unsealed', and thus we receive something 'the world cannot give us': 'Nur Gott kann uns sagen, wer wir sind. Er enträtselt uns unser eigenes so tief versiegeltes Wesen. Er öffnet unsere harten Herzen, und indem wir ihn und seine väterlichen Gedanken über uns verstehen, verstehen wir auch uns selber neu, nämlich als die, die allem Augenschein entgegen nicht verloren sind, sondern die ihm anhören der Anrede Gottes ihr Menschsein ganz neu empfangen'. In a different rhetorical mode than in Martin Luther King's sermon (see below), this is also catharsis. Here, a 'releasing power' is hinted at, proclaimed and evoked, a power that has the ability to 'decipher our troubled and sealed souls'. The catharsis has literally 'defining power', defining the essence of our existence as being known by God. Against all the

11 'Jesaja 26.20-21. 3. Februar 1963. Universitätsgottesdienst Heidelberg', in Von Rad, G., *Predigten*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1972, 1978), pp 114-119.

odds, against everything that underlines its opposite, through these moments we know 'that we are not lost', Von Rad explains. This incident can be framed as a moment of 'resetting the soul', as releasing the soul from estrangement and loneliness, defining it anew. Von Rad's homiletical tradition does not contain expressive exclamations like King's, like 'Lord I'm coming home',¹² but essentially the same reality is happening here.

Throughout the sermon, Von Rad stressed that this 'protected room' is not a form of 'inner migration'. To the contrary, he defines these healing moments as necessary in order to be of any worth in the contemporary society of the hearers. The 'non-contemporary moment' in the sermon, the 'time in our times', does not happen aside of the contemporary reality. It is a word for the sake of the times. If we would not have moments like these, Von Rad says rather offensively, 'die Welt, der wir helfen wollten, würde uns bis auf den letzten Heller ausplündern'. It is necessary for the hearers, both for the protection of their own souls as well as for their capacity to be of any help for their contemporaries, to have this 'room', this protected zone. 'Die Kammer macht uns dem Draußen nicht fremd. Im Gegenteil, sie macht uns ihm erst recht verbunden, weil wir erst von da uns und die Welt in den Horizont einer überschwenglichen Hoffnung gestellt werden'. In incidents like these, the *Hoffnungstruktur* of the prophetic moment comes to the surface. What is received and guarded in this 'room' is hope, not only for the hearer, but also for contemporaries. This dimension is exactly the pattern that we conceptualise in our final concept: the initiation and the edification of the congregation. Through participating in the 'way of the Lord', the congregation is edified and empowered to participate in the crisis of their culture (further chapter 7).

6.2.a Opening up the future: Hope as anticipation of God

While this 'presence' is a fundamental force in the development of the 'redemptive power' in the sermons, we also encounter a form of this presence in the mode of *anticipation*. When in 1988, Desmond Tutu proclaimed that the apartheid regime 'had already lost', he made a theological statement about a present state of affairs. For the preacher, it was a matter of fact that this regime was theologically spoken passé. It was Tutu's daring claim that, while the worldly power of the regime was still ruling society, it would be a matter of time before the future would prove the truth of his present judgement. In Bonhoeffer's sermons, we also saw the emergence of a distinct form of anticipation. Several of his sermons in the 1930s are filled with an anticipation, in this case not of liberation or redemption, but of an approaching disaster. The theological analogies Bonhoeffer used in these sermons are dramatic, like the destruction of Jerusalem as analogy of what he feared to happen within his own context. Or, think of his disturbing intuition in 1932 that we 'may live in the dying seconds of our church'. In these moments in the

12 See King's sermon 'What a mother should tell her child', on May 12, 1963 with the crisis in Birmingham reaching its climax. See Lischer, R., *The Preacher King*, p 18.

sermons, something is foreseen, forefelt and foretold, something the hearers do not yet see. There is a reality *anticipated* in the present. *In the sermons*, it is present. In both instances, this anticipation is intended to influence the hearers, to shock them out of their numbness (Bonhoeffer), to warn rulers that their present rule is only temporarily and that God will hold them accountable for the choices they make (Tutu). There is this peculiar dialectic between presence and anticipation.

First, we focus on the anticipation of *redemption*. When it comes to the anticipatory dimension, we propose the term ‘maieutic power.’¹³ In and through the theological and spiritual discourse in the sermons concerning the concrete reality of the hearers, moments occur where the limitations of the present time are broken up into a vision about the future, like during a birth. A new daring idea about the future is elicited. Through a sort of ‘maieutic power’, contours of a future become visible in the sermon, contours that were previously unknown. In these moments, preachers have the audacity to speak of things that are not yet at hand. Kuhlmann called this an ‘intuitiv gewonnen Zukunftsgewissheit’,¹⁴ and Johann Baptist Metz called it ‘anticipatory imagination.’¹⁵ Hope, in our data, is the engine and the fruit of this ‘maieutic power’. Hope is the distinct power, (coming forth from belief in God, from antecedents in Scripture, from a scrupulous searching of the times, from the imagination of preachers and emerging in the dynamic of congregational life), through which a future is articulated in sermons that is ‘beyond all evidence.’¹⁶ It is this power of hope that is cooperative in the redemptive character of prophetic speech, when destructiva are sought to overcome.

In our data, we see this hope functioning as a transformational power for the present. It is a power through which preachers urge hearers for acts of conversion, humanity, and perseverance. An intriguing result of our research is that the practices of the church can be seen as embodiments of this hope and thus are also filled with this same transformational power. In Tutu’s inauguration sermon, for instance, he had the courage to proclaim a specific future for South Africa, and this future is anticipated in the practices of the church like a *koinonia* in which racism, segregation and hatred is overcome. In this way, the spiritual practices

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- 13 See for the term: Schuster, E. & Boschert-Kimming, R., *Hope against Hope. Johann Baptist Metz and Elie Wiesel Speak Out on the Holocaust. (Studies in Judaism and Christianity)*. (New York: Paulist Press 1999), p 19.
 - 14 Kuhlman, S., *Martin Niemöller. Zur prophetischen Dimension der Predigt. (Arbeiten zur Praktischen Theologie. Band 39)*. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2008), p 107.
 - 15 Schuster, E. & Boschert-Kimming, R., *Ibid.* p 38.
 - 16 Cf Brueggemann: ‘... the prophetic task is characteristically a tenuous act of imagination, grounded in a dream, song, narrative, or oracle, rooted in the elusive but final authority of God. The prophet is the one who dares to speak such a future that is beyond all evidence. The work is not simply to reiterate old acts of hope, but to be informed by such old acts in order to perform acts that may be grounded in divine initiative.’ (...) ‘What emerges on the lips of the poet is a new world now being given and now being received. This way of hope is the work of ministry’. Brueggemann, W., *Reality. Grief. Hope. Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks*. (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2014), pp 127-128.

of the church have the potential power to overcome destructiva. It is through participating in these practices, that all kinds of people can see and experience God's design of human, communal living. In paragraph 6.2.b, we analyse how Desmond Tutu constructed a narrative of hope in this sermon, how this hope can be embodied in spiritual practices and how this hope is at the core of his inclusive public theology.

In our interpretation of the data and in our focus on hope, we are inspired by Joseph Ratzinger's observations on the relationship between hope and prophetic speech. Ratzinger understands the prophetic dimension as principally determined by the Christian motive of hope: 'Daß der christliche Glaube nicht Angst schafft, sondern sie überwindet, ist grundlegend: Das muß die Struktur unserer Verkündigung und unserer Spiritualität bestimmen.' The prophetic dimension in the church is a principal feature of the church, according to Ratzinger, because the prophet and the prophetic is 'wesentlich der *Hoffnungsdimension* zugeordnet'.¹⁷ Ratzinger interprets and qualifies the history of the church as a 'history of hope', governed and triggered by different kinds of contingent charismatic breakthroughs of new manifestations and understanding of that hope.¹⁸ Ratzinger characterises the prophetic dimension as a vital 'impulse' and he acknowledged the necessity of this impulse for the life of the church and also for the vitality of theology. Far from being archaic or a ceased phenomenon, the prophetic is serving this fundamental structure of hope of the Christian church. The sermons and the contexts we researched in this study, may be seen as examples of what Ratzinger called 'breakthroughs of hope', in which in extremely complex and sometimes dangerous situations, the perspective of hope is breaking through.

There is one final pattern in our data, concerning this aspect of anticipation, and that is the anticipation of *disaster* or *doom*. In the prophetic moment, things are forefelt, and that '*futurum* factor' includes forms of danger. There is often a kind of *Aufbruchserwartung* in the sermons, an intuition that things are changing and that a future is at stake. Tutu could literally beg his hearers to stop with the violence that disrupted society, and he could talk concretely about 'possible disasters that may be close'. There is an apocalyptic intuition discernible in the sermons, an intuition that is never categoric or irreversible, but more like a shadow in and above the metaphors, the language, the pathos, and the warnings. Lieven Boeve pleaded for the theological legitimacy of the aspect of danger in preaching and

17 Hvidt, N.C., 'Das Problem der christlichen Prophetie. Das Christentum trägt immer eine Hoffnungsstruktur in sich. Interview mit Kardinal Joseph Ratzinger', in: *30Giorni*, 1999/1.

18 Hvidt, N.C., 'Das Problem der christlichen Prophetie', p 5.

theology.¹⁹ In a similar way, we conclude that prophecy is hardly thinkable without this notion of danger. It is exactly this dangerous power of prophecy that rulers fear, that censors try to silence and that victims of injustice embrace. Hope is the basic structure of the prophetic moment, but it is never gratuitous. Prophetic speech has an inconveniently dangerous power, because it thematises the possibility of societal disaster, spiritual breakdown or even perdition. Theologically this danger is rooted in the concept of God's judgement. In our data, this relationship between hope and drama cannot be systematised into a comfortable equilibrium. In the data, this relationship is *frayed*. Moments of confidence, hope, and promise are alternated by fragments of fear, and threat. The open-endedness in this tension is part of the irksome atmosphere that emerges in the sermons in these moments.

19 'Just as danger constitutes a basic category in a correct understanding of the life and message of Jesus, it likewise forms a basic category in the formation of our contemporary Christian identity. The demythologization of apocalyptic images has all too often led to the abandonment of this element of danger in an effort to make the Christian faith easier to bear.' Boeve, L., *God interrupts history. Theology in a time of upheaval*. (New York/London: Continuum 2007), p 198.

II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part

Summary: In this second part of the chapter, the cathartic and anticipatory dimensions in the prophetic moment are illustrated in two sermons. In 6.1.b, we discuss a sermon from Martin Luther King, entitled 'Why Jesus called a man a fool'. In the sermon, held after the disappointing Chicago Summit in the summer of 1967 (see below), we hear about a suave, rich man, 'he would be called a big shot in Chicago', King shrewdly comments. The sermon is a *demasque* of a person like this. 'A Galilean peasant had the audacity to call that man a fool'. In the sermon, there is an intensification of the perceived reality of destructiva. But in and through this deepening of the fray in which the hearers and the preacher live, a counter reality is emerging in the sermon. By telling his own 'kitchen experience' (an experience of conversion, explained in the sermon below), King moves on in the sermon to prepare a joint celebration of redemption. In our analysis, we make a case that the effective power of the *kerygma* is realised in the proclamation of it. The catharsis that is happening in the sermon generates a releasing and restoring power. It is a fruit of this study to understand the prophetic moment as intrinsically aimed at participating in redemption.

In 6.2.b, we turn to the 'architecture of hope', and we reconstruct it through summarising and analysing Desmond Tutu's inauguration sermon, held when he became archbishop of Cape Town. Hope is a fragile thing. But the prophetic moment is determined by the *Hoffnungsstruktur* of Christian faith, as Joseph Ratzinger explained, and we see this hope breaking through in the empirical data. At his inauguration (in itself a sign of hope), Tutu preached about transfiguration. True religion is not etherical, he explained, but it is meant for the 'valley of human need'. True spirituality is transformational in its aim. In the sermon Tutu stressed the importance of spiritual practices, and he made the poignant point that 'the demons of injustice, oppression and exploitation can be exorcised only by prayer and fasting'. Tutu developed the theme of *koinonia* as a practice of major importance for the church in South Africa. This practice is an embodiment of hope: The reality that is hoped for, an inclusive freedom and an end to violence and injustice, is experienceable in the practices of the church. In the analysis, we show how Tutu, with distinctively Christian themes, developed an inclusive public theology of hope.

**6.1.b Sermon illustrating ‘Seeing the Lord: The cathartic power of God *praesens*’
Martin Luther King Jr., sermon held after the Chicago Summit
(Chicago, 1967)**

1 Introduction of the sermon

This sermon is titled ‘Why Jesus called a man a fool’ and is held in Chicago, in the summer of 1967. In this period, the civil rights movement was in a crucial phase, as Hodgson observed.²⁰ King and his aides, with the passage of two major civil rights bills, had the impression that ‘the war in the South was won’, and now their attention was shifted to the cities, to problems like residential segregation, police brutality, poverty, and rage in the ghettos where African-Americans lived. King sought to shift his campaign to ‘all poor people, not only blacks’. He and his team decided to focus on Chicago, ‘America’s second city, home to the vibrant ‘black metropolis’ of more than a million people, and also to some of the worst slums in the nation’. King and his family moved to Chicago too, to live in a tenement flat in Lawndale, ‘a grim slum belying its bucolic name’, as Hodgson wrote. The racial tensions in the city were huge, and thus the political tensions too. Mayor Richard Daley was not pleased with King’s arrival in Chicago, because the strategy that the *Chicago Freedom Movement* designed, was aggressive and provocative. Focusing on housing, slums and residential segregation, their most controversial tactics were plans of ‘marching through lily-white neighbourhoods’, with the intention to bring the segregation to the surface. On many sides of the political and racial spectrum, the tensions rose to barely manageable threats of violence. The riots that had erupted in Los Angeles, in the so-called ‘Watts Riots’ of 1965, were a threatening scenario to all the major cities of the North.

King suffered under this pressure. Because of his stance on the Vietnam war, he was politically marginalised. Besides that, his principle of non-violence was questioned from different sides: ‘To many in the media, his message of non-violence was dull and stale. Black power and white fear made a better story. To some blacks, King’s non-violent philosophy seemed naive, ineffective, even cowardly.’²¹ After the first major incidents of violence in Chicago that summer, with five hundred people being arrested and two blacks being killed, a high-level summit was organised, in which the political and the business leaders of Chicago met with the leaders of the civil rights movement. It is in the aftermath of this explosive summer and of the frustrating negotiations of this summit, that King’s sermon must be situated. The mayor, the city council, the bankers, and the representatives of the

20 See Hodgson, G., *Martin Luther King*. (London: Quercus 2009), I follow in this paragraph especially chapter 12: ‘Walks on the Wild Side’, pp 167-186.

21 Hodgson, G., *Ibid.* p 179.

real estate industry offered ‘little beyond theoretical support for the principle of open housing’. There was not a constructive, communal atmosphere to face the economic and racial tensions in the city. Though King did not have a formal leading role in the summit, according to Hodgson, one of his interventions saved it: ‘The atmosphere became tense and angry, and it looked as if the summit would collapse. Then King intervened, with what was called by another observer ‘a grant and quiet and careful and calming eloquence’. The city was tired of demonstrations, King said, and so was he. ‘I am tired of demonstrating. I am tired of the threat of death. I want to live. I don’t want to be a martyr... But the important thing is not how tired I am: the important thing is to get rid of the conditions that lead us to march’. The threats of death and their impact on King’s life return in the sermon below. To add to King’s frustration, when finally an agreement was reached, after a second session of the summit, most of Chicago’s black leaders saw the deal as a sell-out.²² In September, a few weeks after this summit, King preached about ‘Why Jesus called a rich man a fool’.

2 Summary of the sermon

Already in the first lines of the sermon, King draws an analogy between the parable of the rich man and the hearers in Chicago. ‘I want to share with you a dramatic little story’, King starts ‘a story of a man who by all standards (*Yes, speak, Doc, speak*) of measurement would be considered a highly successful man (*Yes*)’. In the transcript, the responses of the hearers are included as an integral part of the sermon, and in the audio-version, this involvement of the hearers is unmistakably present: They encourage the preacher, they cackle about his jokes and they express their assent.²³ In only a few lines, King sketches this rich man: He is always building ‘new and bigger barns to store all of his crops’, with the single goal ‘to eat, to drink and to be merry’, hopefully ‘within a few years’. ‘But the parable ends’, King continues, ‘by saying that God said to him, (*Yes*) ‘Thou fool. (*Yes*). Not next year, not next week, not tomorrow, but this night, (*Yes*), thy soul is required of thee’ (*Yes*). The solemn King James language and the repetition of ‘not next year, not next week, not tomorrow’ creates an austere moment. ‘Think of this man: if he lived in Chicago today, he would be considered “a big shot” (*My Lord*). And he would abound with all of the social prestige and all of the community influence that could be afforded. (*Yes*) Most people would look up to him because he would have that something called money. (*Yes*). And yet a Galilean peasant had the audacity to call that man a fool. (*Yes*)’ Although the identification between the worlds of the text and the hearers is evident from the start, the term ‘big shot’ triggers the instant identification. This is a parable about the ‘big shots’ the hearers know, whether it is a rich plantation-owner in Alabama or a wealthy industrial in Chicago, dominating the real estate sector. The sermon is about a ‘Galilean

22 Hodgson, G., *Ibid.* p 179.

23 See for the text and the recording of the sermon: www.kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_why_jesus_called_a_man_a_fool.1.html

peasant', who does not 'look up to this big shot', but who has audacity and exposes the foolishness of this life.

After this opening, the sermon is structured around the several reasons King gives, of 'why Jesus called this man a fool'. The first reason is that this man 'allowed the means by which he lived to outdistance the ends for which he lived'. The choice of words in this paragraph is sophisticated and somewhat academic. It is the language of a liberal, intellectual, and moral leader diagnosing the diseases of his time: 'You see, each of us lives in two realms, the within and the without. (*Yeah*). Now the within of our lives is that realm of spiritual ends, expressed in art, literature, religion, and morality. The without of our lives is that complex of devices, of mechanisms and instrumentalities by means of which we live'. King calls this man an 'eternal fool' because he overvalued the wrong realm.

The second reason this man was a fool is 'because he failed to realise his dependence on others'. King explains that in the sixty words of the parable, more than fifteen times it is about 'I' and 'my'. 'This man was a fool because he said "I" and "my" so much until he lost the capacity to say "we" and "our". (*Yes*) He failed to realise that he couldn't do anything by himself. This man talked like he could build the barns by himself, like he could till the soil by himself. He failed to realise that wealth is always a result of commonwealth'. This is a crucial passage in the sermon. King uses it, to pose the question of 'who built (the barns) of America?' The parable becomes a story not only about greed, selfishness, and arrogance in general, but more particularly, about the building up of this particular American society. In the cynical and aggressive style that characterised King in these last years of his life, he continues: 'Our white brothers must see this; they haven't seen it, up to now. The great problem facing our nation today in the area of race is that it is the black man who to a large extent produced the wealth of this nation. (*All right*) And the nation doesn't have sense enough to share its wealth and its power with the very people who made it so. (*All right*) And I know what I'm talking about this morning. (*Yes, sir*) The black man made America wealthy. (*Yes, sir*) In this passage the preacher becomes a partisan for justice. He discusses the suggestion he heard, that 'blacks should go back to Africa', and he counters it with the remark that 'we were here earlier': 'For more than two centuries, our forebearers labored here without wages. They made the cotton king. With their hands and with their backs and with their labor, they built the sturdy docks, the stout factories, the impressive mansions of the South. (*My Lord*)'

The sermon becomes explicit and blunt. The sarcasm is biting. After explaining that 'blacks' played a fundamental role in building America, King indignantly exclaims: 'now this nation is telling us that we can't build.' 'Negroes are excluded almost absolutely from the building trades. Why? Because these jobs pay six, seven, eight, nine and ten dollars an hour, and they don't want negroes to have it. (*applause*). And I feel that if something doesn't happen

soon, and something massive, the same indictment will come to America – ‘Thou fool!’ In this passage, King exposes a discriminative truth from the economic sphere, especially in the construction sector and in the real estate sector. They systematically exclude black craftsmen, King claims. Through these accusations, a threat is developed. King applies the judgement on the rich fool in the parable to this American society. His claim is that Jesus would call these people ‘fools’. Society is addressed in the sermon as a *persona*, as a corporate identity. In a way, America is on trial in sermons like these. King continues by saying that the ‘rich fool’ had so much in his barns, that he did not know what to do with his goods any longer, and he applies this element to America too: ‘We have our barns, and everyday our rich nation is building new and larger and greater barns. You know, we spend millions of dollars a day to store surplus food. But I want to say to America, ‘I know where you can store that food free of charge: (Yes) In the wrinkled stomachs of the millions of God’s children in Asia, Africa and South America and in our own nation who go to be hungry tonight’. (Yes)’ What happens in fragments like this is that economic realities are transformed to theological judgements. It is about ‘God’s children’ that go hungry to bed.

The third reason King gives, deepens this theological diagnosis. ‘Finally, this man was a fool, because he failed to realise his dependence on God. (Yeah)’ King proceeds the sermon by mocking the godlessness of the rich: ‘That man talked like he regulated the seasons. That man talked like he gave the rain to grapple with the fertility of the soil. That man talked like he provided the dew.’ There is a ‘godless arrogance’ in this man, and this foolishness is ‘still alive today’, King says. Then this ‘godlessness’ is developed in a broader sense: ‘a lot of people are forgetting God’. This passage functions as a bridge to give an extensive testimony of King’s own journey of faith. His own need and despair function in the sermon as an illustration that ‘one day, you are going to need him’, meaning: God. Analytically seen, this personal testimony is the avenue to which the preacher facilitates the congregation to come to a communal catharsis.

King starts his testimony by explaining that, though he was raised in a tradition of preachers and ‘the church meant something very real to me’, it was still ‘a kind of inherited religion and I had never felt (*my Lord*) an experience with God in the way that you must have it if you’re going to walk the lonely paths of life’. Then, King starts to talk about the journey of his vocation, about his first congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, the incident with Rosa Parks that fuelled a movement into existence, about the moment in which he was called to become the spokesperson of this new organisation, ‘and then we started our struggle together’. King sketches these developments as unexpected interruptions in his life, through which he was drawn into the struggle for equal civil rights. Through this societal, communal, and individual struggle, King found his own voice. At the same time, he constructs a kind of contemporary sacred history, an epic narrative about marching and struggling

together, and through this narrative, the hearers and the preachers are connected to each other.

Other shared experiences in this communal struggle are violence, degradation, and danger. King tells about the phone calls that started to intimidate him: 'But I will never forget one night very late. It was around midnight. And you can have strange experiences at midnight. (*Yes, Sir*). I had been out meeting with the steering committee all that night. And I came home, and my wife was in bed and I immediately crawled into bed to get some rest to get up early the next morning to try to keep this going. And immediately, the phone started ringing and I picked it up. On the other end was an ugly voice. The voice said to me, in substance, "Nigger, we are tired of you and your mess now. And If you aren't out of this town in three days, we're going to blow your brains out and blow up your house"' (*Lord Jesus*) The preacher, who earlier in the sermon adopted the role of an academic teacher, using sophisticated language to explain society on a meta-level, now speaks about his own suffering, about being called a 'Nigger', about being threatened with violence. Through it, King makes the sermon an open space where the humiliation of the hearers is acknowledged and expressed in the raw language they know of. 'Lord Jesus' one of the hearers exclaims after this raw passage. It is the first time the name of Jesus is mentioned in an audible response of the hearers.

King deepens his explanation of what happened to him that night. He was 'frustrated and bewildered'. He warmed some coffee, 'thinking that would give some relief'. He pulled back the theology and the philosophy he had studied at university, 'with all their reasoning on the existence of sin and evil'. 'But the answers didn't come there'. He sat there, thinking about his newborn daughter, only a month old, 'the darling of my life', 'and I sat at the table thinking about that little girl and thinking about the fact that she could be taken away from me any minute' (*Go ahead*). Notice one of the hearers urging the preacher to get to the point where he is heading to, together with the congregation: 'Go ahead'. 'And I got to the point that I couldn't take it any longer; I was weak' (*Yes*). King describes his bruises, the abstractions of theology and philosophy failing, the fear for the safety of his spouse. This is a personal memory, an 'interference of biography, crisis and calling' as we have called it (3.3.b). But it is more, and it is more complex. It is also a homiletical way of facilitating the hearers to gain access to their own fray and bruises. In the analysis, below, we show that King's homiletical tradition knows these 'tracks', these homiletical ways of sharing defeat, humiliation and weakness in the sermon. It is personal and authentic, while at the same time, it is the construction of a 'persona', functioning as a ritualised way of creating the moment in which preacher and hearers share and release their pain.

As the testimony is heading for its catharsis, the responses of the hearers multiply and intensify. Notice that the theme of the 'rich fool' becomes less important in the sermon. It is now about the grip that discrimination and

intimidation have on the soul of the hearers. Through the sermon, a releasing power develops that aims at freeing the hearers from this destructive defining power. King confesses that he 'couldn't call on Daddy now', no: 'Now you've got to call on that something in that person that your Daddy used to tell you about.' (Yes). He explains this experience as a discovery that 'religion had to become real to me', 'that I had to know God for myself.' (Yes, Sir). King reiterates his sense of despair: 'Lord. I'm down here trying to do what's right. (Yes) I think I'm right; I think the cause that we represent is right. (Yes). But Lord, I must confess that I'm weak now; I'm faltering; I'm losing my courage. (Yes) And I can't let people see me like this because if they see me weak and losing my courage, they will begin to get weak.' (Yes). In this fragment, it is evident, that the preacher is constantly aware of his public role. It is a paradoxical way of directing the congregation to where he obtains his strength, by showing his weakness. Thus, it becomes a moment of 'public spirituality', an open space where communal experiences of weakness and despair can be overcome.

The essential overcoming of the destructiva is in the spiritual breakthrough that happened in the life of the preacher, which he shares with the hearers in the sermon. It is shared in order to become an actual, congregational moment of overcoming. 'And it seemed at that moment, that I could hear an inner voice saying to me, (Yes) "Martin Luther, (Yes), stand up for righteousness, (Yes), stand up for justice, (Yes) stand up for truth. (Yes) And lo, I will be with you, (Yes), even until the end of the world." And I'll tell you, I've seen the lightning flash. I've heard thunder roll. I felt sin's breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. But I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. No, never alone. No. Never alone. He promised me never to leave me, (Never), never to leave me alone. And I'm going on in believing in him. (Yes). You'd better know him, and know his name, and know how to call his name.'

In the tape recording, but traceable in the annotated text too, an electrifying atmosphere exists and develops between preacher and hearers. The preacher seems to re-experience and re-enact, in the public context of the congregation, a breakthrough in his personal life. That moment is retold and relived through the exact words of a spiritual, called 'Never alone'. All the lines King uses, come from this verse ('I've seen the lightning flashing and heard the thunder roll, I've felt sin's breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul, I've heard the voice of my Savior telling me to fight on, he promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone'). The congregation is familiar with this experience and these lyrics, and as they verbally and emotionally respond to the preacher, the essence of the breakthrough seems to recur. The 'never to leave me alone' of the preacher is confirmed by the response from the congregation: 'Never'. Lischer called this 'moments in which preacher and congregation become one'. The catharsis, present in the traditional song 'Never to leave me alone' is continued in the personal experience of the preacher, and, by retelling it in the sermon, continues in the liturgical experience of the hearers.

King prolongs and intensifies this cathartic moment through citing another spiritual, an explicit slave song, called 'There is a balm in Gilead'. The line comes from Jeremiah 8.22, originally a question full of despair: 'Is there a balm in Gilead?' But in the song, the question mark is transformed into an affirmation, and King explains in his sermon: 'Centuries later our slave forebearers came along. (Yes, sir). And they (like Jeremiah, CMAE) too saw the injustices of life, and had nothing to look forward to morning after morning but the rawhide whip of the overseer, long rows of cotton in the sizzling heat. But they did an amazing thing. They looked back across the centuries and they took Jeremiah's question mark and straightened it into an exclamation point. And they could sing, "There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole". (Yes)'

One stanza in the song, is about 'being discouraged', and King closes by admitting his own discouragement: 'I felt discouraged in Chicago. As I move through Mississippi and Georgia and Alabama, I feel discouraged. (Yes, sir) Living every day under the threat of death, I feel discouraged sometimes. Living every day under the extensive criticisms, even from Negroes, I feel discouraged sometimes. [applause] Yes, sometimes I feel discouraged and feel my work's in vain. But then the Holy Spirit (Yes) revives my soul again. "There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul." God bless you. [applause]' In the traditional script of this well-known spiritual, memories of pain and release are guarded and transmitted. This song contains the 'cry' of the tradition, as well as its memory of catharsis. In the liturgy, through these ritualised words, an actual new releasing moment occurs, in which preacher and hearers together are lifted up out of the effects destructiva have on their lives.

3 Analytical remarks

In this paragraph, we approach the concept of catharsis as a form of resetting of the soul. We selected the term resetting the soul, because in the prophetic moment, as we reconstruct it, the damaged soul of hearers is reset, is 'put back in a position for healing' as Yarbrow Collins called it. We even considered using the term ('resetting the soul') to become the title of our study, for it is an essential pattern in the data: Destructiva that harm the soul and concrete lives are exposed, withspoken, and qualified, and in addition to these diagnostic acts, a redemptive power is generated through which healing may happen.

How does this work? It is important to locate this sermon in the homiletical, theological, and biographical development of King's preaching practice. Richard Lischer has shown how King's sermons became more cynical and aggressive during the course of his ministry. In Lischer's judgement, the sermons became 'more prophetic'. King progressively assessed 'racism to be written into the heart of white America', he came to say more often 'thus saith the Lord', and he proclaimed, 'the

woes of the fathers to be visited upon the children in urban America.²⁴ In the early period of his ministry, King had developed a theology of redemption, that is: a theology in which the unmerited suffering of slaves and blacks could function as a means for the spiritual redemption of an entire society. 'If people are going to suffer in our society', he said, 'it must be us'. But later, this specific idea of redemptive suffering receded, and his preaching became 'more openly prophetic' and antagonistic: 'Late in his career, when King began to give full vent to his rage, it was the holy rage of the prophetic tradition, and not the resentment or vengefulness of his nationalistic critics, to which he lent his voice. His prophetic forebears, as it were, taught him how to get mad, what themes to press, and what language to use.'²⁵

In this sermon, held after the failed Chicago Summit, we sense this anger. In it, King exposes and criticises the economic exclusion of Afro-Americans from the construction and real estate sector. It is an exclusion of those, who, nota bene, 'helped to build America', as King put it. King laments the 'godless arrogance of the rich', that is: of *white* Americans, who are building barns for their surplus of food, while other fellow citizens 'go to bed hungry and cannot feed their children'. King even allows the ugly and aggressive threat he received himself, to enter the vocabulary of the sermon: '*Nigger*, we're gonna blow your brains out'. Where earlier sermons were principally inclusive, always trying to avoid the racial differences between 'whites and blacks', here, this division functions explicitly. This anger is translated theologically in the anticipation of judgement: 'And I feel that if something doesn't happen soon, and something massive, the same indictment will come to America - "Thou fool!"'. In our analysis, this intensification, this more explicit disclosure of the character of destructiva, is an integral part in the anatomy of catharsis. There is no catharsis without this intensification. In the sermon, the rift between 'what ought to be' and 'what is' is explicated and even sharpened and thus, the pain and anger it causes is evoked.

The observation we make about this intensification is that it is not only analytical, namely diagnosing, and qualifying concrete unjust structures, but it is also existential and spiritual. Throughout the sermon, it is evident how these injustices damage the soul, both of the preacher and the hearers. It is this exact damage that is not only shown and shared in the sermon, but also sought to overcome. First, we focus on the role of the preacher in this cathartic movement.

As we explained earlier, the prophetic moment is occupied with evil and the suffering it causes. Lischer cites Heschel that 'one of the important tasks of the

24 Lischer, R, Ibid. pp 159-161.

25 Lischer, R., Ibid. p 34.

prophet, to whom God has given sharper eyes than others, is to perceive the true nature of evil around him.' 'Prophets in Israel were maladjusted to society's conventional lies'.²⁶ The etymological root of the word 'to prophesy', Lischer explains, is 'to slaver' and 'to foam at the mouth'. It is the anger about evil that captures the prophet existentially and that is expressed in his speech. In this sermon, we see this moment of anger and pain exemplified in the preacher's own experiences and in the considerations in his interior life: the *Anfechtung*, the fear, the despair. From other sources, we know that, during the course of his life, the FBI investigated fifty plots to kill Martin Luther King, and we know about the lifelong threat of violence that King and his family had to endure. King accepted this fate. It was part of his understanding of the prophetic. Already in 1958, he wrote that 'any discussion of the Christian ministry today must ultimately emphasise the need for prophecy. Not every minister can be a prophet, but some must be prepared for the ordeals of this high calling and be willing to suffer courageously for righteousness'.²⁷ According to Lischer, this role of the prophet, (he calls it one of the 'masks' of King), was his most important one: 'King not only wore these masks but spent his life in an effort to live in them. They became his truest self. The first of these (masks, CMAE) was the prophet'.²⁸ In this sermon, the preacher exposes to the hearers the interior, existential reality of the costs of this calling: the violence, the humiliation, and the fatigue. King exposes it by the sharing of, what came to be known as, the 'kitchen experience', the personal moment in which he heard his name being called by God: 'Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness'.

The point we want to make is that these experiences of King, are, at one side, extremely individual and personal. They are an example of autobiographical theology, of 'truth through personality', an important means of communication in 'black homiletics'.²⁹ At the same time, and with equal rights, these experiences are communal and liturgical. The hearers have similar experiences of violence and humiliation. Their soul is damaged too by the same destructiva. The resurrection or rejuvenation of the despaired preacher in the 'kitchen experience' may have several rhetorical aims indeed, but one of them is facilitating a similar resurrection among his hearers.

This communality between preacher and hearer is evident in the sermon. Now, we turn to the congregation's part in the homiletical dynamic. In the Afro-American tradition, the participation of the congregation in the act of preaching, is often audible. Preaching, in this tradition, is not about giving a lecture or reading an

26 Lischer, R., Ibid. p 177.

27 Lischer, R., Ibid. pp 171-174.

28 Lischer, R., Ibid. pp 173.

29 Crawford, E.E., *The Hum. Call and Response in African American Preaching (with Thomas H. Troeger)*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1995), p 20.

essay, it is primarily ‘an experience and a lively conversation between God, the preacher and the pew, dealing with real up-in-your-face issues.’³⁰ An essential task for the preacher is ‘establishing a climate where you could pray or experience a release’. The preacher, thus, *sets the climate for participation*.³¹ In this tradition, we see an element surfacing, in an explicit and expressive way, that is integral to the practice of preaching itself, namely the *communal* nature of preaching. Preaching is a corporate performance. Lischer made the daring analysis that, in these instances, ‘the Word becomes the achievement of the group.’³² The preacher invites for participation, and the congregation encourages the preacher. There is *mutuality* going on, a partnership between preacher and hearers. The congregation ‘joins in the celebration and helps the preacher to establish his rhythm by punctuating his calls with well-timed responses.’³³ When King tells about the ‘ugly voice’ that called him ‘Nigger’ and that threatened to ‘blow his brains out’, one man in the congregation exclaims ‘Lord Jesus’. He recognises and shares the pain of the preacher, and expresses it. In this type of preaching, ‘all are to some degree performers and none are spectators.’³⁴ Thus, the congregation, together with the preacher, establishes the sermon’s rhythm, in which ‘repetition is the father of the rhythm and in which rhythm is the mother of ecstasy’.³⁵

Through these homiletical ingredients, catharsis is reached. What happens in the catharsis is a next moment in this communal dynamic, namely the ‘breaking of barriers.’³⁶ In a communal experience, in which the barriers between preacher and congregation, and between text and context are broken down, people are lifted up out of the frightening circumstances of the crisis. It can be said, that in these moments, the preacher ‘becomes one with the congregation.’³⁷ But at the same time, there is another form of participation. The interesting fact is that in this sermon, preacher and congregation are united in the recitation of a spiritual, a traditional hymn. They, contemporaries, participate in earlier and similar experiences in their shared tradition of humiliation, faith and the overcoming of destructiva. Through reciting the verses from the hymns ‘Never alone’ and ‘There’s a Balm in Gilead’, the sermon becomes a joint celebration of redemption,

30 Howard, G., *Black Sacred Rhetoric. The Theology and Testimony of Religious Folk Talk*. (Memphis: BorderStone Press 2010), p 42.

31 Crawford, E.E., *Ibid.* p 25.

32 Lischer, R., *Ibid.* p 22.

33 Lischer, R., *Ibid.* p 22.

34 Lischer, R., *Ibid.* p 138.

35 Lischer, R., *Ibid.* p 130.

36 Lischer, R., ‘Martin Luther King Jr’s Preaching as a Resource for Preachers’, in: Day, D., Astley, J., Francis, L.J., *Making Connections. A Reader on Preaching (Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology)*. (London: Ashgate 2005).

37 Lischer, R., *The End of Words. The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence. (The Lyman Beecher Lectures in Preaching)*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2005), pp 37-38.

through the shared language of traditional songs.³⁸ The participation is even more broader: Through these lines, both the presumed agony of Jeremiah (Is there a Balm in Gilead?), and the consolation of Jesus to the disciples (Never to leave you alone) are evoked.³⁹ In this cathartic moment, a breaking of barriers happens, including the barriers of time and place.⁴⁰ This is what we mean by the emergence in the sermon of ‘another sense of time in our time’. In the final paragraph, King recalls the effects of destructiva on his own life, like the discouragement of living under the threat of death and under extensive criticisms. But these destructiva are recalled during the climax of worship, in which preacher and congregation experience a resetting of their soul. In the liturgy, they are put in a position where a healing power can overcome these damaging effects.

In this paragraph, we deal with characteristics from a specific homiletical tradition, namely the Afro-American Baptist tradition. But it is important to notice that in European homiletical discourse, these considerations are not absent. When Manfred Josuttis wrote about the ‘Ereignis des Evangeliums’, in a chapter called ‘Das heilvolle Wort’, he calls the liturgy and the act of preaching, the ‘hochbrisante Situation des homiletischen Aktes’. When in liturgy and sermon, preacher and congregation approach the reality of the sacred, a dense concentration happens, a concentration that may be hard to delineate in usual, rational categories, but which is essential for understanding of what is religiously happening in the acts of praying and reading the Word, of hearing and speaking, of absorbing and responding. Josuttis wrote about ‘transrationale Phänomene’ becoming experienceable for hearer and preacher.⁴¹ The forms of catharsis are realised in a variety of rhetorical, cultural, and theological modes, but the forms are not decisive. The theological

38 ‘Theologically, it is the moment in which preacher and congregation together break through the poverty and prejudice they experience during the week, to the joy of that which is to be revealed.’ Lischer, R., *The Preacher King*, p 140.

39 See Keith’s Miller analysis of this moment: ‘In a single description of his epiphany in the kitchen, King creates a self by interweaving New Testament language and the social gospel, into the fabric of his black conversion narrative. He also blends his identity with that of the disciples of Jesus and with the narrative voices of a gospel song and a spiritual. Here African Americans relating their conversion epiphanies, the narrative voices of ‘Never alone’ and ‘There is a Balm in Gilead’, and King, the once faltering but now rejuvenated disciple of Christ and leader of the boycott, all speak the same words with the same meaning. They do so through King’s reanimation of the sacred time and typology of folk religion.’ Miller, K.D., *Ibid.* p 140.

40 Miller, K.D., *Ibid.* p 30.

41 Josuttis, M., *Die Einführung in das Leben. Pastoraltheologie zwischen Phänomenologie und Spiritualität*. Gütersloher Verlagshaus. 2. Auflage, Gütersloh 2004, pp 110-111. Josuttis has also called attention for the importance of ‘atmospheres’ as crucial factors in the analysis and understanding of the ‘Gottesdienst’. There is a ‘presence’ in these gatherings, that transcends ‘visibility’. Josuttis spoke of ‘erwachende Atmosphären’ in these moments, which he called an ‘eigentümliche Macht’. See: Jossutis, M., ‘Erfahrungen mit dem Göttlichen in der Praxis der Kirche’, in: Blume, A., *Was bleibt von Gott? Beiträge zur Phänomenologie des Heiligen und der Religion*. (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2007), pp 172-186. See also: Jossutis, M., *Ich bin ein Gast auf Erden. Eine pastorale Lebensgeschichte*. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 2016), p 37.

point is what Immink called the ‘the effective power in the kerygma realising what is being proclaimed.’⁴²

In this paragraph, we showed how the *praesens* of God’s reality, can be experienced by preacher and hearers as a cathartic power in the liturgy and the sermon, a power able to reclaim and to restore hearers from the grip destructiva may have on them. In the next paragraph, we show how the anticipation of God’s active coming, in the form of hope, is in a similar way experienced as a power in the present, both in preaching as in other Christian practices.

6.2.b Sermon illustrating 'Opening up the future: Hope as anticipation of God'

Desmond Tutu, inauguration sermon (Cape Town, 1986)

1 Introduction of the sermon

The last sermon we discuss in this chapter concerns hope. When Desmond Tutu was inaugurated as archbishop of Cape Town in 1986, becoming the head of the Anglican Church in South Africa, it was a momentous day for the church as a whole, but also for the South African nation, as Michael Nuttal described it. Nuttal was the other candidate for the office and he was seen as the ‘choice of the Anglican establishment’, while Tutu was portrayed as ‘the prophetic and controversial Desmond Tutu.’⁴³ Yet, it was Tutu who was elected on 14 April 1986, and, later that year in September, inaugurated in the cathedral of Cape Town. The programmatic sermon he held at that moment is summarised and analysed in this paragraph, and we focus on how Tutu explains that destructiva can be overcome through the power of hope.

2 Summary of the sermon

Tutu starts his sermon with identifying the patterns he sees in biblical calling narratives.⁴⁴ In these accounts, there always is an initial moment of being overwhelmed by God’s presence, of receiving a vision and becoming ‘Spirit-filled’. According to Tutu, there is an ‘almost universal rhythm’ in these calling narratives, in which people are ‘being equipped for mission’. This pattern is also discernible in the life of Jesus, he continued. He had a life in which he was ‘preparing for his Messianic mission’, but ‘he waited until he was anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism’, and then ‘Mark says this Spirit virtually propelled Jesus into the desert to enter the fray against the Evil One’. Tutu sees this pattern operative at Pentecost too, where the disciples had to

42 Immink, F.G., *The Touch of the Sacred. The Practice, Theology, and Tradition of Christian Worship*. (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2014), p 204.

43 Nuttal, M., *Number Two to Tutu. A Memoir*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications 2003), p 13.

44 Tutu, D., *The Rainbow People of God*. (London: Doubleday 1994), pp 109-124.

wait for the Spirit 'before they could embark on their mission'. Surely, these disciples remembered the 'sublime experience of the Transfiguration', and surely, they had thought on that mountain that this was how God wanted to be worshipped and, surely, they wanted to remain there, 'undisturbed by the uncomprehending, demanding, madding crowd'. 'But no – they did not understand yet. The transfiguration was happening so that they could descend to the valley of human need, of faithlessness, of dangerous evil spirits'. Being called and being Spirit-filled is not only not-individual, it is also not-etherical. Religion is not about the sublime, it is about the fray. The pattern Tutu posits, is that the experience of God and the empowerment by his Spirit is intended to be a 'healing, restoring, forgiving, reconciling, admonishing, comforting' presence in the midst of destructiva. Semantically, Tutu accumulates six words of restoration and healing, underlining that in his view the mark of true spiritual life is being part of this healing intention of God in the midst of injustice and need.

Tutu translates these observations into a first major contemporisation concerning the true character of religious life. God is a God with a special concern 'for the weak, the hungry, the powerless', he says. But already in the prophets, we read about religion marked by 'the elaborate minutiae of ritual and sacrifice but which lacks an impact on how the worshippers live their lives day by day'. This is a stern reproach of religiosity that has no impact on concrete lives. Tutu quotes Isaiah's shocking critique on these religious rituals (Is. 1.10-15), ending the quotation with the exclamation: 'There is blood on your hands'. That exclamation must have had an uncomfortable resonance amongst the hearers in the South Africa of 1986: The critique of the prophet addressed at those with 'blood on their hands'. Consequently, referring to the injustices done to Naboth, Tutu focuses on what he calls the 'non-entities of this world'. It is in the conduct towards them, true religiosity can be shown. 'For this God, our God, everybody is a somebody. All life belongs to him. Because of him all life is religious'. And then the contemporisation becomes progressively aggressive: 'Consequently, if you say you love God whom you have not seen and hate your brother whom you have, the Bible does not use delicate language; it does not say you are guilty of terminological inexactitude. It says bluntly you are a liar'. As the 'blood on your hands' still resonates among the hearers, this brute and direct 'you are a liar' may have made the atmosphere in the cathedral uncomfortable.

Theologically, Tutu relates the character of true spiritual life to the incarnation: 'If we take the incarnation seriously we must be concerned where people live, how they live, whether they have justice, whether they are uprooted and dumped as rubbish in resettlement camps, whether they are detained without trial, whether they receive an inferior education, whether they have a say in the decisions that affect their lives most deeply...'. In this religious ceremony with an international profile and with huge attention from the media, Tutu shows that he knows the concrete need and injustices of this society, and he uses

the public platform to expose it. Interestingly, the contemporisation is further developed in his stress on spiritual practices. The sermon is programmatic in that Tutu explores the design of his programme for the renewal and the strengthening of spiritual practices in the church. He underlines that it is through being faithful in these practices, (like prayer, meditation, regular use of the Eucharist, having retreats), that 'we shall be an effective agent in the hands of God': 'I bid you recover the biblical practice of fasting. Why can't it be standard for the diocese and the province to fast, say every Friday. Jesus is reported as saying that some demons could not be exorcised except by prayer and fasting. The demons of injustice, oppression and exploitation can be exorcised only by prayer and fasting'. Contributing to the well-being of the country, Tutu explains, is in spiritual discipline.

In the second major part of the sermon, called 'the church as family', Tutu turns to the subject of *koinonia*. Initially, this feels as a change of subject, but the continuity is in Tutu's stress on the importance of alternative and healing practices in the church, for the sake of society. Tutu starts by acknowledging that 'Our Lord came into a deeply divided and polarised society'. He explains the kind of divisions that polarised that former society: oppressors versus citizens of the vassal state, religious divisions between Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Zealots, the division between Jews, Gentiles, and the Samaritans, men segregated from women, free persons versus slaves, the rich versus the poor, the hatred for collaborators. After listing these divisions, Tutu turns to the miracle of *koinonia* that happened in that society: 'The world saw a veritable miracle unfolding before its very eyes as all sorts and conditions of women and men, rich and poor, slave and free, Jew and Gentile – all these came to belong in one fellowship, one *koinonia*, one communion'. The miracle, Tutu adds, is not merely that they began to see each other as 'equals', but 'as sisters and brothers, members of one family, God's family'. Tutu stresses the importance of this *koinonia* for his day: 'Can you imagine what would happen in this land if we accepted that theological fact about ourselves – that, whether we like it or not, we are members of one family? Whether I like it or not, whether he likes it or not, as I have said before, P.W. Botha is my brother and I must desire and pray for the best for him'. In this passage, the preacher triggers a new 'imagination', in which division and polarisation is overcome by a new form of community. In the sermon, in this 'imagination', the preacher is 'ahead' of his hearers, and by calling an aggressive opponent, with whom he had had so many verbal clashes, a brother, he shows them what it means to inhabit this 'alternative imagination'. This 'imagination', though, is not a thought or an ideal, according to Tutu, it is a core reality of the church. The demons of apartheid are not only exorcised by prayer and by redemptive speech, we conclude through this passage, but also by 'alternative practices' like the *koinonia* of the Church.

Tutu proceeds his thoughts on 'the church as a family', by stressing that he is talking about 'unity', not 'uniformity'. 'It is a sign of maturity to be able to disagree', he says, 'and yet to continue to love one another'. For Tutu, deep

theological motives are at stake in this 'spiritual maturity': 'As the Church, we are set as a sign in the world, the first fruits of the Kingdom, to demonstrate what God intends human society to be, united in a rich diversity, to demonstrate that Christ has indeed broken down the middle wall of partition and so we must accelerate the pace on true non-racialism, especially in our appointments'. There are two fruits of this *koinonia* he underlines. The first is a 'willingness to share'. The 'mutuality in the relationships' in the church means a 'mutuality in giving and receiving'. 'How I pray that in our church we can learn to emulate a true family, emulate the divine generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ, who although rich, for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might become rich'. The second fruit of *koinonia* is having a 'gentle caring and compassion for one another'. Interestingly, this starts with 'seeing', a central notion in our research: 'How I pray that the Lord would open our eyes so that we would see the real, the true identity of each one of us, that this is not a so-called coloured or white, or black or Indian, but a brother, a sister, and to treat each other as such'. This is the trigger for alternative conduct: 'If you 'see' somebody as your brother, it will change your attitude: 'Would you let your brother live an unnatural life as migrant worker in a single-sex hostel? Would you let his family, your relatives, eke out a miserable existence in a poverty-stricken Bantustan homeland?' Tutu turns these questions into an assurance of hope: 'If we could but recognise our common humanity, that we do belong together, that our destinies are bound up with one another's, that we can be free only together, then a glorious South Africa would come into being where all of us lived harmoniously together as members of one family, the human family, God's family. In truth, a transfiguration would have taken place'. It is noteworthy to see how Tutu in this sermon can combine fundamental theological speech about incarnation and *koinonia*, with a societal political discourse on freedom, mutual dependency, and communal humanity. The religious and the public discourse are interwoven.

The third section of the sermon turns explicitly to the theme of transfiguration. In a way, it can be read as a 'sermon in the sermon', as a more or less independent part with different theological and rhetorical accents. The section starts with a reflection on creation, and it is filled with poetry: 'The principle of transfiguration is at work when something so unlikely as the grey grass that covers our veld in the winter, or the tree with gnarled leafless branches, burst forth with the sap flowing, so that the grass is green again and the birds sit chirping in the leafy branches, and the once-dry streams gurgle with swift-flowing water – when winter gives way to spring and nature seems to have experienced its own resurrection'. Suddenly, the grim context in the sermon of division and enmity, is alternated by the light-footedness of mystery and wonder. Tutu continues this joy by giving other examples of metamorphosis: 'The principle of transfiguration is at work when mundane everyday fare, bread and wine, apparently recalcitrant matter, is lifted to a higher order of being or becomes the channel of divine life, quite surprisingly, so that this bread broken and this cup shed become now the body and blood of the victim, who gave his

life once for all in the all-sufficient and perfect sacrifice on the Cross, availing for the forgiveness of our sins'.

Earlier, we saw Martin Luther King refer to Christ as 'a peasant with the audacity to call a man a fool'. In utterances like these, an original, contextual picturisation of Jesus is designed. Jesus is pictured in specific contemporary features through which hearers are enabled to recognise something of his potential presence in their ordinary lives. In a similar way, Tutu calls Christ 'the victim', and he talks about 'the body and the blood of the victim', and in this violent context full of bloodshed, this has a specific resonance. This 'victim' is the 'One who died but now lives' and thus it has something to say to the hearers, victims and offenders alike, namely: 'The principle of transfiguration says that nothing, no-one and no situation is "untransfigurable", that the very creation, nature waits expectantly for its transfiguration, when it will be released from its bondage and share in the glorious liberty of the children of God, when it will not just be dry inert matter but will be translucent with a divine glory'. Tutu uncovers a mysterious principle that he sees operative in creation, in the sacraments and in Christ himself, and this principle forms the essence of his hope: 'No situation is untransfigurable'. Thus, with explicitly christological language, Tutu develops an inclusive, public theology of hope. This transfiguration, Tutu proceeds, was also visible in the persecutor Paul becoming a missionary, in the traitor Peter becoming 'the prince of the apostles', it is the principle at work 'when an instrument of the most painful and shameful death can become the life-giving Cross'. Interestingly, Tutu makes a biographical application too: 'And so it is the principle of transfiguration at work, when one so unlikely, so unfitting, can be called to be the Archbishop and Metropolitan of this great Church. He knows there is much in him that would be a let and a hindrance to others and he asks for your fervent prayers that he will not impede the work of God, that he will learn ways to commend the Gospel of grace graciously and with due humility'.

Passages like these can be called cathartic. In every nerve of the sermon the destructivum is detectable, while at the same time a transfiguration is also literally happening in the sermon, through which these destructiva are transcended. This transfiguration is semantically traceable in the different characteristics of the language that is used: stern, grim and brute when it concerns the exposure of destructiva, playful, poetic, and light-footed when it concerns hope. It is through the power of that 'other language' the preacher tries to draw the hearers into 'another imagination', trying to 'make them see' how things could become transfigured.

After the cathartic passage on transfiguration and hope, the preacher allows this hope to be disturbed again. The next passage in the same paragraph is filled with sorrow and rage. It is a catalogue of humiliations. Tutu refers to a former sign in public spaces that said, 'Natives and dogs not allowed'. While he admits that there is some progress in his country, he fears that 'the

fundamental attitude that "blacks are human, but..." has not changed'. He gives an example of a detained bishop who could not make it to the service. Tutu tells about the humiliations this bishop had to undergo, for instance by 'being stripped to his underpants by laughing policemen in search for dangerous weapons.' 'Was it not in order to humiliate this bishop of the Church of God and his fellow ministers of the Gospel? Would this have happened had they been white?' And Tutu continues by recalling humiliating experiences: 'Would white women have been treated as the women of KTC camp [a squatter camp near Cape Town] in 1983, who in the middle of winter had their flimsy, plastic shelters regularly demolished by the authorities as they sat with whimpering babies on their laps in the rain, with their pathetic household effects gathered around their feet? Would white pensioners have been dismissed as "superfluous appendages" as a former Cabinet minister declared our fathers and mothers who could no longer work?' In all these iconoclastic passages, Tutu names and scandalises the humiliating evil in this society.

In this 'catalogue of sins', the sermon is interrupted again by hope. Tutu recalls fragments of hope and through it, he constructs anew an inclusive public discourse. The point he makes is that these humiliations do not only humiliate the victims, but also the offenders: 'We are all dehumanised by injustice and oppressions (...): Subsequently, Tutu gives examples of hope: 'A young former colleague after 230 days in solitary confinement and nearly a year in preventive detention, said on his release, "Let us not be consumed by bitterness". (...) Someone who is now a priest in this diocese – told me that as he was being tortured he thought: "By the way, these are God's children and they are behaving like animals. They need us to help them to recover the humanity they have lost"'. Tutu also refers to the African concept of *ubuntu* as one of the helpful means to recover humanity in this endangered society. The question with which he closes the paragraph is: 'Why can't we be human together in South Africa?'

Before closing his sermon, Tutu dares to provoke, to increase pressure on those in power, and even to enter morally delicate and questionable positions. It deals with the two massively complex questions of the moment, namely the use of violence and the propagation of economic sanctions against South Africa. Tutu gives a 'qualified critique' on violence. He begins critically by saying: 'Friends, like you, I abhor all violence. I condemn the violence of an unjust system such as apartheid and that of those who want to overthrow it.' But Tutu refuses any cheap and one-sided critique of violence used by victims. He stresses that 'the first and the major source of violence in this country, is the system of apartheid itself'. He recalls that the ANC and the PAC 'were non-violent for most of their history', suggesting that the violence of the apartheid has changed this for the worse. Tutu refuses to close his eyes for the sources of violence. 'No, let us acknowledge that all our problems, all the violence we are experiencing (necklacing et cetera, which we condemn roundly and repeatedly), ultimately stem from apartheid.' The second delicate subject is

about economic sanctions. Tutu begins by saying: 'I do not want sanctions', but in a shrewd argumentation, he makes the government responsible for whether he will use his own, international, and ecclesiastical power to call for sanctions or not. 'I have told the State President as much, I said, if you were to lift the State of Emergency, remove the troops from our townships, release political prisoners and all detainees, unban our political organisations, and then sit down with the authentic representatives of every section of our community to negotiate a new constitution for one undivided South Africa, then for what it is worth I would say to the world: "Put your sanctions plans on hold". (...) The onus must be on those who say "no" to sanctions; you must provide us with a viable non-violent strategy to force the dismantling of apartheid. (...) The ball is still in the court of the Government and the white community.'

The sermon ends by Tutu, more or less, announcing, proclaiming the advent of freedom: 'We shall be free, all of us, black and white, for it is God's intention'. Tutu's argumentation remains theological and doxological: 'We shall be free, all of us, because the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord, assures us that life has overcome death, light has overcome darkness, love has overcome hate, righteousness has overcome injustice and oppression, goodness has overcome evil, and that compassion and caring, laughter and joy, sharing and peace, reconciliation and forgiveness have overcome their awful counterparts in God's Kingdom where God is all in all!'

3 Analytical remarks

We close the chapter with a brief reflection of how hope functions in Tutu's sermon. Hope is a fragile concept. Terry Eagleton cited the philosopher Gabriel Marcel, who wrote that 'hope can only take root where perdition is a possibility'. That is the fragility of hope: the risk that people, situations and/or communities escalate to their destructive potential. Eagleton explained that this is one of the major differences with the concept of optimism, 'for which perdition is simply inconceivable'.⁴⁵ In the violent apartheid context of Tutu, hope is a fragile thing too. Tutu's inauguration sermon is certainly not optimistic, in Eagleton's definition. The destructive realities in Tutu's society, the suffering they cause and the escalating damaging potential they have, are not neglected, or downplayed at all. Conversely, in the sermon, these realities are named and exposed in their humiliating manifestations. But in this sermon, these circumstances function as the habitat in which the Spirit of God propels human beings to proclaim and to embody hope. In the fundamental, theological opening of the sermon, Tutu defines this as the 'rhythm' that can be discerned in 'calling narratives': God calls human beings, gives them vision and spiritual power, but, explicitly, 'for the sake of others'. Forms of religious life that want to remain 'undisturbed by the clamour of the uncomprehending, demanding, maddening crowd' are a farce, and

45 Eagleton, T., *Hope Without Optimism*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2015), p 72.

fiercely criticised by prophets. This programmatic idea is unfolded throughout the sermon. South Africa is portrayed as the habitat where the church, with her own faith and correlative practices, should be an embodiment of hope, showing how estrangement, segregation and hatred can be transcended in and through concrete communities of *koinonia*.

In this paragraph, we explain how hope functions in the overcoming of destructiva. What happens functionally and religiously in this sermon is that the preacher 'makes people hope'. In various ways, Tutu tries to inspire, to energise and to urge hearers into concrete practices of hope. Through it, the preacher 'constructs' hope. Hope is not only a transcendental gift and a divine promise, it is also a 'construction'. Tutu designs and develops a specific perspective on the present and a narrative on the future of his context, and through it, he offers his hearers an 'alternative perception of reality'.⁴⁶ This design consists of several building blocks, some of them taken from Scripture, some of them from the present situation in South Africa, some of them taken from the 'hoped-for future'.

The dialectical tension we see active in this 'construction of hope', is a dialectic between past, present and the anticipation of the future. This temporal dialectic is formative in the concept of hope. 'Hope is the crack in the present through which a future can be glimpsed', Eagleton wrote.⁴⁷ However dimly, hidden or even broken, for genuine hope, the future must somehow be anchored in the present. The visionary character in the prophetic moment happens when preachers see these glimpses and makes the hearers aware of them.

One of the interesting factors in the construction of hope, in this specific sermon, is the 'factuality' of this actual moment. This sermon is held in Cape Town in 1986, where, during the apartheid regime in South Africa, the first black archbishop of the Anglican church was inaugurated to become the head of the Church in South Africa. This means that Tutu was 'enthroned on the archiepiscopal chair

46 See Hendrik Pieterse, in the study on Tutu's prophetic preaching, discussing the general characteristics of prophetic preaching. Pieterse quotes Brueggemann who defined prophetic ministry as 'to disclose God's promise of an another way living, to offer an alternative perception of reality and to let people see their own history in the light of God's freedom and his will for justice'. Pieterse, H.J.C., 'Prophetic Preaching in Context', in Pieterse, Hendrik J.C. (ed), *Desmond Tutu's Message. A Qualitative Analysis (Empirical Studies in Theology. Volume 5)*. (Leiden: Brill 2001), p 108.

47 Eagleton, T., *Ibid.* p 44.

and given the primatial cross, the symbol of his authority'.⁴⁸ Amidst a regime of apartheid, the church appointed a black bishop to lead her. The rituals of the moment were, in a way, strictly ecclesiastical, while at the same time it was a huge event in this segregated society, with an unmistakable message and meaning. For many in the church in South Africa, this inauguration of Desmond Tutu was 'a crack in the present, through which a future could be glimpsed' (Eagleton). John Allen wrote about how the service began 'with a procession of choirs and clergy including archbishops and bishops, clad in colourful copes and mitres from across Africa and the world'. And after the liturgy, 'the celebrations moved to an open-air Eucharist for 10.000 at the Cape Showgrounds, Goodwood, outside the city. Here, the real South Africa asserted itself more vigorously. The service opened with Ntsikana's 'Great Hymn', led by Imilonji ka Ntu, and the Soweto choir played a bigger role than in the cathedral, also leading traditional African choruses'.⁴⁹ When, in his sermon, Tutu defines the Church as a 'sign in the world, the first fruits of the Kingdom, demonstrating God's intentions to society', something of this actually happened in this enthronement service.

Tutu integrates this concrete moment of hope in a larger theological framework of transfigurations. The *past* plays a fundamental role in it. The theological core in this sermon is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Tutu, this is the essential 'assurance that life has overcome death, light has overcome darkness, (...), righteousness has overcome injustice and oppression'. In the sermon, Tutu detects all kinds of traces of this 'principle of transfiguration' in all sorts of contexts and times: in the rhythm of the seasons ('nature seems to have his own experiences of resurrection'), in the transformation happening in the Eucharist, in biographies (both in Scripture as well as in his own life), in words of humanity and reconciliation spoken by black ministers and bishops who were tortured and humiliated in prison. For Tutu, these are echoes of the 'life-giving power of the Cross', and of 'resurrections happening all around us'. In all of these instances, hope is anchored in the past and operative in the present. In the sermon, these present realities

48 See for the account of the circumstances surrounding the inauguration service, c 12: 'The headmaster', in: Allen, J., *Desmond Tutu. Rabble-Rouser for Peace*. (London and Johannesburg: Ebury Publishing 2006), pp 263-282. The event is also described by Michael Nuttal, the other candidate to become archbishop, in: Nuttal, M., *Number Two to Tutu. A Memoir*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications 2003). Nuttal cited the 'prestigious South African magazine' *Leadership*, depicting himself as 'the only serious alternative to the election of Tutu', and 'the choice of the Anglican establishment', while Tutu is called 'the prophetic and controversial Desmond Tutu'. The article is about the question how these rather different characters became 'soul brothers'.

49 It is interesting to notice that in a momentous moment like this, 'prophetic antecedents' emerge. The 'Great Hymne' of Ntsikana, is an expression of this memory, the memory of an 'initial authentic indigenous christian voice', with explicit reference to prophetic occurrences and insights. See especially: Hodgson, J., *Ntsikana: History and Symbol. Studies in the Process of Religious Change among Xhosa-speaking People*. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press 1985) and: Hodgson, J., *Ntsikana's Great Hymn: A Xhosa Expression of Christianity in the Early 19th. Century Eastern Cape*. (Cape Town: Communications/Centre for African Studies 1980).

of hope are brought back into the hearers' memory, and thus the sermon itself becomes a vehicle of hope too. This sermon is about 'making people hope'. It is important to see that hope for the future, in this sermon, is an *extrapolation* of this past and present reality. This is what we meant with 'maieutic power' (6.2.a). Hope is not only something that comes to us from the future, independent from the past and the present. Hope is not merely a theological, abstract postulate. Here, hope is more like an unstoppable dynamic and a transformative power that is released in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and since then pulsating through history, and Tutu dares to extrapolate this power into the future. This Christological past of the present, gives birth to a specific hope for the future. According to Tutu, this 'principle of transfiguration' will change the present and open up the future and consequently promises something for society. In this way, Tutu's hope is not utopian, but rooted in his trust that the resurrection of Jesus Christ means an ontological change in the course of history, including South Africa's. These are the origins of Tutu's *Zukunftsgewissheit*.⁵⁰

Still, hope is vulnerable. On the one hand, in the concrete examples of hope Tutu gives, there is a kind of immanence of God's Kingdom intentions, traceable in concrete people and occurrences. On the other hand, realities of injustice and suffering underline the discontinuity with these divine intentions.⁵¹ In the sermon, Tutu pictures cruel forms of discontinuity, for instance of the cruel humiliation of contemporaries. In this tension between 'immanence and discontinuity', the spiritual practices of the church gain a robust theological profile. In these practices, the transformative power, rooted in Christ's resurrection, becomes operative in the present and a promise for the future. In these practices, an alternative and redemptive way of living is embodied, with the power to overcome the destructiva of the present. According to Tutu, these practices have an exorcistic power. In practices like prayer, fasting, Bible study, regular use of the Eucharist and personal retreats, and in stimulating congregations to become 'communities of *koinonia*' that overcome racism and apartheid, Tutu sees the church's core contribution to its context.⁵² In this way, the stress on the spiritual can be seen as a kind of 'productive non-contemporaneity'. The church retreats into prayer and receives spiritual power in it, for the sake of their contemporaries. When she is faithful in these practices and offers an alternative narrative to the ideology of apartheid,

50 The term is, in a slightly different meaning, used by Sebastian Kuhlmann: Kuhlman, S., *Martin Niemöller. Zur prophetischen Dimension der Predigt. (Arbeiten zur Praktischen Theologie. Band 39)*. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2008), p 107.

51 See on the tension between immanence and discontinuity: Eagleton, T., *Ibid.* p 37.

52 Ndlovu, T.J., *The Church as an Agent of Reconciliation in the Thought of Desmond Tutu (Dissertations/Paper 108)*. (Michigan: Andrews University 1999), p 143.

she is a 'provocative church' (Tomlin), or, a 'hermeneutical key to understand the intentions of the Gospel' (Newbiggin).⁵³

Finally, it is interesting to notice the role of *preaching* in this architecture of hope. This specific sermon can be seen as a specimen of public speech. In a country that has degenerated into a violent republic of fear, this pulpit becomes an uncensored zone of free speech. A religious service with huge national and international media attention, becomes an open place where injustice and humiliation are exposed. By acknowledging the suffering of many citizens, the sermon even becomes a place of refuge for them, a rare public moment in which their pain is honoured and respected. Consequently, the sermon itself becomes a 'breathing space', a moment of public spirituality, where rage, pain and fear are ventilated, acknowledged, and expressed to God. As Brueggemann repeatedly argued: expressions of pain and loss are the necessary ingredients for change and renewal. Another specific power of the sermon is that, while outspoken on racism, an inclusive public theology of hope is constructed simultaneously. Tutu uses the specific Christian sources of hope, to develop a theology of freedom with a promise for all citizens. In this sense, the sermon is an example of what Tutu hopes that Christian congregations are: concrete articulations of God's intentions for human living.⁵⁴

53 See Stefan Paas' closing argument in: Paul, H. & Wallet, B., *Oefenplaatsen. Tegendraadse theologen over kerk en ethiek*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2012), p 199.

54 In his *laudatio*, on the occasion of Tutu's honorary doctorate at the University of Groningen (September 2014), the then dean of the faculty of theology, Geurt-Henk van Kooten stressed Tutu's role and theology as an example of how religion can play a substantive, constructive role in the crises of societies: 'By drawing on Jewish notions of humans' divine dignity and the African notion of *ubuntu*, you forged an impressive combination of religion and culture, and brought it to bear on the process of the restoration of society, healing breaches and redressing imbalances, and ending the dehumanization of others, of both victims and perpetrators.' (...) 'As your work has shown, rather than being a cause of conflict, religion can also contribute to resolving conflicts and to the sustainability of society. The great challenge facing post-Christian, secular Europe, is to acknowledge this potential of religion.'

CHAPTER 7 | EDIFYING THE CONGREGATION

The mystagogic dimension

Summary: In our fifth concept, we explain a final element in prophetic speech, namely the edification of the congregation. Prophecy empowers the congregation to be resistant, it intends to enable the church 'to be truly church', especially in *Lebensfeindliche Umstände*. This edification is explained in this chapter in two modes, namely as initiation (7.1.a) and as participation (7.2.a). In the first paragraph, we develop the notion of mystagogy in prophetic speech. Preachers initiate hearers into 'the way of the Lord in the present', and through it, they invite, convince, or push their hearers to follow this way. This form of discipleship is an initiation into a conflict, it is not without suffering, but it is a way of integrity and truth. In our reconstruction, it is this initiation that makes the hearers resistant.

In the second paragraph, we focus on participation. In the prophetic moment, hearers are transformed from 'spectators to participants', as Bonhoeffer put it. Preachers make hearers aware that this context in which they live, filled with suffering, guilt, and godlessness as it may be, is the habitat of their calling. In the data, we see societal crises being drawn into the sermon, and vice versa, we see hearers being drawn into the crisis of their context. It is interesting to see how in these incidents the doctrinal, the mystagogical and the ethical are interrelated. The church emerges in these sermons as a nexus of practices, where preaching is close to prayer, where the Eucharist is in continuity with public protest to racial injustice. In the sermons, we also detected the homiletical ability of preachers to 'make things plain': the complexity of the moment is reformulated into forms of spiritual simplicity. Preachers pose an 'either/or' to hearers, and through these straightforward elementary questions, hearers are triggered to answer. Finally, what is called for in these answers, is not the heroic, but the essentially Christian. When destructiva dominate the public discourse, the routine life of the church may become prophetic.

I Fundamentals: Theoretical Part

7.1.a ‘This is my God’: Initiating the congregation in the way of the Lord

When it comes to the role of the congregation in the prophetic moment, there are two specific terms in our codes that stand out: initiation and participation. To be sure, the congregation is addressed in all the other concepts, but in this present concept, we want to conceptualise a specific quality in prophetic speech related to the congregation, namely edification. This edifying layer is part of the theological logic of the prophetic moment. The expository, the interruptive and the illuminative do not only lead to liturgical moments in which destructiva are overcome (c 6), they also intend to form and empower Christian congregations in the context they live in (c 7). In the cathartic moment, conversion and ethics are not yet conceptualised to the degree in which they are present in the data. For that reason, we generated a final concept in which this edification is central.

In this paragraph, we develop the empirical observation that it is a specific kind of edification that occurs in the prophetic moment. It is not ‘catechesis as usual,’ a catechesis more or less detached from the specific context, but it is edification in the sense of the formation of a concrete ability to resist. It is a form of edification in which the previous concepts of exposure, interruption and illumination are concentrated into a congregational *modus vivendi*, into a ‘way-of-being-in-the-world’ for the congregation (Luke Johnson, see below), that is responsive to the specifics of the context and true to the earlier assessment of that context in the prophetic moment. It is ethics filled with the vision of the previous concepts. In paragraph 7.1.b, we discuss Werner Krusche’s sermon ‘Wir bleiben weiter bei Jesus.’ In this sermon, Krusche diagnosed the specifics of the *Anfechtung* of the Christian congregation in the DDR context, and through that assessment, a credo and a way of life is developed to empower the congregation in the DDR context: no matter the costs, ‘we will stay with Jesus.’

We selected the term ‘initiation’ for this mode of edification. This catechesis is a development or elaboration of the earlier *Gotteswahrnehmung* (6.1). The preacher edifies the congregation by initiating the hearers into the spiritual character of the times, by discerning God’s presence in it and, subsequently, by showing how the congregation can and should respond to these circumstances, practically and principally. Because of the explicit initiational character of this edification, we could speak of a form of prophetic mystagogy. We propose to consider the prophet also as a mystagogue, who makes hearers see the obscurity, the ridicule, and the danger of destructiva, as well as the mystery of God’s presence in their world. It is through this initiation, the hearers are edified to be church and are made resistant

against destructiva. To reformulate the observation rather mystically: In the sermons, preachers disclose where God can be found in the concrete contextual circumstances of hearers and what it means for them to be with God and to follow him in these circumstances.

This *Nachfolge* often entails suffering. In the data, the catechesis can be a rough discourse. Bonhoeffer spoke of ‘scars and solitude’ and King did not only talk about the ‘agony of his vocation’, but he also shared with his congregation the ‘lonely paths of life’ where his calling had brought him and would bring them too. ‘Maybe you lose your job or get abused’, King explained. Here, the hearers are initiated into a conflict. We could call this edifying moment the ‘prophetic calling narrative of the congregation’, it is a moment in which the prophetic mutates or modifies from the individual to the congregational. The paradoxical character of this initiation, (and that is an important reason to call it ‘mystagogy’), is that this specific form of *Nachfolge*, of ‘suffering on the way of the Lord’, is promised to be a way of truth, integrity, and victory. Through their suffering, the hearers will not only resist destructiva but also share in God’s victory.

In the analysis of paragraph 7.1.b, we develop the term the prophet as mystagogue, but first, we give a miniature of this dynamic in Bonhoeffer’s sermon on Jeremiah.

This ‘Jeremiah sermon’, held in London (on Sunday January 21, 1934)¹, can be interpreted as an initiation of the congregation in what it means to be called by God in the present times (that is: ‘Germany, 1934’). We already discussed an interpretation of this sermon, in which it is presented as Bonhoeffer’s own ‘prophetische Berufungsgeschichte.’² In that interpretation, major attention is given to how Bonhoeffer tried to get a theological and spiritual grip on his own fate, faith and calling amidst the mayhem of the early 1930s. But how does the congregation function in this sermon? It is our suggestion that this sermon can also be seen as the ‘congregation’s prophetische Berufungsgeschichte’. Semantically, there is an interesting and continuous interplay between the ‘he’ being Jeremiah, the ‘I’ of the preacher and the ‘we’ and ‘us’ of the congregation. Theologically, they are in continuity. The same *Sache*, Bonhoeffer implicitly claims, that once captured Jeremiah and estranged him from his contemporaries, is happening again in the individual life of the preacher and

1 ‘Predigt zu Jeremia 20,7. London, 3. Sonntag nach Epiphania, 21. 1. 1934’, in: Bonhoeffer, D., *London 1933-1935. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke. Bd 13)*. (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1994), pp 347-350.

2 Zimmerling wrote that when we read this intense and dramatic passages in retrospectivity, from the perspective of Bonhoeffer’s death, ‘dann drängt sich der Eindruck auf, als habe er selber in der Predigt prophetisch weggenommen, was einmal im Rückblick auf sein Leben zu sagen sein wird’. Zimmerling, P., *Bonhoeffer als Praktischer Theologe*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2006), p 96. See especially chapter 4 for Zimmerling’s interpretation of this sermon: 4.3.2 ‘Das ‘Jeremia-Motiv’ in der Predigt über Jer 20, 7 als Deutung von Bonhoeffers Biographie’.

in the communal life of the congregation, now. 'Phantast, Sturkopf, Friedensstörer, Volksfeind hat man ihn gescholten, hat man zu allen Zeiten bis heute die gescholten, die von Gott besessen und gefaßt waren, denen Gott zu stark geworden war'. The same abusive word used for dissident German Christians (*Volksfeind*), is imagined to have been said to Jeremiah as well. The text of the sermon initiates hearers into a reality of suffering *because of their calling*. In this sermon, the individual character of the prophetic is modified into a congregational characteristic.

The initiation is an edification. In a mystagogical way, Bonhoeffer explains how calling 'works' in this context, how it includes suffering. Bonhoeffer writes how the prophet is initially enticed by God, how he received strength and forgiveness, but it also includes a certain point in which the prophet realises that he is 'trapped' by this God. In the prophetic mystagogy, there is a certain point of no return: 'Als du über mich gewannst, da war ich verloren; da war meine Wille gebrochen, da war meine Kraft zu gering, da mußte ich den Weg des Leidens gehen, da konnte ich nicht mehr widerstreben, da konnte ich nicht mehr zurück, da war die Entscheidung über mein Leben gefallen. Nicht ich habe entschieden, du hast entschieden. Du hast mich an dich gebunden auf Gedeih und Verderb. Gott, warum bist du uns so furchtbar nahe?' Note, once more, the peculiar changes between 'I', 'me' and 'us': 'God, why are you so terrible close to us?' This is what we mean by being drawn into a mystery.

Immediately after this passage, Bonhoeffer turns to the present: 'Tausende von Gemeindegliedern und Pfarrern sind heute in unserer Heimatkirche in der Gefahr der Unterdrückung und Verfolgung um ihres Zeugnisses für die Wahrheit willen. Sie haben sich diesen Weg nicht aus Trotz und Willkür ausgesucht, sondern sie wurden diesen Weg geführt, sie mußten ihn gehen – oft gegen ihren Willen, gegen ihr Fleisch und Blut – weil Gott in ihnen zu stark geworden war, weil sie Gott nicht mehr widerstehen konnten, weil hinter ihnen ein Schloß zugefallen war, weil sie nicht mehr zurück konnten hinter Gottes Wort, Gottes Ruf, Gottes Befehl'. Here, Bonhoeffer applies the calling of Jeremiah to present-day hearers in Germany who had an early intuition of Hitler's destructive aim and therefore opposed him. Through passages like these, Bonhoeffer actualises Jeremiah's calling, while at the same time he creates a prophetic consciousness and a prophetic sensitivity among his hearers towards what is happening in their society.

In the following passages, Bonhoeffer pictures the restlessness that this calling causes, and its compulsory character. He characterises the prophetic calling as a divine force in human life with a direction and a power of its own. The human person may lament the costs of this calling, he may consider its burden to be unbearable, he may even break down because of it, but at the same time a human cannot detach himself from this calling and this force: 'Er kann nicht mehr los, und nun muß er hindurch – mit Gott – es komme, was da wolle'. In passages like this, Bonhoeffer initiates the congregation in what

it means to submit to God's calling in this dark hour of German history. It is in this 'way of the Lord', a distinct form of catharsis emerges: 'Von Gott nicht mehr loskommen bedeutet viel Angst, viel Verzagtheit, viel Trübsal, aber bedeutet doch auch im Guten und Bösen nie mehr gott-los sein können. Es bedeutet Gott mit uns auf allen unseren Wegen, im Glauben und in der Sünde, in Verfolgung, Verspottung und Tod'. Here, it is in their scars that believers may find God.³

Bonhoeffer assesses in this sermon that God's way in the present is a way of suffering, and it is in and through joining in this suffering, hearers can participate in God's victory: 'Gefangenen tragen keine stolzen Kleider, sondern Ketten. Aber diese Ketten verherrlichen den, der als Sieger durch die Welt und die Menschheit zieht. Unsere Ketten und die Fetzen unsere Kleider und die Narben die wir tragen müssen, sind der Lobpreis auf den, der die Wahrheit und die Liebe und die Gnade an uns verherrlichte'. We use the term 'mystagogy', because in fragments like these, the way of the Lord is discerned, including how believers may imitate it. Mystagogy, because in these fragments, spiritual experiences like suffering and darkness are explained in their salutary and even redemptive effects. The sermon ends with a prayer to God, to 'persuade us all', to 'become strong over us' ('werde stark über uns'), because it is through God's persuasive power over us, that we will see *deinen Sieg*.

In this miniature, we encounter a demanding and extreme form of initiation. But, it may be an extreme expression of a mystagogy, that is, in another degree of intensity, part of the logic of the prophetic moment. Manfred Josuttis elaborated the term 'initiation to explain the principal, mystagogical dimension present in the liturgy and in the act of preaching. The recurring sentence he used, is that 'Pfarrer und Pfarrerin führen in die verborgene und verbotene Zone des Heiligen'.⁴ Preachers initiate hearers into the hidden and forbidden 'zone of the sacred'. Josuttis stressed that the way to this 'mysterious zone of the sacred' is not only 'costly', 'er macht nich spaß, sondern kostet Schmerzen'⁵, but also 'forbidden'. What he meant with 'forbidden', applied to his own context, is that the 'power of the sacred' is 'die einzig reale Alternative gegenüber den destruktiven Tendenzen des Mammonismus'.⁶ In every situation anew, he wrote, a society needs people and places 'die das Wort Gottes in Gesetz und Evangelium gegen den Wahnsinn und Angstwellen in

3 Zimmerling, following Werner Kallen, has pointed to the analogies between mystical literature on experiencing God's presence and Bonhoeffer's passages in this sermon on suffering, catharsis and experiencing God. Zimmerling also explained how Bonhoeffer pictured Jeremiah as a 'type of the Crucified': 'Der Gedanke, dass Nachfolge mit äußerem und innerem Leiden und Kampf verbunden ist, kommt unterschiedlich variiert in den meisten Predigten vor. Dabei bildet die Gestalt Jeremias das Grundmotiv: Jeremia, der jochtragende Leidensprophet als Typos des Gekreuzigten ist für Bonhoeffer das Vorbild des Nachfolgers Jesu.' Zimmerling, P., *Ibid.* p 103.

4 Josuttis, M., *Die Einführung in das Leben. Pastoraltheologie zwischen Phänomenologie und Spiritualität.* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996, 2004), pp 34, 50, 67, 85, 119, 135.

5 Josuttis, M., *Ibid.* p 90.

6 Josuttis, M., *Ibid.* p 20.

der Gesellschaft verkünden'.⁷ In this same way, Bonhoeffer initiated his hearers into the way of resisting the '*Wahnsinn* of National Socialism'. Bonhoeffer edified the congregation in a specific 'way-of-being-in-the-world', in a specific ability to resist. Similarly, Tutu initiated the hearers into a form of communal life called *koinonia*, a concrete Christian antidote against the *Wahnsinn und Angstwellen* that apartheid produced. In this way, Krusche initiated the hearers into a life of perseverance, solidarity and hope, a form of resistance against a society filled with organised mistrust, propaganda and lies. The *hochbrisante* character of the prophetic moment, that we encounter in our data, is exactly this dynamic: In the prophetic moment, preachers initiate hearers into a particular zone, where God's presence is detected, while at the same time the core crisis of a society is exposed and formulated. The name of the destructiva is spelled out in these moments, their damaging effect on church and society is explained and a counter reality is evoked in which 'reale Alternative gegenüber destruktiven Tendenzen' are developed.

7.2.a 'This is my world': Making the congregation participant in the crisis of her context

The second term in our data that is strongly related to the congregation, is participation. In prophetic speech, hearers are drawn into the crisis of their context (or conversely: the crisis of the context is drawn into the communal life of the church). The fruit of these incidents is not only that hearers recognise God in their context (cf. 'This is my God, 7.1.a), but also that they recognise their context as the place to live their faith (cf. 'This is my world'). Seeing the Lord in this world, may result in the ability to see this world as God's world. In the prophetic moment, therefore, spectators become participants. We read this term of 'spectators becoming participants' in the analysis of a sermon from Bonhoeffer, in which he explicitly involved the hearers into the crisis of their context. Instead of distancing themselves, hearers were urged to recognise themselves in the sin and in the guilt of others, and thus to participate in this communal crisis: '(...) sie sind meine Brüder, meine Brüder in der Sünde, im Haß, in der Bosheit, in der Lieblosigkeit, meine Brüder in der Schuld'. What Bonhoeffer aims for in this fragment, is to bring about the hearers' insight that this societal conundrum 'ist meine Welt'.⁸ The incident is representative for a broader pattern in the data. In prophetic moments, preachers make hearers participants in the crisis of their context.

What is theologically happening in these moments is mainly that the societal crisis is searched for its spiritual layers. In the prophetic moment, the church participates in this crisis by trying to identify the moral and theological meaning of the crisis.

⁷ Josuttis, M., *Ibid.* p 20.

⁸ 'Predigt zu Lukas 13.1-5' (London, 6. Sonntag nach Trinitatis, 8. 7. 1934), in: Goedeking, H. (Hrsg.), *Ibid.* p 371.

Instead of looking away or avoiding it, the crisis is taken seriously in a theological way. This spiritual participation is one of the fundamental contributions of the church to her context in crisis.

Interestingly, the visionary and the practical merger in these moments. In the sermons we studied, doctrinal reflections, preaching, celebrating the Eucharist and political protest, all emerge as a nexus of practices. There is a spiritual continuity in these different practices. When the spiritual essence of a crisis is diagnosed, the spiritual practices that are stimulated to counter that crisis, emerge in the data in a natural way. This confirms Ellen Charry's observation that the doctrinal, the mystagogical and the ethical are interrelated, that they cannot be separated and that they have a common goal.⁹ In prophetic speech, the church is responsive to the crisis around her in both a visionary and a practical way.¹⁰ In the sermons, hearers are urged to participate in practices such as prayer and the Eucharist, but also in showing diaconal awareness to suffering, in opposing racial injustice, in not betraying fellow citizens. There is a spiritual fluidity and continuity in these acts.¹¹

A second observation concerning this participation, is the homiletical mode through which preachers urge their hearers to participate. In the data, we see a specific strategy in the sermons of 'making things plain'. Von Rad spoke in a sermon about the rare ability of prophets of 'über einer in Wirklichkeit ungeheuer komplexen Tatsächlichkeit ganz einfach zu reden'.¹² In the data, preachers indeed define moments of choice and intense stimuli for conversion in an uncomplicated way. These are moments in which preachers reformulate the complexity of the situation into a form of spiritual simplicity. Consequently, hearers are enabled to answer, to embody their obedience to Christ in concrete acts of discipleship. Krusche, in the sermon we discuss below (7.1.b), posed a sharp but simple question to the hearers: 'To whom do you belong?', and the answer is an absolute 'either/or': 'Ganz oder eben: gar nicht. Er (Jesus, CMAE) kann nur Nachfolger, aber keine

9 Charry, E.T., *By the Renewing of Your Minds. The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997), pp 3-32. See also on the integration of doctrine, mystagogy and ethics: Hütter, R., 'Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of Practices in Worship and Doctrine', in: Volf, M., and D.C. Bass (ed), *Practicing Theology. Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2002), p 207.

10 See on this responsiveness in relation to concrete Christian practices: Bass, D.C., 'Introduction', in: Volf, M., and D.C. Bass (ed), *Ibid.* p 3.

11 In this sense the term 'polycentric understanding of the Christian community', a term from Miroslav Volf, is relevant. In this 'nexus of practices' there is 'circularity' in who is the 'subject' in these practices. The church as a 'nexus of practices' has a strong integrative force, in drawing all kinds of members of the community into 'subjectivity', into taking responsibility in different kinds of practices. Put differently: 'Religious beliefs and practices emerge and are nurtured within a communion of interdependent subjects'. See Plantinga Pauw, A., 'Attending to the Gaps between Beliefs and Practices', in: Volf, M., and D.C. Bass (ed), *Ibid.* pp 34-35.

12 Rad, G. von, 'Predigt zu Jesaja 26.20-21', in: Rad, G. von, *Predigten*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1972, 1978) p 116.

Mitläufer gebrauchen'. In a similar way, King could make it plain to his hearers that 'following Jesus means standing up for justice and peace', standing firm 'even if you lose your job or get abused'. The urge to non-violence is explicated by King in an absolute 'either/or': 'Men for years now have been talking about war and peace. But now no longer can they just talk about it. It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world. It's nonviolence or nonexistence.'¹³

In the appeal to the congregation to make distinct choices, the complexity of the moment and the suffering it may cause is not denied, but amidst the complexity, a daring and demanding 'either/or' is created and posed at the congregation. 'To answer that you're on the side of life, doesn't mean for a moment that you can now relax into a fuzzy philosophy of 'life-affirming' comfort', Rowans Williams said in his inauguration sermon (7.2.b). 'On the contrary: it means that you are willing to face everything within you that is cheap, fearful, untruthful, and evasive, and let the light shine on it'. The urgency of these moments is spiritual and moral/ethical. In these moments, there is a recurring motive that 'conduct and choices matter', that 'things are morally connected', and that ultimately 'you will reap, what you sow'.¹⁴ In sermons that take destructive, sin and injustice seriously, the praxis of hearers matters in a theological way. Because of this, there is an ultimate urgency present in many incidents in the data. There is something at stake in how hearers respond to the concrete questions that the preachers pose. Therefore, we also hear danger and threat in these moments, aimed at hearers when they refuse to obey or to be converted. At the same time, there is potentiality and promise in these moments, an expectation of renewal and change through acts of *Nachfolge*.¹⁵ When we really would allow 'God to be God', and when we really 'would devote our church life to

13 See for this fragment, King's final sermon 'I've been to the Mountaintop'. In the sermon 'Why Jesus calls a man a fool' there is a similar ultimate seriousness to which the preacher brings his hearers: 'Omar Khayyam is right: "The moving of the finger writes, and having writ moves on"'. (...) 'I call on the young men of America who must make a choice today to take a stand on this issue. Tomorrow may be too late. The book may close. And don't let anybody make you think that God chose America as his divine, messianic force to be a sort of policeman of the whole world. God has a way of standing before the nations with judgment, and it seems that I can hear God saying to America, "You are too arrogant! And if you don't change your ways, I will rise up and break the backbone of your power, and I'll place it in the hands of a nation that doesn't even know my name. Be still and know that I'm God"'

14 On the concept of 'choices determine futures', which he calls the 'terms of the covenant', see: Brueggemann, W., *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination. Preaching an Emancipating Word*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012), p 61.

15 See, for instance, L. Boeve on the importance of 'practices': 'For Christians, the subject of history is God in God's eschatological dominion, a God who has made Godself known in Jesus Christ as the defender of the poor, the weak, the rejected, the marginalised and the victims. In the second instance, therefore, the unfolding of history and the notions of reconciliation and completion should not be seen as a matter of theory but of practice. This implies that Christians, in their historical particularity and concrete history, and rooted in their remembrance of Jesus' preaching on the kingdom of God, should be attentive to the places where the victims stumble and fall, and ultimately be able to identify with them.' Boeve, L., *God Interrupts History. Theology in a Time of Upheaval*. (New York: Continuum 2007), pp 196-197.

him, decisive breakthroughs would happen, Bonhoeffer said in a sermon,¹⁶ and it is in these breakthroughs that the church would really participate in the crisis of Germany in a salutary way.

Although we often hear about costly discipleship, preachers rarely call for heroic spiritual deeds. What is called for in these crises is not the heroic, but the essentially Christian. In times full of hatred and fear, a communal life of prayer and penitence, of inclusivity and forgiveness may be dissident and strange, but for the congregation it is her 'routine life.' The practice of the church to celebrate the Eucharist, in which race, societal position and gender are surpassed and overcome, can become a dissident and provocative act. Or, to give another example: In a sermon, Werner Krusche recalled a conversation with a DDR official who told him how astonished he was to see disabled people having an integral and respected position in the Christian congregation, compared to their crippled societal status in the DDR.¹⁷ Amidst destructiva, the routine practices of the church can become prophetic.¹⁸

In these moments, the vision and the beliefs of parishioners are expressed in their practices.¹⁹ Practices are embedded with vision, and therefore, it is also the other way around: The participation in specific practices is an elementary prerequisite to gain access to the vision embedded in it.²⁰

16 'Gott lieben und den Bruder lieben mit jener ersten, leidenschaftlichen, brennenden, alles nur Gott nicht aufs Spiel setzenden Liebe? Lassen wir wirklich Gott Gott sein, stellen wir uns und unsere Kirche ihm ganz anheim? Wenn es so wäre, es müsste doch anders aussehen, es müsste doch etwas durchbrechen –', 'Predigt zu Apokalypse 2.4 f. 7?' (Berlin, Reformationsfest, 6. 11. 1932), in: Nicolaisen, C. (Hrsg.), *Berlin 1932-1933. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd 12)*. (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1997), p 430.

17 Krusche, W., 'Kerzen des Geistes'. Auferstehungskirche Dresden-Plauen (am Tag der Ordination vor 40 Jahren), in: Krusche, W., *Die Schönen Gottes. Predigten*. (Waltrop: Hartmut Spenner 2006), p 136.

18 See on the *prophetic* character of *routine* practices in the church, L.T. Johnson: 'The single greatest countercultural act Christians perform is to worship together and proclaim that Jesus is Lord. To cease from the constant round of commerce and consumption, to resist the manipulation of media that insist that working and possessing defines worth, and to proclaim with the body language of communal gathering that Jesus, not any other power, is Lord, is to enact the politics of God's Kingdom and to embody the prayer 'your kingdom come.' Yet, that community prayer has this prophetic dimensions is seldom even part of Christian consciousness.' Johnson, L.T., *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church. The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians*. (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans 2011), p 124

19 See Campbell, C.L., *The Word before the Powers. An Ethic of Preaching*. (Louisville: John Knox Press 2002), pp 89-104.

20 See for instance Jacob Milgrom, in his preface on his commentary on Leviticus, writing that he learned from Mary Douglas' anthropological perspective that 'when a "primitive" community wished to preserve and teach its basic values, it did not rely on words but ensconced them in rituals'. Milgrom, J., *Leviticus. A Book of Ritual and Ethics. A Continental Commentary*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2004), p xiii. See also Jon Levenson's comment, concerning the hermeneutics of discernment, that 'detachment from ritual performances may decrease one's insight and obscure one's vision.' Cited in: Moberly, R.W.L., *Prophecy and Discernment*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), p 24.

II Particulars: Empirical-Analytical Part

Summary: In the second part of this chapter, we discuss the notions of initiation and participation through the analysis of two concrete sermons. The first sermon, from Werner Krusche on John 6, is essentially a sermon on apostasy (7.1.b). The question of Jesus to the disciples, 'whether, in a time of apostasy, they wanted to leave him too', is translated by Krusche to the hearers in the DDR. Remarkably, the question is transformed into a moment of freedom: Jesus makes the hearers free to make their choice. We analyse the sermon as a form of mystagogy. In the dramatic *Kircheaustrittswelle*, that happened in the DDR since the 1960s, Krusche discerned a concrete question of Jesus, through which the hearers are addressed. Krusche explained this divine question in the circumstances, and at the same time, he edified the congregation in giving three possible answers that can strengthen the conviction of 'wir bleiben weiter bei Jesus'. The reasons to stay are the life-giving power of Jesus' words, his incommensurability of being both human and divine and the *Trost* of being chosen. It is through making these doctrinal answers experiential and existential, hearers are being made resistant. In these moments, the doctrinal, the mystagogical and the ethical are in continuity with each other. In this paragraph, we show that there also is *Seelsorge* in prophecy.

The second sermon we analyse is Rowan Williams' inauguration sermon from 2003 (7.2.b). In the structure of this sermon, there is a tension between insiders and outsiders. On the one hand Williams criticised those in the West who have become 'bored with Jesus', and at the same time he paid attention to the theological meaning of the 'stranger', to the intimate knowledge of God that this stranger or outsider may have, to those 'who are in need, and for whom God is immediate'. In the sermon, Williams developed an inclusive, public theology, about the divine secret that can be discerned in any other human being, and about situations that may blot out this divine image in human beings. In this way, Williams developed a theological framework of why Christians participate in their society, of what they can receive and of what they can give. The way Rowan Williams theologises, is called a form of friendship (by Benjamin Myers, see below), and in this sermon, we recognise this cordial atmosphere, this tone, not of rivalry, but of a communal search for growth, surprise, and justice. We conclude the paragraph with a reference to Luke Johnson's concept of 'prophecy-as-a-way-of-being-in-the-world'. Williams' sermon is an example of this concept of prophecy, a concept in which 'worldliness' is not eschewed, but theologically promoted.

7.1.b Sermon illustrating ‘This is my God’: Initiating the congregation in the way of the Lord

Werner Krusche, sermon on John 6.64b-71 (Magdeburg, 1969)

1 Introduction of the sermon

In this sermon, some of the major spiritual struggles of the church in the DDR in the late 1960’ and early 1970s, are addressed, qualified and answered.²¹ We summarise and analyse the sermon as an example of how preachers try to empower and to energise their congregations in a context of trial and temptation, and how they try to ‘make them resistant’. In the 1950s, the church in the DDR suffered under a ‘Welle primitiver atheistischer und antiklerikaler Propaganda’, a decade with an ‘Antikirchliche Kulturkampf’.²² The church was publicly portrayed as a ‘fifth column’ and *Klassenfeind*.²³ We already discussed these circumstances in the analysis of earlier sermons (4.2.b, 5.1.b). In retrospect, it is said that through this pressure a transition happened, in which the church changed from *Volkskirche* to a *Bekennende Kirche*.²⁴ This transition from ‘Protestantism being part of the soul of a society’ to a marginal role for the church, even to being an ‘undesirable presence’, was turbulent and traumatic for the church. Many church members were not willing to bear these negative repercussions they suffered because of their faith. Another spiritual effect of the circumstances was the mood of powerlessness and resignation that captured the soul of many. It became an important message from the leaders of the EKD to local communities of faith: *Resigniert nicht*.²⁵ All of these themes are theologically and spiritually reworked in this specific sermon.

2 Summary of the sermon

‘Then many of his disciples started to withdraw themselves from Jesus and they didn’t journey any longer with him’. Werner Krusche’s sermon on John 6 opens with the theme of apostasy, of ‘leaving Jesus’. Krusche describes this ‘leaving of Jesus’ as a contemporary experience. In the opening paragraph, there is a theological characterisation of apostasy: ‘Leaving Jesus’ means for these former disciples: ‘returning to the life they had once left behind’, ‘their past becomes their present again’. What is exactly the moment that triggers

21 Krusche, W., ‘Wir bleiben weiter bei Jesus – Joh 6.64-71’, in: Krusche W., *Gottes große Einladung. Predigten*. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1982), pp 89-97.

22 Henkys, R., ‘Kirche im Sozialismus – Knotenpunkte im Verhältnis von Evangelischer Kirche und Staat in der DDR’, in: Rendtorff, T. (Hrsg.), *Protestantische Revolution? Kirche und Theologie in der DDR: Ekklesiologische Voraussetzungen, politischer Kontext, theologische und historische Kriterien*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1993), p 18.

23 Jünger, E., ‘Kirche im Sozialismus – Kirche im Pluralismus. Theologische Rückblicke und Ausblicke’, in: Rendtorff, T. (Hrsg.), *Ibid.* p 319.

24 Rendtorff, T. (Hrsg.), *Ibid.* pp 20, 35, 51, 246.

25 Pollack, D., ‘Der Umbruch in der DDR – Eine Protestantische Revolution? Der Beitrag der Evangelischen Kirchen und der Politisch Alternativen Gruppen zur Wende 1989’, in: Rendtorff, T. (Hrsg.), *Ibid.* pp 45, 50: ‘Resigniert nicht, Gott kennt einen Ausweg, wo Menschen keinen mehr sehen, handelt nicht schizophren, laßt eure Gewissen nicht abstumpfen, bekennt fröhlich euern Glauben und wehrt euch, wo man euch in Bedrängnis bringen will, sucht nicht nur euern Vorteil, zum Christsein gehört auch Leiden.’

this 'relapse'? Krusche asks. Remarkably, the push for it is in Jesus' own claim: 'Er stellt den Anspruch, der Eine und Einzige zu sein, an dem unser Leben hängt, der sich uns ganz schenkt und dem wir ganz gehören. Ganz oder eben: gar nicht. Er kann nur Nachfolger, aber keine Mitläufer gebrauchen.' When it becomes clear that this *Nachfolge* is demanding and absolute, that it is *Kreuzesnachfolge*, then people stop following Jesus, Krusche says, and leave him. This theological fact is not an incident, he adds, but a pattern: That happens all the time. *Bis heute*. Implicitly, Krusche interprets the situation of a *Volkskirche* becoming a *Bekennende Kirche* as a moment of truth, a moment for them to decide whether they are *Mitläufer* or *Nachfolger*.

Krusche redescribes the disciples of John 6 who stop following Jesus, in terms of DDR Christians for whom believing has become a burden and who leave the church. 'Ein paar Mark und ein paar Stunden für den Besuch des Gottesdienstes hätten sie es sich schon kosten lassen – aber ein Stück Leben, die Karriere, die berufliche Zukunft der Kinder, den guten Ruf?' By redescribing the apostasy of John 6 in contemporary terminology, the analogy is clear. The same threat of apostasy is now actual in the DDR of 1969. When Jesus asks for more than 'a few hours and a few *Mark*', it is soon too much: 'Soviel durfte es nicht kosten.' 'Sie hatten sich die Sache mit Jesus billiger vorgestellt.' The atmosphere in the sermon is overtly critical and with a touch of cynicism. Krusche proceeds by describing the 'usual form' of this 'leaving Jesus': This apostasy does not happen through noisy and 'pathetic acts of renunciation', it happens 'noiseless'.

In the next paragraph, the preacher addresses the congregation as 'those who stayed'. The sermon has the explicit aim of empowering them in their perseverance, of making them resistant in this situation in which they are tested. Krusche explains that, to be able to withstand this contextual and spiritual pressure, the hearers need to know existentially 'was man an Jesus hat'. The hearers need a specific kind of spiritual knowledge that will help them endure this crisis. Paradoxically, Krusche claims, Jesus wants to strengthen them by addressing the critical question, 'Wollt ihr auch weggehen?' The edification of the hearers happens through learning how to answer this 'concerned critical question of Jesus' directed at us, 'do you also want to leave?' Krusche allows these questions to enter the sermon, the sermon thus turning into a dialogue with the hearers: 'Wollt ihr auch heimlich davonstehen, oder wollt ihr bei mir bleiben, auch wenn es rechts und links von euch leer wird?' 'Do you want to stay with me?' Jesus asks the hearers in the sermon, 'even when it is getting empty around you'?

The preacher underlines the honesty and the transparency of this question: Jesus does not flirt us into discipleship, he does not force us to follow him and he doesn't disguise the costs of 'bearing the cross': 'Es soll keiner leichtfertig Ja sagen. Und es soll keiner gezwungen Ja sagen. Unser Ja soll bedacht und soll frei sein.' In a society full of manipulation and intimidation, answering Jesus must not happen through religious equivalents of ideological manipulation

and intimidation. 'Ihr wißt ja selbst, was solch ein erzwungenes Ja wert ist.' And at the same time: It is exactly in this 'Republic of Fear', that following Jesus is costly. In a context of intimidation and compulsion, the freedom of deciding to follow Jesus is crucial. Consequently, Krusche transforms the question of Jesus to a moment of freedom, through which the hearers are edified into a new certainty and discipleship: 'Die Frage Jesu, die die Jünger noch einmal völlig freigab, brachte sie zur Klarheit: Wir bleiben weiter bei Jesus.' It is through this question the hearers gain a new clarity of mind: 'We are going to stay with Jesus'.

This sentence, 'Wir bleiben weiter bei Jesus,' is central in the structure of the sermon. The next three points in the sermon are three reasons the preacher proposes to the congregation to stay with Jesus. This recapitulation of reasons is a form of edification.

1 As a first reason to stay with Jesus, Krusche names the 'irreplaceable words' of Jesus, words from which the disciples and the hearers live. It is a passionate paragraph: 'Wer sollte in unserem Leben denn an deine Stelle treten? Für dich gibt es keinen Ersatz!' The irreplaceability of Jesus is in his life-giving words. 'Schöne Reden halten können auch andere. Erhebende Gedanken und tief sinnige Wahrheiten gibt es auch sonst. Impulse für mitmenschliches Verhalten als Lebenseinsatz und –Opfer sind auch von anderen ausgegangen. Um dies zu haben, braucht man nicht bei Jesus zu bleiben. Dafür gibt es anderswo Ersatz. Aber Worte, die nicht nur vom Leben handeln, sondern Leben erzeugen, erwecken, die Leben bringen, die vom Tod zum Leben bringen, Schöpferworte also, die hat nur Jesus. Die hast nur du, Herr, du allein!' Without defaming other religions or ideologies, (in these words, there is even some appreciation for them), the preacher nevertheless names their fundamental deficit. They can talk about life, but they cannot bring life. In a society full of speeches and programmes about the 'good life', Krusche talks about 'words of Jesus that bring life'. We see in this paragraph an intelligent mixture of interruption and empowerment. Krusche shows the deficit of alternatives, while professing the love for and the strength of the *Schöpferworte* of Jesus.

Krusche deepens this argument on the 'life-giving words of Jesus' by two examples. The first example is about guilt. On a strictly semantic level, we read how Krusche, with urgent and passionate vocabulary, speaks about the personal need human beings have for forgiveness: 'Wer in seinem Leben schwer schuldig geworden ist – vielleicht durch die Schuld schuldig geliebener Liebe gegenüber einem Menschen, der darauf gewartet hat und daran zerbrochen ist -, wer unter dieser Schuld nicht mehr meinte Leben zu können und dann das freimachende, lebenspendende Wort Jesu gehört hat: "Dir, sind deine Sünde vergeben", der weiß: ohne dieses Wort, das es nur bei Jesus gibt, könnte er nicht mehr leben.' This theme of guilt is not only part of Krusche's Lutheran and pietistic 'theological sensorium', but in the language

he uses, an existential layeredness and a personal involvement is discernible.²⁶ The second example of Jesus' life-giving words comes from Buchenwald. It is the story of somebody in the camp who was determined to commit suicide. The person was standing at a roll-call, together with 20 000 inmates, feeling 'grenzenlos allein, unheimlich gefangen und ohne Glauben, entschlossen, in der nächsten Nacht in den elektrischen Draht zu gehen und Schluß zu machen,' and then somebody shouted: 'Jesus spricht: Ich bin das Licht der Welt, wer mir nachfolgt, wird nicht wandeln in der Finsternis.' It was Paul Schneider, the Rhenish pastor, shouting his credo through the camp, and that call saved the desperate man: 'Er hat mich durch diesen Ruf gerettet. Denn von da an wußte ich, daß doch einer bei mir ist.' This is what we call an iconic fragment, a crystallisation and embodiment of, in this case, the life-giving force of the Words of Jesus (see 3.4.a).

2 The second major reason to 'stay with Jesus' that Krusche gives, is Jesus' uniqueness or 'incommensurability': 'Nobody is like you', the disciples exclaim. 'Du bist ganz wie wir, aber in einem – und zwar im Entscheidenden – bist du grundlegend anders als wir alle, da versagen alle Vergleiche.' In accessible and doxological language, Krusche explains how in Jesus, God himself is experienced by the 'we' who believe and who stay. 'Wenn wir dich anreden, dann fühlen wir uns von dir ganz menschlich verstanden – und doch merken wir: Hier reden wir nicht einfach zu unseresgleichen, nicht zu einem, der zwar mit uns mitfühlen kann, aber nichts zu ändern vermag, der uns zwar gern helfen möchte, aber im Grunde genauso ohnmächtig ist wie wir. "Du bist der Heilige Gottes"- Du bringst uns Gott in deiner Person; du bist der Mensch in dem Gott Mensch ist. Wir brauchten jetzt nicht mehr nach Gott herumzusuchen. In dir haben wir ihn bei uns.' When this divine reality is experienced in Jesus, Krusche explains, it is no longer a question of whether 'we will stay with you or not'. When we compare our past, our 'old life', with the joy and the fulfilment Jesus' presence gives, that former life loses its attractiveness to us, Krusche says. Note the 'we' and the 'us' of these passages. The preacher presents himself as the spokesman of a small and tested community of believers who decide to 'stay with Jesus', and through his recapitulation of reasons to believe and to stay, he edifies the congregation.

26 In several publications, Krusche has publicly written about the 'catastrophic effects' of the transition to the DDR on his family-life, especially on the health of his wife and the mental stability of his children. See Krusche, W., *Ich werde nie mehr Geige spielen können. Erinnerungen. (Vorwort Richard von Weizsäcker)*. (Stuttgart: Radius-Verlag 2007), pp 234-243 and: Krusche, W., 'Die Kirche war die belagerte Burg, von der aus auf Leben und Tod gekämpft wird', in: Findeis, H. und D. Pollack (Hg.), *Selbstbewahrung oder Selbstverlust. Bischöfe und Repräsentanten der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR über ihr Leben – 17 interviews*. (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag 1999), pp 214-215. The reader of these publications, knowing the intense passages Krusche has written about the dramatic death of his wife in 1962, about her loneliness and despair, and about his judgement on his own absence and failure, cannot but notice the biographical layeredness of sentences in this sermon about 'die Schuld schuldigh geliebener Liebe, gegenüber einem Menschen, der darauf gewartet hat und daran zerbrochen ist'. We mention it with prudence, as an example of how our concept of 'biography, calling, crisis and God' may have its specific manifestation in Krusche's life and how in the practice of preaching, we encounter incidents in which preachers try to get a grip, not only on societal crises, but also on the biographical complexities they entail in the preacher's personal life.

In this paragraph, a sudden kairological fragment emerges. Krusche assesses the present context as a time of *status confessionis*: 'Wenn Menschen von Jesus abfallen, wenn er umstritten ist, dann ist für die, die weiter bei Jesus bleiben wollen, die Stunde des Bekennens gekommen. Man kann dann nicht mehr so selbstverständlich zu ihm gehören, und es genügen dann auch nicht mehr ein paar angelernte, überlieferte Formeln'. In 'confessional moments' like these, new language about God is demanded, Krusche says. He gives an example, by exegetically explaining the term *Heilige Gottes* in John 6. According to Krusche, this is a new confession about who Jesus is for these disciples. Amid their *Anfechtung*, when all these contemporaries leave Jesus, they invent new words for Jesus. *Heilige Gottes* is a newly crafted, confessional term, born in times of *Anfechtung*. Then Krusche turns to the liturgy and the tradition of the church, which he calls a 'tradition of reinventing new language for Jesus'. Through a series of examples from the *Gesangbuch*, Krusche illustrates how believers in every age anew reinvented language for Jesus: 'Wir müßten heute am Sonntag Kantate einmal das Gesangbuch durchgehen und würden staunen, wie die Glaubenden in immer wieder neuen Formulierungen Jesus besungen, sich zu ihm bekannt haben als zu dem unvergleichlichen Du.' In this renewal of language, a new 'confessing of oneself to Jesus' takes place. For Krusche, the term 'Wir bleiben weiter bei Jesus' functions as a contemporary equivalent of what the disciples once said to Jesus: 'Hier wird nicht bloß rezitiert, sondern Stellung bezogen. Wir bleiben weiter bei Jesus. Wir leben von seinem unersetzbaren Wort. Wir bekennen ihn als das unvergleichliche Du.'

3 The sermon closes with a third major reason to 'stay with Jesus'. In this third argument, the emphasis is not on the believer, but on God. According to Krusche, staying with Jesus is ultimately about being chosen: 'Wenn jemand bei Jesus ist und bei Jesus bleibt, wenn einer sich zu Jesus bekennt, dann ist das allemal ein Wunder – das Wunder der Erwählung, die ihren Grund in nichts anderem hat als in den unergründlichen Wesenstiefen Gottes, in seinem grundlosen Erbarmen'. To illustrate this, Krusche again cites a line from a song, from Rudolf Alexander Schröder. The bottom line is: 'Wer bei Jesus ist, der steht im Wunder'. It is a 'miraculous position' to feel that there is a power stronger than the believer, a power that makes him stand firm. It is this miracle that prevents complacency getting a grip on believers. Being chosen is not a guarantee against apostasy, Krusche explains. It is notably in John 6 that Judas is called 'devil': 'One of you is a devil', it says. Krusche warns his hearers: 'Only when you come so close to Jesus, you can fall so deep'. The memory of Judas, who betrayed Jesus after the apostasy as rendered in John 6, can function as a warning for the congregation not to flaunt with their supposed *Bekennermut*. The perseverance of those who believe, is not because of their own courage or stability, but because of 'das immer neue Wunder des erwählenden Herrn'. The sermon ends by quoting a spiritual from the reformed tradition, from Paul Gerhardt: 'Da ich noch nicht geboren war, da bist du mir geboren'. When the congregation is rooted in this 'miracle of election', she will happily confess to be his congregation.

3 Analytical remarks

In the theoretical part of this chapter, we developed the concept of mystagogy in the prophetic moment (7.1.a).²⁷ In our data, we see that hearers are initiated into a particular discernment of God in their own circumstances, and through this initiation and catechesis, they are made resistant. With 'being made resistant' we mean that the hearers learn to discern destructiva and learn to live an alternative life that is able to withstand their effects. In this short paragraph, we show how this mixture of discernment, initiation, pastoral care, and catechesis functions in Krusche's sermon.

Historically seen, mystagogy was a form of postbaptismal catechesis. It was not edification leading up to baptism, but it was edification in learning to see how the baptismal pattern of dying and being raised with Christ could be discerned in the life of Christians.²⁸ In mystagogy, the sacrament of baptism was articulated as an existential experience in the life of hearers. Henk van der Meulen defines mystagogy as 'guiding the spiritual life of believers, both in God's way with them and in their own way with God', and it includes attributing spiritual meaning to occurrences and the process of seeing and experiencing how redemption is a reality in the life of believers.²⁹ In mystagogy, the pattern of redemption, (that is: dying and rising with Christ), is discerned, and explicated in specific circumstances of human lives. Mystagogy brings redemption as close as possible, namely to the existential and physical life of believers. Krusche's sermon is a good example of this mystagogical dimension. The preacher initiates the congregation in the paschal dimension of being Christian, of following Jesus Christ in the DDR. When the disciples of John 6 learned that following Jesus is *Kreuzesnachfolge*, including suffering and dying, *then*, Krusche observes, they refused to follow any longer. Krusche explains that this refusal of the suffering dimension in Christian life, is occurring again in the DDR context of the hearers. As the costs of following Jesus become more evident, then, many believers flinch from following Jesus. The preacher in this sermon, is a seer and a pastor who articulates and guides the spiritual life of the hearers in these times of testing, who translates their experiences into the language of faith.

27 See for an interpretation of the prophets as *mystagogues* in Philo's theology: J. Barton, *Oracles of God. Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile*. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd 1986), p 249.

28 Berk, T. van den, *Mystagogie. Inwijding in het symbolisch bewustzijn*. (Zoetermeer: Meinema 1999, 2003), pp 56, 84-86.

29 Van der Meulen, H., *De pastor als reisgenoot. Pastoraal-theologische gedachten over geestelijke begeleiding*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2004), pp 113-114.

According to Mary Hilker, this is a structural aspect in preaching: ‘Postbaptismal preaching always remains a form of mystagogical catechesis, as it is an invitation to enter more deeply into the paschal mystery at the heart of all Christian life.’³⁰ It is a recurring pattern in our data: Preachers explain that following Jesus may include suffering, and that this suffering is part of the redemptive mystery of God’s presence in this world. It is a paradoxical mystery that needs explanation and guidance, because it is the strange mystery of finding life through dying, of being a blessing by being cursed. Hearers need explanation of this spiritual pattern to be able to discern it and to understand it, and therefore mystagogy has catechetical features. In this sermon, we also see these formative, catechetical dimensions operative. The congregation is supplied with three important reasons ‘to stay with Jesus’ and thus, they are enabled to deepen their commitment to him. In giving these answers, the preacher proves to be not only a pastor and a seer, but also a theologian, who selects dimensions from the Christian doctrinal tradition, (like the power of the Word of God, the dual nature of Jesus Christ and divine election), and translates them as formative beliefs for the present. This leadership is grounded in theology.³¹

The specific aspect we add to these observations is that mystagogy makes resistant. In this probing context of apostasy in the DDR, the preacher discerns ‘Jesus looking at the hearers’, asking them the same question as in John 6. According to Krusche, it is through the initiation in and answering of this critical questioning of Jesus, the congregation is edified to become resistant. How does the preacher empower the hearers in this sermon? A first ingredient of this empowerment is ‘not looking away’, is: facing the danger.³² The preachers in our research have a sensitivity to this ‘something’, which is difficult to define precisely, but there is ‘something’ that causes spiritual, cultural, and societal unrest.³³ In Krusche’s sermon, the preacher qualifies explicitly what is spiritually happening in the church. Krusche faces in this sermon the painful *Kircheaustrittswelle*, and he describes ‘how it functions’: It happens ‘noiselessly’, he says, without ‘pathetic acts of renunciation’, it happens as a growing mood of fatigue. Spiritual guidance first of all gives insight in this ‘something’ that makes hearers quit believing. As the ‘watchman’ in the Old

30 Hilker, M.C., *Naming Grace. Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*. (New York: Continuum 1997), p 188.

31 See for a plea for this ‘theological leadership’, Rein Nauta’s opening chapter on leadership: Nauta, R., *Paradoxaal Leiderschap. Schetsen voor een psychologie van de pastor*. (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers 2006) pp 7-24

32 Cilliers, J., ‘Worshipping in the ‘in-between’ times of transition: Reflections on the liminality of liturgy’, in: Pieterse, H. & C. Thesnaar (eds.), *A Faithful Witness: Essays in Honour of Nel Malan*. (Wellington: Bybel Media 2009), p 174.

33 See R. Nauta’s book on ‘paradoxical leadership’, a plea for preachers to recapture their theological and prophetic role of leadership in the paradoxical situation of a society that both longs for guidance, vision and leadership, while at the same time being critical and even dismissive to explicit leadership. In his chapter ‘Charisma and Kairos’, Nauta cites several important aspects of this leadership, like ‘being able to give words to the central problems of a context’, ‘being able to discern the underlying structures of that which causes societal unrest’. Nauta, R., *Ibid.* p 39.

Testament became a metaphor for prophetic alertness and warning, in a similar way, Krusche exposes the spiritual danger for the congregation. By explicating how apostasy develops and occurs, the hearers cannot *not* see it anymore.³⁴

But there is more to it. Krusche interprets this question of Jesus as a form of edification. To be able to be faithful in circumstances of apostasy, Krusche claims, the hearers need to know existentially ‘was man an Jesus hat’. This personal and experiential conviction is a prerequisite for faith that can endure crises like this. According to Krusche, this is exactly the aim of Jesus’ question. By being able to answer the question of ‘whether the hearers also want to leave Jesus’, they can develop language, attitudes and reasons for why they are ‘staying’. In the mystagogical tradition, questions like these are called ‘discerning questions’: They are questions that trigger critical analysis and self-examination, questions that evoke feelings, meanings and attitudes of which the hearers were not aware previously. The ‘discerning questions’ trigger and stimulate this awareness, and thus they are crucial in developing a stronger identity.³⁵

The empowerment in this sermon is also traceable in the experiential power of the theological aspects Krusche develops. The theological convictions he mentions, as reasons to stay with Jesus, have not only proven their veracity in the personal life of the preacher,³⁶ but in explaining them to the hearers, Krusche shows how these beliefs can also have a stabilising and motivational power in the existential life of the hearers. The power of the Word of God, the divine and human nature of Christ and the belief in God’s election, are explained as realities with the power to console and to strengthen believers in times of tribulation and testing. The doctrinal, the mystagogical and the ethical are indeed in continuity in these moments.³⁷ This catechetical way of making theological convictions experiential, intends to strengthen the character of the hearers.

Finally, and this is something we also know from mystical and mystagogical theology, language is part of this ‘transformation’. After a severe personal crisis, or after a real encounter with God, language often changes too. In this kairological

34 See on this dimension of being a ‘watchman’, especially in the relationship between prophecy and pastoral care: Miskotte, H.H., *Pastor & Profet. Over de andere kant van pastoraat*. (Baarn: Ten Have 1992), pp 18, 36-38.

35 See on ‘discerning questions’ and their role in triggering insight: Noordzij, J.C., *Religieus concept en religieuze ervaring in de christelijke traditie. Proeve van een psychologie van de spirituele ontwikkeling*. (Kampen: Kok 1994), pp 192-193.

36 See for the importance of the experiential side of faith in the biography of the mystagogue: Berk, T. van den, *Mystagogie. Inwijding in het symbolisch bewustzijn*, p 57.

37 Other studies have also shown the importance of this *personal* character of faith and convictions, especially under totalitarian regimes. W.J. Lamfers, for instance, has shown how Vaclav Havel stressed the importance of a ‘personal existential revolution’, of the personal imperative ‘to defy the lie and the live in the truth’, of the challenge to personally oppose and overcome violence. Lamfers, W.J., *Drie dissidente denkers. Bonhoeffer, Havel en Plesu over vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid*. (Boekencentrum: Zoetermeer z.j.), pp 70-88.

moment of *Bekennen*, as Krusche calls it, not only the hearers are drawn into a transformational movement, but language itself is affected and changed too. Krusche argues that these moments of decision call for a newness of language, and in this newness, the whole aim of the sermon emerges: the hearers deepen their commitment to Christ through the invention of new language, and thus they ‘take a stand’ in their context. Note the doxological character of this new language. When Krusche recites several songs from the *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, (according to Krusche, these songs are all examples of former inventions of new language in the midst of *Anfechtung*), we not only note the preference for songs of Advent, (though it is Sunday Cantata), but also the fact that Krusche selects lines in which ‘du’ or ‘dir’ is dominant: ‘Ich stehe an deiner Krippen hier, o Jesus, du mein Leben’, or: ‘Wir singen dir, Immanuel, du Lebensfürst und Gnadenquell, du Himmelsblum und Morgenstern.’ The hearers are ‘tied to Christ’ in an intimate ‘Du un Ich’ and it is Krusche’s conviction that this personal and doxological relationship will make the hearers stronger in periods of tribulation.³⁸

In the edification of hearers, there is a spiritual, initiational ‘inside’ (7.1), but there are also societal, practical elements in it (7.2). This concept of edification is not only about ‘being made resistant’, but it is this resistance that is stimulated to be applied to concrete societal circumstances. We now turn to this participatory impulse in the prophetic moment.

7.2.b Sermon illustrating ‘This is my world’: Making the congregation participant in the crisis of her context
Rowan Williams, inauguration sermon (Canterbury, 2003)

1 Introduction of the sermon

At his first press conference, in July 2002, after the news had been spread that Rowan Williams was appointed as the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, Williams spoke of his hopes that ‘Christianity in this country [is] able again to capture the imagination of our culture, to draw the strongest energies of our thinking and feeling into the exploration of what our creeds put before us.’³⁹ This would become an often repeated dictum and an impulse for his vocation: ‘capturing the imagination of our culture.’ With Williams as archbishop, a church leader was appointed with the intellectual capacities and the visionary power to aim for such a high ideal. Williams was expected to be a leader, who ‘will see it as his role to raise uncomfortable questions’ (McGrath), who is ‘a prophet and a theologian’

38 See also Krusche’s lecture of the same year: ‘Paul Gerhardt – heute gesungen. Gemeindevortrag bei den Wittenberger Paul-Gerhardt-Tagen (1969)’, in: Krusche, W., *Verheißung und Verantwortung. Orientierungen auf dem Weg der Kirche*. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1990), pp 82-93.

39 Goddard, A., *Rowan Williams. His Legacy*. (Oxford: Lion Books 2013), pp 45-46.

(The Tablet), who will not eschew controversy, neither in ecclesiastical and moral nor in political and societal issues.⁴⁰ At the same time, Williams presented himself as a man of dialogue, of listening, of solidarity with society, a man of both tradition and innovation: his focus on the project of ‘Fresh Expressions’ would become a major legacy.

In the liturgy of his enthronement service, readings were taken from Isaiah 6.1-8 and Revelation 19.1, 5-9, and the Gospel reading was from Matthew 11.25-30;⁴¹ a song was performed by Rachel Grey, a soprano, singing about ‘under the dark trees, there he stands, there he stands; shall he not draw my eyes?’ The poem speaks of Jesus as ‘a stranger to them all’. This theme about the ‘stranger’, is elaborated by Williams in his enthronement sermon.⁴²

2 Summary of the sermon

Williams starts the sermon with a joke: ‘If someone in the street would tell us “They’ve found out! Run!”, nine out of ten of us, would do so: ‘We don’t like our secrets to be revealed’, Williams says. Though our secrets may be petty or trivial, still ‘we don’t want to be under the kind of detached scrutiny that threatens and diminishes us’. In the next sentence, the tone of the sermon deepens: ‘There are secrets too that are too terrible for us and others to face because they concern pain we cannot cope with, abuse, enforced silence, secrets that others make us keep. To feel that the truth is to be revealed before we have the resource to live with it, is humiliating and frightening’. The tone of this Enthronement sermon is set: This is not a self-congratulatory religious ceremony, this is a man of conscience speaking, a man with a priestly heart, aware of the attention of a national and worldwide audience, and determined to speak of things the entire society knows about: abuse, pain, manipulation, secrets.

The theme of ‘knowing and telling secrets, of discovering a truth not everyone sees’ is taken from the Gospel reading (Mt. 11.25-30). In it, ‘Jesus has just been talking about what happens to the local towns that have seen his miracles and heard his words and yet haven’t changed’. These locals ‘haven’t realised that there is a mystery in who Jesus is’. And then we read Jesus’ abrasive reaction to these people, a reaction Williams applies to contemporary Christians in Europe: ‘And Jesus rounds on them and says, “I don’t want your idle curiosity or I don’t want your patronage. There is a secret you don’t have a clue about – and the ones who know that secret are the ones who don’t try to protect themselves by staying at a safe distance”. And he might equally round on us, in what used to be called ‘Christendom’ in the West, and say, “You have seen everything, the truth has been displayed, and yet you react with boredom or polite curiosity.

40 Shortt, R., *Rowan’s Rule. The Biography of the Archbishop*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton 2009), pp 233-278.

41 The sermon can be found on <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org>.

42 Shortt, R., *Ibid.* pp 259-260.

It's all a bit too familiar, he says. Perhaps it's time for you to listen to some strangers". Williams qualifies 'Christianity in the West' as being at risk of 'being bored with Jesus', as 'protecting itself by staying at a distance'. He suggests this Christianity to let herself be interrupted by strangers: 'Perhaps it's time for you to listen to some strangers'.

Which 'strangers' does he mean? 'We must turn to the children; the exhausted; the burdened and oppressed – they know the secret. Unless we know that we need life, we'll be baffled; but we hate admitting our lack, our poverty. It's the real hungry who can smell fresh bread a mile away. For those who know their need, God is immediate – not an idea, not a theory, but life, food, air for the stifled spirit and the beaten, despised, exploited body'. As Von Rad preached in the mid-sixties in post-war Germany about the insensitivity to God of many contemporaries, thus Williams is exposing an 'attitude of boredom with Jesus'. The irritation of Jesus about the Judean villagers that remain unchanged by his presence, is prolonged by Williams and applicated to the current hearers.

The sermon continues by asking about what 'this food, this life' is. Williams: 'God has poured out his own life in Jesus', and that means that 'we cannot know fully who God is, unless we are willing to stand in the same place as Jesus, in the full flood of the divine life poured out in mercy and renewal'. 'It's only in the water that you can begin to swim'. In the following sentences, a sudden and fierce 'either/or' occurs: 'Without the gift of the Spirit, we wouldn't survive the presence of that absolute Truth, that unfading light which is God. And if we're not seeking to stand where Jesus is, our talk about God remains on the level of theory; nothing has changed. On the Day of Judgement, says Jesus, looking back at the towns where he ministered, the people who are in trouble are those who have seen everything and grasped nothing'. An ultimate seriousness is developing in the sermon, a warning for the day of judgment, when, according to Williams, those who remain unchanged 'will be in trouble with Jesus'.

Williams continues by describing how the church lives from this secret: 'The church exists to pass on the promise of Jesus – You can live in the presence of God without fear; you can receive his fullness and set others free from fear and guilt.' 'Here is the secret of our true identity – we are made to be God's children and to find our most profound freedom in surrender to him'. To illustrate the beauty as well as the painfulness of this process, Williams uses the metaphor of a restorer or conservator restoring a damaged work of art; in analogy: God works 'to remove the grime, the oil and dust of ages, to let us appear, as we say, in our true colours. Wonderful, yes, but it also means that God will lay bare all the ways in which we hide from him and others, all the sad and compromised and cowardly things we do to stop ourselves being human'. When our secrets are laid bare in this process, 'we want to run': 'They've found out! Run!' But then the tone becomes cathartic, in the sense of: facing, cleansing, and overcoming darkness: 'But, says Jesus, gently and insistently, we must stay. In

the unsurpassable words that George Herbert put into our Lord's mouth, "You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat". Truth looks terrifying, but taste and see. You will find that Truth is indeed the bread of life'.

While in the sermon a tension is maintained to those who are 'bored with Jesus', who 'know everything about bread, except that you're meant to eat it', there is also a broad inclusivity, originating in Williams' conviction that 'it is God's secret that we are all made to be God's sons and daughters.' 'No-one can be written off; no group, no nation, no minority can just be a scapegoat to resolve our fears and uncertainties. We can't assume that any human face we see has no divine secret to disclose: those who are culturally or religiously strange to us; those who so often don't count in the world's terms (the old, the unborn, the disabled). And this is what unsettles our loyalties, conservative or liberal, right wing or left, national and international.' Williams claims that 'in every face something of the divine secret can be discerned'. This theology is deeply inclusive, but it is unsettling too. This 'divine secret' also applies for the old, the disabled, the unborn.

In the next paragraph, Williams moves on to the delicate and fiercely debated subject of unity in the Anglican church. The spiritual core of this community should be the communal ability and intention 'to identify the same Jesus in each other's life'. But then Williams poses a dark question: 'Does there come a point where we can't recognise the same Jesus, the same secret?' The answer Williams gives is complex and dialectical, moving forward and backward between exclusivity and inclusivity. First, we must acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and God, that means that 'He is not the prisoner of my current thoughts and experiences'. This lordship of Jesus 'gives us the freedom and the obligation to challenge what our various cultures may say about humanity'. 'If all we have to offer is a Jesus who makes sense to me and to people like me, we have no saving truth to give. But the truth is that we are given the joy of speaking about one who is the secret of all hearts, the hidden centre of everything – and so one who comes to us always, yes, as a stranger, "as one unknown", in Albert Schweitzer's words, but also as the one that each person can recognise as "more intimate to me than myself".'

Williams is making a plea for a Jesus who must be sought and who can be recognised. With the help of Augustine and Schweitzer, he designs a contemporary 'search profile' of Jesus, namely as the 'stranger who can be recognised in and by everyone'. It is exactly this passionate search for Jesus and his presence that pushes Williams to a strong passage about *Zeitgenossenschaft* and participation: 'This is why the Christian will engage with passion in the world of our society and politics – out of a real hunger and thirst to see God's image, the destiny of human beings to become God's sons and daughters come to light – and, it must be said, also out of real grief and fear about what the human future will be if this does not come to the light. The church should warn and lament as well as to comfort. So, when Christians grieve or protest

about war, about debt and poverty, about prejudice, about the humiliations of unemployment or the vacuous cruelty of sexual greed and unfaithfulness, about the suffering of children or the neglect of the helpless elderly, it is because of the fear we rightly feel when insult and violence blot out the divine image in our human relations. And anything that begins to make us casual about this is one more contribution to obscuring the original image of God in us, another layer of dust and grime over the bright face of Christ'. This passage, in which mystagogy and political engagement are in continuity with each other, is a passionate plea for concrete Christian involvement in every area of societal life.

For Williams, a generosity and inclusivity flow from this theology, from 'the true and proper confidence in the secret shared with us'. Confidence is the key concept of the following passage. The confidence that we are created, and that we are called to shape our lives as a response to God. The confidence that we are redeemed, that 'God has acted once and for all in Jesus Christ to halt us in our slide towards self-destruction and has opened to us the possibility of life that is animated by nothing less than God's life'. Thus, confidence leads to thankfulness, 'to respond to God with noisy praise and silent adoration'. In these thoughts about confidence, as in other passages in this sermon, cathartic, that is: purifying, and ecstatic elements can be discerned: 'We need to be confident that we are being transfigured: touched by God's Holy Spirit, we have been decisively changed and endowed with something of God's liberty. In this confidence, we know we are not prisoners of this world, we can make a difference by God's grace, and can share in the work of uncovering afresh the hidden face, the life-giving secret'. Participation in a society is not only or merely an ethical action, but it is far more spiritual and mystagogical, it is 'sharing in the work of uncovering afresh the hidden face'.

In the final section, Williams draws together the various lines of thought of the sermon: this 'confidence' can only emerge, when the foundation of the Church is in 'the sense of being told our secret, by Jesus', and in our 'coming to him as the one who alone can satisfy the hunger of human hearts'. This means for Williams that the source of ministry in the church is to be found in a primordial joy: 'What do I pray for in the Church of the future? Confidence; courage; an imagination set on fire by the vision of the Holy Trinity; thankfulness. The Church of the future, I believe, will do both its prophetic and its pastoral work effectively, only if it is concerned first with gratitude and joy; orthodoxy flows from this, not the other way around, and we don't solve our deepest problems just by better discipline but by better discipleship, a fuller entry into the intimate joy of Jesus' life'.

The sermon ends in doxology. Williams recalls a memory of a visit he once made to an Orthodox monastery, where he was shown an old chapel, a 'place intensely full of the memory and the reality of prayer'. A monk showed him around and pulled the curtain from the front of a sanctuary, unwrapping one

simple picture of Jesus. This transformed into an iconic moment for Williams: 'For some reason at that moment it was as if the veil of the temple was torn in two: I saw as I had never seen the simple fact of Jesus at the heart of all our words and worship, behind the curtain of our anxieties and our theories, our struggles and suspicion. Simply there; nothing anyone can do about it, there he is, as he has promised to be till the world's end. Nothing of value happens in the church that doesn't start from seeing him simply there in our midst, suffering and transforming our human disaster. And he says to us: If you don't know why this matters, look for someone who does – the child, the poor, the forgotten. Learn from them, and you will learn from me. You will find a life's work; and you will find rest for your souls; you will come home, you will sit and eat.'

3 Analytical remarks

When we analyse this sermon from the perspective of participation, we first notice Williams' critique of 'Christians in the West who have become bored with Jesus'. They are the people, 'who know everything about the bread except that you're meant to eat it'. This paragraph in the sermon accentuates participation, or the lack of it: 'It's only in the water that you can begin to swim'. It is fair to say that participation (in practices like prayer, the Eucharist, following Jesus) here is a prerequisite to gain access to the experience of 'the full flood of the divine life poured out in mercy and renewal'. Apart from this participation, (that is: 'in keeping oneself at a safe distance', as Williams put it), there is the risk of getting bored. At the heart of Christian life there is a *participatory* moment, Williams posits. At the end of the sermon, he repeats this mystical-participatory emphasis: 'Nothing of value happens in the church that doesn't start from seeing him simply there in our midst, suffering and transforming our human disaster'. Notice the importance of the concept of *seeing* here. This is the *Gotteswahrnehmung* we talked about earlier, it is the seeing of and the participation in this reality of Jesus' presence that feeds the spiritual life of the church, and that will give 'confidence, courage, an imagination set on fire by the vision of the Holy Trinity, thankfulness'. For Williams, this 'presence' is the spiritual source: 'The Church of the future, I believe, will do both its prophetic and its pastoral work effectively, only if it is concerned first with gratitude and joy'.

In Williams' theology, this mystagogical core is intrinsically *open*, in the sense of: intrinsically receptive to others and even in need of others. In a way, this theology forces the church to participate in the reality of contemporaries. Notably, in this sermon, it is the *insider* that may have become estranged to Jesus, (that is: bored), and it is the *stranger* to which the insider should listen. The terminology is turned upside down: outsiders may have intimate knowledge of Christ, insiders may have grown jaded with Jesus. There may be periods in which the church needs outsiders for her knowledge of Christ, William provocatively implies, for it is the exhausted and the oppressed that 'know the secret': 'It's the really hungry who can

smell fresh bread a mile away. For those who know their need, God is immediate – not an idea, not a theory, but life, food, air for the stifled spirit and the beaten, despised, exploited body.’ Williams develops in this sermon a theology in which participation in the core practices of the church is intrinsically tied to participation in the raw realities of one’s societal context. Being close to those who suffer, like the elderly, the handicapped and the exhausted, may reinforce the experience of Christ’s presence, he claims. In this way, theology and mystagogy, discipleship and ethics are brought into a necessary and fruitful interdependence. In these passages we discern again, what Ellen Charry called, the ‘life-nurturing power of doctrine’ (7.1.a). When Williams speaks about experiencing Christ, he speaks of a ‘life-giving secret’, about ‘a saving truth’ to share. There is a relationship of mutuality in these passages, of giving and receiving between insiders and outsiders.

The second impulse to participate in the spiritual quest of a society, is rooted in Williams’ theological anthropology. The secret of the identity of every human being, he says, is that ‘we are made to be God’s children and to find our most profound freedom in surrender to him’. The theological core of this public theology is in the themes of humanity and freedom. ‘This is why the Christian will engage with passion in the world of our society and politics – out of a real hunger and thirst to see the destiny of human beings to become God’s sons and daughters come to light – and, it must be said, also out of real grief and fear about what the human future will be if this does not come to the light.’ Williams gives a positive reason for participation: human flourishing through surrender to God, and a negative reason: protest when societal developments obscure the divine image in the other, especially in those who suffer and in those who are from a different race or a different religion. The raw realities of sexual abuse, racism and the humiliation of being unemployed, ‘may blot out the divine image in our human relations’, and the engagement of Christians in their society has also this side of protest and resistance against developments like this.

Benjamin Myers compared Williams’ theology not with a ‘construction site’ (with ‘the scholar as a grand architect’), but with a form of friendship: ‘Not a monument to be built but something collectively ventured, explored, revised, negotiated, threatened by subtle conflicts, and enlarged by subtle graces.’⁴³ In Williams’ theology, we recognise indeed this fundamental, dialogical and sympathetic way of theologising about communal problems. His public theology is infused by a form of friendship. It is not rivalry that drives him, but growth, surprise, and promise. ‘The Christian approaches culture, society, art, politics, not with a negation and a demand for a rival culture or society, but with the readiness to question in the

43 Myers, B., *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams*. (London: T&T Clark 2012), p 5.

name of a something more that God alone opens up and makes possible.⁴⁴ In this atmosphere, Williams can explicate and discuss the major delicate issues of his society, like racism in the multi-cultural society, like the position of the unborn and the elderly people, like child abuse, sexual greed and unfaithfulness, like the legitimacy of participation in the Iraq war. In a way, this sermon is public *soul-searching*: It is honest public speech, in which, from a Christian perspective on freedom and humanity, a society is given second thoughts about the frayed, destructive realities in her midst that tend to remain obscured or neglected, and that runs the risk of damaging society and individuals.

In his monograph on prophecy, Luke Timothy Johnson has coined the term 'prophecy as representation'. Conceptually, Johnson uses two understandings of the prophetic dimension, the first one being 'prophecy-as-prediction', and the second one 'prophecy-as-a-way-of-being-in-the-world'. The first concept of prophecy-as-prediction, he sees as a defining motive throughout the whole New Testament. In Luke and Acts, Johnson claims, the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in the life of Jesus and his followers functions as 'an apology for God's fidelity to Israel'.⁴⁵ But Johnson discerned a second conceptual understanding of prophecy in the works of Luke and Acts, an understanding of equal importance, but with different theological accents, namely 'prophecy-as-a-way-of-being-in-the-world'. The description of this second understanding is a dimension of prophecy that 'very much concerns present-day-readers'. This second understanding is not about 'speaking beforehand' as in prediction, but 'speaking for' as in representation.⁴⁶ The prophetic dimension, he proposes, is an aspect of 'representing the living God'. When Johnson theologises about the prophetic dimension, he is theologising about the presence of the living God in concrete contemporary situations and how this presence is enacted, embodied, and represented in practices of the church. This prophetic dimension belongs to the fabrics of what it means to be church, according to Johnson.

Johnson's concept of 'representing the living God' is helpful when analysing Williams' sermon. Interestingly, this 'representation of God', where Johnson writes about, is triggered especially when the image of the living God in concrete human beings is endangered or obscured. And, interestingly too, when the church fails in this representation, because of her 'being bored with Jesus', it is the stranger who may embody this representation of the living God. In a similar way, in an essay on 'religious lives', Rowan Williams has written about Etty Hillesum, who lived in a time of brutality, and who, amidst destructive narratives, felt an urge 'to take

44 See Williams' essay 'Europe, faith and culture', in: Williams, R., *Faith in the Public Square*. (London: Bloomsbury Continuum 2012, 2015), p 74.

45 Johnson, L.T., *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, p 24.

46 Johnson, L.T., *Ibid.* p 41.

responsibility for God in this situation', of 'being a witness to the fact that God lives, in an epoch of terror, dehumanisation and the apparent absence of God'.⁴⁷ This is what we mean with the concept of *edification*: In prophetic speech, hearers are edified to take responsibility *on behalf of* God by taking responsibility *in this world*. Initiation leads to participation. Prophecy is a way of being in this world, in which the initiated is resistant *and* participant.

⁴⁷ See Williams' essay 'Religious lives', in: Williams, R., *Faith in the Public Square*. (London: Bloomsbury Continuum 2012, 2015), pp 318-320.

Part III
Conclusions and homiletical proposals

CHAPTER 8 | MAKING SEE

Closing argument

8.1 Introduction

What is religiously happening in the prophetic dimension of preaching? In this chapter, we answer our basic research question anew by generating a concept that integrates the five concepts we already extracted from the data (cc 3-7). GTM, certainly in its earlier versions, not only urges researchers to describe a phenomenon, distinguish the patterns in it and to formulate the patterns on a conceptual level, but it also stimulates to delineate relationships between concepts and to construct a theoretical framework.¹ One of the instruments that can be helpful in this final phase of the research, is the development of a single explanatory concept.² In this study, we therefore searched for a central organising idea, a concept able to clarify the major theological logic that is operative in the different concepts combined. In this concluding chapter, we describe the phenomenon of prophetic speech from the perspective of a central, theological process happening in it, namely *Making See*. Before developing our central concept within the next paragraphs, we first want to elaborate on an additional motive relevant in this last chapter. In this present

1 Glaser, B.G., 'Grounded Description: No No'. In: *Grounded Theory Review. An international journal* 15 (2016)/2, p 4.

2 See on this central explanatory concept: Verweij, A., *Positioning Jesus' Suffering. A Grounded Theory of Lenten Preaching in Local Practices*. (Delft: Eburon 2014), p 63. Charmaz is hesitant in promoting the formulation of this 'single basic process' in GTM studies. In her own research on chronic illness, this tool helped her to deepen the definition of several primal processes; but instead of a single process she distinguished several. 'The early grounded theory texts prescribed discovering a single basic process. If numerous 'basic' social processes occur in a setting, determining 'the' most fundamental process can be daunting, even for an objectivist grounded theorist. While I had no difficulty defining 'loss of self' as more basic than 'managing illness', or 'disclosing illness' in my study of experiencing chronic illness, I could not define a single basic process that unified everything I was learning. For several years I wrestled with trying to identify one basic social process that captured everything I learned about experiencing illness.' Charmaz, K., *Constructing Grounded Theory. A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. (Los Angeles: SAGE 2006, 2008), pp 138-139. See also: Charmaz, K., 'A Constructivist Grounded Theory Analysis of Losing and Regaining a Valued Self', in: Wertz, E.J. et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis. Phenomenological Psychology, Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis, Narrative Research, and Intuitive Inquiry*. (New York: Guilford Press 2011), p 170. See also Juliet Corbin's definition: 'The core category captures in a few words the major theme or the essence of the study and enables all the other categories and concepts to be integrated around it to form the theoretical explanation of why and how something happens. It may not be the only explanation that can be derived from the data, but it does offer a logical and plausible one.' Corbin, J. and A. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. (Fourth Edition). Los Angeles, London: SAGE 2015), p 13.

chapter, we intend to rewrite the phenomenon of prophetic speech in such a way that it may become recognisable, applicable, and hopefully motivational, for local preachers. We hope to show that the prophetic dimension of preaching is a potentiality, a pneumatological possibility, present in the texture of the practice of preaching. After having studied high-profile preachers, like Bonhoeffer, King, and Tutu, (preachers who sometimes seem *larger than life*), we now turn to fairly anonymous preachers, preaching in the regular rhythm of congregational life. In this last phase, we searched for *local* resonances of the generated concepts of our study, and in this chapter, we will give examples of the sermons we found. In their own graduality and coloured by their specific locality, the essence of the phenomenon of prophetic speech is recognisable in these examples.

In the selection of new material, we intentionally sought for a variety of local sermons and we focused on our own Dutch context. We included a Roman Catholic and a Protestant sermon, sermons from a preaching cycle on Ezekiel that was held during a recent turbulent period in Dutch society, a sermon held in a congregation where a local drama took place and a sermon taken from a recent initiative, called the ‘Sermon by a Layperson’ (Preek van de Leek).

These are the challenges and the aims of this chapter: To redescribe the phenomenon of prophetic speech from the perspective of a single concept, to present the major research results of our study and to make a start with exploring how the phenomenon may be traceable in regular, local practices of preaching. Though this last aspect in fact calls for a new and a different kind of study, namely a congregational study on local prophetic speech, we close our own research with an initial exploration of it.³

3 In this last phase we loosened up the strict methodological demands for the selection of sermons (cf 2.3.3). In an earlier version of this chapter, we discussed new sermon fragments, taken from rather exceptional situations. In it, for instance, we discussed a sermon held after the terror attack in Berlin, in the days just before Christmas in 2016 (see: ‘Bischof Dr. M. Dröge. Ansprache nach den Anschlägen an der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche in Berlin. 20. Dezember 2016’, taken from www.ekbo.de/wir/landeskirche/bischof.html). Another fragment we discussed, was a homily of frère Christian de Chergé, prior of the brothers of Tibhirine, a small fraternity of eight French Trappist monks who were abducted and killed in Algeria in 1996 by the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA). Their story was made accessible through the film *Des hommes et des dieux*. In the last Holy Week of his life, frère Christian wrote several homilies, dealing with the theme of ‘love for one’s enemies’, and we analysed one of them for its prophetic purport (Chergé, C. de, *L’invincible Espérance*. (Paris: Bayard/Centurion 1997)). But in the research group, we decided to change this perspective, to search for examples in Dutch regular, local practices of preaching and to rewrite the chapter accordingly. As we noted earlier: in fact this asks for a new study. As Rein Brouwer developed an understanding of what *koinonia* means through studying it in an empirical, local Dutch congregation, in a similar way we could research within a local community what prophetic speech means there (see Brouwer, R. *Geloven in gemeenschap. Het verhaal van een protestantse geloofsgemeenschap*. (Kampen: Kok 2009). Maybe our own study can stimulate a *congregational study* like that. Here, we make a provisional start with it. Because the researcher of this study also leads training seminars for preachers, he was in circumstances to consult colleagues for their observations and suggestions of sermon fragments in their own context with a prophetic kind of strength. The sermons that are discussed in this chapter are the fruits of suggestions and consultations in several of these seminars. The sermons were taken from public sources (8.3, 8.4, 8.7), or the preacher was contacted for the manuscript of a sermon and for consent to integrate it in our analysis (8.5, 8.6).

8.2 Making See as central explanatory concept

This research has provided us with clear answers. The main question of the study is: What is religiously happening in the prophetic dimension of preaching? Our compact answer is: Destructiva are exposed, interrupted, and overcome, illumination and catharsis happen and through these different processes, the congregation is initiated and edified to be participant in and to be resistant to the crisis of her context. In this concluding chapter, we redescribe the phenomenon through the perspective of a single explanatory concept.

Because of the prominence of optical, illuminative and mystagogical facets in the five concepts we generated, we decided to explore the purport of the concept of 'seeing.' In an initial exploration, we noticed the generative power of the concept and how it resonates in various disciplines. Gerben van Manen, for example, has explained how, according to Miskotte, 'seeing' is a crucial moment in the theological exegesis of Scripture, prior to preaching.⁴ Miskotte urged preachers to absorb the content, the words and the structures of the scriptural text to such a degree, that they begin 'to feel, to see and to understand what it means, also for the contemporary context.'⁵ Johan Cilliers has explored the same concept of 'seeing' in his inaugural lecture and applied it to homiletics in general.⁶ The concept also provides cross references to the arts and to literature: Bas Heijne, a Dutch literary critic, has written an essay on the meaning of literature in the 21st century with 'seeing' as focal point.⁷ The title of the pamphlet was inspired by the artistic credo of Joseph Conrad. In the preface of a novel, Conrad wrote to his hearers: 'My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*. That – and no more, and it is everything.'⁸

Making See turns out to be a promising and fruitful concept. With this concept, we are able to answer our research question in a most comprehensive and concentrated way. The concept integrates the expository, illuminative, cathartic and initiating qualities of the previous five concepts. This is essentially what prophetic speech is about: Making See.⁹

4 Manen, G. van, *Ontmoeting met God. Een multiperspectivisch model in het spoor van Franz Rosenzweig en Kornelis Heiko Miskotte*. (Boekencentrum Academic 2017), p 151.

5 Manen, G. van, *Ibid.* p 151.

6 Cilliers, J., *The optics of homiletics: preaching as reframing of perspective*. (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University Language Center 2012). See also: Josuttis, M., 'Über den Predigteinfall', in: Josuttis, M., *Rhetorik und Theologie in der Predigtarbeit. Homiletische Studien*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag 1985), pp 70-86.

7 Heijne, B., *Echt zien. Literatuur in het mediatijdperk*. (Amsterdam: Athenaeum – Polak & Van Genneep 2011).

8 Heijne, B., *Ibid.* p 76.

9 See for an analogy the title of a commentary on the prophetic book of Revelation: 'Sehend werden'. Cf Hirschberg, P., *Sehend werden. Wie die Johannesoffenbarung die Wirklichkeit erschließt*. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2013).

We distinguish in our data three basic interrelated qualities of seeing:

1 Making See means making something visible. In prophetic speech, preachers make destructiva visible. This verbal visualising of realities that damage the congregation is intrinsically interruptive.

2 Making See means transferring insight. Destructiva are not only made visible, they are qualified in a theological and spiritual way. By this, preachers make hearers perceive reality in specific ways.

3 Making See means voicing a vision.¹⁰ In prophetic speech, a vision is communicated, hearers are made participants in the power of the vision and urged to embody the ethical translation of it.

The various aspects of Making See are expounded in the five following paragraphs.

8.3 Making See: Vigilance to make destructiva visible

Prophetic speech is speech that is intensely occupied with evil. It is not speech merely concerned with ‘discerning signs of transcendence in everyday life’, as regular preaching sometimes is defined.¹¹ It is more specific and more grim: Prophetic speech is concerned with discerning realities that damage and disrupt human existence. The first quality of prophetic speech is this preoccupation with destructiva. Prophetic speech exists because destructiva exist. It is speech born out of the confrontation with them. In Scripture, for example, the initials of prophetic speech show up, not in Genesis 1 and 2, but in chapter 3, when disobedience, brokenness and estrangement to God had become realities, when God cursed a snake and prophesied the crushing of his head.¹² It is a refrain in our study: Prophetic speech is about discerning and overcoming destructiva. It always has kept elements of this grim cursing of evil.

In other words, prophetic speech is *responsive*. In Dutch theological discourse, Oepke Noordmans once characterised dogma as ‘the only one who is allowed to sleep during the sermon’, but who is awakened when preachers start to doze.¹³ In a comparable way, the prophetic dimension in preaching may be called a *dormant* aspect in preaching. It is like a watchdog that sleeps, but that is woken up by

10 See for the term ‘voicing a vision’: Cilliers, J., *Ibid.* p 5.

11 See Cilliers referring to Weyel, Gräß and Berger: Cilliers, J., *Ibid.* p 5.

12 See on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this specific text as *protevangelium* and as messianic prophecy: Arnold, B.T., *Genesis (New Cambridge Bible Commentary)*. (New York: Cambridge University Press 2009), pp. 68-75.

13 Noordmans, O., *Herschepping. Beknopte dogmatische handleiding voor godsdienstige toespraken en besprekingen*. (Amsterdam: Holland Uitgeversmaatschappij 1956), p 24.

intuitions of danger. The more dangerous the destructiva, the harder the barking. This characteristic can be referred to as *vigilance*. The prophetic dimension in preaching is the vigilant aspect in this practice. In it, there is a watchfulness operative for the effects destructiva may have on hearers and, more general, on the spiritual climate in communities and societies. Gerrit de Kruijf developed a model of theological reticence, when it comes to the prophetic function of the church, but he maintained this element of vigilance, the awareness that destructiva have a violent and pandemic potential.¹⁴ De Kruijf proposed that in a democracy, Christians learn a mode of ‘thinking twice’: They learn to make a habit of living in different kind of rationalities. They join societal discourse and they are able to think along with it, in terms of the current rationalities. But they are also able to ‘think again’, to approach the same dilemma from a specifically Christian perspective. Nonetheless this cooperativeness, the church stays vigilant, and when ‘she discerns the devil’, her cooperative role in society is reconsidered and postponed, as De Kruijf put it. Then, prophetic speech is required.¹⁵

The recent, contextual reconstruction of Barth’s ‘Emergency Homiletic’, by Angela Dienhart Hancock, can be seen as a historical example of how this vigilance is translated into prophetic witness.¹⁶ In the period when Hitler seized power (1932-1933), Barth organised two semesters in homiletics for his students, and in these lectures, he developed a homiletic in which the freedom of the Gospel is the crucial theme. This freedom is seriously endangered, according to Barth, when the Gospel (and the sermon), is made subordinate to other, so-called ultimate realities (like the nation, the state, *das Volk*, political interests, the public relevance of the church). When these realities begin to dominate the church (the liturgy, the sermon, the mind of the preacher, the receptiveness of the hearers), the openness to speak and to hear God’s word is severely compromised. Then, a vigilant prophetic protest may awaken.

The nine criteria for preaching Barth developed in these homiletical lectures, are all contextual coordinates developed in response to this danger. They are the fruits of vigilance. Hancock showed how each of the nine criteria has specific contextual reasons. For instance, the criterium of the church as the primal locus of preaching (*Kirchlichkeit*) is critique on *das Volk* as its primal locus; the *Bekennnismässigkeit* of the sermon is critique on the church being dominated by public interest and a political agenda as main priorities; the *Amtsmässigkeit* of the preacher underlines that the locus of legitimacy of the preacher is not situated

14 Kruijf, G.G. de, *Waakzaam en nuchter. Over de christelijke ethiek in een democratie*. (Baarn: Ten Have 1994), pp 230-246.

15 Kruijf, G.G. de, *Ibid.* pp 14-15.

16 Hancock, A.D., *Karl Barth’s Emergency Homiletic. 1932-1933. A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 2013).

in human criteria, including race (think of the Aryan paragraph), but in God's calling. These homiletical criteria were developed as Barth's attempt to discredit the concrete practices of his days, to detoxicate preaching from these other, so-called ultimate realities, while through these criteria, he simultaneously tried to defend the freedom of the essential act of the church, namely the preaching of the Gospel.

A central result of our research, related to this vigilant quality, is 'making visible'. The data show that preachers make visible what they see as potentially damaging for the hearers, and this accent on visibility is related to the obscurity that surrounds and characterises destructiva. Evil often happens in the murk of the unsaid, the unacknowledged and the subconscious. People keep silent about evil, for instance, because of group pressure or unhealthy obsessions with own identities. Persons and communities can develop their own truths to such a degree that rationality, faith, the tradition of the church or moral considerations are regarded as subordinate to that identity.¹⁷ There, in circumstances like those, destructiva can thrive.¹⁸

The problem of the obscurity of evil is even deeper than these mechanisms. Paul Ricoeur has written about 'the fundamental enigma' that surrounds evil: Evil is omnipresent and fundamentally inapprehensible, it has a tendency and a power to nestle itself in all kinds of realities and it has a resistance to being exposed.¹⁹ The Dutch psychiatrist and philosopher Gerrit Glas has explained how there is something in evil that makes it hardly expressible for human beings and how it can make people numb and literally speechless.²⁰ Several disciplines consulted in our research speak of evil, not in terms of failure, but in terms of a force.²¹ We explain these backgrounds rather explicitly, because they are crucial to understand the prophetic dimension in preaching. It is prophetic speech that tries to break these silences surrounding evil, to give words to what is resistant to be named. Making visible is a first moment of interrupting this hiddenness of destructiva. In the analysis, we have shown how through iconic and iconoclastic fragments, preachers make their hearers aware of the power and the danger of these destructiva.

17 See for instance Stangneth, B., *Het kwade denken*. (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact 2017), pp 148-164.

18 Johan Cilliers wrote about tendencies in communities towards 'shared blindness and group myopia': 'A painful reminder of this would be the ideology of apartheid, which for instance excelled in structured short-sightedness, if not structured blindness – and the organised and structured remorselessness consequently suffered by some sectors of the church.' Cilliers, J., *The optics of homiletics*, p 6.

19 Hoeven, J. van der, 'Het kwaad: alomtegenwoordig, ondoorgrondelijk, onoorspronkelijk.' In: *Beweging* 59 (1995)/4, p 110.

20 Glas, G, 'Het kwaad, de taal en de schaamte.' In: *Beweging* 59 (1995)/4, pp 112-113.

21 Long, Th.G., *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith*. (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans 2011), p 135. See also Verbrugge, A., *Tijd van onbehegen. Filosofische essays over een cultuur op drift*. (Nijmegen: Sun 2004), pp 252-285.

A second central result of this study, when it comes to the concept of exposing *destructiva*, is the role that the personal or theological biography of the preacher has in it. The preacher ‘already knows’ what damages the church and society, either because of personal biographical experiences or because of living a life in close community with those who suffer. In an experiential way, the preacher knows the damaging power of *destructiva*. When autobiographical theology is defined as ‘not starting from well-ordered and systematically arranged knowledge, but from a life as it has developed and as it is developing in its connection with others,’²² prophetic speech is an example of it. Our research can function as an impulse to take biography seriously in theology and preaching, and to consider it as one of the epistemological sources that enable vigilance, when it comes to exposing *destructiva*. Interestingly, the data also show a connection between crisis, biography, and the calling of preachers. It is in their calling, the biography of preachers is ‘consecrated,’ so to say, made fruitful in the service of interrupting evil.

We now turn to a local practice, a miniature to illustrate the vigilant dimension in preaching. The example selected is taken from a sermon held in May 2017, in a Roman Catholic parish in the Netherlands. The text of the sermon is taken from John 14.15-21. To understand the incident, knowledge of the context is important. The sermon, delivered by a senior priest who is known for his temperate and academic attitude, was given during a period in Dutch society of vigorous discussions about the theme of ‘*voltooid leven*’, literally ‘completed life’. Legislation was prepared with the intention to give citizens the right to end their life under medical guidance, without present reasons of physical or mental illness. In the week after this sermon was held, political negotiations to form a new government in the Netherlands, collided because of these medical-ethical and religious themes. Apart from this specific actuality, the sermon is part of a broader sensitivity: Can a secular liberal attitude become ideological and dismissive, maybe even allergic, to Christian beliefs and values?

The sermon focuses on the tension between the (Johannine understanding of the) world and the community of disciples. The preacher explains that the setting of chapter 14 is Jesus’ farewell discourse, and that in it, he ‘detached’ his disciples from the world. The disciples are called to avoid the world. This avoidance is not about renouncing or forsaking this world. It is neither about avoiding the joy that creation can offer us: ‘If you live a life of gratitude, of care and reverence, you can discern God’s presence in his created world’. But later in the Gospel of John, the word ‘world’ gets a ‘darker colour’. According to the preacher, John refers with the term ‘world’ to those who do not accept Jesus, ‘and who, progressively aggressive, resist the light and the life he brings’. The keyword the preacher accentuates is ‘hostility’.

22 Barnard, M., ‘My father’s tobacco-jar, Church Square Pretoria and Freedom Park: An autoethnographical exploration’, in: *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35/2, p 2.

Then, the present situation is addressed: 'In our own times, we are also aware of how the vulnerability of our faith is exposed to a neutrality in which de facto nothing is sacred anymore, where everything is grey. (...) Maybe things used to be too self-evident in our faith, but that which is most precious to us, is now questioned from all sides and it looks like an attack. This questioning of our faith is done by a kind of people that try to hide their profanations under the guise of a principal neutrality. But, brothers and sisters, do not let yourself be misguided: A neutrality like that seems very principal, but it is the wrapping of a lie. The message of this so-called neutrality is in fact a disguised form of indifference, of refusing to make a conscious choice. But, if you are not prepared to make choices, you may be carried away by the first gust of wind.'

In our interpretation, what happens in this passage is vigilance or alertness. The preacher searches for words to describe an intuition, namely that beliefs and values important to Christians are questioned from so many sides and with such a specific attitude, that, (though it is presented as 'neutrality'), 'it looks like an attack'. Indifference is interpreted as an attack against what is sacred. Or, to be more precise, the preacher suspects that the indifference is fuelled by a specific kind of aggression. In the act of 'making visible', preachers try to make hearers aware of these hidden mechanisms.

But there are other instances of vigilance in the sermon as well. The sermon is in fact not primarily about a certain Christian identity that is being threatened. The sermon is, in other words, not sectarian or parochial, merely defending the identity of a minority group under pressure. The sermon is vigilant about what it means for a society when indifference and neutrality become normative. The sermon is about character formation, about the kind of character that is needed to withstand evil and to serve what is good. The preacher is vigilant about how a mentality of neutrality and indifference may be incapable of inspiring and enabling human beings to fight for what is good. In the final paragraph of the sermon, we read about the process of character formation and the discipline it takes. We read about 'being able to make choices', about 'our will and our mind that have to become stronger to be able to make these choices', about 'our consciousness that has to remember what is good' and about 'our will that must be stimulated to do this good'. The vigilance in this sermon is not only about an assumed attack on Christian beliefs and values, it is also vigilance about what happens to the moral infrastructure of a society when indifference becomes pandemic. The preacher tries to make visible to the hearers that this indifference is potentially damaging for any human community.

8.4 Making See: Interrupting to show alternatives

Commenting on his 11th symphony, the Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich wrote: Can music attack evil? Can it make man stop and think? Can it cry out, and thereby draw man's attention to various vile acts to which he has grown accustomed? (1.2.4). Apparently, his music included a motive of interrupting his

listeners, to ‘make them stop and think’. In this chapter, we unfold the theological logic that is operative in the concept of Making See, and one of the sequences in it is this act of intervention. We can pose Shostakovich’ question to our data as well: Can *sermons* make humans stop and think? and *How* do prophetic sermons interrupt damaging discourses?

The results of our study show that interventions begin with ‘making visible’ (8.3). By making *destructiva* visible, their hidden dynamics are interrupted. A second feature of the intervening moment is *freedom*. In their interruptions, preachers make the impression of being free in a *parrhēsiastic* way (1.2.3.c).²³ A third characteristic is the threatening character of interventions. It is in the interruptions we most clearly see something of the dangerous power prophetic speech can have.²⁴ We illustrate these characteristics in an example taken from Dutch homiletical history.

In March 1948, on the brink of the celebration of Easter and amidst the armed conflict of the Dutch government in Indonesia (by some called ‘police actions’, by others ‘a colonial war’), Rev Jan Buskes preached in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. The (radio broadcasted) sermon was about the confrontation between Pilate and Jesus.²⁵ Texts for the sermon were sayings from Jesus: ‘I am the truth’ (John 14.6) and from Pilate: ‘What is truth?’ (John 18.38)

In the opening of the sermon, the preacher explains that it deals with one of the hardest facets of the Gospel, namely the absoluteness of Jesus and the fact that we have to make a choice. According to him, this is exactly what Pilate did not want to do: He did not want to make a choice. Buskes portrayed Pilate as a meek and tolerant man, except for when he was confronted with alternative absolute truth claims, like the claims of Jesus. The Roman Imperium was Pilate’s absolute truth and therefore Jesus had to withdraw his own claims of absoluteness. ‘Everything may be questioned’, Buskes wrote, ‘except the absolute claims of the Roman Imperium’. When someone questioned those claims, Pilate became absolute himself, and no longer afraid to use violence. The point Buskes wants to make is about ‘violence without truth’, about how the denial of Jesus’ truth contains a hidden form of aggression. In confrontation

23 It is this freedom that often impresses contemporaries. While studying Werner Krusche’s sermons, we read Eberhard Jüngel’s first experiences with the church in the DDR, and it was the freedom of speech that caught his attention: ‘Ich habe als junger Mensch, als Schüler, im Kontext der immer despotischer werdenden ‘sozialistischen’ Schule, die Kirche kennengelernt als den einzigen Ort, an den man ungeniert die Wahrheit sagen konnte’. For Jüngel this became an *Urerlebnis*, and it stimulated his interest in finding the sources of this evangelical *parrhēsia*. See Jüngel, E., *Die Leidenschaft, Gott zu denken. Ein Gespräch über Denk- und Lebenserfahrungen*. (Zürich: TVZ 2009), pp 12-13.

24 Lieven Boeve made a plea for the legitimacy of danger in theology and preaching: ‘Just as danger constitutes a basic category in a correct understanding of the life and message of Jesus, it likewise forms a basic category in the formation of a Christian identity’. See: Boeve, L., *God Interrupts History. Theology in a Time of Upheaval*. (London: Continuum 2007), p 198.

25 See the printed summary of the sermon in: Buskes, J.J., *Droom en protest. Getuigenissen uit een halve eeuw van strijd*. (Baarn: Ten Have 1974), pp 135-139 (I owe this reference to prof. Herman Noordegraaf).

with Jesus, this violence may catch fire. Buskes then implements this thought by giving examples of 'world powers using violence without truth': 'Pilate's scourge in Palestine, Hitler's concentration camps in Germany, the gallows of Dimitrov in Bulgaria, the *kampungs* burned down in Java by general Spoor, Masaryk's suicide in Czechoslovakia. With the sentence 'the *kampungs* of general Spoor', Buskes referred to the incidents that, when railway-bridges were sabotaged in Java, the nearest *kampungs* were collectively burned down as reprisal by the Dutch army, led by general Spoor.²⁶

What happens in this sermon is what we call 'exposing destructiva', a making visible and making aware of violent realities that are suppressed or not known to the public. Buskes intervenes in a tacit atmosphere, in which possible dark sides of the war in Indonesia are forbidden to be spoken of in public, in this critical way. This is what we call *parrhēsiastic* freedom and *Geschichtsschreibung gegen sich selbst*: It takes courage and freedom to speak in a radio broadcasted sermon during a colonial war, about possible *Dutch* atrocities. Here, we sense the threatening character these interventions may have for those in power.

The incident is also an example of the tension happening in the vocation of the preacher. After the incident, Buskes has written about how he was scorned in the public media.²⁷ *Elsevier*, a Dutch opinion magazine, wrote that 'this reverend deserves the contempt of the Dutch people' and the State Secretary of Defence sent a complaint about Buskes to the Synod of his church. Buskes replied with a letter, in which he wrote about the calling of the church to testify against violence like this, not aiming to insult anybody, but 'for the sake of our own people that is co-responsible for this violence'. Buskes' response shows his vigilance about how a society is damaged when its integrity is lost through violence like this. Buskes, in this letter, also wrote the Minister about the *libertas prophetandi*, as he called it, which he related to his preaching vocation (both during World War II, and these early postwar years): '*Mijn prediking is mij ernst*'. 'Preaching, your excellency, is serious business for me'.²⁸

A further interesting result, concerning the character of interventions in prophetic speech, is the dialogue that can be discerned in the interruptions. Our research shows that the interventions, threatening and acerbic as they sometimes are, are part of a dialogical ground structure. Interventions are not isolated oracular incidents, but they are part of a sermon and the format of the sermon influences the character of the interventions. One of the surprising results of our analysis of this interruptive aspect is this dialogical feature. Prophetic speech does not end

26 In 2016, the Swiss-Dutch historian René Limpach published his research-study *De brandende kampongs van Generaal Spoor* (Amsterdam: Boom 2016), in which he wrote about the question whether the excessive violence of the Dutch army was incidental or structural. His study is a historical reconstruction of the latter.

27 See Buskes, J.J., *Hoera voor het leven*. (Amsterdam: De Brug - Djambatan 1959), pp 239-242. See also Buskes, J.J., *Droom en protest*, pp 137-139, and Jongh, E.D.J., de, *Buskes. Dominee van het volk*. (Kampen: Kok 1998), pp 280-291.

28 Buskes, J.J., *Droom en protest.*, p 138.

communicative processes, but is a specific quality in these processes.²⁹ When we analyse the confrontations as part of the rhetorical and theological structure of entire sermons, and when we analyse the function of these confrontations, they turn out to be part of a conversation. In our reconstruction, this conversation can accelerate into confrontation, but even then, it hardly ever ends these ongoing communicative processes.

This dialogical ground structure is also an interior dialogue, i.e. for the preacher. We generated the term 'attuning' to show how preachers in their interventions search for integrity between considerations of necessity, responsibility, and effectivity (4.2.a). The dialogical ground structure is interior for the congregation as well. The sermons can be framed as 'interior dialogues of the congregation' in search for direction and spiritual decidedness. In the sermons, for instance, we found creative tensions between passing criticism on others and self-criticism, between discontinuity with dominant narratives and being part of that same narrative, of serving continuity and regeneration of a shared narrative by being dissident (4.1.a). The congregation is located in the midst of an internally pluralised context in which it is obliged to search for its own position and contribution in relation to the other fundamental existential choices surrounding it.

Interestingly, this polyphony is traceable in the sermons, even in the interruptions. In the prophetic moment, the church interiorises the crisis of her context: she takes it seriously, she takes part in its discourses, she acknowledges the complexity of it, she honours the victims of it, she exposes the dark sides of it, she ferociously interrupts its destructiveness, and at the same time, she searches for illumination and catharsis in it. In this way, the prophetic sermon can be seen (to use a term from Matthew 6.6), as the *tameion* of the congregation, as the inner chamber to which Jesus pointed the congregation, as a place of solitude, reflection, and prayer.³⁰ It is into this *tameion* the congregation takes the crisis of her context with her, relating it to Scripture and bringing it into prayer. Likewise, the Christian congregation, in her prophetic calling, can serve as the *tameion*, the inner chamber, of her culture.³¹ The illumination and the catharsis the congregation may find in these moments, may be regenerative too for her context and culture. Prophetic theology is not necessarily a form of rivalry, as we learned from Rowan Williams, it can be a form

29 Miskotte, H.H., *Pastor en profet. Over de andere kant van pastoraat*. (Baarn: Ten Have 1992), p 191, 201. See also: Dulk, M. den, 'Om terug te komen op Mans Miskotte', in: *In de Waagschaal. Tijdschrift voor theologie, cultuur en politiek*. 45 (2016)/11, pp 4-7.

30 See for a similar reflection on the importance of this room, this 'Kammer', in its protective and regenerative function, Gerhard von Rad's sermon on Isaiah 26, in paragraph 6.1.a.

31 Miskotte recognised this dialogical dynamic in the structure of Scripture. See his remarks on the 'dialogical structure of the Bible, in which a conversation is going on, between prophet and people, between apostle and congregation, an often tensed conversation, but not a conversation that 'forces' something. Think of the apostolic call 'we ask you, we exhort you' (see I Thess. 4.1, I Thess 5.12, Phil. 4.3, II Joh. 5)'. Miskotte, H.H., *Pastor en profet*, p 191.

of friendship too (see 7.2.b). It is a friendship proving its strength and love in giving the best the church has, namely searching for illumination amidst various forms of crisis in a culture.

The theological point we want to make, is that prophetic speech, somehow needs *debate*. Jan Veenhof made the point that *for us*, the term ‘revelation’ has developed into a more or less absolute term that does not allow critique or debate, while in the New Testament, prophetic speech is part of a conversation. It is speech proposed to the congregation and possibly in need of correction and coordination.³² Modern biblical scholarship also points to the role of debate and dispute within prophetic texts and within the prophetic corpus. Walter Brueggemann designed his Old Testament Theology in a polyphonic way of core testimonies, countertestimonies, and unsolicited testimonies. ‘It is my judgment’, he wrote, ‘that while the Old Testament can make assumptions about and claims for what is real, it is unable and unwilling to do so by way of silencing counter voices.’³³ In Brueggemann’s design, the core testimony in the Scriptures starts off as a form of apologetics, but the speech moves on in acknowledging all kinds of objections and voices of dissent against the core statements and these counter voices become an essential part of the testimony itself. Brueggemann argues that we receive the sacred texts through this multiplicity of perspectives. Other recent studies show the plurality between prophetic texts in the Old Testament corpus and the intertextual discourse that is going on between them.³⁴

These observations confirm our own analysis of prophetic speech as part of a conversation. Prophetic speech may have an image of being dominant speech, intolerable of critical responses, even inclined to silence counter voices and alternative perspectives. But in the interruptions as we reconstructed them in this research, we see a meandering movement, where self-criticism is alternated with criticism on others, where the truth of other perspectives is acknowledged, while at the same time deficits in these alternative perspectives are not concealed. It is in and through the debate in this shared narrative that prophetic moments emerge. Williams’ Christmas sermon of 2011 (4.1.a), for example, is conversational and inclusive, while it also contains moments of uncompromising interruptions.

32 Veenhof, J., *De kracht die hemel en aarde verbindt. De identiteit van de Geest van God als relatiestichter*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2016), p 216. Stewart-Sykes made a similar point (1.2.1.b), and the prophetic experiment in the early Reformation show a similar intuition (1.2.2.b).

33 Brueggemann, W., *Theology of the Old Testament. Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1997). p 68. See: Talstra, E., ‘Van Priesters, Prekers en Partizanen. Walter Brueggemann en de theologie van het Oude Testament’, in: Dubbink, J., *Bijbelse Theologie (ACEBT)* 30 (2015), pp 73-88.

34 Talstra refers to the study of H. Leene ‘Newness in Old Testament Prophecy (Leiden: Brill 2014), see Talstra, E., *Ibid.* p 10.

The generative strength of interruptions in prophetic speech, as we reconstruct it, is situated in the fact that they contain an *alternative*. Our research shows that interruptions are not only critical, they are also transformational. The interruptions are part of a shared narrative, and for the sake of that shared narrative, destructiva in it are exposed and interrupted, and an alternative is proposed that is potentially salutary for all. Ecclesiastical prophetic speech that is only critical and dismissive, without formulating generative alternatives, can be considered as *deficient* prophetic speech. In our reconstruction, prophetic speech contains a moment of *Making See alternatives*. In prophetic speech, destructiva are made visible while alternatives are made *preferable*. Interestingly, recent studies show that change not necessarily happens through confrontation, but more likely through the identification of hearers with inspiring alternatives.³⁵

8.5 Making See: Illumination and transferring insight

Makings See, as we move to a third characteristic, does not only imply notions of visibility, of making destructiva visible, it also refers to notions of insight. In prophetic speech, a specific perception of reality is communicated with the aim that hearers begin to see and begin to share that perspective. In our research, we have referred to this as the 'illuminative dynamic'. The power of prophetic speech is when a coalescence occurs between the exposition of destructiva and specific words from Scripture. Then, sacred texts 'come alive', or 'rise to the occasion', as Rosenstock-Huessy called it (5.2.a) and then, theological and spiritual insight may occur about the reality in which the hearers live. The redemptive drama about which hearers read in Scripture is recognised as happening, in a specific sense, before their eyes. Through this mechanism, the reality in which they live is qualified in a theological and spiritual way.

How does this illumination and qualification work? Our research shows that preachers, on the one hand, prove to have an 'absorbing competence' in it (5.2.b). The genius of prophecy may not primarily be in its theological originality, but in its heightened receptivity (a receptivity that is both horizontal and vertical).³⁶ Preachers are contemporaries and in an inductive way, they absorb what is going on in their context. Van der Velden, whose terms we employ in this paragraph, called this the 'experience of the depth dimension of existence' (in Dutch: 'de bevinding van het bestaan').³⁷ Interestingly, at this level there is communality:

35 See Cilliers, J., 'Skryfbeskouing en oorrerings-retoriek: Perspektiewe op Performatiewe Prediking', in: *Acta Theologica* 2009/1, pp 1-16. Cf pp 6-7.

36 In 8.8, we describe the specific interaction between inductive and illuminative aspects in the coming to be of prophetic speech.

37 Velden, M.J.G. van der, *K.H. Miskotte als prediker. Een homiletisch onderzoek*. ('s Gravenhage: Boekencentrum 1984), p 193.

In the sermons, we meet contemporaries who share this perception of reality: philosophers and writers, poets and singers, allies who see certain destructiva as well, members of society who suffer, youth in ghettos that tell something about hypocrisy and violence. All these voices participate in the sermons, and their 'experiences of existence' are forwarded and integrated by preachers. As we already said: Prophetic speech is part of a shared narrative and has thoroughly dialogical structures.

But there is also a vertical receptivity. Van der Velden called this the 'experience of Scripture' (in Dutch: 'de bevinding van het Woord'). In the sermons we analysed, preachers find words from Scripture ('recognise words', as we call it) that have a specific relevance and power for the circumstances in which the hearers live. We used Leo Baeck's term, who spoke of *nachschaffender Beredsamkeit*: In sermons, specific words from Scripture are excarnated, and these words 'travel' into current times and circumstances and facilitate new judgements to happen. For Bonhoeffer, for example, the words from the Apocalypse: 'Aber ich habe wider dich', had a crystallising and an epiphanic power for the situation in which he preached. These scriptural words are old words, Baeck underlined, but they facilitate the emergence of new insight. Prophetic speech is about triggering this insight. The mystery of this illuminative dynamic is that somehow this new speech *participates* in the authority of the original texts. The words have power: they prove to be able to do justice to the contemporary experience of existence of the hearers, but they are also able to deepen it, to qualify it, to withspeak it, and to open it up for God's presence. What happens through this illuminative dynamic is the claim that the present reality of the hearers participates in the same redemptive drama that is going on in Scripture.

In this way, Making See can be interpreted as making hearers understand what the kerygma of Jesus Christ means for contemporary hearers. Michael Beintker made the observation that the boundaries between kerygmatic and prophetic speech in the New Testament, are thin or fluid. What are called *Gemeindebildungen*, he wrote, should be interpreted as pneumatological 'Aktualisierungen der Christusbotschaft'.³⁸ According to us, prophetic speech has a similar structure. It is *Gemeindebildung* as it actualises the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is through

38 Beintker, M., 'Das (unvermeidliche) prophetische Risiko beim Verkündigen', in *Zeichen der Zeit* 40 (1986), p 67-77: '...und man kann überhaupt fragen, ob nicht große Teile des ganzen Neuen Testaments diese Signatur literarisch fixierte Gemeindeprophetie tragen. Zumindest haben wir uns die Grenzen zwischen dem Kerygma und der Prophetie äußerst fließend vorzustellen, denn immer da, wo das Kerygma im Blick auf konkrete Adressaten formuliert wird (...), reden die neutestamentlichen Zeugen prophetisch. Die in manchen Phasen der exegetischen Diskussion rasch als 'Gemeindebildungen' bewerteten Aktualisierungen der Christusbotschaft im Neuen Testament müssen als vom Heiligen Geist geschenktes prophetisches Zeugnis respektiert werden und haben in aus diesem Grunde für uns eine Autorität von der man in modernistischer Gutmütigkeit und Ignoranz nichts abmarkten kann. Das Neue Testament ist ein apostolisches und prophetisches Buch.'

these actualisations that kerygmatic and prophetic concentrations can happen in sermons. In our view, this theological dynamic is at the centre of prophetic speech: In the 'Aktualisierung der Christusbotschaft', illumination happens, destructiva and their alternatives become visible, and a redemptive power draws hearers into new modes of existence. In the examples below, taken from a series of sermons on Ezekiel held in a local congregation, we illustrate this specific intermingling of kerygmatic and prophetic features in *Gemeindebildung*.

How do these abstract theological mechanisms function in local practices of preaching? How does this *Gemeindebildung* happens and how can we recognise kerygmatic and prophetic aspects in local practices of preaching? To answer these questions, we now turn to a local practice. We studied nine sermons from a cycle of sermons on the prophet Ezekiel, held by the same preacher, in the second part of the year 2001. In the sermon, the rhythm of Protestant congregational life is visible: Sundays of celebrating the Lord's Supper, of baptism, and of the confirmation of congregation members into office. From a societal and political point of view, this was a turbulent period. In September 2001, the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York took place, and the global tension it caused was detectable in Dutch society. Fierce public disputes arose, especially focusing on the debate with Islam in general, and with the Islamic community in the Netherlands in particular (a community embodied by citizens with often a migrant background). To add to the tension, populism suddenly seemed omnipresent and powerful. The populist politician Pim Fortuyn, who had an explicitly negative agenda on Islam and who was openly critical of the political and governmental establishment, gained momentum: In March 2002, he would win the city council elections in Rotterdam with a landslide victory. In May 2002, national elections were scheduled, and these elections suddenly gained the potential of causing fundamental changes. In the last four months of 2001, all these insecurities pulsed through society. There was an eerie atmosphere. The interesting question is: What kind of traces of this reality do we find in the sermons? How does *Gemeindebildung* happen in it, how do illuminative, kerygmatic, and prophetic processes happen in these sermons? The following pages contain a small case study of how these realities are addressed within these sermons.

A first example is taken from a sermon held on a Sunday on which the Lord's Supper was celebrated (14 October 2001). In the morning service, a homily was held on Ezekiel 3.3: 'Eat this word'. In the afternoon of the same Sunday, the preacher meditated on what it means to be a watchman (Ezekiel 3.16-21). He starts the sermon with an example related to the current reality: 'When you receive an envelope with white powder (read: anthrax, CMAE), and when people in your surrounding start to get ill, you have to inform the authorities. If you do not do that, you endanger the lives of others.' 'In America people are convinced of this, and we can only agree with them. We all have had to face the facts.' Here, the atmosphere after 9/11 enters the sermon. The preacher says: 'We shall have to be vigilant, as the apostle says, but also be sober and

temperate. We should not begin to panic. Panic is the reaction of those who were not vigilant, and who are now overreacting and frightening the people. The press should take its responsibility in this, just like the government and the church. The church definitely has a task in our society to be alert and to give signals'. In this sermon introduction, the preacher gives direction to hearers, while the reference to the actuality is at the same time an opening for discussing the pericope taken from Ezekiel. Actuality and Scripture are drawn into a mutual illuminative dynamic.

The keywords are 'endangering the lives of others (by not warning them)' and 'being held responsible'. 'Ezekiel is made watchman', the preacher reiterates and he explains that a watchman searches the horizon for calamities: 'If he fails, then his society is in danger'. 'What does it actually mean that a prophet is called a watchman?' (adding in a side-remark: 'not only a prophet, you can also think of an apostle or a preacher as a watchman'). Does he know more than others, does he have a sharper look at developments around him? According to the preacher this is not the point: 'We should not forget that many warnings for specific negative developments in our society, like the delusion of the economy and environmental disturbance, came from voices outside the church'. 'Being a watchman is not related to expertise, it is related to absorbing the Word, to eat it' ('like we did this morning'). Ezekiel must watch over the Word, the preacher explains, he must warn those who become godless, that is: Who hear the word but who disregard it. "If you do not warn them", the Lord threatens the prophet, "I will hold you accountable for their blood".

In the sermon, the preacher meditates on what it may mean to warn other people who are leaving God, while at the same time he warns the congregation-members not to leave God themselves. Of course, there is a legitimate reticence in warning and we are all slightly allergic to it, he admits. The principal mistake we often make, he explains, is that we claim authority for ourselves. But it is not about us, or about the church, it is about God, 'the God who hates apostasy and infidelity'. 'In verse 17, we literally read: "You shall warn them for Me."' According to the preacher, warnings like these can be impulses to turn around and to seek God. 'If you have ever experienced things like these (that warnings can make you turn around), you will want to serve others with it.'

It is interesting to see how in this sermon the preacher empowers the congregation to be Christian congregation in rather turbulent times. He does not join discourses of fear, popular at that moment. He does not intensify the fear apocalyptically and he does not soften it with some kind of eschatological consolation. He faces it and qualifies those who are now in panic, nota bene, as people who were not vigilant. This is one of the signs that is given to society: Here, in the church, a different discourse is going on, and it is not paralysed by fear. Interestingly, the preacher also transcends discourses of 'them and we': In this sermon. The risk of leaving God is a risk that is present inside and outside the congregation. And: Insight in what is harmful for society can come through

all kinds of voices, from inside and outside the church. In our interpretation, the preacher translates the biblical theme of being a watchman, to the theme of how the church can be vigilant and be a blessing for its society. In several ways, the preacher interiorises the crisis that is going on in society, he reads Scripture from that perspective, and then he communicates the illuminative patterns he discerned in studying the text in the present times.

In the following week, in a service where children were baptised, the sermon deals with the theme of responsibility (the text of the sermon is Ezekiel 18.23). A similar illuminative dynamic happens in this sermon. In the opening paragraph, the preacher reflects on the present moment: 'Especially when children are baptised, you sometimes wonder about the world that we have built (or that we have broken down), about a world in which contrasts become sharper and egoism rises'. (...). 'This time makes us think, about the evil of terrorism, but also about the causes and the roots of it.' Then the preacher explains: 'Prophets can suddenly obtain a specific actuality. I already decided to preach about Ezekiel before the terrorist attacks happened, but now that we are reading these prophetic chapters one by one, their actuality strikes me.'

In Israel's Exile, the preacher continues, a question emerged: 'Why do all these things happen to us?' There was a saying that "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and that the children's teeth are set on edge because of it" (18.2). 'Children suffer under the sins of their fathers, is the thought.' According to the preacher, this saying is about 'feeling like a victim', and there is truth in it: Destructive trends spread out, even over generations. 'If God makes us honest', he explains, 'we see causes and effects. How we deal with the environment and how it effects the future. How we have become richer and richer (and other parts of the world do not share in it) and how we have become entangled in our prosperity. How the congregation of Christ has been weakened, by indolence and by anxious and paralysing forms of conservatism. Well, then you see how a next generation comes to leave the church, because they hardly have examples of living faith any longer'. Here, we see how illuminative dynamics occur in sermons. An exilic discourse in Ezekiel on cause and effects leads to a resonance of it in the contemporary situation of the preacher. 'If God opens our eyes and makes us honest', the preacher says, 'then we see these mechanisms in our own ecclesiastical life'.

On the other side, this discourse of feeling like a victim, is also dangerous. 'People legitimise their exit from the church, by referring to the hypocrisy of other churchgoers or the oppressive narrowness of an earlier generation.' According to the preacher, 'they have left God, but do not want to be held responsible for it'. 'We all have our excuses: "It is hard to be faithful in these changing times", "I am so busy", "the world has become complicated". But God does not accept this playing the victim. "All souls are Mine", we read in verse 4. Every single person has a personal responsibility, and "the soul who sins, shall die". The preacher interprets these verses as having an exposing power: 'You

cannot hide yourself', he exclaims to hearers in a direct appeal to them. 'Every human being is placed before God. Therefore, you do not need to be a fatalist or a pessimist. Of course, there are lines through the generations. There are traces of blessings as there are also negative influences that are passed down through the generations. I hear the stories, I see the damage. But this morning, I have to tell you in God's name: You are personally placed before God. You are responsible for your life – or for your downfall'. Paradoxically, the preacher explains, Ezekiel stresses this responsibility because it creates space, space for returning to God.

In the final paragraphs, the preacher explains that in Ezekiel 18 a debate or dispute is going on. There is a fierce dialogue to be heard: 'You say: "God's way is not right", you say: "We cannot help it"'. According to the preacher, it is a delightful characteristic in God that he is willing to have a dispute with us: "Tell Me, what do you think of Me, spit it out! Then I shall say what I think of you". The preacher explores the Evangelical power in these dynamics: 'You are not merely a face in the crowd or a number in the masses. You are not a victim either. You, human being, you are addressed by the Eternal One. You are called by your name. Even in this our time, where many people leave the church, you should not hide yourself by complaining or by boasting that you are someone who stays.' The essence is: 'Your life is not doomed; your life is claimed by God.'

In sermons like this, we see the concepts of our analysis functioning in a local practice. With a kind of 'absorbing competence' (5.2.a), the preacher is in dialogue with his context. One of the significant features of these months in 2001 was an atmosphere of blaming and victimisation. In the populist discourse, the establishment was explicitly blamed for many deficits in society. In the discourse on the so-called 'failed integration of migrants', social democratic policies of inculturation were blamed, either for their naivety or for their lack of guarding and promoting Dutch national values. In the terrorist debate, victimisation played a similar important role: Terrorism was seen as an effect of a colonial past or as the effect of the imbalance between rich and poor countries. On the other side, Western societies were seen as victims of barbarians. And there was another, more elusive, atmosphere present in these months: The sense of fear, a sense of societal tensions possibly rising to a dangerous scale. The preacher absorbs all these themes (5.2.a), he adopts them in his language, metaphors and sermon-themes (we read of victims, of the sins of others, of blaming, we read of pessimists, fatalists and of a doom hanging over our lives), he recognises the themes in Scripture (5.1.a) and, in the sermon, he qualifies the contemporary reality in theological and spiritual ways (5.3.a).

The prophetic dimension can also be discerned in the vigilance of the preacher for destructive aspects operative in all these realities, especially destructive for the religious life of the members of the congregation. The preacher explicates one damaging aspect in particular: Victimisation may lead to an attitude of hiding yourself from God and excusing yourself before God. In the sermon,

the mechanisms of blaming others and of hiding yourself before God are deconstructed and counterbalanced. Hearers are spoken to as accountable human beings and they are triggered into a debate with God, a debate that may accelerate into a conflict. In the sermon, this debate actually happens. The edifying and empowering quality in this sermon is in the paradoxical truth that victimisation weakens identities, whereas being aware of God and of the human accountability to God, may strengthen the awareness that it matters how humans live and which choices they make.

A final example, taken from this series of sermons, is from a sermon on Ezekiel 34 (verse 11: 'Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out'). We analyse a series of sermons, because that is how things work in congregational life: It is not about a single sermon, it is about the cadence of weekly preaching, and of slowly getting a grip on what is happening in a society. This specific sermon was held on the last Sunday before Advent (25 November 2001). 'This pericope is situated after the fall of Jerusalem', the preacher explains. 'In the last weeks, as we read the previous chapters, we noticed the deadly seriousness with which God disputes with his people'. But now that Jerusalem has fallen, the tone changes. Notice the focus on God, in 'I Myself will search for my sheep', the preacher remarks. This accent is critical: Other leaders, political, societal, and religious, had received a calling to look after the people, in God's name, but they did not do it: 'They fed themselves'. Therefore, the flock disintegrated. 'Shepherds that feed themselves, are a threat to the flock', the preacher explains, and he gives examples of dictators like Robert Mugabe, of Taliban warlords in Afghanistan and of CEO's of large companies, that 'enrichen themselves in scandalous ways, while they sack their employees'.

Then, the preacher draws the hearers deeper into the imagery of Ezekiel 34: 'When leaders feed themselves, the flock degenerates. Then the strongest ones begin to dominate, they begin to push away the weaker ones, they push them away "with side and shoulder", as verse 21 says. "Away with you", they say, and they may even use violence: with their horns, they butt the others aside. They want to have the cleanest water for themselves, while with their own hooves they pollute the water of others'. Then the preacher adds: 'A sharper picture of our own society of greed, I do not know'. This is what we call in our analysis: 'exposing destructiva', 'making visible', this is bringing to the consciousness of hearers how greed and selfishness rule in society and possibly in their own lives too, this is: 'dialogue accelerating into confrontation'. 'Our world is a world where good shepherds will be lacking', the preacher continues. "'What do I care for other people?"; people say. That slogan is an old one: "Am I my brother's keeper?" If we become focused solely on ourselves, there will be victims among others. Maybe we are not aware of it? "We do no harm other people, do we?"; we say. But if you are always focused on "not lacking anything for yourself", you also push others aside. "I want to have the clearest water!" You use your elbows, you push yourself to the front, others stay behind.'

In interruptive dialogical passages like these, the distance between society and church evaporates: that which damages the atmosphere in society, influences the hearers in the church in a similar way. The preacher tries to make the hearers see how this reality may influence them. In the sermon, we see how the public debate about populism and leadership is absorbed, but also translated and deepened. In the Christian congregation, critique of leadership is related to a concern for the weak ones. It is also broadened and personalised: when leaders degenerate, society may disintegrate, and the greediness of leaders may resonate in the greediness of ordinary citizens. In this way, the sermon has public relevance, while it creates and keeps an own agenda. Finally, the preacher turns to the alternatives. 'What does a good shepherd do, in situation like this? He slaps the strong ones, and the weaker animals may come forward. How often Jesus did this: to invite a weaker one to come forward.'

In the following parts, the preacher draws the hearers into a specific 'redemptive presence'. Interestingly, the language and the themes are still absorbed from the actuality, but in it, *another reality* is opened up for hearers. The theme is: Peace. 'I Myself will search for My sheep', the preacher reiterates, 'and then peace will come, don't you think?' 'What is real peace?', he asks. 'Now you see how one regime ousts another one. The Taliban is chased away and new rulers take over. People take back their liberties. Men in Kabul push each other away for a seat in the cinema. That looks a bit like our liberties – and you adjudge it to them – but is that what they need right now? Is that what we need, our youth and children? Prosperity, and the freedom to buy all kinds of stuff? To go on a razzle, is that freedom? Is that peace?'

With this passage, the preacher draws the hearers into a critical reflection, and through it, popular definitions of liberty and peace become shallow and cheap, especially when compared to the turbulence of these months: 'There are so many signs of a deep distress that dominates humanity, these days', the preacher reflects. 'Think of the fear among Americans (they are the richest country in the world and still afraid and shocked; where is a place of safety, if it is not even there?). Think of our own country: More people begin to feel insecure (migrants, violence); the end of tolerance is coming closer. Shepherds of a questionable quality see their way clear'. And then, after this shrewd and sharp spiritual disqualification of those contemporary leaders who 'smell power', the sermon moves to another shepherd, 'to the one who came in the places where the weak ones are, the one who was slapped himself'. On this specific Sunday, the names of parishioners who passed away in the previous year, were remembered. The sermon ends with a meditation on peace, related to them: 'I have seen "sheep" that were threatened, they had fallen prey to sickness and death, they had a struggle to perform, and still: they were safe. Nobody could scare them any longer. That is the security of Romans 8, that nothing can separate you from the love of God, that is in Jesus Christ, our Lord. That is the reality of faith. God's promise: "I Myself, will look after them". He did. He came.'

In these last paragraphs, we see how fluid the relationship is indeed, between kerygma and prophetic speech. It is in the proclamation of who Christ is (what kind of shepherd he is and what kind of peace he gives), that the opposite becomes sharper, the reality of those shepherds who feed themselves and who have no peace to give. This is 'Aktualisierung der Christusbotschaft', as Beintker called it, and as these evangelical truths are actualised and contextualised in sermons, kerygmatic and prophetic aspects come along with it.

8.6 Making See: Voicing a vision to participate in its power

One of the most unexpected results of our study is the issue of the specific power that is at work in the sermons we analysed. In prophetic speech, forms of analytical, interruptive, and illuminative power are operative, as well as forms of cathartic and initiational power. According to our reconstruction, prophetic speech participates in the power of a vision and it intends to make hearers participant in that vision as well. In this paragraph, we explain how seeing, vision and power are crucial ingredients of prophetic speech.

We begin with an observation taken from the Gospel of John. In Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus, the first sentence Jesus expressed, is that 'unless a person is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3.3). Notice the unexpected usage of *seeing* in this verse. Seeing, in this specific context, means more than perceiving. Here it refers to an initial form of 'taking part in something', or 'participating in'.³⁹ In verse 5, this seeing is explained and stipulated as 'entering the kingdom of God'. In John 3, *seeing* is an initial form of *entering*. In a specific way, seeing has a *participatory* aspect. Our choice for the concept of Making See is related to this dynamic. Prophetic speech includes this participatory dimension of seeing. Seeing includes initial forms of participation in a presence emerging while hearers listen to this prophetic speech. While a vision is voiced, the power of that vision begins to work through speech. This is a fourth quality we distinguish in prophetic speech. It is our analysis that through this speech, hearers are drawn into the proximity of a presence, and the participation in that presence generates a specific power that has the potentiality to break down and to overcome the power destructiva have. In the example we discuss below, we explore how in an intense confrontation with evil, a releasing power emerges in the sermon.

The prominence of this aspect of *power* in the data was a surprise for us. At the same time, we started to recognise the importance of it in various kinds of sources and disciplines. In Van der Leeuw's phenomenology, prophetic speech is interpreted as speaking a *Machtwort*, and prophet, apostle and preacher, are

39 Veenhof, J., *De kracht die hemel en aarde verbindt*, p 151. See also Wilckens: "Sehen" meint in biblischer Sprachweise die Erfahrung göttlichen Handelns (vgl. Ex. 16.7, Dtn 3.21 f.; Ps. 27.13, 34.9, 98.3; Jes 40.5; 52.10); in: Wilckens, U., *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1998), p 65.

portrayed by him as participating in the redemptive power of this word.⁴⁰ In the discipline of Biblical Theology, we cited Ernst Käsemann claiming that the *apocalyptic* question (namely *Whom the sovereignty of the world belongs to?*) is the central question behind the entire New Testament (1.2.1.b). The charismata, in Käsemann's understanding, are part of a theology of *resurrection*, they are the means through which the Holy Spirit equips the Christian congregation with specific power. Jan Veenhof, (discussing prophetic speech in relation to the Pauline notion of the struggle with the 'powers that be'), made the same point: The ultimate question is: *Who has the power?*⁴¹ In the discipline of Homiletics, Manfred Josuttis characterised God's act of speaking through preaching, as a *divine dynamic* and a *discourse of power*.⁴² Josuttis spoke of a power that can emerge in preaching, a power with the same creative potentiality that was also at work in creation and resurrection, a combatant power in attacking destructiva, while at the same time mediating *Lebenskraft*. For our analysis, it is important to notice that the communication of this power is tied to the presence of the One who speaks. Eberhard Jüngel, also writing about the creative power of the Word of God, stressed that 'die Anrede Gottes' is a form of *Selbstmitteilung*: 'Und dann ist das Wort nicht nur ein Instrument. Dann ist der Redende im Wort präsent.'⁴³

The language and the concepts we generated in our own analysis, (terms like cathartic power and the exorcistic dimension in prophetic speech), point to this *Machtsgeschehen*, to this redemptive power operative in speech. With redemptive we mean that through this speech, the sermon becomes a temporary place where the power of destructiva on hearers is broken. Our research supplies us with concepts to describe these cathartic moments: Through the cumulative effect of the several sequences we described, a releasing power is developed in prophetic

40 See for instance G. van der Leeuw on 'the preacher': 'Die Macht drängt zum Sprechen, zum Reden wider Willen, ohne eigen Meinung. Sie drängt aber auch zum Predigen. (.....) Es ist was Entscheidendes geschehen, ein Wunder; die Welt hat ein anderes Gesicht bekommen. Nun bleibt nichts anderes übrig, als daß man hinget und es den Leuten sagt, ihnen die Frohbotschaft, die Warnung, die Mahnung zur Bekehrung überbringt. Es ist jetzt nicht Gott, der unmittelbar spricht, durch den Mund des Propheten; es ist Gott, der gesprochen *hat*, getan *hat*, und seine Rede, seine Tat haben sich hier und da einzelner Menschen bemächtigt, so daß es sie nicht länger leidet am Ort ihres Verweilens und sie hingehen müssen, zu sagen von dem, was sie erlebt. Sie können es sehr verschieden sagen, in herzlicher Paränese, in schwerem theologischen Vortrag, im Gleichnis, in der Anekdote, in der Strafrede, aber immer wird ihr Sagen Predigen, *Verkündigung* sein: alles hat sich gewendet, es ist etwas Großes geschehen.' Leeuw, G. van der, *Phänomenologie der Religion*. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1933), pp 209-210.

41 Veenhof, J., *Ibid.* p 113.

42 'Die Glaubenden werden aus der vergehenden Welt herausgerissen und für das Reich Gottes bewahrt. Die Macht, die sich hier manifestiert, befreit die Angeredeten aus der Herrschaft der Sünde, reißt sie aus der Gewalt des Gesetzes, rettet sie aus der Verdammungszusammenhang des Todesgeschicks. Ein Wort, das so mächtig ist, daß es gegen die ganze Menschheitsgeschichte anzugehen vermag, ist von jener kreativen Potenz erfüllt, die die Schöpfung aus dem Nichts und den Gekreuzigten aus dem Tod ins Leben gerufen hat (Röm. 4). Die Dynamik Gottes ist Lebenskraft'. Josuttis, M., 'Von der göttlichen Dynamik des Evangeliums', in: *Predigen aus Leidenschaft*. (Karlsruhe: Verlag Evangelischer Presseverband 1996), p 13.

43 Jüngel, E., 'Die schöpferische Kraft des Wortes', in: Gäde, G. (Hrsg.), *Hören - Glauben - Denken (Fs. Peter Knauer)*. (Zürich/Berlin: LIT Verlag 2005), p 9.

speech. It is because preachers have the audacity and the insight to expose destructiva (8.3), it is because interventions happen and generative alternatives are shown and made preferable (8.4), it is because illumination happens and the lived reality of hearers is qualified in a spiritual and theological way (8.5), it is through these cumulative sequences that forms of *seeing* occur, creating a space in which hearers can participate in a redemptive reality.

We now turn to a local example in which a preacher breaks through the paralysing power of a specific destructivum, making the sermon a temporary place where the power of this dark reality is broken down. The sermon was held in stirring circumstances, namely on the Sunday after that a young girl, a teenage member of the congregation, did not come home from school.⁴⁴ In the days after she was reported missing, extensive search operations were initiated and dark intuitions arose about what may have happened to her. In the first Sunday after her disappearance, the girl's classmates from school joined the service in the congregation of which she and her family were members. The text for the sermon was taken from a pericope that was read by the school's principal, after the news had become public: Isaiah 41.8-13 (the pericope was read from a specific, accessible Dutch translation (Groot Nieuws Bijbel), and the preacher used that translation as source).

In the opening lines of the sermon, the preacher addresses the drama that is happening, and related it to what we actually do when we gather as a congregation on Sunday: 'The thing that happened this week is in our thoughts, and our hearts are filled with difficult feelings. In that condition, we read the Bible today. Reading the Bible is actually a strange habit. But the church sticks to it, because she knows from experience that this book is used by God to speak with us. We do not experience that every time, but we experience it often enough to continue with it. So, we read the Bible, every time we gather on the first day of the week'. In this opening, the preacher refers to what we have called 'illuminative dynamic'. It is because of the hope for and the promise of that dynamic that the Bible is read even in these circumstances. This opening is de facto an expression of the hope that God will speak, exactly in the circumstances. After this thought, the preacher continues: 'It is the first day of the week, but it is the sixth day since N. went missing. She has been intercepted on her way, and since then we have not heard from her. We hardly know anything, but we think a lot. We live between fear and hope. But how much hope? And how much fear? In that condition, we read the Bible'. In this compact opening, the preacher absorbs and voices the 'experience of existence' that all participants in the service share. He ends the opening paragraph with a sobering question: 'Words, a book full of words. But what is

44 The sermon, its backgrounds and the circumstances in which it was held, were discussed after an introductory lecture by the preacher who delivered it, in a seminar for preachers on the theme of 'actuality in preaching', organised by Areopagus/IZB (june 2017). In our summary of the sermon, we anonymised the specifics of names, dates and places.

the value of words in circumstances like these?' It is this interplay between faith and hope being disturbed by doubt and fear, that continues throughout the sermon.

Then the preacher turns to the prophetic text of Isaiah. Note the fact that a *prophetic* text is read in this service: 'The prophet Isaiah says, as representative of God, to what was left of the Jewish people at that time: "Do not be afraid. I am with you". The fact that God was really with them, was not confirmed by the visible facts'. Then, what we have called an 'instant identification' with the actual context happens in the sermon: 'In that sense, there is a particular relationship with the present situation. Israel, intercepted on its way, captured by a much stronger one, taken away. Grasped by Babylonians. Unable to return home'. The eerie power of this fragment is in the audacity of the preacher to express the hardly expressible fear of what may have happened to the teenager. The sentences are short and staccato, the verbs express the hardly bearable, possible truth: 'intercepted on its way', 'captured by a stronger one', 'grasped', 'unable to return home'. There is also audacity in speaking words of comfort in this situation, the words from Isaiah that the preacher keeps repeating throughout the sermon: 'Do not be afraid, I am with you'.

"Well, we do not see anything of that, some said", the preacher continues. He adds: 'I think some of them said things like that, because Isaiah recalls for them God's own history with them: "I have chosen you"; "you are descendant of Abraham, my servant". The point Isaiah accentuated is: "Do not draw the wrong conclusions out of the circumstances". "Do not think: God has abandoned us". "Think about what God has done for us. In that way, he will continue to deal with us". So: "do not be afraid"!'. Directly after these lines, we read: 'N. knew God. Newly born, she was brought into this church. She was baptised, a sign that God knows her and counts her to be one of his children'. 'It was not without a reason he gave that sign. Had we still lived in paradise, then it was not needed. But we live in a world where all kinds of things can happen. And when it happens, this sign is there to tell you: It still counts, it still counts'.

The preacher deepens these themes, by a reflection on prayer: 'We like to believe these things. Especially in these days. Therefore, we pray. Because there is a God. And this God is not indifferent towards human beings. That is: We have reasons to think like that. For we received the Gospel. And there, we learned to know God as a heavenly Father. And we are his children, and these children matter to him. Therefore, we call on his Name for this one child of his, this one young girl. And we take our prayer seriously. That is: We want to do that. We want to believe in what we say to God. We want to believe that he hears us. Because we want her back'. After a pause, we read: 'No, there is no guarantee. The facts prove that. In situations like these there has been prayed before. Not always these prayers were answered'. In these sentences, the preacher expresses the searching, spiritual attitude that many in the congregation will recognise: wanting to believe, praying, hoping for a return,

while at the same time struggling to believe, struggling with the question whether prayer matters at all. It is as if the preacher makes a slow motion of the spiritual rollercoaster of those days, and leads the congregation in its search for a form of prayer and hope that has integrity. It is as if the preacher is publicly trying to *reconstruct* faith, as it is fractured by agonising circumstances.

In the paragraph that follows, the Bible is called a 'training in facing reality'. After having reconstructed forms of hope and prayer, now we read about facing destructive realities. The sentences are filled with an awareness of death and evil: Believing in God, the preacher explains, is not a way of avoiding the rough reality or to soften it with sweet thoughts. No, it is in living with the Bible that you learn to see the true nature of human life. 'It (read: the Bible, CMAE) talks about inconvenient themes. It speaks of death and human evil. It questions all our motives. It imprints us with the consciousness that we all will have to die and that your Creator will hold you accountable'. In the Bible, we hear people scream, disowned and suppressed people, people that have been put away. 'Anyone who lives with the Bible does not have any illusions'. 'Those who say: "Why does God allow this to happen", express their feelings, but do not pose a question we did not already know.' 'The Bible is a continuous training in facing reality. And still, the prophet says, on behalf of God: "Do not be afraid. I am with you...!'"

What happens in this fragment, is that hardly expressible destructiva are drawn into language. We are reminded of Tutu's sermon at the funeral of Steve Biko, in which Tutu found language that penetrated and mirrored the destructivum of that moment (3.4.b). In a similar way, the realities and the thoughts that haunt and scare people in this situation, about moral evil, about death, about having no illusions, are not left unspoken or avoided in the sermon, but they are expressed and mediated to God. Through it, a 'breathing space' emerges in the sermon. Notice also the warning expressed in the fragment, that 'your Creator will hold you accountable'.

The sermon continues with the question: 'But what does God do? What does God do in this case?' 'Yes, he also acts through people. Through spreading pamphlets, through the messages broadcasted on television, through the searching of the marines and the investigations of the police, helicopters in the air, jetfighters with their noise and their equipment searching the woods. What an activity for one young girl. Here, we become aware of what the Apostle Paul must have meant when he called the authorities a "servant of God". So much hustle for a single young girl. That's how it should be.' But the preacher allows these thoughts to be disturbed again: 'It is not enough for us. (...) We want her back, and she has not yet returned. And if God is more than his creatures, then he also is more powerful than we are. So, we pray. Though we do not know what we exactly have to think of it. We say: "Do something. Bring her back! Keep her life safe!" 'The preacher leads the congregation into a daring form of intimacy with God (see 3.4.b), he sets the example, in this public form of

spirituality, of sharing all his thoughts with God, the intense hope, the darkest fears, the appeal for God to act for this one single girl.

The preacher continues by turning to the theme of the 'promise'. He explains: 'When the people returned home, Israel has witnessed the veracity of this prophecy.' 'Jerusalem welcomed her children who were coming home after the exile.' "Do not be afraid, I am with you", God had said. And since then, in dire circumstances, they have read these words again and again! Here, a noteworthy dimension of prophetic texts emerges. The preacher explains how these texts received a new function, a comforting power in Israel for new situations between memory and hope, despair and faith. He continues: 'He who believes is realistic. Believing is not shouting down your fears or fleeing into an illusion.' "I am with you", says God. But the believer is sometimes forced to acknowledge how the promise is made from elastic.' 'Sometimes, the fulfilment of the promise is stretched (like an elastic, CMAE) and keeps us waiting.' 'Sometimes, this goes very far. Like Jesus had to experience, when he became aware of the fact that, with promise and everything, he had to die. This may also happen to N., we know that. There still is the promise, the pledge of his nearness, but then, we do not see it confirmed in the outcome we had hoped for. Just as it was with Jesus: then the promise accompanies us into death. But that is what we believe: That this promise does not break. But that God keeps his promise. Even then!'

The preacher has reached a point in the sermon, where he has allowed faith, hope and the promise to touch the reality of the *de profundis*, of the extreme depth of death. He faces what everyone fears, he refuses to *not* face that reality, he proclaims that, even there and then, God's promise will accompany N. After this expression of trust, the preacher allows these thoughts to be disturbed again: 'No, we do not want that. We do not want heaven for her, but this earthly, ordinary life. In heaven, it is good, but we had the strong impression that God had meant her for here: at home, at school, to learn, to live with us. That is what we pray for. That is what we hope for. That she may return, like Israel returned home, after the exile.'

The final theme that the preacher addresses is the theme of fear. We know: Fear is a suffocating power in circumstances like these, for families, for youth and peers, for the congregation, for the town in which this happened. It may also be a specific effect that evil has. It creates fear. The preacher addresses this in the sermon: 'Who are we? How do we live our life? How do we react to this? Do our children notice something in us? (.....) What example do we set to them? What do we talk them into? Do we transmit fear to them, and insecurity? Yes, we have been shocked. And we say all kinds of things. But what does it mean, in these circumstances, that we believe? What does it mean to trust our heavenly Father? What difference does it make?' True to the reticence of the preacher, he answers: 'We cannot answer these questions beforehand. It is only to be experienced in living with God. Many have the experience that

encounters with God have an effect on our lives. That they provide a basis for your soul.' Certainly, this basis or foundation is not your entire soul. There is much room left, that can be filled with fear and confusion, with bitter pain, with finding it difficult to wait. But there is this basis.' You know of God. He will never renounce what he has said. It still counts. It will remain something you can count on: "I will be with you!"

In this sermon, a *prophetic* text functions in a *contemporary* situation marked by *destructiva*. Even from a distance (both in time and place), we feel the power that an evil that is feared, has on this specific context. In this reality, more concretely: in the context of the rhythm of a local congregation gathering for worship, in the rhythm of a preaching practice performed by a local minister (who knew the situation, the schoolmates, the family, and the girl), a prophetic text on hope is read. In recent decades, prophetic texts are predominantly explained as indignant expressions of moral protest. We should not overlook, though, that in Scripture, comfort and hope are equally important prophetic themes. These themes *become* prophetic in moments in which they function to break the power of doom and despair, to release hearers from the grip this power can have and to evoke the perspective on something new. Hope and trust in God can interrupt dominant discourses of fear and doom (chapter 4). In the context of this sermon, the question at stake is not primarily about *exposing* *destructiva*; what is at stake here, is the question whether prophetic texts can have the actual *power* to break the grip that *destructiva* hold on the soul of human beings and of communities. In this sermon, the preacher noticed how prophetic texts can develop to *new* functions. In new situations of despair, these texts are read to remind hearers of earlier moments of God's presence and thus the prophetic texts begin to function as promises for a future in which this divine presence may be expected again. In our analysis, this is what happens in the sermon: the atmospheric power of *destructiva* is broken. Theo Pleizier has developed an understanding of preaching as 'offering a temporary home for believers'. In a climate of fear and panic, this sermon on a prophetic text provides that 'temporary space' to the hearers.⁴⁵

In the sermon, we see the mechanisms function that we have analysed in this study: the absorbing competence of the preacher, the illuminative dynamic happening between the prophetic text and the actuality, the instant identifications between text and context, the incarnating of a scriptural word to this new situation. But in this example, we see another specific quality in prophetic speech happening, namely its releasing power. Here, a discourse

45 Pleizier, T., *Preken is een thuis bieden. Consequenties van het hoorproces voor de prediking*. (unpublished paper, Doorn: Contio Gereformeerde Bond, january 2012). See also Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, citing Walter Brueggemann, about the purpose of the sermon as 'providing a world in which the congregation can live', and she names Martin Luther King's prophetic sermons as an example for it: 'King's speech was a highly contextual sermon, proclaimed to a national congregation. Its profound power lay not only in its rich cadences and stirring rhetoric, but also in its capacity to create a world this nation as yet could not imagine – but a world for which many hungered and yearned. King gave us a world to live in.' Tubbs Tisdale, L., *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1997), p 119.

of fear and despair is interrupted, and another perspective is opened up. The things that are hardly expressible, the loss of a teenager, the darkness of moral evil, it is reimagined in the language of the prophet Isaiah. Through it, hearers are drawn into a specific presence, and this presence has a kind of *exorcistic* power. In our analysis, we see the preacher embodying an attitude (an attitude that we observed to be operative in most of the sermons we studied), of what Ton van der Hoeven called an 'exorcistic existence': Without fear, evil is faced and qualified, its grip is withspoken and an alternative presence is opened up.⁴⁶ Prophetic speech is a *Machtsgeschehen*.

8.7 Making See: Disclosing destructive and redemptive patterns in real-life

A final result of our empirical analysis, and an additional reason to generate the central concept of Making See, is our observation of a 'prophetic mystagogy' that is operative in the sermons. In the data, there is a peculiar relationship discernible between the crisis of a context, the call for conversion, concrete ethical imperatives and mystagogical moments. This 'prophetic mystagogy' is not an afterthought in the sermons, but it is interwoven in the sermons. In this paragraph, we will explain the different aspects of this final quality in Making See.

The basic pattern in this mystagogical moment is the pattern we reconstructed in this research, but now applied on the micro level of hearers and on the meso level of the congregation. The pattern of exposing destructiva, interrupting them and overcoming them through moments of illumination and catharsis is concretised and personalised in the life of the hearers.⁴⁷ In prophetic speech, preachers make hearers see how the destructiva that damage their context influence their own individual and communal life as well. In prophetic speech, the congregation is made participant in this crisis: Preachers show how hearers are part of the crisis and how their lives are intermingled with it. To give some examples: The destructiva of apathy, fear, and betrayal, (widespread societal diseases at that time in the DDR), also entered the Christian community in Magdeburg, and in a sermon, the bishop made the congregation see how these destructive patterns damaged the community. In these moments, preachers craft in their

46 Hoeven, T. van der, *Het imago van satan. Een cultuur-theologisch onderzoek naar een duivels tegenbeeld*. (Kampen: Kok 1998), pp 258-261.

47 It is interesting to see how two popular essays in the Netherlands, both writing about how to respond to present forms of evil (like terrorism, populism, racism), conclude with an accent on the importance of an initiation in a concrete life-style that is resistant to these destructive. Bas Heijne wrote about embodying a radical alternative, about 'changing yourself', about responding to hatred with dignity, about the long and painful process of trying to understand the other one, with reconciliation as goal (Heijne, B., *Wereldverbeteraars. Gandhi, King, Mandela – hun erfenis*. (Amsterdam: Prometheus 2017), pp 72-73) and Beatrice de Graaf explored themes from Augustine, and she wrote about the Christian proclamation that evil is overcome and will end, about the practice of hope in the Christian liturgy and about conquering evil in one's own life (Graaf, B. de, *Heilige Strijd.. Het verlangen naar veiligheid en het einde van het kwaad*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2017), pp 114-139).

sermons forms of mutuality and communality between the congregation and the context. The destructiva that haunt society are qualified as a *communal* problem (4.2.b). Bonhoeffer tried to make his hearers see how congregation members are contemporaries and how, *for theological reasons*, they cannot distance themselves from the crisis of their context: 'Das ist meine Welt, in der das geschehen ist, die Welt in der ich lebe, in der ich sündige, in der ich Haß und Lieblosigkeit säe Tag um Tag (.....) – und diese Betroffenen, die Galiläer und Pilatus, sie sind meine Brüder, meine Brüder in der Sünde, im Haß, in der Bosheit, in der Lieblosigkeit, meine Brüder in der Schuld' (5.2.b).

At the same time, we noticed that in prophetic speech, hearers are initiated into *alternative and redemptive patterns of life*. The overcoming of destructiva is a major aim in prophetic speech, and in the mystagogical moment, preachers try to make hearers participate in this releasing power. In our analysis, we deliberately switch to the language of mystagogy and initiation for this moment. What we mean by this is that the illuminative and cathartic dimensions in prophetic speech are now applied to and even *continued* in the lives of hearers. At least, that is what preachers urge the hearers to: to continue this overcoming of destructive in their lives. Here initiation, conversion and ethics intermingle. Conversion is a concrete act of resisting specific destructiva and this has a definite ethical component. But in the sermons, we also discern a mystical aspect. The 'way of the Lord', as it is discerned in prophetic speech, is translated into concrete forms of discipleship and resistance. Preachers make hearers see how they can join this 'way of the Lord' in their personal context and in their own life. Interestingly, our research suggests that the discipleship that is called for in prophetic speech, is hardly ever a call for the heroic, but a call for the essentially Christian. In times of turmoil, the routine life of the church may become prophetic.

An interesting result of our study is the dialectic we discovered between *initiation* and *participation*. It is a dialectic of participating in the *shared* narrative of a context in an *alternative* way and for the sake of that shared narrative. First, initiation. Initiation, as a religious act, makes hearers participate in a specific redemptive reality, and this participation empowers and edifies the hearers. Our research shows how this *edification* intends to make hearers *resistant*. Prophetic speech edifies the congregation in seeing the destructive patterns in their context. It is realistic speech that gives the courage to see and to face evil, to qualify it while others may look away. This speech also provides resources to be able to overcome these destructiva and thereby it provides an alternative 'way-of-being-in-the-world', as Luke Timothy Johnson called it (7.2.a). The edification that is operative in prophetic speech enables the congregation to be a Christian congregation in a socialist society, or in a culture of apartheid, or in society of

greed. This edification initiates them into a different lifestyle, making congregation members a sort of 'living alternatives' for their contemporaries. It is in these lifestyles individual hearers and the congregation as a community continue to interrupt and overcome destructiva. To give an example: The *koinonia* of the Lord's Supper, in which divisions of ethnicity are reconciled and transcended, is both a source and a continuation of the sermonic prophetic protest against apartheid.

Second, participation. This initiation into a specific 'way-of-being-in-the-world', is intended to be a *blessing* for the context. One of the eureka moments of our research was the insight that it is in living a *different* life, the congregation lives *in solidarity* with her context as she tries to be a healing and redemptive alternative. In our theory, conversion, ethics, and discipleship are real-life extrapolations of the prophetic experience of a releasing presence and power. This experience of *Lebenskraft* as Josuttis called it, often transmitted by speech, is at the centre of the prophetic dimension in preaching, and is intended to pulsate through communities and individual lives, to make contemporaries participate in it as well.

In the last example we now turn to, we show and develop the working of this 'prophetic mystagogy', this exposure of destructive patterns and the initiation in redemptive patterns of life. We sought to explore these dynamics in an alternative circuit of preaching, so to speak. The sermon is taken from an initiative called 'Sermon by a Layperson' (Preek van de Leek), initiated in 2008 by Abeltje Hoogenkamp, a Dutch minister, at the time serving in Amsterdam. She invited all kinds of opinion leaders (like journalists, writers, artists, politicians) to preach in the Singelkerk, on Sunday afternoons.⁴⁸ In the experiment, new language might occur and alternative perspectives on Scripture, church, and culture; the experiment is an interesting attempt to bring culture, faith, inspirational speech, and preaching into new forms of interaction. Since 2008, the experiment has been copied in many congregations in the Netherlands. We deliberately included a context like this in our final empirical cycle (with another kind of preaching and with an explicitly mixed audience), to see in what way our generated concepts might occur in sermons like these. The sermon we selected is about how to live a spiritual life of integrity in modern Dutch society.

The Scripture readings for the sermon were taken from Genesis 32/33 (Jacob's struggle at the Jabbok and the meeting with his brother), and from Luke 4.1-13 (about the temptation of Christ in the desert). The sermon starts with an allusion to a then popular novel from the Dutch writer Kluun. In English, the novel is entitled *Love life*, but the Dutch title was *Komt een vrouw bij de dokter* (something like: 'A woman consults her doctor'). The autobiographical novel is about a successful couple, living a life of prosperity and luxury, but then, the woman falls sick, it turns out she has breast cancer, she suffers and dies. The

48 See further: www.preekvandleek.nl

novel is about her husband, having enormous difficulties to accept this: the deterioration of his wife's beauty, not being able to continue their hassle-free life any longer; he has affairs, but ultimately, he helps her to die.

The sermon, alluding to this novel, starts with the sentence: 'A man consults his doctor'. He tells his doctor about the problems he has with his hip, caused by a fight he was in. He tells his story. For the first time in years, he had been alone, he explains. His wife and children were on holidays, he had taken them to the airport, returned to his car, and then 'in the dawn of the day, somebody appeared, and without saying anything he started to mug me'. The doctor assumes he has been robbed, asks if he is in a shock, but the man answers: 'Probably I cannot explain this to you, but I am not afraid or angry, mind you: it was an angel'. 'It was an angel descended from the heavens above to wake me up hard-handily'.

When the preacher explains why this wake-up call had to happen, she starts to expose the destructive patterns in which the man had lived. 'Doctor, I had been fleeing from myself'. The wealth, the possessions, (...) certainly: I worked hard and honest, eighty hours a week, but still...'. 'The vicious tricks of my younger years, the betrayal of my brother'. 'Why do I tell you all of this? Because I want to share it with someone. My gratitude, my joy. Thanks to that stone hard angel, I have returned to myself. He kicked and beat me out of my years of sleepwalking and daydreaming.' 'Now, I can face my brother again. This is who I am. A blessed and successful man, while at the same time I am a limping lookalike, vain, excited for power, capable of doing anything, for instance of cheating my old blind father, only to..., yeah: what for?' Now, the man tells, he is freed from searching approval or acknowledgment: 'I have returned to the truth. To God'.

This sermon, in its own graduality, is a sermon that reminds of Martin Luther King's sermon: 'Why Jesus called a man a fool'. And, just as in the Ezekiel sermons, where we also read a deeply critical passage on the power of greed in Dutch society (8.5), in the same way here, we read about the foolishness of a life, of this life of blind ambition, betrayal, and egoism. Through an illuminative dynamic between a Scripture passage, a popular novel and the contextual actuality, a certain way-of-life in contemporary society is portrayed as foolish. At the same time, the sermon is about illumination and conversion, about suddenly seeing the dark truth about one's own life. In mystical (or Reformed) terms: It is about a human being becoming aware of an old life and of the resurrection to a new way of seeing and being, of conversion as a blessing. The exposure of what is damaging (8.3), the interruption of it and the opening up to alternatives (8.4), they are the fruits of this illuminative moment (8.5). Later on, the preacher speaks in cathartic terms (8.6), of how this change caused feelings of freedom in the man, of 'being healed, being deeply grateful, feeling gifted'.

In the second part of the sermon, the preacher turns to the confrontation in the desert, between Jesus and the devil. When Jesus is at his weakest, the devil approaches him and offers him all the kingdoms of the world. The preacher meditates on the question why Jesus did *not* accept the offer. The first answer is: Because 'in every fibre of his being, Jesus knew that he would not be who he was, without the God he intimately dared to call "my father", "*our* Father". The ultimate power belonged to that Father, who he thanked so often and so much, his whole short life long. 'But maybe', the preacher adds, 'this is only half of the truth. Maybe the other half has to do with his love for human beings. Nothing less than that: Pure love for humans'. What the preacher means, is that in Jesus' way of living, love and freedom are ultimate truths. Therefore, he declined the offer of the devil. The preacher continues with a further exploration of the centrality of love and freedom among those who follow Jesus: 'Therefore, people do not follow him because of the pressure of a tradition or family demands, not because they are afraid that if they do not follow, now or then, a terrible punishment will await them, no they follow because they decided, in freedom, to want to belong to the Living One, because they want to learn from him how hard and painful and beautiful and demanding and fulfilling, sacrificial love can be. And sometimes, as if in a coincidence, they suddenly see (miracles still happen!): He really is here. My God.'

Here, the preacher approaches the 'presence' we wrote about ('He really is here'), here the power of a vision is unfolding itself in the sermon and here the power of destructiva is broken. First, the preacher speaks about an alternative life, a life that these people wanted to learn from Jesus, a life based on sacrificial love. In the process of learning this life, she speaks about discerning an elusive presence, of Jesus himself. 'My God, he is here!' Notice that the word *seeing* emerges when it comes to referring to that presence: 'they suddenly see: He is really here'. It is this presence that strengthens them in learning alternative and redemptive life patterns. Throughout the entire sermon, a contrast functions between an old life (of greed, of searching approval of others, of deception, of living a spiritually sordid and empty life), and a new perspective on life, here: based on sacrificial love. The point we want to make in this concept is about initiation, participation and being resistant (8.8). It can be argued that the preacher intends to initiate hearers into this life based on the demands and the promises of this specific love that Jesus embodies. It is also clear that the preacher participates in the narrative of her culture, that she exposes the downside of it and proposes real-life alternatives. Now it is through the sequence of exposing of how life should *not* be lived, an illuminative dynamic with Scripture and an experience of God's presence, that an alternative life is formulated that is able to make hearers *resistant*.

In the last paragraphs, the preacher explains how this life can be a *blessing*. In our theory, ethics and discipleship are real-life extrapolations of the earlier experience of a releasing presence. The power of that moment is continued

in the life that hearers are urged to live. In the sermon, the preacher turns to a meditation on the miracles of Jesus. 'It's a shame', she remarks, 'that increasingly more theologians make us think that the miracles of Jesus are fairy tales'. Because of that, 'we could miss a point in the miracles, namely that Jesus makes them dependant on the question that others have, for instance their longing to be freed from distress, or on the honesty of their faith.' It is exactly because of the freedom of these other ones, Jesus denied the offer of the devil: 'He refuses to become somebody who would fix it all for the masses'. The point the preacher wants to make is that Jesus declined the offer of the devil, because he did not want to become a miracle machine, he did not want this direct contact, this mutual freedom, and this love to disappear. Then, the preacher extrapolates these themes to concrete life in her Dutch society. She gives examples of how contact, freedom and love between human beings continuously disappear. 'Take charity', she says. 'When we think that love means taking away the sorrows of other people without them even asking for it, giving money, giving abundantly of what we think is interesting, important, valuable, beautiful, and pleasant, and then we become sad, angry and cynical when that other human being is not grateful enough for what we have given.' 'Every time again', she says 'we fall out of the truth'.

'Falling out of the truth' is exactly what we mean in our mystagogical concept: Here, it means losing contact with that liberating presence the preacher earlier referred to, that astonishing moment of 'seeing Jesus', that gathering around the truths of sacrificial love, mutuality, and freedom. The sermon ends with the preacher formulating how to keep contact with that truth. She considers the importance of silence and retreat, of abstaining from the opinion of others, of letting oneself be shocked by the offers of the devil to obtain power as much as we wanted, if only we... Silently, the sermon returns to the language of Jacob and his struggle. It meditates on accepting to be this human being, in this specific struggle, and it ends with an original change of perspective: 'Until you are weary and broken by the fight, and you suddenly discover that it is actually a dance, an embrace, a gift. A blessing, maybe even a consecration'.

The redemptive patterns that are proposed in the sermons, in this sermon too, can on the one hand be interpreted as christological: It is the pattern of death and resurrection applied to concrete human lives that makes these lives fruitful and a blessing for others. On the other hand, they can be seen as pneumatological, as being part of the restorative power that is released in the christian congregation through the Holy Spirit. In both instance, prophetic speech draws human beings to 'enter' and to participate in God's redemptive presence.⁴⁹

49 See on the centrality of the theological theme of the 'recovery' of this world, in the pneumatology of A. Kuyper and H. Bavinck: Veenhof, J., *De kracht die hemel en aarde verbindt*, p 84, 122.. See on how preaching can open the hearers 'to novel ways of seeing and being', the passages on catharsis in: Leede, B. de, and Stark, C., *Ontvouwen. Protestantse prediking in de praktijk*, pp 147, 166 and 205-206.

CHAPTER 9 | LEARNING TO SEE

Epilogue on the interplay between the inductive and the illuminative in prophetic speech

9.1 Introduction

In this epilogue of our study, there are two intriguing issues that we discuss briefly. The first one is the question of how prophetic speech can be seen as part of *God's revelatory presence*, while simultaneously it is thoroughly *human speech*. The second issue is about the *criteria of discernment*. Is there a way to validate contemporary speech as being prophetic? Is it possible to theologically assess and judge the credibility of speech that presents itself as prophetic?

9.2 On the interplay between the human and the divine in prophetic speech

We start with the dialectical tension between the human and the divine in prophetic speech. Throughout this study, we noticed that *epiphanic* moments happen in and through *human* speech. Our empirical research shows an interplay in these *epiphanic* moments between the *inductive* and the *illuminative*. We interpret prophetic speech as a *donum*, as a grace given by God and received in awe and wonder by preachers, while this study also shows that the human factor in this speech cannot be underestimated. For the realisation of prophetic speech, it matters how preachers live, study, pray, speak, if and how they are contemporaries and able to absorb what is happening around them, if, how and when they dare to be different and *unzeitgemäß*.

In our search for theological models on the relationship between the human and the divine in human speech, we were inspired by an article of Karl Rahner about, what he calls, *Urworte* (which can be translated as 'primal words' or 'depth words').¹ These are words that do not simply convey information, like technical or utility words do, Rahner explains, 'Sie erhellen *uns*, nicht wir sie.

¹ Rahner, K., 'Priester und Dichter', in: Rahner, K., *Schriften zur Theologie. Band III: Zur Theologie des geistlichen Lebens*. (Zürich/Köln: Benziger Verlag 1957), pp 349-378. See also: Hilbert, M.C., *Naming Grace. Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*. (New York: Continuum 1997), pp 33-34.

Sie haben Macht über uns, weil sie Geschenke Gottes sind, nicht Gemächte der Menschen, wenn sie vielleicht auch durch Menschen zu uns kamen.² Interestingly, Rahner writes that 'these words rise up from the depths of our own hearts', that they have an anthropological bedding and origin, so to speak, while these words are currently given to us by God. They are *Geschenke Gottes* and they also have a transcendent origin. What happens theologically in these primal words? In these *Urworte*, a part of our human reality is given a name and specific aspects of this reality are, in a mysterious way, opened up for us: 'In jedem Urwort ist ein Stück Wirklichkeit gemeint, in dem uns geheimnisvoll ein Tor aufgetan wird in die unergründliche Tiefe der wahren Wirklichkeit überhaupt.'³ Rahner speaks about the *erlösende Aufgabe* of language and speech: The depth words open up reality for us in such a way that they are infused with a perspective of redemption. When poets speak depth words, Rahner writes, the things they speak about 'look redeemed'.⁴

This somewhat condensed German philosophical theology is illustrated by Rahner through two typologies of people who speak words: the poet and the priest (and by extension, the preacher). What interests us is how Rahner differentiates the anthropological (or: inductive) and the theological (or: illuminative) aspects of the *Urworte* in the typology of the poet and the priest, and how the two can coincide. Rahner's reflections are helpful to formulate how, in our own research, inductive processes have a part in epiphanic speech.

In the article, Rahner explores how priests speak the depth words, the *Urworte*. According to him, the priest is pre-eminently someone who is positioned in the *Dienst am Wort*. Rahner refers to Acts 6.4 for this axiomatic point.⁵ The priest in Acts 6 is a *verbi divini minister*. The word the priest expresses is God's Word: 'Das Wort, das dem Priester anvertraut ist als Gabe und Aufgabe, ist das wirksame Wort Gottes selbst'. What Rahner means by this, is that the priest does not express his own words, but God's Word in the singular, namely: 'the Word that has become flesh among us'. Rahner asks: 'Wann wird das dichteste, das wirksamste Wort gesprochen?' 'Welches ist das Wort des Priesters, von dem alle anderen nur Auslegungen und Abwandlungen sind?' The answer is: At the moment when the priest lifts the bread and the wine and says: 'This is my body ... This my blood ...' 'Da wird nur Gottes Wort gesprochen. Da wird *das* wirksame Wort gesagt. (...) Alles ist dann da: Himmel und Erde, Gottheit und Menschheit, Leib und Blut, Seele und Geist, Tod und Leben, Kirche und Einzelner, Vergangenheit und die ewige Zukunft. Alles ist in dieses Wort hineingesammelt.'⁶ Every other word the priest says and every other practice he performs is derivative from this Word.

2 Rahner, K., Ibid. p 351.

3 Rahner, K., Ibid. p 353.

4 Rahner, K., Ibid. p 356.

5 Rahner, K., Ibid. p 358.

6 Rahner, K., Ibid. p 362-363.

The poet is another type. Other than the priest, the poet does express, in the words he speaks, his own *Dasein*. That is exactly his task and mode of existence. The poet searches for 'an identity in an aesthetical way of his being and his consciousness'. The poet, therefore, does have a position to speak from the depth of his own being and to search for fitting words. The poet also speaks *Urworte*: 'Er ist ein Mensch die Urworte verdichtet sagen kann. Jeder Mensch spricht Urworte, solange er nicht in geistigen Tod versunken ist. Jeder nennt die Dinge bei ihren Namen und setzt so das Tun seines Vaters Adam fort. Aber der Dichter hat die Berufung und die Gabe, verdichtet solche Worte zu sagen. Er vermag sie so zu sagen, daß durch sein Wort die Dinge wie erlöst einziehen in das Licht der andern, die des Dichters Worte hören.'⁷

In the article, Rahner explores how these two modes of existence need each other and how they even call for each other and influence each other. On the one hand: 'Der Priester ruft den Dichter'. The priest calls the poet out of his own existence. 'Der Priester weist nicht auf sein Herz, sondern auf das durchbohrte Herz des Sohnes. Er sagt "Ecce Homo!"; und zeigt dabei nicht sich und seine Gestalt, er zeigt jenen, der allein sagen kann, wer der Mensch ist.'⁸ But the poet, on the other hand, also has an *Existenzweise* of his own, with an equally unique perspective and power. The poet has a specific closeness to human existence and to the human heart: 'Wem stehen verdichtet die vollen Worte, die Urworte des Menschen zu Gebote? Wer kann den anderen Menschen so anrufen, daß er in seinem Eigentlichen, das er oft selbst nicht kennt, aufgerufen ist? Wer trifft die Mitte des Herzens, das verloren und sündig sein mag – und doch getroffen werden muß, soll er Erlösung erlangen? Wer kann dem Menschen seine Fragwürdigkeit sagen, so daß er sie vernimmt? Wer kann das, wenn nicht der Dichter!'⁹

In the article, Rahner explores the potentiality of human beings to become both priest and poet. Rahner searches for examples of words that were able to express both the depths of human existence and the *wirksame* Word of God. He refers to specific instances in the Bible, like the creation narratives, the Song of Songs, the prophecies of the Hebrew prophets, the parables of Jesus and I Corinthians 13 by Paul. But he also refers to the *Confessiones* of Augustine, to the sermons of Juan de la Cruz, Meister Eckhardt and John Henry Newman. In all these examples, Rahner sees the depth and the richness of human existence being incorporated in speech that is rightly called 'Word of God'. Rahner is essentially exploring the potentiality and the reality of human words being transformed by the Spirit of God to become words of God.¹⁰

7 Rahner, K., *Ibid.* p 356.

8 Rahner, K., *Ibid.* p 367.

9 Rahner, K., *Ibid.* p 370-371.

10 'Es bleibt dabei: Wo das Wort Gottes das Höchste sagt und es am tiefsten in das Herz des Menschen versenkt, da ist es auch ein menschlich dichterisches Wort. Und der Priester ruft den Dichter, damit seine Urworte die konsekrierten Gefäße des göttlichen Wortes werden, in denen der Priester das Wort Gottes wirksam verkündet'. Rahner, K., *Ibid.* p 374.

Rahner's concepts are informative for our study. Prophetic speech, as we reconstructed it, is *epiphanic* speech, while at the same time the research uncovered the *inductive* factors that have a formative influence on this prophetic quality in speech. The epiphanic words are also *human* words, with traceable human origins, the result of human searching, human craftsmanship and human imagination. It is speech arising from the human *eros to know*, as Sergei Bulgakov calls it.¹¹ When Rahner writes about *Urworte* as words spoken by the poet and the priest, and how they search for each other and need each other, we recognise it as an apt description of the prophetic dimension in preaching. Preaching principally has a redemptive core, it is speech uttered in a congregation gathering around a sacramental, redemptive presence, that is: around Jesus Christ who said: 'This is my body, this is my blood, given for you'. Preaching continues this redemptive reality and participates in its power, and the prophetic moment is a specific quality in this practice of speech. At the same time, in this speech human existence is voiced, societal injustices are lamented, questions are posed, intuitions are voiced and destructiva are discerned. In our reconstruction, it is the interplay between the illuminative and the inductive that characterises prophetic speech.

What kind of inductive factors are formative in prophetic speech?

1 Biography, context and calling. In prophetic speech, we discovered an interference between the contextual crisis, the biography of preachers and their calling. These factors influence the content and the shape of their speech. When preachers know biographically of the damaging effect of destructiva, specific sources of solidarity, resistance and insight are opened up to them and these sources function and are traceable in the sermons. It may be posed that in the theological moment of calling these biographical experiences become vocational and homiletical assets, and in that way a blessing for others. These biographical factors are formative in the realisation of prophetic speech.

11 See for a similar reflection on the interplay between the illuminative and the inductive, Sergei Bulgakov's chapter on 'The Gifts of Pentecost': 'The gift of prophecy makes a man *other* than himself; it makes him live a life not his own but which he assimilates as his own. In prophecy, we go out of ourselves ('ecstasy'), and a new principle of life enters into us. Prophecy is the *meeting* and union of the human spirit with another principle. It is an extremely *active* state of the spirit, in which the latter strives to meet the higher principle, in order to become fructified by and identified by it. In this sense, prophecy is an extremely *creative* state of the human spirit, in which the latter strives to receive creative conception and to accomplish spiritual birth. (...) On the human side, prophecy is the *eros of the spirit*. This aspect of prophecy is examined by Plato in his *Symposion* (a work which is the pinnacle of natural inspiration) with a profundity that almost surpasses the measure of human inspiration: Eros, as is man, is a son of Poros and Penia, of the creaturely and noncreaturely principles. The winged god gives man the power to ascend into the world above in order to be inspired by this world and to give birth in beauty, to create'. Later: 'According to the authentic interpretation, the Pentecost is a *universal consecration in prophecy*, for which every individual receives his particular gift and in this sense no member of the Church is deprived of this proper gift'. Bulgakov, S., *The Comforter* (translated by B. Jakim). (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 2004), pp 293-294.

2 Solidarity with those who suffer. Prophetic speech does not only have biographical aspects, it also has a specific *communal* and *congregational* quality. In prophetic speech, it is known how hearers and contemporaries suffer and under which realities/powers they suffer. Prophetic speech often becomes a 'breathing space' for those who suffer under these powers. Lischer daringly called the sermon 'an achievement of the group' (6.1.b), and in the liturgical, prophetic response to suffering and destructiva, we see the veracity of that observation confirmed. Qua epistemology, the biography of the preacher, the communal life of the congregation and societal experiences of suffering are inductive sources for prophetic speech.

3 Being present. Related to the former two aspects is our observation that being present in the circumstances where destructiva happen, creates a specific and unique *noetic* potential. Prophetic speech is *not* likely to happen apart from experiences of being present in the midst of the reality of these destructiva. Those who are in the centre of a crisis have a first right of speech. The research shows how in being present and in experiences of suffering, attendants become receptive to specific insights, including a prophetic 'clarity of mind' (Paul Tillich).¹²

4 International and oecumenical contacts. Interestingly enough, the broader perspective is a crucial ingredient too for prophetic speech. Several sources in our study point to the risk of communities becoming closed communities, absorbed with preserving, guarding, and confirming their own identity. Preaching as a practice can even become encapsulated by this narrowness and group pressure. In discerning and exposing destructiva, though, it is crucial that 'others', (like the stranger, the dissident, the sufferer, or the worldwide oecumenical community of the church), are invited to have a say in what they see as destructive within a specific church and society. The sources show how international oecumenical contacts often have sharpened the awareness of preachers and congregations concerning the destructive realities that damage church and society in their own context.

5 Memory. Prophecy is not only about the present, it is also speech coming forth from memory. Toni Morrison's concept concerning the ability 'to re-memory' (which was called a 'prophetic ability'), and Gregor Taxacher's concept of a 'Geschichtsschreibung gegen sich selbst', express a truth that is present in our data, namely that knowing history is an important factor in prophetic speech. 'Forgetting' makes preaching fashionable and shallow, myopic, and sometimes even false, while 'remembering' is a prophetic attitude in which both failures and

12 See for an interesting example of this receptive for new insight while being present, Rowan Williams' reflection on 9/11, reflections that originated in his being present in New York, close to Wall Street, at 9/11: Williams, R., *Writing in the Dust. After September 11*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 2002).

sin as well as redemption and moments of exodus are living and formative realities in the perspective and speech of the preacher.

6 Spiritual life. In the data of our study, there is a repeated accent on prayer, on fasting and retreats, on a renewal of the spiritual life of the congregation and the church, on moral integrity. Michael Beintker wrote that for him, prayer is a form of sharpening his 'prophetic perception'.¹³ Spiritual life is a formative factor in strengthening spiritual resistance. Williams spoke of the joy of the Lord's Supper as a source for the prophetic vocation of the church (7.2.b) and Tutu called for a renewed prayer life, to make the church in South Africa stronger in 'exorcising the demons of injustice' (6.2.b).

7 Theology and tradition. A final inductive component in the realisation of prophetic speech, is the way theology and the spiritual tradition of preacher and congregation influence their perception and judgement of the present (4.2.a). The insight that is communicated through the sermons is a *mediated* form of insight: Foundational stories in a confessional tradition, theology, patterns of interpreting Scripture, spirituals, and hymns, these are all formative factors in making preachers and hearers see and assess reality in specific ways, making them alert for specific themes and risks. In this way, Christian communities develop a theological and cultural linguistic paradigm for interpreting their contemporary reality.¹⁴ These different paradigms are traceable in the different sermons we studied.

The point we want to make is: Empirical analysis shows how inductive processes have a formative influence on prophetic speech. This research result is not new. In studies on King's speeches and sermons, for example, these influences are meticulously reconstructed.¹⁵ King's speeches do not simply originate in the individual genius of the speaker, as earlier ideas on prophetic speech assumed, they come to be through different inductive factors and processes (like biography, tradition and theology, prayer, and communal spiritual life). 'King's dream' may

13 'Prophetische Verkündigung lebt vom Gebet. 'Man kann nicht predigen ohne zu *beten*' (Barth, Homiletik, S. 69). Das Gebet ist neben der Arbeit mit dem Text die wichtigste Form der Predigtvorbereitung. Ich bete für meine Gemeinde. Ich bete für meine Stadt. Ich bete für Einsicht und Phantasie. Ich bete für wahrheitsgemäße Aussagen und gegen die Langeweile. (.....) [I]m Beten, im Bitten, Danken und Loben, bringe ich ja die alltäglichsten Geschichten und Lebenbezüge vor Gott, buchstabiere ich gleichsam Gottes Nähe im Detail. Aus diesem Grund ist unser Gebet eine elementare Form prophetischer Wahrnehmung – Meditation der Wirklichkeit in ihrem direkten bezug auf den Vater, den Sohn und den Heiligen Geist.' Beintker, M., 'Das (unvermeidliche) prophetische Risiko beim Verkündigen', in: *Die Zeichen der Zeit* 40 (1986), p 70.

14 Leede, B. de, and C. Stark, *Ontvouwen. Protestantse prediking in de praktijk*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2017), p 77, p 89.

15 See for instance Hansen, D.D., *The Dream. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*. (New York: HarperCollins 2003), and: Miller, K.D., *Voice of Deliverance. The Language of Martin Luther King, Jr., and its Sources*. (Athens/London: University of Georgia Press 1992, 1998).

even be the echo of a young student's prayer.¹⁶ What may be a new research result, though, is our suggestion that the inductive factors we extracted from the data, are intrinsic aspects of the practice of preaching itself. This is what preachers do when they perform the practice of preaching: They listen as closely as possible to parishioners and contemporaries, especially to those who suffer; they are trained to be aware of their own calling, their biography and the crisis of their context, they have learned how these aspects interfere in the existence of preachers and how they can function as sources in their vocation; they are stimulated to know their own theological tradition and to live in its spiritual atmosphere; they are part of a worldwide church, including the persecuted church, and these global contacts may provide specific insight on the own context of the congregation. The inductive processes we found in the analysis of prophetic speech are part of the fabrics of the preaching practice. In this way, the practice of preaching has a *noetic potentiality*: through living in this practice, preachers can obtain specific kinds of insight. H.-J. Abromeit has observed 'daß eine spezifische Existenz bestimmte Erkenntnisse provoziert' (3.3.b). The preacher is similarly positioned in a 'spezifische Existenz'.¹⁷ Given the specific theological and inductive infrastructure of this practice, the prophetic dimension is a potentiality in the practice of preaching.¹⁸ The preaching life can be seen as a continuous journey of *Learning to See*.

9.3 On discernment: Assessing the credibility of prophetic speech

Interestingly, the various inductive factors we extracted from the data (see above), are also helpful in assessing the credibility (or dubiousness) of speech/preaching that presents itself as prophetic. According to Luke Timothy Johnson, this issue of discerning the veracity of contemporary prophetic speech is a crucial theological

16 Richard Lischer has written about one of the possible inductive components of the 'I have a dream' speech, namely an experience of a prayer meeting that King had attended. Lischer: 'The meeting was in Mount Olive Baptist Church in Terrel County, Georgia. The church had been torched and a service was held in the 'charred remains of the sanctuary'. A young woman led the prayers and 'she spoke with the innocence and the idealism peculiar to the young'. 'The students often spoke of their dream for black people America, and, as she prayed, the young woman began to intone her own vision of the future with the phrase 'I have a dream'. That evening the whole church, including its most distinguished visitor (read: King, CMAE), swayed to the phrase, 'I have a dream'. The metaphor of the dream is a staple of black religion (...)' Lischer, R., *The Preacher King. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Word that Moved America*. (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press 1995), p 93.

17 See on the relationship between insight and participating in ritual action, especially on the modern tendency to detach insight from the act of participation in (liturgical) rituals, and thus the modern tendency to 'shift the locus of truth from the practicing community to the nonpracticing and unaffiliated individual': Moberly, R.W.L., *Prophecy and Discernment*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), p 24. See also on the participation in practices as a source for specific knowledge: Nieman, J., 'Why the Idea of Practice Matters', in: Long, T.G. and L. Tubbs Tisdale (ed.), *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice. A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*. (Westminster: John Knox Press 2008), pp 18-39.

18 See on the *epiphany* potentiality of Christian practices: Sawicki, M., *Seeing the Lord. Resurrection and Early Christian Practices*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press Minneapolis 1994).

quest.¹⁹ Moberly closed his monograph with a chapter called ‘Prophecy and discernment today’, and he stressed two criteria for prophetic authenticity.²⁰ The first criterium is central in his conclusion and has a *moral* character: ‘Moral integrity is *the* quality that must characterize a prophet’s speech and life.’²¹ The second criterium is more implicit in his conclusion and is christological, it concerns ‘the pattern of Christ, as displayed in the gospels and expounded by Paul, which entails self-giving for others and refusal to allow true life under God to involve benefiting at the expense of others.’²²

We close our research with our own proposal of how to assess the authenticity (or possible inauthenticity) of prophetic speech in the present. The basic pattern we reconstructed is the exposure, the interruption, and the overcoming of destructiva through moments of illumination and catharsis. In our reconstruction, these three concatenated moments of exposing, interrupting, and overcoming must be recognisable in speech that deserves to be called prophetic in the Christian congregation

The various inductive factors we reconstructed are helpful to make this basic theological pattern more precise. A kind of theological and homiletical system of checks and balances emerges, by which we can guard and stimulate the authenticity of prophetic speech:

First, there are the criteria of presence and experience (personal and/or communal). Prophetic speech is concrete and contextual speech, emerging from specific experiences and aimed at concrete situations. The inductive processes in prophetic speech show that the confrontation with destructiva often has a biographical resonance in the life of the preacher, and that these biographical experiences are consecrated in prophetic speech to become a blessing for others. In one way or the other, for speech to be prophetic, preachers must participate in the circumstances about which they speak. These experiences can be personal, but they can also be congregational. In either case, prophetic speech happens in close contact with those who suffer, with those who have seen with their own eyes

19 ‘The theologian seeks to make explicit the shape of God’s Word being spoken to the church in the present circumstances, and how the church’s decisions might continue the story of God’s people. (.....) We should make no mistake: The experience of God or the experience of God’s absence is not accessible for casual perusal. It requires careful attention and delicate diagnosis. The process of discernment is risk-filled, and never self-validating. The interpretation of the present moment in terms of God’s activity is perilous, prone to error and false prophecy, and at the very least requires constant renewal and revision. But such discernment, such interpretation of God’s word as speaking through the fabric of human lives is the absolutely fundamental and necessary task of theology. Without it, there is no subject matter’ Johnson, L.T. *Scripture and Discernment. Decision Making in the Church*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1983, 1996), pp 30-31.

20 Moberly, R.W.L., *Prophecy and Discernment*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), pp 221-253.

21 Moberly, R.W.L., *Ibid.* p 227.

22 Moberly, R.W.L., *Ibid.* p 243.

the power of destructiva. Preachers (when they do not have these biographical experiences for themselves) must be able to absorb these experiences of suffering in their speech. This is a crucial factor in discerning the veracity of prophetic speech: Is it speech that is recognised as truthful and liberating speech by those who suffer (either in the congregation or in society)? It may also be a crucial factor to discern inauthentic prophecy: At the expense of whom does this speech happen? Who are, implicitly or subconsciously, made victims of this speech? These factors point to the *locus* from where prophetic speech happens. Our research suggests that living in the proximity of concrete destructiva can make humans receptive for a specific *Urteilkraft*, and can give authority and legitimacy to speech arising from it (while living at a distance from these destructiva may lack that degree of discernment and legitimacy).

Second, there is the factor of synchronic and diachronic communality. After having stressed the unique strength of local and personal perspectives (see: presence and experience), it seems paradoxical to stress the importance of a connectedness to positions that transcend the local and contextual perspective. In our reconstruction though, prophetic speech has a communal bedding and various unexpected voices play a formative role in its realisation. Take, for instance, the theological tradition. If the content of prophetic speech does not resonate in the spiritual and confessional tradition of the church, the credibility of that specific speech is at stake. Though prophetic speech may be fiercely critical to the actual state and shape of a tradition, our research shows that the essence of prophetic speech is often in contact with the 'tradition's continual cry' (Lischer). There is a 'cry' in each tradition, and prophetic speech happens in contact with that 'cry'. Another example of this communality is the worldwide community of churches. Communality also means that if the content of prophetic speech is not recognized by other churches, especially by churches from other cultures and contexts, the perspective of this specific speech may be too narrow and parochial. Our research shows how easily churches can develop myopic flaws for detecting what is essentially damaging their own communal and societal life. Other churches should therefore have a say in this quest for the prophetic. A final example of diachronic communality is the factor of 'memory'. Every voice in a culture or a community that is able to remember the iniquities of concrete societies and contexts, and that is able to show how these historical realities influence and mark the present, should have an important role in the discourse on prophetic speech. This includes critical journalism and the voice of dissident minorities that do not succumb to societal pressures to forget former iniquities.

These aspects of communality can be applied to discourses on a national and a societal level, but also to consultations on a local and a congregational level.

Communal consultation and debate in the congregation, for instance, that includes voices from others (voices from other cultures, voices from refugees, voices from other confessional denominations, voices from the different generations in a congregation, societal voices of suffering or dissent) will strengthen prophetic speech in local congregations. Interestingly, this synchronic and diachronic communality is also part of the training and the practice of individual preachers. In preparing their sermons, preachers absorb and interiorise these different voices and ultimately crystallise them into a single sermon.

Third, there are the christological and pneumatological patterns in prophetic speech that can serve as criteria for its veracity and authenticity. The basic pattern of exposing, interrupting, and overcoming destructive can be interpreted as having *cruciform* characteristics. Crucial in prophetic speech is the opposition to and the overcoming of destructiva, and our research shows how individuals (preachers, parishioners, or contemporaries) and communities have a preparedness to suffer because of this redemptive and salutary aim. In our reconstruction, factors of self-giving, love for one's enemy and the preparedness to suffer are more recognisable as components of prophetic speech than self-centeredness, the search for scapegoats, and barricaded identities. In true prophetic speech, preachers prefer to bear suffering rather than to inflict it on others. 'If more blood must be shed, let it be our blood', Martin Luther King said (quoting Ghandi, after Birmingham's worst night of violence, 10 May 1963²³). Prophetic speech is speech with redemptive power, while preachers and congregations are aware of the christological pattern that suffering may be part of the way to resurrection. It is because of this redemptive aim of prophetic speech, the pneumatological patterns are discernible in it as well. Ernst Käsemann interpreted prophecy as a form of *Provokation*, and what he meant by it is that in prophetic speech human beings are 'provoked' out of their old lives to become part of the new existence about which the gospel speaks and which is facilitated by the Spirit.²⁴ In our research, we noticed this pneumatological or charismatic character of prophetic speech: Its critical, interruptive and provocative features intend to restore, to heal and to initiate into the 'hard, and painful, and beautiful, and demanding, and fulfilling, and sacrificial life of love' (8.7).

23 Calloway-Thomas, C. (Ed.), *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Sermonic Power of Public Discourse*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press 1993), p 55.

24 Käsemann, E., 'Zur paulinischen Anthropologie', in: Käsemann, E., *Paulinische Perspektiven* (2., durchgesehene Auflage). (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1972), pp 14-16.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF CODES

(Codings of the first cycle of sermon analysis: Sermons from Bonhoeffer, King and Tutu)

Sermon 1 – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Revelation 2.4. f7 (Berlin, 1932)

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|---|--|
| <p>1.1 Speaking with authority (The preacher seems to know something, and speaks with authority from this specific knowledge)</p> <p>1.2 Exposing deceptive strategies in the church that conceal the real crisis of the church (cf <i>Selbstkritik der Kirche</i>)</p> <p>1.3 Making the congregation feel uncomfortable</p> <p>1.4 Interrelating the crisis of the church and the crisis of society</p> <p>1.5 Lamenting and blaming the blindness of the church to the crisis around her</p> <p>1.6 Speaking with authority (Claiming to speak a word from God about and against the church)</p> <p>1.7 Interrupting routine liturgy and celebrations</p> <p>1.8 Calling back (Calling the church back to the essence of their tradition)</p> <p>1.9 Exposing the inflation and erosion of the language of the church</p> <p>1.10 Showing the travesty of various practices in the church</p> <p>1.11 Confronting (Voicing God's critique against the church)</p> <p>1.12 Qualifying the present (cf Speaking in the name of God)</p> <p>1.13 Assuming an inner awareness among the hearers of God's critique</p> <p>1.14 Accusing the church for concealing the crisis in her (because of fear for god, for a loss of face in society)</p> <p>1.15 Exposing the self-gratifying character of the church</p> <p>1.16 Trying to hurt the hearers to awaken them</p> <p>1.17 The sermon as an accusation</p> <p>1.18 Lamenting that the hearers are untouchable and dispassionate</p> <p>1.19 Making plain contrasts to choose, denouncing compromises</p> | <p>1.20 Urging to make a choice: (Reducing complexity to a theological and spiritual plainness)</p> <p>1.21 Calling back (the hearers to their former and real history with God)</p> <p>1.22 Seeing the threat of apostasy in the congregation and trying to prevent it through the sermon</p> <p>1.23 Stirring and revitalizing the congregation by asking critical question</p> <p>1.24 Creating communality</p> <p>1.25 Making aware of the reach of the societal crisis in the personal life of the parishioners</p> <p>1.26 Biography as battle-ground (where this current crisis has its destructive effects on members of the congregation)</p> <p>1.27 Engaging with atmospheres and unspoken realities that influence the church</p> <p>1.28 Detecting of and engaging with the present day obstacles to believe</p> <p>1.29 Reclaiming faith (The preacher fights to win hearers back)</p> <p>1.30 The sermon as a confrontational counterword (against the ruling atmospheres and unspoken realities)</p> <p>1.31 <i>Heute!</i>'Now is the time'. Creating a <i>kairos</i>-awareness</p> <p>1.32 Making guilty (Preaching as accusing and as 'making guilty')</p> <p>1.33 Exposing the deplorable state of the church</p> <p>1.34 Exposing the need for revitalization and reformation of the church</p> <p>1.35 Unmasking vocabulary (By new, stirring and vivid language exposing and triggering contemporary forms of unbelief)</p> <p>1.36 Failing spirituality (Bringing the spiritual negligence of the church to the surface)</p> <p>1.37 Accusing (The failure of the church as a thirst for power instead of being an agent of hope)</p> <p>1.38 Preaching as provocation (Triggering the unbelief and negligence of the church)</p> |
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- 1.39 The pulpit as a *Kampflplatz* (The sermon as a place where the prophetic fight within the church itself takes place)
- 1.40 Making the church a corporate persona in need of conversion
- 1.41 Making addressable (Being church means being open to God's critique)
- 1.42 Practical ecclesiology (The true shape of the church is penitence)
- 1.43 Simplicity (Interrupting the business of the church and urging her to spiritual 'simplicity')
- 1.44 The place of breakthroughs (Implicit urging of the church to become the place of decisive breakthroughs)
- 1.45 Ultimate seriousness (Warning for destruction and the end of God's patience with the church)
- 1.46 Anticipating. The sermon as pre-view and as anticipation (The threat of the future, being present in a sermon)
- 1.47 Apocalyptic intuition (Seeing and announcing days of destruction/doom coming)
- 1.48 Discerning God's destructive presence (Suggesting societal forces of destruction as being God's instruments)
- 1.49 Suggesting the possible end of the church (Considering God taking away the candle)
- 1.50 Making a Scripture passage a threatening comparison for the present
- 1.51 Anticipating (Seeing God's destruction coming)
- 1.52 Warning for God's aggression
- 1.53 Relating church and society (Church and society being one under God's judgment)
- 1.54 Urging the congregation not to resist God, not even in his judgements
- 1.55 Acknowledging fear (cf 'The future is scaring')
- 1.56 Seeing through the days of destruction (The future is scaring but the promise is comforting')
- 1.57 Being made existentially involved in the crisis of this context
- 1.58 Blessing: Naming those who are called by God (and suffer because of that), 'blessed ones'.
- 1.59 Designing hope (Naming those who are called by God as 'living under a promise')
- 2.6 Authority/*Vollmacht* (Explaining and re-enacting the categorical character of God's calling)
- 2.7 Making simultaneous (Making Scripture speak present tense)
- 2.8 Making participants (In the sermon the congregation is involved in the prophetic call)
- 2.9 Rhetorical violence (Rhetorics that reflect the aggressiveness of text and context)
- 2.10 Using paradoxes to discern God's hidden presence
- 2.11 Attempting to break through the estrangement of listeners to God
- 2.12 Recovery: Re-establishing the fundamental familiarity with God's word
- 2.13 Identifying God's love as the supreme motive of the prophetic call
- 2.14 Interiority (Penetrating the personal experience of being called)
- 2.15 Drama and dynamics of being called (becoming despised, weak and laughable, an idiot)
- 2.16 Being inconvenient among contemporaries
- 2.17 Rhetorical rhythm of intensification
- 2.18 *Bis heute*: Illustrating the continuity of the prophetic experience
- 2.19 Making Scripture an illuminating and unmasking parable of the present
- 2.20 Instant identification (Using contemporary keywords that create instant identification between Scripture and the present (cf: *Volksfeind*))
- 2.21 Disclosing and exposing the spiritual undercurrent of the present
- 2.22 The life of the prophet as locus where the suffering because of this crisis takes place
- 2.23 Scars and solitude (Expressing the costs of being compelled to preach gods judgment)
- 2.24 Getting a grip on one's own calling in the present (of the preacher, the hearers, the church, society)
- 2.25 Interference of theology, preaching and biography (The sermon as cathartic moment of personal and congregational illumination)
- 2.26 Constructing identification, continuity and contemporaneity (cf *Jeremias war von unserem Fleisch und Blut*)
- 2.27 Being brought to surrender (see 'biography as battle-ground')
- 2.28 Prophetic mystagogics (Explaining and exposing the grim way in which God can capture a human being)
- 2.29 Constructing new language that invites and enables the congregation to communicate with God
- 2.30 Creating one reality (The sermon as a theological zone *sui generis* where
- Sermon 2 – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Jeremiah 20.7 (London, 1934)**
- 2.1 Constructing new stirring semantics
- 2.2 Using violent semantics for God's calling
- 2.3 Transmitting the claim of Scripture to the congregation
- 2.4 Context-resonating preaching (The crisis of the context resonates in the sermon)
- 2.5 Involving the congregation in being called

- the realities of scripture, preacher, congregation and current context are integrated
- 2.31 Provocative sarcastic dialogue with God (see: public spirituality, see: preaching and prayer, see: porous zones in the sermon)
- 2.32 Creating biographical transparency, with the aim that the congregation can discern gods working (not only in society, sermon, congregation but even in biography)
- 2.33 Making the congregation participant in God's calling
- 2.34 *Furchtbar nahe*: Talking about God's presence in 'shivering' language (see: catharsis)
- 2.35 Present-day decisions as focal points of God's calling
- 2.36 Creating a prophetic consciousness in the congregation
- 2.37 Ethics: Indicating where prophetic decisions are being made in the present context
- 2.38 Being dissident (Blessing and the burden of being dissident)
- 2.39 Preacher and prayer (The sermon becoming a conversation/dispute with God)
- 2.40 Public spirituality (The sermon as a means that bring the congregation to prayer, communication with God)
- 2.41 Learning to See (The sermon as a proposal to see what is happening in the present)
- 2.42 Understanding the prophetic dimension as an integral part of every Christian biography
- 2.43 *Zusammenbrechen*: Being brought to surrender to God
- 2.44 Doxology of scars (Discerning God in 'all our ways', even in our scars)
- 2.45 Being captured by God (see 'the categorical character of God's calling')
- 2.46 Overcoming: Being certain of sharing in the victory of the gospel
- 2.47 Sermon as a tow-rope (Making the sermon a means to tow the hearers to surrender, certitude and *visio dei*)
- 2.48 Preaching and transformation (The sermon as effort to overcome as congregation the crisis and the *Anfechtung* of this time (see also: edification))
- 2.49 Praying in the sermon: Inviting God's presence to persuade the 'us' of the congregation
- Sermon 3 – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon on Luke 13.1-5 (London, 1934)**
- 3.1 The risk of 'actuality' (The risk of the sermon becoming absorbed by the sensations of the present).
- 3.2 Overcoming this world
- 3.3 Equipping the congregation (to be Christian congregation in this critical context)
- 3.4 Preaching as resistance to destructive potentialities
- 3.5 Pointing to the risk of avoiding the crisis and its divine call (Looking away, being optimistic, blaming and judging others)
- 3.6 Negative phenomenology
- 3.7 Selecting a Bible-text with a specific potentiality for the actual moment
- 3.8 Pre-exegetical moment of insight (Selecting a specific text for the sermon with the aim to illuminate the present)
- 3.9 Illuminating the theological meaning of actual occurrences
- 3.10 Instant identification (Using typical and precarious terms from the present in the re-telling of Scripture)
- 3.11 Making Scripture contemporary
- 3.12 *Und nun Jesus*: Making the sermon a place where Jesus' distinct way of dealing with a catastrophe is communicated
- 3.13 Mystagogics: God's acting presence in crises according to Jesus
- 3.14 Discerning God's call in crises (Tracing and explicating God's critical call in actual societal crises)
- 3.15 Stressing the discontinuity of Jesus (compared to all kinds of dealings with a crisis in the present)
- 3.16 Addressing the danger of not respecting God's mysterious presence in crises
- 3.17 Speaking with authority (This is going on, this is the proper interpretation)
- 3.18 Illumination: Making the congregation see and feel how a crisis is to be seen
- 3.19 Transforming (Spectators becoming participant through the sermon, Making participant)
- 3.20 Making hearers addressees of what is said by God in the crisis of their society
- 3.21 The sermon as necessary theological explication of God's call in societal crises
- 3.22 Urging to penitence (Making the congregation aware of their being involved in the crisis of their culture)
- 3.23 Creating an existential and spiritual solidarity and communality
- 3.24 Overcoming this world (Pointing to resources of salvation and spiritual resistance)
- 3.25 Making receptive and 'reachable' for God's grace
- 3.26 Pointing to the redemptive power of penitence (in a contemporary example, Gandhi)
- 3.27 Making Ghandi's life an illuminative parable of God's working in this world.
- 3.28 Prophetic mystagogy (Making the guilt of the other a mirror of my own sin).

- 3.29 Prophetic mystagogy (Explaining the kenotic power of penitence and conversion)
- 3.30 Overcoming this world (The congregation as community where the crisis of this culture is overcome by repentance, love, guilt-bearing, hope)
- 3.31 Speaking with direct authority
- 3.32 Making the sermon a moment in which the congregation is confronted with Jesus' No
- 3.33 Prophetic mystagogy (Tracing God's 'way' in this world)
- 3.34 Prophetic instructions (Defining the spiritual and moral instructions in which the hearer can follow 'God's 'way' in this world')
- 3.35 Creating *certitudo* (Pointing the way by which this world and its ways of doing (*die Welt der Zeitung, die Welt der Schrecken und die Welt des Richtens*) is overcome)
- 3.36 The sermon and the practice of prayer (In the sermon penitence is practiced in prayer)
- 3.37 Inviting God (to make the congregation repentant) (see: 'Porous zones in the sermon')
- 3.38 Making participant (Through the sermon the congregation is made aware of their being part of and being responsible for a societal crisis)
- Sermon 4 – Martin Luther King Jr., sermon on the Vietnam War (Atlanta, 1967)**
- 4.1 Daring to address in the sermon controversial and complex themes (Not avoiding political themes and political statements in the sermon)
- 4.2 Knowing what themes haunt society and knowing how to address them
- 4.3 Being called (Feeling compelled to speak)
- 4.4 The necessity of prophetic preaching (Revealing and penetrating the blindness to the own sins of a society)
- 4.5 Making see (The sermon as an attempt to break through societal and ecclesial self-deception and blindness)
- 4.6 Interrupting a dominant discourse
- 4.7 Warning the hearers that neutrality and silence can be betrayal
- 4.8 Explicating the moral and theological dimensions of political and societal crises
- 4.9 Vocation of agony (Expressing the burden of being called to speak in controversial conflicts)
- 4.10 Revealing societal mechanism of apathy, fear and conformism
- 4.11 Overcoming (Preaching and the overcoming of apathy, fear and conformism)
- 4.12 Explicating mechanisms that make numb and afraid
- 4.13 Feeling compelled to speak (The calling to have to speak God's truth)
- 4.14 Retraction (Being transparent about earlier failures of not saying what had to be said)
- 4.15 Incubation (The factor time in becoming able to see and to say)
- 4.16 'Evangelical guts' (Commitment to the Gospel and the nerve to dissent)
- 4.17 Prophetic critique as manifestation of the love for one's country, people and society
- 4.18 Making society a *corporate persona*, a *collectivum* that is addressed in the sermon
- 4.19 Explicating failing societal commitment (Standing up for those who are forgotten)
- 4.20 Qualifying (judging, measuring) major political societal choices to their moral and spiritual content
- 4.21 Spiritual *demasque* (Revealing the spiritual bankruptcy that causes these major societal choices)
- 4.22 Triggering the conscience of the hearers (by revealing, making public brute societal injustices)
- 4.23 Creating unequivocalness (Bringing complexity back to moral and spiritual plainness)
- 4.24 Revealing and exposing the destructivum of war
- 4.25 Uncovering cruelty
- 4.26 Making See (Trying to influence by proposing a way of seeing and interpreting societal patterns and realities)
- 4.27 Deepening the level of awareness (Preaching and the intention of deepening insight and alertness)
- 4.28 Existential involvement of the preacher (The preacher's own deepening level of insight as impulse for his preaching)
- 4.29 Warning for the dissolution of the moral integrity of this society because of this choice for war
- 4.30 The sanitizing aim of prophetic societal critique
- 4.31 Biographical transparency as homiletical strategy
- 4.32 Speaking on behalf of victims
- 4.33 Theology, preaching and biography (Being in touch with the victims in society, and because of that being able to speak on their behalf)
- 4.34 Exposing the ways public opinion is formed and how contemporaries are deceived (see: the corruption of language)
- 4.35 Explicating the poisoning and blinding of public opinion and the necessity to preach
- 4.36 The church and her vital and necessary role of questioning the violence that is used by the state

- 4.37 Explaining the burden and responsibility of being called by Jesus Christ (see: scars and solitude)
- 4.38 Being captivated by Jesus as source and imperative to speak
- 4.39 Communal hope as an essence in the Gospel (Explaining how commitment to peace is a consequence of believing in Jesus (see: faith taking shape in practices))
- 4.40 Discipleship (The preacher drawing personal consequences related to the crisis of the context, from his commitment to Jesus)
- 4.41 Interrupting a dominant discourse (Making the so-called enemy 'human'; see: depoliticizing and demilitarizing public speech)
- 4.42 The sanitizing aim of prophetic preaching
- 4.43 The sermon as interruption of political discourses of hatred
- 4.44 Dismantling the atmosphere of hatred by exposing the suffering of the other human beings
- 4.45 Making a society conscious of its own complicity and guilt in complex global crises
- 4.46 Creating a public awareness and memory of complicity
- 4.47 To re-memory (The sermon as collective moral memory to remind society to what is inconvenient and thus being suppressed, forbidden and forgotten)
- 4.48 Being able to withstand political and societal pressure
- 4.49 The effects of the colonization of the mind: Becoming inert and numb
- 4.50 Qualifying the press of not being able to discern evil any longer
- 4.51 Failing societal mechanism of critical public information
- 4.52 Feeling compelled to tell God's truth in a context where truth is obscured
- 4.53 Place of immunity (The church and the sermon as a place of free speech)
- 4.54 The sermon as a way of forcing a society to look in the mirror
- 4.55 'The inclusivity of guilt' (The sermon and the construction of a collective and guilty 'we')
- 4.56 To penetrate and disclose the destructivum
- 4.57 Lamenting, voicing and defining the suffering of helpless victims because of a war
- 4.58 Iconoclasm (To deconstruct the propaganda of war with the description of the suffering caused by war)
- 4.59 Constructing and proposing a counter-narrative)
- 4.60 Focus on structures (Revealing, making aware of, unjust economic and political structures in society (see: the pedagogics of prophetic preaching))
- 4.61 Inviting the hearers to a meta-position from which their own society is observed and judged
- 4.62 Making discontent (The sermon and the troubling of the conscience of the hearers and making it discontent)
- 4.63 *Spiritual death*: Warning for the spiritual death of a society because of its persistent injustices
- 4.64 Tracing redemption
- 4.65 Using biblical semantics to uncover contemporary injustices (cf *The shirtless and barefooted people of the land, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light*)
- 4.66 Using biblical semantics to trace contemporary hope
- 4.67 Becoming morally inert (The effects of destructiveness on the soul of the hearers)
- 4.68 Qualifying the present (Interpreting societal crises as critical effect of society's own failures)
- 4.69 Prophetic instructions (Urging the hearers to resist and challenge (poverty, racism, militarism; see also: faith taking shape in practices))
- 4.70 Triggering redemption (cf *Speeding up the day when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*)
- 4.71 Preaching and ethics as 'catalytic moments' in the dynamics between God and this world
- 4.72 Creating communality (The all-embracing character of love, love as the necessity for the survival of mankind)
- 4.73 Reaching out as inclusive as possible
Defining love as the supreme unifying principle of life)
- 4.74 Prophetic criticism as expression of the love for one's people, society and country
- 4.75 Speaking to the soul of the nation to save it from disaster (cf *Come home America*)
- 4.76 Calling one's own society back to her fundamental identity (Remembering society to the metaphysical dimensions of her founding documents)
- 4.77 The sermon as a zone of conflict (The hearers are drawn into the sermon as the zone where they are confronted with God and his judgments)
- 4.78 Ultimate seriousness (Bringing the hearers in a situation of ultimate seriousness before God)
- 4.79 Conversion and ethics (Urging the hearers to make choices)
- 4.80 Theological iconoclasm (Mocking and interrupting the thought of America being 'Gods darling')

- 4.81 Dangerous speech: Making a daring imagination in the sermon of God fiercely threatening this society to break its backbone
- 4.82 Warning for God's anger
- 4.83 Authoritative speech: The sermon as a direct appeal from God
- 4.84 Urging to repent
- 4.85 Explicating the costs of discipleship (The realism of suffering as consequence of faith)
- 4.86 The sermon as impulse to surrender
- 4.87 Following Jesus and standing up for justice and peace
- 4.88 Suffering because of following of Jesus as crucial theological theme (cf *Before the crown we wear, there is the cross we must bear*)
- 4.89 Empowering the hearers to persevere
- 4.90 The metaphysical architecture of hope (Claiming the existence of a moral order that will guarantee the eventual down-fall of injustice)
- 4.91 Reciting the liturgical tradition (Unleashing the hope that lives in the hymns of the liturgical tradition)
- 4.92 Reciting the liturgical tradition (Being in touch with the struggle and the Christian hope of earlier generations)
- 4.93 Reciting the liturgical tradition (Finding common ground between preacher and congregation, past and present in the shared heritage of the liturgical tradition)
- 4.94 Forces of transformation (Defining faith as a force of transformation)
- 4.95 'Speeding up redemption' (Defining faith as a force that triggers the coming of the reality 'when justice will roll down like waters')
- 4.96 Invoking biblical eschatology as promise
- Sermon 5 – Martin Luther King Jr., sermon held after the Chicago Summit (Chicago, 1967)**
- 5.1 Making Scripture a revealing and exposing parable of the present
- 5.2 'Instant identification' (Using contemporary key-terms that create instant identification between scripture and the present (cf *A certain rich man, a big shot*)
- 5.3 The sermon as 'satire' (Making a mocking satire of greed and godlessness)
- 5.4 Qualifying (Economic and political circumstances becoming theological judgements. The sermon as the place where the theological and spiritual dimension of for instance richness or war is detected and unveiled)
- 5.5 The sermon and the liturgy as 'release' (Releasing the disgust and anger about injustice)
- 5.6 The sermon as 'divine public mockery' (see: making guilty)
- 5.7 Instant identification (Jesus 'the peasant')
- 5.8 Jesus as 'the strange contemporary' (Portrayal of Jesus in which he is both a contemporary as well as critical and 'different')
- 5.9 Trying to position the voice of Jesus in contemporary society
- 5.10 Making society standing on trial (The sermon as a lawsuit)
- 5.11 Communicating with several audiences
- 5.12 Being able to invent language fit for different listeners
- 5.13 Layered language (Constructing language that also contains the unspoken and sometimes unconscious undercurrent of society and of the hearers)
- 5.14 Illumination (The illuminating moment in preaching: The daily experience of the hearers is illuminated, brought into words, and connected with scripture and God)
- 5.15 Portraying and mocking the stupidity of foolish living people in this society (see: the sage in the prophet)
- 5.16 'Lost lives' (Revealing contemporary ways in which human life can become foolish and lost)
- 5.17 Theological and spiritual anamnesis (Naming of and warning for societal diseases)
- 5.18 Wisdom, morality and prophetic speech (Exposing the foolishness of unjust human living)
- 5.19 Daring to enter dangerous zones of language and societal analysis
- 5.20 Explicating false and failing collective identities
- 5.21 The sermon as re-memory (Guarding the memory of former injustices and former struggles for justice)
- 5.22 Sarcasm (Releasing the pain of being insulted)
- 5.23 Mocking (Showing the injustice and stupidity of public opinion or public memory)
- 5.24 Making public (Making hidden and appalling societal structures and motives, public and explicit in the sermon)
- 5.25 *Thou fool!* Unleashing Jesus' threatening critique to this concrete society (cf Bonhoeffer *Aber ich habe wider dich*)
- 5.26 In the sermon society is made an addressable person
- 5.27 The sermon as 'substitute speech' (Speaking on behalf of poor and hungry people that have no voice for themselves)
- 5.28 Making discontent (Portraying society with all its painful injustices as to trigger the conscience of hearers)

- 5.29 Showing the spiritual destructive effects of injustice in the life of the hearers
- 5.30 Qualifying economic injustice to 'God's children' as an insult to God
- 5.30 *It is one and the same reality*: What is told about in scripture and what is experienced in this society is the same (see: creating one reality)
- 5.31 *Godless arrogance*: Giving a theological diagnosis and qualification of richness (The sermon and the divine verdict about societal phenomenon)
- 5.32 Laying bare and mocking of a spiritual attitude that is dominant in society and in the minds of individuals
- 5.33 Prophecy, satire and wisdom (Satirical portrayal of contemporaries who think they are God)
- 5.34 Theological and spiritual diagnosis and qualification of current society
- 5.35 Personal testimony of suffering because of the crisis of this society
- 5.36 Theology, biography and preaching (The interference of the crisis of this context in the life of the preacher, being shared in the sermon)
- 5.37 Giving testimony (Making shared suffering tangible in a personal testimony of the preacher)
- 5.38 Religion that fails (Being critical and self-critical about 'outward religion'; see: religion that *doesn't* take shape in practices)
- 5.39 Preaching and initiation: Guiding hearers in attitudes that (and that cannot) endure crises and suffering
- 5.40 'Cathartic power' (The melting together in the sermon of congregation, preacher, text and societal crisis towards a cathartic release)
- 5.41 Being called as being interrupted
- 5.42 Interiority, biography and preaching (Experiencing a calling in societal crises)
- 5.43 Designing contemporary sacred history (Constructing strong identification stories for the current hearers)
- 5.44 Designing hope as empowering
- 5.45 The triggering effect of societal crises in biographies and vocations
- 5.46 Finding your voice and your themes (Sudden involvement in societal and ecclesiastical crises, unexpected vocations)
- 5.47 Empowering the hearers to be one and united in their resistance
- 5.48 The transformation of present crisis-situations to 'sacred moments'
- 5.49 The exposure of suffering
- 5.50 Preaching and the sharing of suffering
- 5.51 The sermon as jeremiad (Communal releasing of pain and humiliation)
- 5.52 Saying out loud in the sermon the shocking reality
- 5.53 Biography, theology and preaching (Sharing the same humiliation)
- 5.54 Speaking a language in which the destructive undercurrent of this society is present
- 5.55 Community between hearers and preacher (Explicit responsiveness from hearers)
- 5.56 Community in suffering
- 5.57 Theology being resonant (Expressing the need for a theology and preaching that has words and concepts to name the horrible and the destructive)
- 5.58 Theology that fails (The failure of abstract or optimistic theology in the face of sin and evil)
- 5.59 Public spirituality (The sharing of vulnerability and despair)
- 5.60 Tension between authenticity and imagery (see: in his existential crisis the preacher is still conscious of his public role)
- 5.61 Crystallizing shared pain and anxiety in a personal example that makes the pain accessible
- 5.62 Biography as a window on shared suffering (see *mystagogics*: making shared suffering visible and tangible by explicating it in biographical examples)
- 5.63 Testimony of the reality of God in a time of crisis (cf *The real presence of God in times of need*)
- 5.64 The effects of the destructivism of this society on the existence and vocation of the preacher
- 5.65 Preaching, prayer and God's presence (Making the recollection of a personal memory of God's presence accessible for a shared experience of that presence)
- 5.66 Facilitating stories and images of identification for the hearers to facilitate comfort and catharsis among the hearers
- 5.67 Preaching and God's presence (Communal re-enacting and re-experiencing God's releasing, redemptive interference)
- 5.68 Catharsis (Communal release of tension, aggression, longing and hope)
- 5.69 Stimulating and exciting dynamic between the preacher and the congregation
- 5.70 Elevation (Breaking of barriers between preacher and congregation, between text and context, and the communal experience of being lifted up out of the frightening circumstances of the crisis)
- 5.71 Rhythm and ecstasy (The rhythm of words of hope spoken by the preacher preparing the way for catharsis)
- 5.72 Preaching and anticipation (In the sermon future redemption can be tasted, felt, experienced)

- 5.73 Reciting the liturgical tradition (Traditional songs being the expression of current exaltation)
- 5.74 Urging the hearer to surrender
- 5.75 Being connected to sacred history (In the sermon a connection happens and a continuity is designed with the sacred history from the bible to the cotton fields of the present (see: prophetic preaching is not only interrupting, but also restoring continuity))
- 5.76 Expressing in a lament the communal experienced injustices in this society
- 5.77 Preaching and the proclamation of hope
- 5.78 Mediation (Liturgy and tradition carries/guards/mediates former pain, suffering, hope and faith (see Lischer and 'inherited rage'))
- 5.79 Explicating the vocational costs of criticism and threat (see: drama and dynamics of being called)
- 5.80 Lamenting (Admitting in public the solitude and the scars of this vocation)
- 5.81 Reciting the liturgical tradition (The legitimizing and reviving power of tradition and its liturgy)
- 5.82 Preaching and singing (see: preaching and praying, see: porous zones in the sermon)

Sermon 6 – Martin Luther King Jr., sermon at a gathering of garbage workers on strike (Memphis, 1968)

- 6.1 Detecting, defining and empowering the determination among the hearers
- 6.2 Qualifying (Reading/interpreting current changes and movements in society as having theological meaning)
- 6.3 Making sense (Giving coherence and meaning, influencing the imagination and view of reality of the hearers)
- 6.4 Communal character of preaching (The response of hearers as constitutive element of the preaching-event)
- 6.5 Absorbing competence of the preacher (The preacher being able to absorb the dynamic that comes from the congregation)
- 6.6 The spherical factor (Specific spheres, circumstances and atmospheres influence the tension that can be felt in the sermon)
- 6.7 Making the congregation aware and participant of a present kairological moment in history
- 6.8 Tracing God, tracing redemption
- 6.7 Theological interpretation of the present
- 6.8 Preventing violence (see: sanitizing aim of prophetic critique)
- 6.9 Redemptive resources (Stressing non-violence as resources to resist)
- 6.10 'Either/or': In the sermon the hearer is confronted with a compelling form of 'plainness' (see: make it plain)
- 6.11 Announcing doom (Warning that without conversion, the consequences of persisting injustices in this society, will be: doom, destruction)
- 6.12 The reach of destructiveness (In the sermon the destructive effects of hatred in the existence of hearers is opposed, denied, exorcized)
- 6.13 Reclaiming humanity and identity (The sermon and the liturgy as healing, purification, to de-poison and to detoxicate)
- 6.14 Public theology (Giving theological rationales for societal struggles)
- 6.15 Revealing the destructive societal mechanisms and structures that sabotage resistance
- 6.16 Instant identification (Straightforward and natural identification with biblical parallels)
- 6.17 Communality and continuity in time (Activating the prophetic potential of one's spiritual and theological tradition)
- 6.18 Prophetic preaching as the individual expression of a long tradition, a broad movement and a communal struggle
- 6.19 Speaking on behalf of others: Demanding dignity
- 6.20 Theological and spiritual leadership (Speaking against one's supporters: exhibiting and demanding dignity and the renouncing of violence)
- 6.21 Overcoming (Expressing the certainty that immorality will lose)
- 6.22 Overcoming as celebration (Celebrating in the sermon the anticipation of victory)
- 6.23 Empowerment (Living determined Christian lives because of the trust of the outcome of this struggle)
- 6.24 Anticipating in the sermon the downfall of current injustice
- 6.25 'Foreknowledge' (Knowing of the victory over injustice)
- 6.26 Suffering for others (Willing to suffer for the benefit of society)
- 6.27 The missionary dimension of prophetic critique (cf *We have got to say to the nation*)
- 6.28 Triggering the hidden destructive forces that define and influence society
- 6.29 Making see (Making the hidden destructive forces visible, making people see these forces and influences)
- 6.30 Creating iconographic public images that influence public opinion
- 6.31 Prophetic presence (The interrupting force of spiritual resistance)
- 6.32 Making see (Triggering destructiveness and make it see in public discourse)

- 6.33 Villification and iconoclasm (The public mockery and demolition of 'societal/cultural icons')
- 6.34 Crystallizing the hidden and destructive forces of a society in a person, an incident or an example
- 6.35 The epochal dimension of prophetic preaching (The non-individual but generational and ecumenical, the non-incident but structural character of the prophetic dimension)
- 6.36 Spiritual resources that can overcome physical violence (inner fire, baptism, prayer)
- 6.37 Iconography (Making a visible frame of the spiritual contrasts and struggles that are going on in society)
- 6.38 Making the destructivum powerless and foolish (Preaching, sacred mocking, satire and the releasing of fear and anger)
- 6.39 Sermon and celebration (Future victory is anticipated and experienced in the sermon)
- 6.40 'Overcoming this world' (In the sermon the victory over hatred and fear that now dominate society is experienced and celebrated)
- 6.41 Street-liturgy (Being church in the street. Empowering dynamic between liturgy, tradition, action and preaching)
- 6.42 The prophetic potential of the spiritual tradition of the church (prayer, liturgy, baptism, non-violence)
- 6.43 Non-parochial (The non-parochial but societal and national aim of prophetic critique)
- 6.44 Being able to talk from the perspective of a shared loyalty to this society and nation
- 6.45 Appealing to the collective national conscience
- 6.46 Being able to speak on behalf of (Summons to preachers to be able to articulate the longing of the people)
- 6.47 'Be prophets and preach prophetic' (Urging the church and its preachers to prophetic ministry; see: the epochal dimension of prophetic preaching)
- 6.48 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me' (Summoning preachers to speak and preach with spiritual authority and certainty)
- 6.49 Company of preachers (Communality between preachers)
- 6.50 Urging preachers to be self-critical (Critique at preachers because of them being self-concerned, etheric and not relevant)
- 6.51 To provoke and to trigger (By stimulating provocative concrete sanctions, triggering and resisting the destructiveness in society)
- 6.52 Faith taking shape in concrete practices
- 6.53 Speaking on behalf of God
- 6.54 Speaking on behalf of people that are deprived of their dignity (see: substitute speech)
- 6.55 Humanizing force of the prophetic (Reclaiming the identity of deprived people as God's children (see: making human))
- 6.56 Prophetic commissioning and empowering (Practicing economic sanctions as prophetic signs of resistance)
- 6.57 Battle of means (Making the sermon concrete in 'societal acts' of resistance and disobedience (boycot, demonstrations))
- 6.58 Villification of unjust industries (Concrete naming of persons, industries, factories that embody the destructive and unjust system that is being criticized)
- 6.59 Dangerous power (Being able to mobilize societal resistance and being able to sabotage)
- 6.60 Urging the hearers to costly discipleship (cf *dangerous unselfishness*)
- 6.61 Creating a simultaneous reality between Scripture and reality
- 6.62 Typological links (Using terms from the 'lived experiences' from the hearers to re-imagine scripture (cf *A man from another race came by*))
- 6.63 Re-imagining and qualifying (Using sacred texts to re-imagine the present situation)
- 6.64 *It is one reality* (The circumstances, crises and forces in a bible-passage are presented as essentially the same realities of the present-day context of the hearers)
- 6.65 Living local critical hermeneutics (Reading the Bible on behalf of and from the perspective of garbage workers on strike (see: substitute speech, speech on behalf of others))
- 6.66 Suggesting that determination, power and readiness for action can accumulate and accelerate and thus become 'powerful days'
- 6.67 Sanitizing speech (Prophetic critique and its motives of sanitizing public communal life)
- 6.68 Calling back (Prophetic critique and its motives of calling one's own society back to its intended identity)
- 6.69 Being part of and creating 'mythication' (The preacher creating an iconographic 'homiletical persona'; the preacher becoming part of iconographic processes about himself/herself)
- 6.70 Retrospectivity (Iconographic processes about the preacher influence the interpretation of their sermons, vocation, biography)

- 6.71 Performance, persona and preacher (Making rhetorical and strategic use of publicity)
- 6.72 Searching for 'alliances of humanity' (see: civil religion, popular religion)
- 6.73 Being able to speak from multiple sources of authority
- 6.74 Designing sacred history
- 6.75 Designing hope (Using rhetorical and homiletical means to construct a counter-narrative of hope)
- 6.76 Dangerous calling (Being in danger and suffering because of one's calling)
- 6.77 The sermon as a moment where the preacher 'comes home' and releases his fears and hopes (see the homiletical analogy with Bonhoeffer, see: trying to get a grip on one's own struggles as preacher in this societal crisis)
- 6.78 The sermon as communal exaltation and anticipating celebration
- 6.79 Communal catharsis (The sermon and the communal catharsis of pain, hope and experienced redemption)
- 6.80 Communality and unity (The merging of preacher, congregation, scripture, text and context in a moment of 'one-ness')
- 6.81 Preaching and the evoking/happening of God's liberating power
- 6.82 Anticipating on a, according to the preacher, secure and redeemed future.
- 6.83 Promising the hearers future redemption
- 6.84 Being ahead (The preacher as 'one who is ahead', as one who has experienced future redemption and presents that redemption in the sermon)
- 6.85 Preaching becoming singing
- 6.86 One great transformative drama (Making the present an integral part of the great transformative drama from the Bible to the present situation)
- 6.87 Retrospectivity (The framing force of subsequent developments that dominate the interpretation of earlier texts, persons or sermons)
- 6.88 Iconographic dynamics (Preachers or sermons themselves becoming part of an iconographic dynamic).
- Sermon 7 – Desmond Tutu, sermon at the funeral of Steve Biko (King Williams' Town, 1977)**
- 7.1 Penetrating and disclosing the destructivism
- 7.2 Numbness (Illustrating the effect of the destructivism in the existence of the hearers: numbness, see: the reach of the destructivism)
- 7.3 Existential and biographical involvement (see: biography as battleground)
- 7.4 Disputing with God in the sermon (see: preaching and prayer, see: public spirituality)
- 7.5 Lamenting (Expressing the preacher's and congregation's sense of being abandoned and betrayed by God)
- 7.6 Naming and disclosing the annihilating forces active in this context
- 7.7 Detecting and evoking hope
- 7.8 Provocative intimacy: *Do you really love us?*
- 7.9 Making political human rights a spiritual and theological matter
- 7.10 'The inclusivity of hope': Persisting in the inclusivity of hope in the midst of destructive racial violence
- 7.11 Remembering God
- 7.12 By recalling God's redemptive history, evoking that presence
- 7.13 Making Scripture and context simultaneous
- 7.14 Advocating the collective and inclusive character of hope
- 7.15 Creating simultaneity (between a Scripture-passage and a concrete current context)
- 7.16 Knowing what to say (Selecting a biblical passage with an illuminating potential for the present critical situation)
- 7.17 *God is no neutral sifter on the fence*
- 7.18 Making liberation the defining aim of God's acting
- 7.19 The sermon as a means to regain intimacy with God
- 7.20 Acknowledging disillusion (The experienced demolition of hope)
- 7.21 Making the redemptive drama contemporary (A continuous interplay of worlds (scripture and context) through which one reality is created)
- 7.22 Proclaiming the reversal (Proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus (and thus the defeat of death, evil and darkness)
- 7.23 Speaking with a specific authority (The preacher seems to know something, is certain of that knowledge and speaks with authority from that knowledge)
- 7.24 Giving a theological and spiritual qualification of the present
- 7.25 Iconic fragments (Making persons or incidents 'windows' in which the redemptive character of gods reality becomes visible)
- 7.26 Biography as battle-ground (Making biographies transparent as crystallizations of the core-battle that is going on in society)
- 7.27 Theological and spiritual leadership (Being able to address and acknowledge the real hurt and anger of the hearers)

- 7.28 Theological and spiritual leadership (Being able to bend the anger of the hearers away from their destructive potential)
- 7.29 Theological and spiritual leadership (Being able to canalize the explosive anger of the hearers in the direction of reconciliation)
- 7.30 Theological and spiritual leadership (Knowing what to read and cite from Scripture in turbulent crises)
- 7.31 Preaching as exorcizing and healing the destructive effects of apartheid in the soul of the hearers
- 7.32 Re-definition (Making human beings define themselves in terms of the gospel (and not in the negative or destructive terms society sees them))
- 7.33 Tracing God in political and societal movements (cf a movement in which God, through Steve, sought to awaken in the black person a sense of his intrinsic value and worth as a child of God')
- 7.34 Urging for reconciliation and pacification in the midst of destructive and explosive circumstances
- 7.35 Having the guts to stand up and say something
- 7.36 The sermon as a law-suit (Spelling out concrete societal injustices in the sermon as a law-suit)
- 7.37 To warn (The threatening dimension of prophetic power)
- 7.38 Anticipating (Naming the possible disaster that can happen, see: *Apokalyptische Vernunft*)
- 7.39 Begging the hearers to avoid disaster
- 7.40 Preaching as a direct appeal to God
- 7.41 Engaging with the atmospheres and powers that dominate society
- 7.42 Announcing the downfall of present societal ruling powers
- 7.43 Constructing a new perspective on what is happening in this society (Designing hope)
- 7.44 The urgent appeal (Urging to faith taking shape in concrete practices)
- 7.45 *We have already overcome!* (The sermon as a place where the reality of the overcoming of separateness is explicated, believed and experienced)
- Sermon 8 – Desmond Tutu, inauguration sermon (Cape Town, 1986)**
- 8.1 Creating communality (Making God's calling beneficial for others) (see: sanitary dimensions of prophetic preaching)
- 8.2 Empowering (God's Spirit empowers people to enter the destructivum)
- 8.3 Human need as impulse for practices of transfiguration
- 8.4 False and failing religiosity (Religious life that is undisturbed by societal injustices and human need as failing spirituality)
- 8.5 'Being God's healing presence' (Urging hearers to personify God's healing presence)
- 8.6 Semantics of abundance (The doxology of God's presence being expressed in abundant semantics)
- 8.7 Transmitting awe and wonder (Rhetorical strategy of moving the congregating to awe (see also: making God's healing presence accessible))
- 8.8 Defining God's character as a source for redemption
- 8.9 Defining God's character as a prescriptive for the hearers to act
- 8.10 Self-critique of the church (Reproaching of a religiosity without concrete practices)
- 8.11 Authority (Using academic and refined language that reflect leadership and craftsmanship)
- 8.12 Theological and spiritual leadership (Knowing what to read and cite from scripture in concrete turbulent crises)
- 8.13 Addressing the sins of society (see: addressing society as a corporate identity, see: sermon as law-suit)
- 8.14 Making the church feel uncomfortable (The preacher being inconvenient, dissident)
- 8.15 Designing layered language in order to communicate with multiple discourses and addressees
- 8.16 Categorical and offensive confrontation
- 8.17 Intervention: In the sermon the destructive effects of apartheid are intervened
- 8.18 The sermon as requisitory (Naming the concrete scandalous injustices in this society (see also: lived experiences of the hearers))
- 8.19 Free speech (Using the sermon to bring offensive injustice to the surface)
- 8.20 Public lamenting (cf *People dumped as rubbish in resettlement camps*)
- 8.21 Saying out loud the taboos
- 8.22 Shocking and triggering the conscience of the hearers by naming the raw realities of the injustices in this society
- 8.23 Empowering and demanding spiritual discipline of the church
- 8.24 Weapons of the spirit (Exorcizing the demons of injustice by prayer and fasting (see: healing))
- 8.25 Healing (The sanitizing aim of the prophetic appeal)
- 8.26 Exorcizing (Spiritual offensive against the destructive effects of apartheid in the existence of the hearers)
- 8.27 Advocating counter-practices against apartheid (*koinoinia*)

- 8.28 Theological and spiritual leadership (Exhibiting a spirituality that transcends enmity and hatred)
- 8.29 Performing practices of hope
- 8.30 Sudden contemporaneity (Making Scripture a revealing and exposing parable of the present)
- 8.31 Instant identification (Using contemporary key-terms that create instant identification between scripture and the present)
- 8.32 Stirring vocabulary (Using characteristically painful key-terms from society in retelling Scripture)
- 8.33 Discerning redemption
- 8.34 The sanitizing aim of prophetic critique and prophetic instructions
- 8.35 Urging the congregation to counter-practices of hope and inclusivity
- 8.36 Public theology (Bending societal enmity to sensitivity to each other's needs)
- 8.37 Creating a societal counter-narrative (*koinonia* versus segregation)
- 8.38 Personalizing (Giving societal injustice a face and a name)
- 8.39 Creating communality (Stressing the communality of destiny and humanity)
- 8.40 Public theology (Designing a theology aimed at the transformation of South Africa)
- 8.41 Discerning the redemptive layer in creation
- 8.42 Reconnecting the church to her sources of vitality
- 8.43 Needing paradoxes to discern God's strange hidden presence (cf *Christ the victim*)
- 8.44 Discerning Christ in the core crises of this society
- 8.45 Empowering (Defining the transfigurational potential present in so called 'victims')
- 8.46 Instant identification (Using key-terms in which a crystallization happens between the hearers, the context, scripture and Christ)
- 8.47 Hope as an essence in Christian theology (Announcing the transfiguration to come)
- 8.48 Hope as an essence in Christian theology (Proclaiming that no one and no situation is untransfigurable)
- 8.49 The preacher's personal testifying of being part of God's transforming power
- 8.50 Interiority (Biographical theology made beneficiary for the hearers)
- 8.51 Interiority (Using personal and biographical experiences to explicate the experiences of the hearers)
- 8.52 Naming humiliating and scandalizing evil in society (see: penetrating the destructivum, see: the sermon as jeremiad)
- 8.53 Preaching and anger (The sermon as an expression of furious rage (see: speaking on behalf of victims))
- 8.54 Place of refuge (The sermon as a moment in which the humiliation of people is recognized and honored)
- 8.55 Free speech (Speaking out freely in a censored society (see: the sermon as an uncensored word))
- 8.56 Iconography of pain
- 8.57 Iconography of hope
- 8.58 Acknowledging societal and cultural 'alliances of humanity'
- 8.59 Disclosing and deconstructing the destructivum
- 8.60 Detecting and criticizing the source of societal violence
- 8.61 False and failing humanity (Being silent as betrayal)
- 8.62 Daring to enter the morally questionable (Calling for economic sanctions against South Africa)
- 8.63 Daring to provoke and to trigger the powers, institutions and atmospheres that dominate a society (see: *Zeichenhandlungen*)
- 8.64 Proclaiming the certainty of God's victory
- 8.65 Chanting about freedom
- 8.66 Making a theological inference: Christ has overcome darkness, so we will be free (see: certitude)
- Sermon 9 – Desmond Tutu, sermon after a banned rally (Cape Town, 1988)**
- 9.1 Trying to 'read' what is happening in this society and what should be done (see: *Zeitdeutungskämpfe*)
- 9.2 Means of resistance: Prayer (see: weapons of the spirit)
- 9.3 Redemptive aim of prophetic theology (Praying for our country)
- 9.4 The sermon as confrontation (Evil is told it will not prevail; see: engaging the powers, see: the pulpit as a *Kampfplatz*)
- 9.5 Reclaiming this world as God's world
- 9.6 Exorcism (In the sermon the false claims of systems on the lives of people is being resisted, denied, exorcized)
- 9.7 Being able to discern evil and resistance to God
- 9.8 Warning the rulers of this country
- 9.9 Engaging the powers that be (Summoning leaders of a society to conversion)
- 9.10 Announcing doom and judgment (cf *You will bite the dust*)
- 9.11 Liberating speech (The unburdening of language that has become 'prostituted')
- 9.12 Interrupting the 'colonization of the mind' (Destructiva are not only traceable in individual lives, biographies, congregations, but also in conditioned

- patterns of thinking, see: the reach of destructiveness)
- 9.13 False language (Exposing false language and its effects on society)
- 9.14 Reclaiming reality (The sermon as access to what is real and to what matters in the lived experience of the hearers)
- 9.15 Using satire to reveal and to mock the destructivism
- 9.16 Wisdom, morality and prophetic speech (The sage in the prophet)
- 9.17 No nuance: The sermon as expression of uncontrolled rage (Categorically condemning destructive systems and rulers)
- 9.18 Using satire to mock rulers
- 9.19 Assuming the bible to be an explosive book for which rulers fear
- 9.20 Clerical identity as vulnerability (Expression of having no other weapons than spiritual weapons)
- 9.21 Clerical identity as 'spiritual aristocracy'
- 9.22 Clerical visibility (Conscious and sometimes provocative forms of being present in society as church)
- 9.23 Exposing in public media the destructive essence of spiritual realities in this concrete society
- 9.24 Knowing and using the power of modern media (Knowing and using the effect of photographic scenes of evil and injustice)
- 9.25 Satiric exposure of the resistance against prayer
- 9.26 Claiming back of what has been captured by apartheid
- 9.27 The sermon as *Kampfplatz* (Fighting for the freedom of the Gospel)
- 9.28 Claiming the church and the sermon to be a free space and uncensored zone
- 9.29 Fiercely resisting attempts to domesticate the church and the sermon
- 9.30 Warning for God's anger
- 9.31 Ecclesiology in *Lebensfeindliche Orte* (Developing a robust ecclesiology of God never allowing the church to be taken down)
- 9.32 Theological and religious qualification (Proposing and explicating a theological and religious reading of the essence of the crisis of this society)
- 9.33 Preaching and eschatology (Chanting about the freedom that will come (see: *rhythm is the mother of ecstasy*))
- 9.34 Preaching and *certitudo* (The preacher is being ahead, in knowing for certain that freedom will come)
- 9.35 Being transferred in the future (In the sermon the congregation is transferred into a reality that is not yet visible, but that is promised in the sermon)
- 9.36 Creating communality (cf *Our freedom will be your freedom*)
- 9.37 The preacher being able to take a perspective that transcends lines of division and enmity
- 9.38 Christian hope (Overcoming enmity, spreading the inclusiveness of hope, cf *We want it also for you, Mr Vlok*)

APPENDIX B:

Theses on the prophetic dimension of preaching

On Liturgy, preaching and prophetic elements

1 One of the earliest functions of preaching in the earliest Christian congregations was to mediate prophetic speech.

(*Making See*, 1.2.1.b 'Perceptions of the prophetic in the New Testament', cf Stewart-Sykes, A., *From Prophecy to Preaching. A Search for the Origins of the Christian Homily*. Brill 2001.

2 Prophecy is not only a discourse on epistemology, authority, and identity (as Laura Nasrallah rightly formulated), it is also a discourse on power, on the power of vision, on the power of participating in a reality that is stronger than its destructive alternatives.

(*Making See*, 1.2.2.a Prophetic disputes as debates on epistemology, authority, and identity)

3 The prophetic dimension is one of the elements that belongs to the *Tiefensgrammatik* of the Christian liturgy. When a prophetic moment occurs in contemporary preaching, *existing* scriptural, traditional/confessional, intellectual, contextual, and liturgical ingredients *come alive*. Seen from this perspective, the prophetic dimension is a *natural* element in the practice of preaching.

(*Making See*, 1.4.1 'Elements of the prophetic in the texture of liturgy', cf Michael Beintker, 'Das (unvermeidliche) prophetische Risiko beim Verkündigen', *Die Zeichen der Zeit* 1986)

On Exposing destructiva

4 Prophetic speech functions to guard the *integrity* of the church. When the church does not see evil when it happens, (or when she even collaborates with it), her integrity is seriously damaged. The church, also for her own spiritual hygiene, should not want to do without prophetic voices.

(cf Johan Cilliers, *God for us? An analysis and evaluation of Dutch Reformed preaching during the Apartheid years*. Sun Press 2006; Cavanaugh, W.T., *Torture and Eucharist. Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*. Blackwell Publishing 1988).

On Interrupting dominant discourses

5 Just as raising children to become mature human beings is not possible without resisting the things that damage their development, preaching and catechesis is not possible without resisting the things that damage faith. To interrupt what is damaging is an essential feature of preaching and the loss of this interruptive aspect may damage the spiritual life of the congregation.

(cf Philippe Meirieu, *Pédagogie: le devoir de résister*, ESF Editeur Paris 2007), cf Micha de Winter, *Pedagogiek over Hoop* (afscheidscollege Utrecht 2017))

6 Preaching flourishes when it is agreed to be a *parrhēsiastic play* in which all participants need each other to know the truth. In this *play*, preachers run the risk of having to speak the truth and hearers run the risk of hearing inconvenient truths about themselves, but all participants agree that these risks are salutary for each other. Local congregations, who want to know the truth about themselves, should therefore not only invite preachers with whom they agree.

(*Making See* 1.2.3.c 'Michel Foucault, parrhēsia and the audacity of truth-speaking')

7 Prophetic speech, triggered by and occupied with evil as it is, is essentially a discourse on the *good* life.

(cf Beatrice de Graaf, *Heilige Strijd. Het verlangen naar veiligheid en het einde van het kwaad*, Boekencentrum 2017)

On Recognising the Word

8 This empirical study shows that illumination in preaching is an *epiphanic* moment, that happens within a specific *inductive* infrastructure. Both the epiphanic and the inductive are constitutive elements of the prophetic dimension in preaching. Prophetic speech, therefore, cannot be *made* (for it remains an epiphanic moment) but it can be stimulated or hindered to happen.

(*Making See*, chapter 5 'Recognizing the Word', chapter 9 'Learning to See')

9 The joy of experiencing moments in which scriptural words incarnate into the present, (moments characterised by Miskotte as moments of *feeling embraced*, of *being blessed* and of *being struck by a bolt of lightning*), are necessary and crucial moments for the spiritual life and the theological existence of preachers. The training and coaching of preachers should be primarily aimed at facilitating these moments to keep occurring.

(cf Kornelis Miskotte, *Opmerkingen over theologische exegese*, Bosch & Keuning 1934)

On Overcoming destructiva

10 The shattering of myths often causes a dangerous vacuum. The volatile mixture of disillusionment, apathy, anger, and fear can develop to be dangerous and extremely destructive. The vigilance in preaching in the coming decade should watch for the development of disillusionment.

(cf László Krasznahorkai, *The melancholy of resistance*, New Directions 1989, Pankaj Misrah, *Age of Anger*, Penguin 2017)

11 In the practices of the church (prayer, preaching, Eucharist, diaconal presence), Christians practise in, anticipate on and incidentally actually experience, the overcoming of evil. It is in the concentration on these essential practices, the church is a blessing for her society.

(*Making See*, chapter 6 'Overcoming destructiva')

12 The more damaging the reality of destructiva in a society, the more prophetic the *routine* life of the church.

13 Prophetic speech is a gift to the church rooted and participating in the power of Pentecost. If prophetic speech is concerned with overcoming evil and with creating hope, it is theologically questionable to suggest that it has ceased.

(cf Hvidt, N.C., 'Das Problem der christlichen Prophetie. Das Christentum trägt immer eine Hoffnungsstruktur in sich. Interview mit Kardinal Joseph Ratzinger')

On Making See

14 Marianne Sawicki's claim that the essence of the practices of the church is the 'initiation of people into the presence of Jesus as Risen Lord', and that *Seeing the Lord* is the climactical essence of the church's practices, is confirmed in this study on prophetic speech. Our study shows that preachers like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King and Desmond Tutu claim that, in Sawicki's terms, 'Jesus still speaks today'.

(cf Marianne Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord. Resurrection and Early Christian Practices*. Fortress Press 1994)

On Peripheral issues

15 It is advisable that the Royal Dutch Football League (KNVB) and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) start a joint research to investigate whether there is an analogy in the effects of playing football on artificial grass and using beamers during sermons.

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SUMMARY (IN ENGLISH)

The core issue of this study concerns the question of What is religiously happening in the prophetic dimension of preaching? In other words: Which theological and homiletical processes occur in sermons that are called 'prophetic'? This research question is at the centre of this study, and in this book we develop a conceptual and theological reconstruction of the prophetic dimension in preaching as a contemporary phenomenon.

I Prolegomena

The first part of the study consists of a discussion of the *practical theological* and *methodological* prequestions. That prophetic power can emerge in preaching is an old but living and vibrant intuition, both in the church and in homiletics. At the same time, there is also a modern cultural sensitivity that speeches, literature and poetry may contain prophetic dimensions. The prophetic is a category that resonates in many contexts, and that appeals to the imagination of many. The risk of this popularity is that the meaning of the concept becomes nebulous and unclear. An important aim of this study is to clarify this ambiguity.

Our study offers an *empirical* analysis of prophetic preaching. The prophetic is not studied from a theological normative conception of what prophetic preaching is or should be. The prophetic is reconstructed from an analysis of existing practices of preaching in the Christian congregation.

Because of the centrality of this empirical element in our approach, we started our research with a *phenomenological* exploration. In chapter 1, we develop an initial, and therefore fragmentary, 'topography of the prophetic'. The exploratory question was: In what surroundings is a vivid discourse about the prophetic in progress, what is the content of

this discourse and how do these discourses possibly affect contemporary understandings of the prophetic? Five contexts have been explored:

1 The prophetic plays a part in *holy scriptures* (in this study, we focus on the holy scriptures of the Christian church). 2 The prophetic is traceable in the *history/tradition* of confessional communities and societies, and this tradition influences and frames their understanding of the prophetic in the present. 3 The prophetic is a concept that is reflected on in modern *intellectual discourses*. 4 The prophetic is a broad and cherished concept used in *contemporary societies* to understand specific expressions of audacity, critique and vision, especially in transitory moments (expressions in literature, political protest, music). 5 The final context we discern is the *local, religious community*, where prophetic texts are read and explained for the present, and where, in different forms of graduality, the prophetic can be experienced as an actual reality. In our study, we focus on the Christian congregation as *topos* of the prophetic, and in that, we focus on *preaching* in particular.

In this phenomenological exploration, an intriguing bricolage of fragments of the prophetic comes into being. The *methodical* aim of the 'topography' is to give the empirical researcher a sense of the complexity of the phenomenon, and of the different layers of meaning that may be inherent in contemporary use of the concept. Furthermore, this broad approach has a *theological* reason: historically and theologically it is recommended not to look upon the prophetic as an 'intramural phenomenon'. It is, therefore, preferable to develop an open research attitude and methodology in studying the phenomenon. In addition, *homiletically* seen, it is probable that the different surroundings and discourses affect each other and that preaching is influenced by these various sources. In the contemporary understanding of 'prophetic preaching', scriptural, historical, intellectual, present-day societal, and specific Christian elements will unremittably relate to each other in specific ways.

In the final part of the first chapter, we develop a *practical theological* framework. We assume that the Christian congregation, on the one hand, does not live in isolation, and therefore will be influenced by discourses on the prophetic in her surrounding. On the other hand, the Christian congregation has her own tradition and association with the prophetic. This tradition has grown into liturgies. For instance, the liturgical concept 'Word of God', an essential concept for the understanding of Scripture and for preaching, is originally a prophetic notion. Another example is the *epiclesis* in which the Holy Spirit is invoked and in

which the presence of Christ is prayed for. In pneumatological and christological traditions of the church, however diverse they may be, prophetic aspects are rarely absent. Likewise, more examples of traces of the prophetic tradition in liturgies can be given. The study gives rise to consider the prophetic as part of the own *dramaturgy* of the liturgy, as an intrinsic aspect of it. In our study, we approach the prophetic as a specific dimension in the relationship between God and human beings, as part of the *divine-human dynamics*. Seen from this practical theological perspective, it is no surprise that especially in preaching this prophetic dimension may come to the fore.

Chapter 2 outlines the *methodological* design of the study and its implementation. This study is a *qualitative research*. Primarily, it aims to approach, describe, and understand an *empirical phenomenon*, i.e. the occurrence of the prophetic in preaching. In this study, we try to get a conceptual grip on this *epiphanic* moment in preaching. The *Grounded Theory Methodology* provides the researcher with an attitude and with tools to carefully describe complex phenomena like this, and to move from the empirical to the conceptual level in their description.

In the initial phase of our study, we performed an exploratory research to trace preaching practices on which there is a broad consensus that they (did) contain prophetic dimensions. In the first cycle of our empirical research, we selected three preaching practices that have received *ecclesiastical*, *academic-homiletical*, and *cultural* recognition of a prophetic dimension. This broad and well-founded recognition functions as the solid starting point for our study. We call these practices ‘contemporary paradigmatic practices of prophetic preaching’. This involves the preaching of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr., and Desmond Tutu. Following additional research in secondary literature about the preachers and the circumstances in which they preached, we selected three sermons of each preacher.

In the analysis of the sermons, we used various methodical tools offered by the Grounded Theory approach, such as *coding* (characterising line-by-line in a shorthand code what is happening in that fragment of a sermon) and the theoretical reflection on the codes by writing *memos*. Another interesting methodical tool is the development of *sensitizing concepts*. At the start of our research, we formulated the initial phenomenological observations and our own intuitions regarding the prophetic in preaching in six ‘sensitizing concepts’. In this way, the

researcher creates clarity about his starting point and the focus resulting from this can make sensitive to certain aspects in the empirical material, as well as to how the empirical material *differs* from expectation.

After the analysis of the first cycle of sermons, using a method of *ongoing comparison of the material*, the first patterns in the codes were classified in *ten initial categories*. In a second cycle of empirical research, these ten tentative concepts have been studied anew, in new and other practices of preaching. In the selection of these new sermons, we sought for preachers who gave theological, spiritual, and societal direction to their church, also in their preaching. The initial criteria the sermons had to meet, were maintained for the most part. The ten initial categories were studied in sermons from Werner Krusche (in the context of the East German Democratic Republic), in the Heidelberg University sermons of Gerhard von Rad (held in the post-war tension in West Germany, with a sharp intuition of increasing secularisation in Europe) and in various sermons of Rowan Williams (sermons held in a plural modern society, and in political, conflicting situations). We call these practices 'exemplary practices of leadership in preaching.' Again, three sermons of each preacher have been analysed. This second cycle has been a stimulating phase in our research. The ten initial concepts were manifestly present in these new sermons and gained a sharper substantive profile and a wider (because: more conceptual) range. At this stage, we developed the *five definitive concepts* of our research. These five concepts are discussed in the empirical part of our study (chapters 3-7).

An important methodological addition is our choice to study the sermons *in their entirety*. Rather than analysing specific *incidents* in sermons, (risking that these incidents would be detached from their integrated position in the whole), the *theological and rhetorical unity* of the sermon was starting point of each analysis. By analysing the whole of the sermon, we think we do better justice to the *contextual dynamic* taking place in the sermon and to the *particular singularity* of each sermon. For these reasons, summaries of the entire sermons are included in the book. In the empirical part, each chapter starts with a section called 'Fundamentals'. That section describes the conceptual and theological results of our research. The second part of each chapter, called 'Particulars', explains how this concept manifests itself in concrete, particular sermons.

II Empirical Research

I Exposing

What is religiously happening in the prophetic dimension of preaching? The first distinctive moment in the prophetic is about making *visible*. Our study shows that the prophetic starts with vigilance towards what *damages* people. For this damaging power we use the intuitive and heuristic concept 'destructivum'. In all contexts we studied, the destructivum has its own appearance (its own history, its own character, its own range, its own gradation of destructiveness), be it apartheid, apostasy, defeatism, or greed. Prophetic preaching occurs because these destructiva exist and the intensity of the prophetic is correlative to the power of the destructivum. The more damaging the destructiva are, the more explicit the prophetic will manifest itself in preaching. In the research, we see there is an accent on what damages the *belief of the parishioners* and the *integrity of the Christian congregation*. Simultaneously, we see this cannot be separated from what damages *society* and threatens *humanity*. Because damaging powers are brought to the light, the prophetic moment in preaching is also a *breathing space* for those who recognise this damaging power and suffer from it.

This study shows that the destructivum is often *hidden*. Hidden, because it happens on a subconscious level, because it is tabooed or censored, because it is denied or concealed. An important feature of revealing the destructivum is therefore *deconstruction*. What conceals the damaging power, is deconstructed, so the source and the core of it comes to the light. Another outcome of our research is that it shows that, specifically in this dynamic, the theological category of the *calling* has its role. In the revealing function of prophetic preaching, preachers identify realities in the lives of their hearers and in their society that are uncomfortable and critical, identifying things one would rather overlook or keep silent about. Preachers indicate being reluctant to assume this role, knowing it may entail suffering and isolation, and therefore they frequently speak of a calling. *Someone must speak*, but this spiritual compulsion is often experienced as a burden. A final result within this concept is the role of *iconic* and *iconoclastic fragments*. In the prophetic dimension, the essence of a crisis in a church or a society may be showed in an iconic fragment in the sermon. Such fragments are crystallising moments of visibility. Interestingly, prophetic preaching itself can become part of an analogous iconic dynamic.

2 Interrupting

The second concept we developed is *interruption*. In the prophetic dimension, the destructivum is not only shown, it is interrupted as well. The prophetic moment is an intervention. When we analyse sermons in their entirety, we see the intervening moments in these sermons have a meandering movement. There are moments of continuity with a societal narrative that are alternated with moments of discontinuity; there is self-criticism that can change in criticism on others; there is a paradoxical form of interruption that seeks the benefit of the one that is interrupted. In our study, we developed the term *attuning*. In the critical moment in prophetic preaching preachers are not mere naysayers, but they attune their intervention to what *must* be said, what is *wise* to say and what is *strategic* or *effective* to say, given the specific context in which they are *responsible*. Empirical research shows that the intervening moment in prophetic preaching possesses a surprising paradoxicality, generativity and constructiveness. Precisely in the way preachers intervene (or not), they either affirm or lose their theological integrity and their contextual credibility.

3 Qualifying

A third distinctive moment that occurs in prophetic preaching is that a *theological and spiritual qualification* is given to what is happening in a congregation, church or society. The research shows that in the studied sermons an *illuminative dynamic* occurs between Bible texts and the actuality of the context. Specific words from the Bible are *recognised* in the present and vice versa: the present is recognised in passages from Scripture. We call this the *epiphanic* moment. Analytically seen, the strength of the prophetic moment in preaching seems to lie in the fact that it *participates* in the strength of the Bible passage that is recognised. Because preachers identify in their sermons a specific type of synchrony between the Bible passage and the present, a specific force is released. This force contains *Urteilkraft*. The power of the prophetic is that the destructivum, while it is causing damage, is identified, and the spiritual and theological qualification of this destructivum is a fruit of this illuminative dynamic. Because words or situations from Scripture are recognised, a particular diagnosis of the present occurs. The research shows that this recognition is the basis of speaking, while simultaneously preachers speak a *new* word, a word derived from this initial recognition.

For this 'new speech' we use terms such as *excarnating Scripture* and *derivative prophecy*.

Throughout our research, it appears, on this point as well, that in the prophetic moment, the preacher does not occupy an isolated position. The analysis of the sermons shows that precisely in the prophetic moment preachers have *listened* well. Not only did they listen to Scripture and to the theological and spiritual tradition in which they live, they also listened to contemporaries (journalists, musicians, writers, and young people), to congregation members, to contemporary occurrences that seem to have a particular meaning. The diversity of voices that can be traced in the sermons is remarkably great. It includes voices from contemporaries from other religions, voices from people that are marked as hostile or marginal by the public opinion, and it pays particular attention to those who suffer. In our research we developed the term *absorbing competence* for this capacity of preachers. In the final chapter, we call this the inductive factors in the coming to be of the prophetic.

4 Overcoming

The power of the prophetic, as we have shown, lies in the exposing, in the interrupting, in the diagnostic and in the illuminative. A remarkable research result is that the power of the prophetic is also in the *cathartic*. In the prophetic dimension in preaching, destructiva are not only revealed, interrupted, and qualified, they are also *overcome*. By 'cathartic' we mean that preachers see the effect of the destructivum in the lives of their hearers, and as a reaction, a certain redemptive force is sought in sermons, that seems to develop as well, a force in which hearers can participate and that has the explicit intention to free them from the grip of the destructiva on their lives. It surprised us to note how many codings in our analysis refer to themes such as recovery, restoration, deliverance, exorcism of evil, detoxification, redemption.

Overcoming destructiva occurs on the one hand in the form of a *praesens*. In the prophetic moment, we see that in the catharsis a cleansing and a healing force is released. In their sermons, preachers make their hearers aware of God's presence, meanwhile the sermon itself becomes a mediating moment of that presence. The prophetic contains this moment of mediating salvation, of facilitating a participation in a particular form of deliverance and salvation. Yet, there is also presence in the form of *anticipation*. Anticipation is also a force in the present.

Our research shows that in the prophetic *hope* is a formative theological category, in particular when it comes to overcoming destructiva. The *practices of the church*, (such as prayer, *diakonia*, preaching, the sacraments, pastoral presence), function as embodiments of this anticipation. In these practices, a future is anticipated, and by partaking in these practices a force is released in the present that has the potential to overcome destructiva. Participation in the *koinonia* of the Eucharist can break and overcome the power of apartheid, for example. In this sense, the prophetic dimension in preaching is part of a nexus of practices in the Christian church that are interconnected and in their connection, can form a counterforce against the identified destructiva.

In the prophetic dimension of preaching a future is forefelt and anticipated. This future is not without threat, and the explication of this threat is also part of the prophetic.

5 Initiating

The fifth distinctive moment in the prophetic dimension of preaching is the *initiation* and *edification* of the congregation. Prophecy is also a form of initiation. In our theological reconstruction of the prophetic dimension, this initiation is an intrinsic fruit of the preceding moments. Because destructiva are exposed, qualified and broken, and because a healing presence is appointed and experienced, the congregation is edified in a reality that affects how the congregation herself sees, feels, and lives. Repentance and *Nachfolge*, ethics and the articulation of a vision, are integrated parts on this path of edification. Our research gives rise to speak about this in *mystagogic* terms. The prophetic sermon shows, on the one hand, how destructiva have penetrated in the concrete life patterns of the hearers, but it initiates them too in alternative redemptive patterns, that are beneficiary for themselves and others, and required in the present.

Our research shows an intriguing dynamic in the prophetic dimension between *initiation* and *participation*. Initiation is about concentration, it is about keeping a distance to other influences, it means guarding and deepening one's own spiritual identity. Participation, on the other hand, is about being part of the crisis of a society, it is about *not* looking away and seeking isolation, it concerns the pursuit of a particular form of solidarity. The dynamic we see operative in the prophetic moment is that, because parishioners are *initiated*, they can *participate* in the crisis of a time *in a particular and fruitful way*. Fascinatingly, the prophetic

moment is not merely initiation in contemplative moments, but it is also an edification of the hearers *in* the crisis surrounding them. In the prophetic, the crisis of a society is taken seriously, and in a specific way the congregation participates in it, for example in the search for illumination, for being able to make destructiva visible and to overcome them. Initiation, in this way, can make parishioners *resistant* and in that specific mode participants in the crisis of a context.

A final observation from our research is that the initiation is not about the heroic, the mysterious or the spectacular, but about the essentially christian. The more coercive destructiva dominate societies, the more prophetic *regular congregational life* becomes.

III Conclusions and homiletical suggestions

Making See

In the third part of this study, our research develops in two directions. First, we present our *central concept*. Grounded Theory Methodology encourages researchers to integrate the various processes discovered in the studied phenomenon into a central concept. In addition, this last part of our study contains a third (limited) but new cycle of empirical analysis. An issue that consistently featured in our research is the question whether the prophetic is a *generic* characteristic of preaching or whether it is an *incidental* moment in this practice. Answering this requires additional and a different type of research, but to make a start with it, we studied the generated concepts in *regular, local practices of preaching* in our own Dutch context. In this third part of our study, we show how in these different local contexts, and in different forms of preaching too, the essence of the prophetic resonates.

The central concept we developed is the concept of *Making See*. In our reconstruction, the principal theological and homiletical process that occurs in the prophetic dimension of preaching is the process of *seeing*, and of *making see*. This concept primarily rises from our data. At decisive moments in the research, an aspect of this notion of *seeing* comes to the light. 1 In the prophetic moment destructiva are made *visible*. Making these, often-hidden, destructive forces visible, has an *interruptive* aim. *Making visible* is a quality of *Making See*. 2 The prophetic is concerned with *insight* and *perception*, with the happening of illuminative moments that enable a spiritual and theological qualification of what is going on in

a context. Making perceptive is a quality of *Making See*.³ In the prophetic moment a *vision* is voiced and released, and the power of this vision has a liberating effect in the present. This visionary force is also embedded in other practices of the church. For instance in the Eucharist, or in diaconal presence, a particular vision lies hidden and participation in these practices can make participants receptive for and partaking in the power of this implicit vision. Finally, initiation means being initiated in this visionary force and embodying it through *Nachfolge*. This visionary aspect is also a quality of *Making See*.

The central concept emerges from the data, but can be applied broader too. In the *exegetical process*, moments of seeing are crucial for preaching. Moreover, *homiletics* can be interpreted as a discourse on seeing, and in addition, the concept encourages and facilitates a fruitful relation with the *arts, literature and politics*. There, too, the language of *Making See*, of transmitting insight, and of the power of vision is recognised and useful.

Chapter 8 contains our final homiletical proposals. Based on the concept of *Making See*, we develop five aspects of *seeing* and in these five characterisations, the definitive answer of our research question is given. Simultaneously, we illustrate how these five characterisations resonate in local, regular practices of preaching.

In the epilogue, chapter 9, we discuss two remaining questions, underlying our research. In it, we describe, employing Karl Rahner's essay on *Urworte*, the prophetic moment as a specific interaction between the *illuminative* and the *inductive*. Our research suggests that in the epiphanic moment, inductive factors play a decisive part. Prophecy is a gift, but there are factors through which this gift manifests itself. In the epilogue, we describe seven of these inductive factors that emerge from our research and that, according to our reconstruction, play a formative part in the coming to be of the prophetic moment in preaching.

These inductive factors are also fruitful to be used in the discourse on distinguishing the prophetic. That, too, is an underlying issue that featured throughout our research. Are there contemporary criteria available to distinguish between authentic prophetic speaking and non-credible or implausible expressions of it? Based on our research results, we develop three tentative patterns that can be helpful in answering this, historically and theologically, complex question.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG (IN GERMAN)

Was geschieht eigentlich – aus religiöser Perspektive – innerhalb der prophetischen Dimension des Predigens? Oder, anders gesagt: Welche theologischen und homiletischen Prozesse vollziehen sich in Predigten, die wir als ‘prophetisch’ bezeichnen? Dieser Frage widmet sich vorliegende Studie. In ihr entwickeln wir eine konzeptuelle und theologische Rekonstruktion der prophetischen Dimension des Predigens als zeitgenössisches Phänomen.

I Prolegomena

Der erste Teil der Studie behandelt praktisch-theologische und methodologische Ausgangsfragen. Sowohl in der Kirche als auch in der Homiletik ist die alte Intuition, wonach sich beim Predigen eine prophetische Kraft entwickeln kann, noch immer lebendig. Zugleich existiert eine moderne Sensibilität für Reden, Literatur und Dichtung, die im Nachhinein als ‘prophetisch’ bezeichnet werden. Die Kategorie des Prophetischen taucht in zahlreichen Kontexten auf und spricht viele Menschen an. Doch die Beliebtheit birgt die Gefahr, dass dadurch die Bedeutung des Begriffs unklar wird. Ein wichtiges Ziel dieser Studie ist es, in diese Unklarheit wieder Klarheit zu bringen.

Eine Besonderheit der Studie liegt in der *empirischen* Analyse des prophetischen Predigens. Das heißt, wir nähern uns dem Prophetischen nicht über eine normative theologische These darüber, was prophetisches Predigen ist oder wie sie auszusehen habe, sondern rekonstruieren es dadurch, dass wir existierenden Praktiken des Predigens in der christlichen Gemeinde analysieren.

Durch die Ausrichtung auf das Empirische besteht der erste Schritt unserer Untersuchung aus einer phänomenologischen Erkundung: Wo und wie tritt das Prophetische hervor? Im Kapitel 1 erstellen wir

eine anfängliche und deshalb fragmentarische 'Topographie des Prophetischen'. Die Hauptfragen dabei lauteten: An welchen 'Orten' finden lebendige Diskurse über das Prophetische statt? Welchen Inhalt haben sie? Wie beeinflussen sie möglicherweise das zeitgenössische Verständnis des Prophetischen? Wir untersuchten fünf Kontexte: 1 Die Heiligen Schriften. Hier spielt das Prophetische eine große Rolle (in unserer Studie konzentrieren wir uns auf die Heiligen Schriften der christlichen Kirche). 2 Die Geschichte und die Traditionen der Gemein- oder Gesellschaften. Diese Traditionen beeinflussen das Verständnis des Prophetischen heute. 3 Die intellektuelle Reflexion. Auch hier spielt der Begriff des Prophetischen eine Rolle. 4 Moderne Gesellschaften. Hier ist der Begriff des Prophetischen vielerorts präsent, und zwar in den unterschiedlichsten Ausdrucksformen (u.a. Literatur, Musik, politische Demonstrationen, neue Medien wie YouTube), vor allem während allgemeiner Übergangszeiten. 5 Und als letzter Kontext: die lokalen religiösen Gemeinschaften. In ihnen werden prophetische Texte gelesen und für den modernen Menschen erklärt. Außerdem kann hier, in unterschiedlicher Gradation, das Prophetische als Wirklichkeit erlebt werden. Bei unserer Forschung konzentrieren wir uns auf die christliche Gemeinde als eigenen *Topos* des Prophetischen, vor allem aber auf das Predigen in ihr.

Durch die phänomenologische Erkundung in Kapitel 1 entsteht eine faszinierende Bricolage aus Fragmenten des Prophetischen, eine 'Topographie', deren methodisches Ziel darin besteht, dem empirischen Forscher die Komplexität des Phänomens bewusst zu machen und ihn darüber aufzuklären, welche unterschiedlichen Bedeutungsschichten sich möglicherweise in der zeitgenössischen Verwendung des Begriffs verbergen. Diese breite Orientierung ist aber auch theologisch motiviert: Aus historischen und theologischen Gründen liegt es nahe, das Prophetische nicht nur als reines 'intramurales Phänomen' zu betrachten. Deshalb sollte dem Untersuchungsobjekt eine möglichst offene Forschungshaltung und – methode entgegengebracht werden. In homiletischer Hinsicht ist es wahrscheinlich, dass sich die unterschiedlichen Kontexte gegenseitig beeinflussen und dass das Predigen von unterschiedlichen Quellen mitbestimmt wird: Das zeitgenössische Verständnis dessen, was 'prophetisches Predigen' bedeutet, setzt sich aus einem spezifischen Geflecht biblischer, historischer, intellektueller, aktuell-gesellschaftlicher und spezifisch christlicher Elemente zusammen.

Gegen Ende des 1. Kapitels arbeiten wir ein praktisch-theologisches Bezugssystem aus, bei dem wir davon ausgehen, dass die christliche Gemeinde nicht isoliert existiert, sondern unter dem Einfluss außerhalb stattfindender Diskurse über das Prophetische steht. Außerdem nehmen wir an, dass es in christlichen Gemeinden bereits eine Tradition bezüglich des Umgangs mit dem Prophetischen gibt. Diese Tradition äußert sich u.a. durch die Liturgie. So ist zum Beispiel die Wendung 'Wort Gottes' (ein Grundbegriff der Bibellesung und des Predigens) ursprünglich ein prophetischer Begriff. Außerdem werden bei der Bibellesung immer wieder prophetische Texte vorgetragen und für den modernen Menschen erklärt. Ein weiteres Beispiel ist die *Epiklese*, in der der Heilige Geist angerufen und in der um die Anwesenheit Christi gebeten wird. In den pneumatologischen und christologischen Traditionen der Kirche, wie unterschiedlich diese auch sein mögen, fehlen prophetische Aspekte so gut wie nie. In der Liturgie gibt es zahlreiche Spuren der prophetischen Tradition, weshalb wir glauben, in unserer Studie das Prophetische für ein Element der spezifischen Dramaturgie der Liturgie halten zu dürfen, für einen ihr innewohnenden Aspekt. Somit verstehen wir das Prophetische als bestimmte Dimension im Verhältnis zwischen Gott und Mensch, als ein Element der *divine-human dynamics*. Vor diesem praktisch-theologischen Hintergrund überrascht es nicht, dass sich ausgerechnet in Predigten die prophetische Dimension derart ausgeprägt findet.

Im Kapitel 2 legen wir das methodologische Konzept der Studie und dessen Umsetzung dar. Unser Forschungsansatz ist qualitativ, das bedeutet: Der Wissenschaftler nähert sich einem empirischen Phänomen, beschreibt es und versucht es zu begreifen, in unserem Fall das Auftreten des Prophetischen beim Predigen. Wir streben eine konzeptuelle Erfassung dieses *epiphanischen* Moment des Prophetischen in der Predigt an. Die datengestützte Theoriebildung (*Grounded Theory Methodology*) gibt dem Forscher eine Haltung und ein Instrumentarium an die Hand, womit er komplexe Phänomene durch deren sorgfältige Beschreibung von der empirischen auf eine konzeptuelle Ebene heben kann.

Um die Qualität des Forschungsmaterials zu gewährleisten, erstellen wir sechs Kriterien, denen die Predigten, die wir analysieren wollen, genügen müssen. Außerdem gingen wir explorativ vor, um die Praktiken jener Predigten zu eruieren, die allgemein dafür bekannt sind, prophetische Dimensionen zu besitzen oder besessen zu haben.

Im ersten Zyklus unserer empirischen Forschung wählten wir drei Praktiken des Predigens aus, denen auf kirchlicher, akademisch-homiletischer und kulturell-gesellschaftlicher Ebene eine prophetische Dimension zugeschrieben wird. Diese breite und datengestützte Zuschreibung ist ein solider Ausgangspunkt für unsere Forschung. Wir nennen diese Praktiken 'zeitgenössisch-paradigmatische Praktiken des prophetischen Predigens'. Es handelt sich dabei um Predigten von Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King und Desmond Tutu. Nach ergänzenden Forschungen in der Sekundärliteratur über die Prediger und die Bedingungen ihres Predigens wählten wir von jedem dieser drei Prediger drei Predigten aus.

Bei der Analyse der Predigten griffen wir auf unterschiedliche methodische Mittel der datengestützten Theoriebildung zurück, zum Beispiel auf das Kodieren (mit Hilfe eines kurzen Codes wird Zeile für Zeile beschrieben, was im jeweiligen Predigtfragment geschieht) und auf das theoretische Reflektieren dieser Codes mit Hilfe der Abfassung von Memos. Ein weiteres interessantes methodisches Instrument ist die Entwicklung von 'sensitizing concepts'. An den Anfang unserer Forschungen setzten wir, basierend auf unseren ersten phänomenologischen Beobachtungen und unseren Überlegungen zum Prophetischen beim Predigen, sechs 'sensitizing concepts'. Durch den Einsatz von 'sensitizing concepts' erlangt ein Forscher Klarheit über seine Ausgangspunkte und sensibilisiert den dadurch entstehenden Fokus nicht nur für bestimmte Aspekte des empirischen Materials, sondern auch dafür, ob das empirische Material von den Erwartungen abweicht und wenn ja, in welcher Weise.

Nachdem wir den erste Zyklus von Predigten unter Anwendung der Methode des ständigen Vergleichs analysiert hatten, teilten wir die ersten Muster innerhalb der Codes in zehn vorläufige Kategorien. In einem zweiten Zyklus der empirischen Forschung konzentrierten wir uns erneut auf diese zehn Konzepte, doch diesmal in anderen Praktiken des Predigens. Bei der Auswahl dieser neuen Predigten entschieden wir uns für führende Prediger, die ihrer Kirche unter komplexen Bedingungen theologisch, geistig und gesellschaftlich neue Wege wiesen, auch in ihrem Predigen. Die anfangs gesetzten Kriterien, denen die Predigten genügen mussten, wurden weitgehend beibehalten, und wir erforschten die zehn zunächst erarbeiteten Kategorien in Predigten von Werner Krusche (im Kontext der DDR), in den Heidelberger Universitätspredigten von Gerhard von Rad (im Kontext der spannungsbeladenen Nachkriegs-

BRD, mit einer deutlich wahrnehmbaren Säkularisierung in Europa) und in einigen Predigten von Rowan Williams (Predigten, die sowohl vor einer pluralen modernen Gesellschaft als auch während politisch-konfliktreicher Situationen gehalten wurden). Wir nennen diese Praktiken 'exemplarische Praktiken der Führungskompetenz beim Predigen'. Auch diesmal analysierten wir von jedem Prediger drei Predigten. Dieser zweite Zyklus stimulierte unsere Forschungen. In diesen Predigten waren die zehn anfänglichen Konzepte deutlich anwesend und erfuhren eine schärfere inhaltliche Profilierung und eine größere (weil konzeptuellere) Reichweite. Während dieser Phase entwickelten wir die fünf definitiven Konzepte unserer Untersuchung, die wir im empirischen Teil unserer Studie behandeln (Kapitel 3-7).

Als wichtig erwies sich auch unsere Entscheidung, die Predigten in ihrer Gänze zu untersuchen. Anstatt nur bestimmte Ereignisse des Predigens zu analysieren (mit dem Risiko, diese Ereignisse bei der Analyse aus dem integralen Ort des Ganzen zu lösen), gehen unsere Forschungen nun von der theologischen und rhetorischen Einheit einer Predigt aus. Indem wir die Predigten in ihrer Gesamtheit analysieren, können wir sowohl der kontextuellen Dynamik innerhalb der Predigt als auch der Eigentümlichkeit jeder Predigt die erforderliche Aufmerksamkeit entgegenbringen. Aus diesem Grund liefern wir von jeder Predigt eine ausführliche Zusammenfassung. Im empirischen Teil beginnt jedes Kapitel mit einer Passage, die den Titel „Fundamentals“ trägt. Darin legen wir die konzeptuellen und theologischen Resultate unserer Forschungen dar. Den „Fundamentals“ folgen die „Particulars“, in denen wir erklären, wie dieses Konzept in konkreten Predigten umgesetzt wurde und worin die Besonderheiten des Konzepts in diesem spezifischen Kontext bestehen.

II Empirische Forschung

1 Enthüllen

Was geschieht eigentlich in religiöser Hinsicht innerhalb der prophetischen Dimension des Predigens? Das erste distinktive Moment im Prophetischen besteht darin, dass etwas *sichtbar* gemacht wird. Wir entdecken, dass das Prophetische einsetzt mit der Wachsamkeit gegenüber allem, was den Menschen Schaden zufügt. Diese 'schädigende Macht' bezeichnen wir mit dem intuitiven und heuristischen Begriff des 'Destruktivums'. In sämtlichen Kontexten, die wir untersucht haben,

besitzt das Destruktivum eine spezifische Erscheinungsform (eine spezifische Geschichte, eine spezifische Reichweite, einen spezifischen Charakter und einen spezifischen Grad der Destruktivität), sei es als Apartheid, Apostasie, Defätismus oder Habsucht. Prophetisches Predigen geschieht, weil diese Destruktiva existieren, und die Intensität des Prophetischen ist abhängig von der Kraft des Destruktivums. Je schädlicher die Destruktiva sind, desto expliziter manifestiert sich das Prophetische beim Predigen. Während unserer Forschungen stellten wir fest, dass es sich besonders dem zuwendet, was dem Glauben der Gemeindemitglieder und der Integrität der christlichen Gemeinde Schaden zufügt. Gleichzeitig erkannten wir, dass es in engem Zusammenhang steht mit dem, was die ganze Gesellschaft beschädigt und das Humanum bedroht. Dadurch, dass das Schädigende sichtbar gemacht wird, ist der prophetische Moment des Predigens auch ein Augenblick des Durchatmens für all jene, die dieses Schädigende erkennen und darunter leiden.

Unsere Studie zeigt auch, dass das Destruktivum oft *verborgen* ist. Verborgen, weil es sich auf einem unbewussten Niveau abspielt, weil es tabuisiert oder zensiert, weil es geleugnet oder mit Hilfe der Sprache verhüllt wird. Deshalb ist eine wichtige Eigenschaft der Enthüllung eines Destruktivums dessen *Dekonstruktion*: Das, was das Schädigende verhüllt, wird dekonstruiert, so dass der Kern des Schädigenden sichtbar wird. Ein weiteres Ergebnis unserer Untersuchung besteht in der Erkenntnis, dass gerade bei dieser Dynamik die theologische Kategorie der Berufung eine Rolle spielt. Beim prophetischen Predigen *enthüllen* die Prediger Wirklichkeiten im Leben der Zuhörer, die für diese wenig angenehm und kritisch sind. Das heißt, sie sprechen etwas an, was die Menschen lieber nicht sehen oder worüber sie lieber schweigen möchten. Prediger geben zu, diese Rolle nur ungern auf sich zu nehmen und sprechen gerade in diesem Zusammenhang oft von einer Berufung. Das erklärt, warum eine Berufung auch als Last empfunden werden kann. Ein letztes Ergebnis innerhalb dieses Konzepts klärt die Rolle ikonischer und ikonoklastischer Fragmente. Innerhalb der prophetischen Dimension kann sich die Essenz einer Krise in einer Kirche oder einer Gemeinschaft in einem ikonischen Fragment offenbaren. Solche Fragmente erweisen sich als Kristallisationsmomente der Sichtbarkeit. Bezeichnenderweise kann auch das prophetische Predigen selbst zum Element einer analogen ikonischen Dynamik werden: Es existiert eine Wirkungsgeschichte von prophetischen Predigten, in denen frühere

prophetische Momente in einer Kirche und in einer Kultur immer wieder vorgebracht werden.

2 Unterbrechen

Das zweite Konzept, das wir entwickelt haben, besteht aus dem Unterbrechen. In der prophetischen Dimension wird das Schädigende nicht nur aufgezeigt, es wird auch unterbrochen. Der prophetische Moment ist eine Intervention. Analysieren wir Predigten im Ganzen, sehen wir, dass darin das Intervenierende einen mäandernden Verlauf nimmt. Mal besteht dabei eine Kontinuität mit einem gesellschaftlichen Narrativ, mal eine Diskontinuität; Selbstkritik verwandelt sich in Kritik an anderen; Formen der Unterbrechung streben das Gute sogar an für den, der unterbrochen wird. In unserer Studie entwickeln wir den Begriff des *attuning*, das etwa mit *abstimmen* zu übersetzen ist. Im kritischen Moment des prophetischen Predigens sind die Prediger nicht einfach nur Schwarzmalen, sondern stimmen ihre Intervention ab auf das, was gesagt werden *muss*, auf das, was zu sagen sich als *weise* anbietet, und auf das, was im spezifischen Kontext, in dem die Prediger *Verantwortung* besitzen, *strategisch* oder *effektiv* sinnvoll ist. Die empirische Forschung zeigt, dass das intervenierende Moment im prophetischen Predigen eine überraschende Paradoxalität, Generativität und Konstruktivität aufweist. Gerade in der Art und Weise, wie Prediger intervenieren (oder nicht), stärken oder untergraben sie ihre theologische Integrität und ihre kontextuelle Glaubwürdigkeit.

3 Qualifizieren

Ein drittes distinktives Moment des prophetischen Predigens liegt darin, dass dem Geschehen in einer Gemeinde, einer Kirche oder in einer Gemeinschaft eine theologische und geistige *Qualifikation* zugeschrieben wird. Unsere Studie zeigt, dass bei den untersuchten Predigten zwischen den Bibeltexten und der Aktualität des Kontexts eine illuminative Dynamik entsteht. Bestimmte Bibelworte werden von der Gegenwart *erkannt*. Aber es gilt auch das Umgekehrte: Man erkennt in Passagen der Schrift die Gegenwart wieder. Wir bezeichnen dies als *epiphanischen* Moment. Empirisch und analytisch betrachtet scheint die Stärke des prophetischen Moments beim Predigen auch darin zu liegen, dass es an der Kraft der Bibelpassagen, die wiedererkannt werden, teilhat. Bauen Prediger in ihren Predigten eine bestimmte Form der Synchronizität zwischen Bibelpassagen und Gegenwart auf, wird eine spezifische Kraft freigesetzt. Diese Kraft ist die *Urteilkraft*. Die Kraft des Prophetischen besteht darin, dass das Destruktivum in dem

Augenblick, in dem es Schaden anrichtet, benannt wird. Die geistige und theologische Qualifizierung des Destruktivums entsteht unter anderem durch die illuminative Dynamik: Dadurch, dass Wörter oder Situationen aus der Bibel wiedererkannt werden, erfolgt eine spezifische Diagnose der Gegenwart. Wir stellten fest, dass dieses Wiedererkennen die Grundlage des Sprechens bildet, wobei der Prediger gleichzeitig ein *neues* Wort spricht, ein Wort, das sich aus dem vorangegangenen Wiedererkennen ergibt. Dieses 'neue Sprechen' bezeichnen wir als *excarnating Scripture* und als *derivative prophecy*: Was sich in diesen Momenten des Predigens ereignet, kann als abgeleitete Form der Prophezeiung verstanden werden, als ein neues Wort, das aus dem alten maßgeblichen Wort der Schrift entsteht.

Wie schon im Verlauf unserer gesamten Untersuchung beobachteten wir auch hier, dass der Prediger im prophetischen Moment keine isolierte Position einnimmt. Die Analysen der Predigten zeigten, dass die Prediger beim prophetischen Moment genau *zuhörten*, und zwar nicht nur den Schriften der theologischen und geistigen Tradition, der sie angehören, sondern auch den Zeitgenossen (Journalisten, Musikern, Schriftstellern und der Jugend) und den Gemeindemitgliedern. Außerdem hörten sie auf zeitgenössische Ereignisse mit einer bestimmten Bedeutung. Auffällig ist die hohe Diversität der deutlich identifizierbaren Stimmen in den Predigten. Es gibt Stimmen von Zeitgenossen anderer Religionen, von Menschen, die von der öffentlichen Meinung als 'feindlich' eingestuft werden. Außerdem offenbart sich in ihnen eine spezifische Aufmerksamkeit für die Leidenden. Dieses Vermögen der Prediger bezeichnen wir mit dem in unserer Studie entwickelten Begriff des 'absorbierenden Vermögens' und zählen es im letzten Kapitel unserer Arbeit zu den 'induktiven Faktoren bei der Entstehung des Prophetischen'.

4 Besiegen

Die Kraft des Prophetischen liegt, wie wir gezeigt haben, in der Enthüllung, in der Unterbrechung, im Diagnostischen und im Illuminativen. Ein weiteres bemerkenswertes Ergebnis unserer Forschungen ist, dass sich die Kraft des Prophetischen zusätzlich im Kathartischen äußert. In der prophetischen Dimension des Predigens wird das Schädigende nicht nur enthüllt, unterbrochen und qualifiziert, sondern auch *besiegt*. Unter dem 'Kathartischen' verstehen wir: ein Prediger erkennt, welche Auswirkungen das Destruktivum auf das Leben seiner Zuhörer hat. Als Reaktion darauf wird in den Predigten die Suche nach einer bestimmten

erlösenden Kraft spürbar. Diese entwickelt sich daraufhin auch und die Zuhörer können an ihr teilhaben, denn sie hat die erklärte Absicht, sie von den Destruktiva zu befreien, die ihr Leben bestimmen. Bei unserer Analyse waren wir überrascht, wie viele Kodierungen sich auf Themen wie Besserung, Genesung, Befreiung, Austreiben des Bösen oder Entgiften bezogen.

Der Sieg über die Destruktiva erfolgt zum einen in Form einer *Präsenz*. Im prophetischen Moment nehmen wir in der Katharsis die Freisetzung einer reinigenden und heilenden Kraft wahr. Wenn Prediger in ihren Predigten die Zuhörer darauf hinweisen, dass Gott unter ihnen anwesend ist, wird die Predigt selbst zum vermittelnden Moment dieser Anwesenheit. Das Prophetische besitzt das Moment der Heilsvermittlung und ermöglicht eine Partizipation durch eine spezifische Form der Erlösung und des Heils. Präsenz erfolgt aber auch, zum anderen, in Form der *Antizipation*. Die Antizipation ist ebenfalls eine Kraft in der Gegenwart. Unsere Studie zeigt, dass die *Hoffnung* im Prophetischen eine formative theologische Kategorie darstellt, und zwar gerade dann, wenn es darum geht, Destruktiva zu besiegen. Die Praktiken der Kirche wie Gebet und Diakonat, Predigt und pastorale Präsenz stellen Verkörperungen dieser Antizipation dar. In diesen Praktiken wird die Zukunft antizipiert, und durch die Teilnahme an diesen Praktiken wird in der Gegenwart eine Kraft freigesetzt, die die Destruktiva potentiell zu besiegen vermag. So ist es zum Beispiel möglich, durch die Teilnahme an der *koinonia* des Abendmahls die Kraft der Apartheid zu brechen und zu besiegen. In diesem Sinne ist die prophetische Dimension beim Predigen Teil einer breiteren Matrix von Praktiken in der christlichen Kirche, die miteinander verbunden eine Gegenkraft zu den benannten Destruktiva bilden.

In der prophetischen Dimension des Predigens entsteht eine Ahnung der Zukunft und die auf diese Weise erspürte Zukunft wird antizipiert. Die Zukunft ist nicht ganz ohne Gefahr, und deshalb besteht auch ein Element des Prophetischen darin, diese Gefahr genau zu benennen.

5 Einweihung

Das fünfte distinktive Moment der prophetischen Dimension des Predigens besteht aus der *Einweihung* der Gemeinde. Prophezeiung ist auch eine Form der Initiation. In unserer theologischen Rekonstruktion der prophetischen Dimension ergibt sich diese Einweihung intrinsisch aus den vorangegangenen Momenten. Durch die Benennung und

Brechung des Bösen und durch den Hinweis auf die heilsame Präsenz und deren Erleben wird die Gemeinde in eine Wirklichkeit eingeweiht, die Einfluss darauf hat, wie sie sieht, spürt und lebt. Bekehrung und Imitation, Ethik und Meinungsbildung sind integrale Elemente auf diesem Weg der Einweihung. Unsere Forschungen lassen es berechtigt erscheinen, sich beim Reden darüber einer mystagogischen Sprache zu bedienen. In der prophetischen Predigt wird nicht nur dargelegt, welchen Einfluss Destruktiva auf die Lebensmuster der Zuhörer haben, sondern auch, welche alternativen Lebensmuster segensreich sind und gerade heutzutage von einer Gemeinde eingefordert werden müssen.

Unsere Forschungen offenbaren in der prophetischen Dimension eine faszinierende Dynamik zwischen Initiation und Partizipation. Initiation bedeutet Zurückgezogenheit und Konzentration, das heißt für die Zuhörer: Teilhabe an der Kraft, die sich im prophetischen Moment freisetzt. Partizipation bedeutet, an der Krise einer Gemeinschaft teilzuhaben, also nicht wegzuschauen und sich in die Isolierung zu begeben, sondern eine spezifische Form der Solidarität auszuüben. Die Dynamik, die wir im prophetischen Moment erkennen, besteht darin, dass gerade aus der Initiation heraus spezifisch und fruchtbar an der Krise einer Zeit partizipiert werden kann. Das Faszinierende daran ist, dass das prophetische Moment nicht nur aus der Einweihung in kontemplative Momente besteht, sondern auch aus einer Einweihung der Zuhörer in die Krise, die sich in ihrem Lebensumfeld vollzieht. Im Prophetischen wird die Krise einer Gesellschaft so ernst genommen, dass sie nicht nur in die Gemeinde eingebracht wird, sondern auch beim Predigen nach Illumination und Katharsis gesucht wird, mit deren Hilfe diese Krise besiegt werden soll. In diesem Sinne ist Initiation eine spezifische Form der Partizipation.

Zuletzt beobachten wir bei unseren Forschungen, dass bei der Initiation nicht das Heroische, das Geheimnisvolle oder das Spektakuläre im Mittelpunkt stehen, sondern das essentiell Christliche. Je stärker Gemeinschaften von Destruktiva dominiert werden, desto prophetischer wird das normale Gemeindeleben.

III Schlussfolgerungen und homiletische Anregungen

Sehend machen

Im dritten Teil der Studie bewegen sich unsere Forschungen in zwei Richtungen. Zum einen legen wir unser zentrales Konzept dar, denn die datengestützte Theoriebildung fordert die Forscher auf, die unterschiedlichen Prozesse, die innerhalb des zu erforschenden Phänomens entdeckt werden, zu einem zentralen Konzept zu integrieren. Zum anderen umfasst der dritte Teil unserer Studie einen dritten (eingeschränkten) Zyklus empirischer Analyse. Eine Frage, die sich bei unserer Untersuchung immer wieder stellt, ist, ob das Prophetische eine dem Predigen *eigentümliche* Eigenschaft ist oder nur ein *gelegentlich auftauchendes* Moment dieser Praxis. Die Beantwortung dieser Frage erfordert eine ergänzende und andersgeartete Untersuchung. Deshalb prüfen wir im dritten Teil der Studie unser zentrales Konzept anhand von regulären und lokalen Praktiken des Predigens im niederländischen Kontext. Wir zeigen, wie sich in verschiedenen Kontexten und Formen des Predigens, die Essenz des Prophetischen in regulären Praktiken des Predigens offenbart.

Unser zentrales Konzept ist das *Making See*. In unserer Rekonstruktion erweist sich der Prozess des Sehens als zentraler theologischer und homiletischer Prozess in der prophetischen Dimension des Predigens. Das Konzept erschien zuerst bei den von uns erhobenen Daten. Bei entscheidenden Momenten unserer Forschungen trafen wir stets auf einen Aspekt des Begriffs *Sehen*. 1. Im Prophetischen geht es darum, dass Destruktiva *sichtbar* gemacht werden. Die Sichtbarmachung dieser verborgenen schädigenden Kräfte besitzt einen unterbrechenden Charakter. Sichtbarmachen ist eine Form des Sehens. 2. Im Prophetischen geht es um *Einsicht*, um illuminative Momente, bei denen sich eine geistige und theologische Qualifizierung dessen vollziehen kann, was in einem Kontext geschieht. Einsicht ist eine Form des Sehens. 3. Im Prophetischen geht es um *Sichtweise* und um *Vision*. Im prophetischen Moment wird eine visionäre, betrachtende Kraft freigesetzt, die eine erlösende Wirkung in der Gegenwart besitzt. Diese visionäre Kraft ist auch in anderen kirchlichen Praktiken eine treibende Kraft. So verbirgt sich zum Beispiel in der Eucharistie, aber auch in der diakonalen Präsenz eine bestimmte Vision. Eine Teilnahme an diesen Praktiken kann bedeuten, dass man an deren impliziten Visionen teilhaben kann. In der Initiation schließlich partizipiert das konkrete Leben der Imitation an der visionären Kraft. Auch Sichtweise/ Vision sind Formen des Sehens.

Allerdings taucht das zentrale Konzept nicht nur in den Daten auf, sondern ist auch in größeren Zusammenhängen wirksam. Im *exegetischen Prozess* sind Momente des Sehens unverzichtbar für das Predigen, die *Homiletik* selbst kann als ein Diskurs über das Sehen verstanden werden, und außerdem stimuliert und erleichtert das Konzept ein fruchtbares Verhältnis zu *Kunst, Literatur und Politik*. Auch hierbei ist die Sprache des Sichtbarmachens, des Übertragens von Einsichten und Vision deutlich erkennbar und von Nutzen.

Kapitel 8 beinhaltet schließlich den endgültigen homiletischen Entwurf. Anhand des Begriffs *Making See* entwickeln wir fünf Aspekte des Sehens. Diese fünf Charakterisierungen führen zur definitiven Antwort auf unsere Forschungsfrage. Gleichzeitig illustrieren wir, wie sich diese fünf Beschreibungen in den lokalen, regulären Praktiken des Predigens wiederfinden.

Im Epilog, Kapitel 9, stellen wir zwei letzte Forschungsergebnisse dar. Hier beschreiben wir, unter anderem mit Hilfe von Karl Rahners Essay über Urworte, den prophetischen Moment als spezifische Interaktion zwischen dem Illuminativen und dem Induktiven. Unsere Studie deutet an, dass induktive Faktoren (aus der Wirklichkeit des Predigers, der Gemeinde und/ oder des Kontexts) auch im Epiphanischen eine entscheidende Rolle spielen. Die Prophezeiung ist eine Gabe, doch manifestiert sich diese Gabe durch bestimmte Faktoren. Im Epilog beschreiben wir sieben solcher induktiven Faktoren, die sich aus unserer Forschung ergaben und die, unserer Rekonstruktion zufolge, eine formative Rolle bei der Entstehung des prophetischen Moments in der Predigt spielen.

Diese induktiven Faktoren müssen auch im Diskurs über das Erkennen des Prophetischen berücksichtigt werden. Diese Frage hat uns bei unseren Forschungen ebenfalls ständig beschäftigt: Gibt es zeitgenössische Kriterien, um authentisches prophetisches Sprechen von nicht-authentischen oder nicht-glaubwürdigen Ausdrucksformen des Prophetischen zu unterscheiden? Anhand unserer Forschungsergebnisse entwickeln wir drei tentative Muster, die bei der Beantwortung dieser historisch und theologisch äußerst komplexen Frage behilflich sein können.

SAMENVATTING (IN DUTCH)

Wat gebeurt er, vanuit religieus perspectief gezien, in de profetische dimensie van prediking? Anders gezegd: Welke theologische en homiletische processen gebeuren er in preken die we 'profetisch' noemen? Deze onderzoeks-kwestie staat centraal in deze studie. In dit boek ontwikkelen we een conceptuele en een theologische reconstructie van de profetische dimensie in prediking als een contemporain fenomeen.

I Prolegomena

Het eerste deel van de studie bestaat uit een bespreking van de praktisch-theologische en methodologische voorvragen. Dat in prediking een profetische kracht zich kan ontwikkelen is een oude maar levende intuïtie, zowel in de kerk als in de homiletiek. Tegelijkertijd is er ook een contemporaine sensitiviteit voor toespraken, literatuur en poëzie die, achteraf gezien, 'profetisch' genoemd worden. Het profetische is een categorie die in allerlei contexten blijkt te resoneren en die voor velen tot de verbeelding spreekt. Het risico van deze populariteit is dat de betekenis van het begrip onhelder wordt. Een belangrijk doel van deze studie is om in die onhelderheid verheldering te brengen.

Het eigene van de studie is dat het een *empirische* analyse biedt van profetische prediking. Het profetische wordt niet bestudeerd vanuit een theologische opvatting over wat profetische prediking is of zou moeten zijn. Het profetische wordt gereconstrueerd vanuit een analyse van bestaande praktijken van prediking in de Christelijke gemeente.

Omdat het empirische centraal staat in deze benadering, zijn we het onderzoek begonnen met een fenomenologische verkenning. Waar en hoe doet het profetische zich voor? In hoofdstuk 1 hebben we een, initiële en dus fragmentarische, 'topografie van het profetische' opgesteld. De

verkennde vraag was: Op welke ‘plekken’ is er een levendig discours gaande aangaande het profetische, wat is de inhoud daarvan en op welke manier beïnvloeden die discourses mogelijkwerwijze het contemporaine verstaan van het profetische? Er zijn vijf betekenisgebieden verkend: 1 Het profetische speelt een rol in heilige Schriften (in dit onderzoek richten we ons op de heilige Schriften van de Christelijke kerk). 2 Het profetische is terug te vinden in de geschiedenis en in de traditie van gemeenschappen of samenlevingen, en die traditie beïnvloedt het verstaan van het profetische in het heden. 3 Het profetisch is een begrip dat een rol speelt in contemporaine intellectuele reflectie. 4 Het profetische is een begrip dat opduikt in moderne samenlevingen, op tal van plekken en in heel verschillende soorten van expressie (zoals literatuur, muziek, politieke demonstraties, YouTube), met name rondom transitie momenten. 5 Het laatste betekenisgebied dat we onderscheiden zijn lokale religieuze gemeenschappen, waarin profetische teksten worden gelezen en uitgelegd voor het heden, en waar, in verschillende vormen van gradualiteit, het profetische als een realiteit kan worden beleefd. In ons onderzoek richten we ons op de Christelijke gemeente als een eigen *topos* van het profetische, en daarin richten we ons met name op prediking.

In de fenomenologische verkenning in hoofdstuk 1 ontstaat op deze manier een intrigerende bricolage van fragmenten van het profetische. Het methodische doel van deze ‘topografie’, is om de empirisch onderzoeker een besef te geven van de complexiteit van het fenomeen, en van de verschillende betekenislagen die in het contemporaine gebruik van het begrip mogelijk besloten liggen. Daarnaast heeft deze brede oriëntatie ook een theologisch motief: Het is historisch en theologisch gezien raadzaam om het profetische niet als een ‘intramuraal fenomeen’ te zien. Het is daarom verkieslijk om in de bestudering van het fenomeen een zo open mogelijke onderzoeks-attitude en -methodiek te ontwikkelen. Daarnaast is het homiletisch gezien waarschijnlijk dat de verschillende betekenisgebieden elkaar beïnvloeden, en dat ook prediking door de verschillende bronnen beïnvloed wordt. In contemporain verstaan van wat ‘profetische prediking’ is, zullen bijbelse, historische, intellectuele, actueel-maatschappelijke en specifiek christelijke elementen steeds op specifieke manieren zich tot elkaar verhouden.

In het slotgedeelte van het eerste hoofdstuk ontwikkelen we een praktisch-theologisch kader. We veronderstellen dat de christelijke gemeente enerzijds niet in een isolement leeft, en dat het daarom ook

beïnvloed wordt door discoursen over het profetische die om haar heen gebeuren. Anderzijds is er in de christelijke gemeente ook een eigen traditie van en een eigen omgang met het profetische. Die traditie is onder andere traceerbaar in de liturgie. Het liturgische begrip ‘Woord van God’, bijvoorbeeld, (een essentieel begrip rondom Schriftlezing en prediking), is van oorsprong een profetisch begrip. Bovendien worden in de Schriftlezingen regelmatig profetische teksten gelezen en uitgelegd voor het heden. Een ander voorbeeld is de *epiclese* waarin de Heilige Geest wordt aangeroepen en waarin om de aanwezigheid van Christus wordt gebeden. In de pneumatologische en christologische tradities van de kerk, hoe divers die ook mogen zijn, zijn profetische dimensies vrijwel nooit afwezig. Zo zijn meer voorbeelden te geven van sporen uit de profetische traditie in de liturgie. Het onderzoek geeft aanleiding om het profetische te zien als een onderdeel van de eigen *Dramaturgik* van de liturgie (Plüß), als een intrinsiek aspect daarvan. Het profetische benaderen wij in deze studie als een specifieke dimensie in de omgang tussen God en mens, als een onderdeel van de *divine-human dynamics*. Dat juist in prediking deze profetische dimensie actueel kan worden, is vanuit deze praktisch-theologische achtergrond geen verrassing.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt een schets gegeven van het methodologisch ontwerp van de studie en van de uitvoering ervan. Dit onderzoek is een kwalitatief onderzoek. Het wil allereerst een empirisch fenomeen, (namelijk het gebeuren van het profetische in prediking), benaderen, beschrijven en pogen te begrijpen. In deze studie proberen we conceptueel grip te krijgen op dit *epifanische* moment van het profetische in prediking. De gefundeerde theoriebenadering (*Grounded Theory Methodology*), verschaft de onderzoeker een attitude en een instrumentarium om complexe fenomenen als dit, zorgvuldig te beschrijven en om vervolgens van het empirische tot het conceptuele niveau te kunnen komen in de beschrijving ervan.

Om de kwaliteit van het onderzoeksmateriaal te garanderen, hebben we zes criteria opgesteld waaraan de te analyseren preken moeten voldoen. Daarnaast hebben we een verkennend onderzoek gedaan om die praktijken van prediking op het spoor te komen waarover een brede consensus is dat daarin profetische dimensies aanwezig zijn of zijn geweest. In onze eerste cyclus van empirisch onderzoek, hebben we drie praktijken van prediking geselecteerd die kerkelijke, academisch-homiletische en cultureel-maatschappelijke erkenning hebben gekregen van een profetische dimensie. Die brede en gefundeerde erkenning

is een solide uitgangspunt voor ons onderzoek. We noemen deze praktijken ‘contemporain-paradigmatische praktijken van profetische prediking’. Het gaat hierin om de prediking van Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King en Desmond Tutu. Na aanvullend onderzoek in secundaire literatuur over deze predikers en de omstandigheden waarin ze preekten, hebben we van ieder drie preken geselecteerd.

In de analyse van de preken hebben we gebruik gemaakt van de verschillende methodische middelen die de gefundeerde theoriebenadering biedt, zoals coderen (het regel voor regel benoemen in een korte code van wat er gebeurt in dat fragment van de preek) en zoals de theoretische reflectie op de codes door het schrijven van memo’s. Een interessant methodisch instrument is daarnaast het ontwikkelen van ‘sensitizing concepts’. In het begin van ons onderzoek hebben we de aanvankelijke fenomenologische observaties als ook onze eigen intuïties aangaande het profetische in prediking, verwoord in zes ‘sensitizing concepts’. Op die manier scheidt de onderzoeker helderheid over zijn vertrekpunt en kan de focus die daardoor ontstaat zowel sensitief maken voor bepaalde aspecten in het empirisch materiaal, als dat het juist ook ontvankelijk maakt voor in welk opzicht het empirisch materiaal anders is dan verwacht werd.

Na de analyse van de eerste cyclus van preken, via een methode van voortdurend vergelijken van het verschillende materiaal, werden de eerste patronen in de codes benoemd in tien initiële categorieën. In een tweede cyclus van empirisch onderzoek zijn deze tien tentatieve concepten opnieuw bestudeerd, nu in nieuwe en in andere praktijken van prediking. In de selectie van de nieuwe preken hebben we gezocht naar leidinggevende predikers die in complexe omstandigheden, theologisch, geestelijke en ook maatschappelijk richting hebben gegeven aan hun kerk, ook in prediking. De aanvankelijke criteria waaraan de preken moesten voldoen, zijn grotendeels gehandhaafd. De tien initiële categorieën zijn bestudeerd in de preken van Werner Krusche (in de context van de DDR), in de Heidelbergse universiteitspreken van Gerhard von Rad (in de naoorlogse politiek-maatschappelijke spanning in de BRD, met een scherpe intuïtie van toenemende seculariteit in Europa) en in verschillende preken van Rowan Williams (preken zowel in een plurale moderne samenleving, als in politiek-conflictueuze situaties). We noemen deze praktijken ‘exemplarische praktijken van leiderschap in prediking’. Van iedere prediker werden opnieuw drie preken geanalyseerd. Deze tweede cyclus heeft stimulerend gewerkt

in ons onderzoek. De tien aanvankelijke concepten waren herkenbaar aanwezig in deze nieuwe preken en kregen een scherper inhoudelijk profiel en een breder (want: conceptueler) bereik. In deze fase hebben we de vijf definitieve concepten van ons onderzoek ontwikkeld. Deze vijf concepten worden besproken in het empirisch gedeelte van ons onderzoek (hoofdstukken 3-7).

Een belangrijke aanvulling is onze keuze om preken in hun geheel te bestuderen. In plaats van bepaalde incidenten in preken te analyseren, (met het risico dat die incidenten in de analyse losgeweekt worden van hun integrale plek in het geheel), is in dit onderzoek de theologische en de retorische eenheid van de preek het uitgangspunt. Door de hele preek te analyseren, menen we ook beter recht te kunnen doen aan de contextuele dynamiek die gaande is in de preek en aan de particuliere eigenheid van iedere preek. Het is ook om deze redenen dat samenvattingen van de hele preken zijn opgenomen in het boek. In het empirisch gedeelte begint ieder hoofdstuk met een gedeelte dat 'Fundamentals' heet. In dat deel worden de conceptuele en theologische resultaten van ons onderzoek beschreven. In het tweede gedeelte van ieder hoofdstuk, genaamd 'Particulars', wordt uitgelegd hoe dit concept zich manifesteert in concrete preken, en wat de eigenheid van het concept in die specifieke context is.

II Empirisch onderzoek

1 Zichtbaar maken

Wat gebeurt er, vanuit religieus perspectief gezien, in de profetische dimensie van prediking? Het eerste distinctieve moment in het profetische is dat iets *zichtbaar* wordt gemaakt. Ons onderzoek laat zien dat het profetische begint met waakzaamheid naar datgene wat mensen beschadigt. We gebruiken voor die 'beschadigende macht' de intuïtieve en heuristische term 'destructivum'. In al de contexten die we bestudeerd hebben heeft het destructivum een eigen verschijningsvorm (en een eigen geschiedenis, een eigen karakter en een eigen bereik en gradatie van destructiviteit). Het kan apartheid zijn, massale geloofsafval (*apostase*), defaitisme of hebzucht. Profetische prediking gebeurt omdat destructiva bestaan en de intensiteit van het profetische is correlatief verbonden met de kracht van het destructivum. Des te meer beschadigend destructiva zijn, des te explicieter het profetische zich zal manifesteren in prediking. In het onderzoek zien we dat er een accent

ligt op datgene wat het geloof van gemeenteleden en de integriteit van de Christelijke gemeente beschadigt. Tegelijkertijd zien we dat dit niet los te koppelen is van datgene wat de samenleving beschadigt en van wat het humanum bedreigt. Omdat het beschadigende aan het licht wordt gebracht, is het profetische moment in prediking ook een ademruimte voor al degene die dit beschadigende herkennen en eronder lijden.

Het onderzoek laat ook zien dat het destructivum veelal *verborgen* is. Verborgen, omdat het op een onbewust niveau zich afspeelt, omdat het getaboëiseerd wordt of gecensureerd, omdat het ontkend wordt of verhuld door taal. Een belangrijke eigenschap van het onthullen van het destructivum is daarom de *deconstructie*: datgene waardoor het beschadigende verhuld wordt, wordt gedeconstrueerd, zodat de kern van het beschadigende aan het licht komt. Een ander resultaat van ons onderzoek is dat het laat zien dat juist in deze dynamiek de theologische categorie van de *roeping* een rol speelt. In de onthullende functie die profetische prediking heeft, benoemen predikers werkelijkheden in het leven van de hoorders die ongemakkelijk zijn en kritisch, die iets zeggen wat men liever niet ziet of waar men liever over zwijgt. Predikers geven aan deze veeleisende en riskante rol niet graag op zich te nemen, en spreken veelvuldig juist hier over roeping. Dit verklaart waarom roeping ook als een last kan worden beleefd. Een laatste onderzoeksresultaat binnen dit concept is de rol van iconische en iconoclastische fragmenten. In de profetische dimensie kan het gebeuren dat de essentie van een crisis in een kerk of een samenleving in een iconisch fragment getoond wordt. Dergelijk fragmenten zijn kristallisatiemomenten van zichtbaarheid. Interessant genoeg kan ook profetische prediking zelf onderdeel worden van een analoge iconische dynamiek. Er is een werkingsgeschiedenis van profetische preken aanwijsbaar waarin een eerder profetische moment in een kerk en in een cultuur gekoesterd wordt.

2 Onderbreken

Het tweede concept dat we ontwikkeld hebben is interrumpere. In de profetische dimensie wordt het beschadigende niet alleen getoond, het wordt ook onderbroken. Het profetische moment is een interventie. Wanneer we preken in hun geheel analyseren, zien we dat het interveniërende in deze preken een meanderende beweging heeft. Er zijn momenten van continuïteit met een maatschappelijke narratief die afgewisseld worden met momenten van discontinuïteit daarmee, er is zelfkritiek die over kan gaan in kritiek op anderen, er is een vorm van interruptie die juist het goede zoekt voor degene die

geïnterrupteerd wordt. In ons onderzoek hebben we de term *attuning* ontwikkeld, wat vertaald kan worden met *afstemmen*. In het kritische moment in profetische prediking zijn predikers niet simpelweg neezeggers, maar stemmen zij hun interventie af op wat gezegd *moet* worden, op wat *wijs* is om te zeggen en op wat *strategisch* of *effectief* is om te zeggen, gezien de specifieke context waarin zij *verantwoordelijk* dragen. Empirisch onderzoek laat zien dat het interveniërende moment in profetische prediking een verrassende paradoxaliteit, generativiteit en constructiviteit bezit. Het is juist in de manier waarop predikers interveniëren (of niet), dat zij hun theologische integriteit en hun contextuele geloofwaardigheid kunnen bevestigen of verspelen.

3 Kwalificeren

Een derde distinctief moment dat gebeurt in profetische prediking is dat een theologische en een geestelijke kwalificatie gegeven wordt aan datgene wat gaande is in een gemeente, in een kerk of in een samenleving. Het onderzoek laat zien dat in de bestudeerde preken een illuminatieve dynamiek gebeurt tussen Bijbelteksten en de actualiteit van de context. Specifieke woorden uit de Bijbel worden *herkend* in het heden en andersom: het heden wordt herkend in passages uit de Schrift. We noemen dit het *epifanische* moment. Empirisch en analytisch gezien lijkt het sterke van het profetische moment in prediking ook te liggen in het feit dat het participeert in de kracht van de Bijbelpassage die herkend wordt. Doordat predikers in hun preken een bepaalde vorm van synchroniteit benoemen tussen de Bijbelpassage en het heden, komt een specifieke kracht vrij. Die kracht is *Urteilskracht*: de kracht van het profetische is dat het destructivum, *terwijl het bezig is schade aan te brengen*, benoemd wordt. De geestelijke en theologische kwalificatie van dat destructivum is onder andere een vrucht van deze illuminatieve dynamiek. Doordat woorden of situaties uit de Schrift herkend worden ontstaat een specifieke diagnose van het heden. Het onderzoek laat zien dat deze herkenning de basis is van het spreken, terwijl tegelijkertijd predikers een *nieuw* woord spreken, een woord afgeleid vanuit die initiële herkenning. We gebruiken voor dat ‘nieuwe spreken’ termen als *excarnating Scripture* en *derivative prophecy*: Wat gebeurt in deze momenten in prediking kan beschouwd worden als een afgeleide vorm van profetie, als een nieuw woord dat afgeleid wordt uit het oude gezaghebbende woord in de Schrift.

In heel ons onderzoek, ook op dit punt, blijkt dat in het profetische moment de prediker geen geïsoleerde positie inneemt. In de analyse

van de preken blijkt dat juist in het profetische moment predikers goed hebben *geluisterd*. Ze hebben niet alleen intensief geluisterd naar de Schriften en naar de theologische en geestelijke traditie waarin ze staan, maar ze hebben ook geluisterd naar tijdgenoten (journalisten, musici, schrijvers en jongeren), naar gemeenteleden, naar contemporaine gebeurtenissen die een bepaalde betekenis lijken te hebben. De diversiteit aan stemmen die traceerbaar is in de preken is opvallend groot. Het omvat stemmen van tijdgenoten uit andere godsdiensten, het omvat stemmen van mensen die door de publieke opinie juist als ‘vijandig’ worden bestempeld, en het heeft een specifieke aandacht voor hen die lijden. In ons onderzoek hebben we de term ‘absorberend vermogen’ ontwikkeld voor deze capaciteit van predikers. In het laatste hoofdstuk zullen we dit de ‘inductieve factoren in de wording van het profetische’ noemen

4 Overwinnen

De kracht van het profetische, zoals we hebben aangetoond, ligt in het onthullende, in het interrumperende, in het diagnostische en in het illuminatieve. Een opmerkelijk onderzoeksresultaat is dat de kracht van het profetische daarnaast ook in het cathartische ligt. In de profetische dimensie in prediking wordt het beschadigende niet alleen onthuld, onderbroken en gekwalificeerd, het wordt ook *overwonnen*. Wat we bedoelen met het ‘cathartische’, is dat predikers het effect zien van het destructivum op de levens van hun hoorders en dat in de preken, als reactie daarop, een bepaalde verlossende kracht gezocht wordt, die zich ook lijkt te ontwikkelen, een kracht waarin hoorders kunnen participeren en die de uitgesproken intentie heeft hen los te maken van de grip die destructiva op hun levens hebben. Het heeft ons verrast te bemerken hoeveel coderingen in onze analyse refereren naar thema’s als herstel, genezing, bevrijding, uitdrijving van het kwade, ontgiften.

Dit overwinnen van destructiva gebeurt enerzijds in de vorm van een *praesens*. In het profetische moment zien we dat in de catharsis een reinigende en een heilvolle kracht vrijkomt. Terwijl predikers in de preek hun hoorders opmerkzaam maken op Gods presentie in hun omstandigheden, wordt de preek zelf een bemiddelend moment van die presentie. Het profetische bevat dit moment van heilsbemiddeling, van het faciliteren tot een participatie in een specifieke vorm van bevrijding en heil. Anderzijds is er ook presentie in de vorm van *anticipatie*. Ook de anticipatie is een kracht in het heden. Ons onderzoek laat zien dat in het profetische de *hoop* een formatieve theologische categorie

is, juist wanneer het gaat om het overwinnen van destructiva. De praktijken van de kerk, zoals gebed en diaconaat, prediking en pastorale presentie, functioneren als belichamingen van die anticipatie. In deze praktijken wordt geanticipeerd op een toekomst en door deelname aan die praktijken komt een kracht vrij in het heden die de potentie heeft destructiva te overwinnen. Deelname aan de *koinonia* van de avondmaalstafel kan de kracht van apartheid breken en overwinnen, bijvoorbeeld. De profetische dimensie in prediking is in deze zin onderdeel van een bredere matrix van praktijken in de Christelijke kerk die onderling verbonden zijn en die in hun samenhang een tegenkracht kunnen vormen tegen de benoemde destructiva.

In de profetische dimensie van prediking wordt een toekomst voorvoeld en wordt op die gevoelde toekomst geanticipeerd. Die toekomst is niet zonder dreiging, en het expliciteren van de dreiging is ook een onderdeel van het profetische.

5 Inwijden

Het vijfde distinctieve moment in de profetische dimensie van prediking is de *inwijding* van de gemeente. Profetie is ook een vorm van initiatie. In onze theologische reconstructie van de profetische dimensie is deze inwijding een intrinsieke vrucht van de voorafgaande momenten. Doordat het kwaad wordt benoemd en gebroken, en doordat een heilzame presentie wordt aangewezen en beleefd, wordt de gemeente ingewijd in een werkelijkheid die gevolgen heeft voor hoe zij zelf ziet, voelt en leeft. Bekering en navolging, ethiek en visievorming zijn integrale onderdelen op deze weg van inwijding. Ons onderzoek geeft aanleiding om hierover in mystagogische termen te spreken. In de profetische preek wordt uitgelegd op welke manier destructiva doorwerken in levenspatronen van hoorders en ook welke alternatieve levenspatronen heilvol zijn en juist in het heden gevraagd worden van de gemeente.

Ons onderzoek laat een intrigerende dynamiek in de profetische dimensie zien tussen initiatie en participatie. Initiatie, als religieus gebeuren, vindt plaats in de afzondering en de concentratie, het is: hoorders die in een geestelijke zin deelkrijgen aan de kracht die vrijkomt in het profetische moment. Participatie daarentegen is naar-buiten-gericht, het betreft de deelname aan de crisis van een samenleving, het is niet weggijken en ook niet het isolement zoeken, maar een specifieke vorm van solidariteit betrachten. De dynamiek die we zien

in het profetische moment is dat juist vanuit de initiatie op een eigen en vruchtbare manier geparticipeerd kan worden in de crisis van een tijd. Fascinerend genoeg is het profetische moment niet alleen een inwijding in contemplatieve momenten, maar ook een inwijding van de hoorders in de crisis die om hen heen gaande is. In het profetische wordt de crisis van een samenleving zo serieus genomen, dat die crisis ingebracht wordt in de gemeente en dat onder andere in prediking gezocht wordt naar illuminatie en catharsis om die crisis te overwinnen. In deze zin is initiatie een specifieke vorm van participatie.

Een laatste observatie vanuit ons onderzoek is dat het in de initiatie niet gaat om het heroïsche, het geheimzinnige of het spectaculaire, maar om het essentieel christelijke. Des te dwingender destructiva samenlevingen domineren, des te profetischer het reguliere gemeentelven wordt.

III Conclusies en homiletische voorstellen

Te zien geven

In het derde hoofddeel van deze studie ontwikkelt ons onderzoek zich in twee richtingen. Allereerst presenteren we daarin ons centrale concept. De gefundeerde theoriebenadering stimuleert onderzoekers om de verschillende processen die in het bestudeerde fenomeen ontdekt zijn, te integreren tot een centraal concept. Daarnaast bevat dit derde deel een derde (beperkte) cyclus van empirische analyse. Een vraag die voortdurend op de achtergrond van ons onderzoek heeft meegespeeld, is de vraag of het profetische een *generieke* eigenschap is van prediking of dat het een *incidenteel* moment is in deze praktijk. De beantwoording hiervan vraagt aanvullend en andersoortig onderzoek. Om daarmee een begin te maken, hebben we in het derde deel van deze studie het centrale concept bestudeerd in reguliere en lokale praktijken van prediking in de Nederlandse context. We laten zien hoe in verschillende contexten en in verschillende vormen van prediking de essentie van het profetische in reguliere praktijken van prediking resonanceert.

Het centrale concept dat we ontwikkeld hebben is het concept *Making See*. Vrij vertaald: *Te zien geven*. In onze reconstructie is het centrale theologische en homiletische proces dat gebeurt in de profetische dimensie van prediking het proces van *zien*. Dit concept komt allereerst op uit onze data. Op de beslissende momenten in ons onderzoek duikt steeds een aspect van dit begrip *zien* op. 1 In het profetische gaat het

erom dat destructiva *zichtbaar* worden gemaakt, en het zichtbaar maken van deze vaak verborgen beschadigende krachten heeft een interrumperend karakter. 2 In het profetische gaat het daarnaast om *inzicht*, om illuminatieve momenten waardoor een geestelijke en theologische kwalificatie kan gebeuren van wat gaande is in een context. 3 In het profetische gaat het ten derde om *visie* en om *visioen*. In het profetische moment komt een visionaire, schouwende kracht vrij die een bevrijdend effect heeft in het heden. Die visionaire kracht is ook een drijvende kracht in andere praktijken van de kerk. In de eucharistie, maar ook in diaconale presentie, bijvoorbeeld, gaat een bepaald visioen schuil en deelname aan deze praktijken kan betekenen dat men deel krijgt aan het impliciete visioen ervan. In de initiatie, tenslotte, krijgt het concrete leven van de navolging deel aan die visionaire kracht.

Naast dat het centrale concept opkomt uit de data, is het ook breder toepasbaar: In het exegetische proces zijn momenten van *zien* cruciaal voor prediking, homiletiek überhaupt kan geïnterpreteerd worden als een discours dat gaat over *zien*, en daarnaast stimuleert en faciliteert het concept een vruchtbare relatie met kunst, literatuur en politiek: ook daar is de taal van zichtbaar maken, inzicht overdragen en van het visioen, herkenbaar en bruikbaar.

Hoofdstuk 8 bevat ons uiteindelijke homiletisch ontwerp. Aan de hand van het begrip *Making See* ontwikkelen we vijf aspecten van *zien* en in die vijf karakteriseringingen gebeurt de definitieve beantwoording van onze onderzoeksvraag. Tegelijkertijd illustreren we hoe die vijf beschrijvingen resoneren in lokale, reguliere praktijken van prediking.

In de epiloog, hoofdstuk 9, bespreken we twee laatste onderzoeksresultaten. Hierin beschrijven we, onder andere met behulp van Karl Rahner's essay over *Urworte*, het profetische moment als een specifieke interactie tussen het illuminatieve en het inductieve. Ons onderzoek suggereert dat ook in het epifanische, inductieve factoren (vanuit de werkelijkheid van de prediker, de gemeente en/of de context), een beslissende rol hebben. Profetie is een gave, maar er zijn factoren waardoorheen deze gave zich manifesteert. In de epiloog beschrijven we zeven van dergelijke inductieve factoren die opkomen uit ons onderzoek en die, volgens onze reconstructie, een formatieve rol spelen in de wording van het profetische moment in prediking.

Deze inductieve factoren kunnen ook een rol spelen in het discours over het onderscheiden van het profetische. Ook dat is een vraag die in ons hele onderzoek, op de achtergrond, een rol heeft gespeeld. Zijn er contemporaine criteria voorhanden om onderscheid te kunnen maken tussen authentiek profetisch spreken en niet-authentieke of niet-geloofwaardige expressies daarvan? Aan de hand van onze onderzoeksresultaten ontwikkelen we drie tentatieve patronen die behulpzaam kunnen zijn in het beantwoorden van deze, historisch en theologische, uiterst complexe vraag.

INDEX OF PERSONS

Abromeit, H-J.	81, 115	Bosch, R.	60
Allen, J.	96-98, 116-117, 228	Boschert-Kimming, R.	205
Althaus, P.	89	Botha, P.W.	96, 222
Aquinas, T.	31	Brouwer, R.	262
Arendt, H.	6	Brown, D.	123, 156, 173
Arnold, B.T.	264	Brown Taylor, B.	68
Assmann, J. und A.	161, 172	Brueggemann, W.	43, 94, 105, 122-123, 163, 195, 205, 227, 230, 238, 272
Attenborough, R.	116	Bryant, A.	52
Auden, W.H.	4	Buber, M.	167, 190, 193
Aune, D.E.	12, 14	Bulgakov, S.	298
Baeck, L.	155, 166, 178, 274	Bullinger, H.	17
Bal, M.	15	Burke, K.	161
Balthasar, H.U. von	42	Buskes, J.	54, 269-271
Barnard, M.	267	Butt, R.	134
Barnes, J.	29	Buttrick, D.	56, 140
Barth, K.	42, 54, 88-89, 150, 265-266	Byrant, W.C.	112
Bartlett T.	4	Caffier, W.	151
Barton, J.	9-11, 246	Calloway-Thomass, C.	304
Bass, D.C.	237	Calvin, J.	44
Battle, M.	120	Campbell, Ch.L.	47, 115, 239
Bavinck, H.	8	Carlyle, T.	112
Bayat, A.	28	Cavanaugh, W.	48, 74
Beintker, M.	6, 38-39, 274, 281, 300	Chandler, A.	68
Berk, Tj, van den	246, 248	Charamba, G.	135
Berthod, A.	28	Charmaz, K.	52, 55, 56, 59, 60, 62, 63, 66, 261
Bethge, E.	93, 184	Charry, E.	237, 255
Bezzant, R.	143	Chergé, C. de	262
Biko, N.	120	Christophersen, A.	43, 57, 88
Biko, S.	84, 87, 115-123, 132, 198- 199	Churchill, W.	4
Blenkinsopp, J.	11, 24-25, 61	Cilliers, J.	48, 113-114, 128, 247, 263- 264, 265, 273
Bluhm, H.	47	Clements, R.	11
Blumer, H.	52, 55, 59	Collins, A.Y.	12, 200-201, 215
Boeije, H.	60	Connor, E. 'Bull'	84-85
Boeve, L.	74, 128, 206-207, 238, 269	Conradie, F.	123
Boff, L.	165	Corbin, J.	50, 52, 59, 261
Bohren, R.	3, 12, 47, 173	Crawford, E.E.	217-218
Bonhoeffer, D.	21, 33, 42, 54, 56, 58, 60, 63, 66, 76, 79, 80-83, 87-96, 112, 113, 114, 127, 131, 156, 158-159, 162, 166, 168, 173-174, 177-187, 204-205, 231, 233-236, 239, 260, 274, 289	Daley, R.J.	209
Boonstra, P.	42, 54, 156, 158	Darmaputera, E.	54
Borer, T.A.	97	DeWet, F.W.	48, 142
Borgh, E. van der	17-19	Dibelius, O.	89
		Dienhart Hancock, A.	43, 87-89, 265-266
		Douglas, M.	239

Dróge, M.	262	Hütter, R.	237
Dudzus, O.	88	Hvidt, N.C.	4-5, 47, 58, 206
Duhm, B.	11		
Dulk, M. den	271	Immink, F.G.	8, 36-39, 220
Dunk, H.W. von der	51	Ipgrave, M.	9
Dyson, M.E.	106-107		
		Jacobsen, D.S.	11-12
Eagleton, T.	226-229	Janse, S.	47
Ehud, B.Z.	9	Jemielity, T.	95
Ester, H.	28	Jensen, M.	141-142
		Jeremias, J.	129
Fascher, E.	5	John Paul II	48, 54
Filipi, P.	94-96, 185	Johnson, L.B.	106
Findeis, H.	143, 153, 175	Johnson, L.T.	12, 43, 232, 239, 256, 301-302
Fishbane, M.	103		
Fisichella, R.	4	Jong, J. de	4
Flick, U.	55	Jong, J. de (cardinal)	54
Földényi, L.	51	Jongh, E.D.J. de	270
Formicola, J.R.	48	Jonker, H.	8
Foucault, M.	20, 25-27, 34, 60	Josuttis, M.	121, 219, 235-236, 263, 282
Frick, P.	21		
		Jüngel, E.	145, 174-175, 241, 269, 282
Gerhardt, P.	245		
Gerkin, Ch.V.	47	Kallen, W.	235
Ghandi, M.	182, 304	Kaplan, E.K.	198
Gillespie, Th. W.	12-15	Karskens, M.	25
Glas, G.	266	Käsemann, E.	3, 14-15, 54, 282
Glaser, B.	51-52, 261	Kelsey, M.T.	47
Gnilka, J.	78	Kennedy, J.F.	4
Goddard, A.	249	Khayyam, O.	111, 238
Goethe, J.W. von	167, 190, 193	King, M.L.	54-55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 64, 66, 77, 79, 80, 83, 84-86, 87, 106-115, 127, 132, 153, 159, 160-161, 198, 199, 202, 203-204, 208-220, 224, 233, 238, 260, 287, 291, 300-301, 304
Gooijer, A.	46		
Gordimer, N.	28	Klaassen, T.	29-30
Grey, R.	250	Kleppe, M.	122
Grözinger, A.	48-49	Koopmans, J.	54
Graaf, B. de	74, 145, 152, 288	Kooten, G-H. van	230
		Körtner, U.H.J.	36, 78
Halik, Th.	68	Koyama, K.	54
Hall, P.	68	Kraus, H-J.	12, 14-15, 43, 95
Hansen, D.D.	106, 300	Krog, A.	117
Harding, V.	107	Kruijff, G.G. de	47, 265
Harnack, A. von	13	Krusche, W.	67-68, 74, 75-76, 113, 114, 132, 133, 134, 143-154, 158, 162, 166-177, 181, 194, 201, 232, 236, 239, 240-249, 288
Hauger, M.	187, 193, 202		
Havel, V.	77, 103, 248	Kuhlmann, S.	48, 127, 205, 229
Healy, N.M.	47	Kunonga, N.	135, 140
Heijne, B.	263, 288		
Henkys, R.	175, 241	Laing, A.	134
Herbert, G.	252	Lamfers, W.J.	248
Heschel, A.J.	43, 102-103, 198, 216-217	Lang, B.	157
Hilkert, M.	45, 158, 165, 247, 295	Lange, A.	7
Hillesum, E.	256	Lange, E.	177
Hindenburg, P. von	88	Leede, B. de	4, 300
Hirsch, E.	88-89		
Hirschberg, P.	263		
Hitler, A.	81, 163, 177, 234		
Hodgson, G.	107, 209-210		
Hodgson, J.	228		
Hoeven, J. van der	266		
Hoeven, T.H. van der	74, 288		
Hoogenkamp, A.	290		
Howard, G.	218		

Leene, H.	7, 272	Paas, S.	230
Leeuw, G. van der	8, 282	Papen, F. von	88
Leith, S.	5	Parks, R.	212
Levenson, J.	239	Pauck, W. and M.	43
Levine, A-J.	193	Pelly, J.	28
Lieburg, F.A.	15, 17	Pieterse, H.J.C.	47, 53, 59, 227
Limpach, R.	270	Pinochet, A.	48
Lischer, R.	47, 77, 85-86, 105, 123, 132, 151, 162-163, 201, 215-219, 301, 303	Plantinga Pauw, A.	237
Long, Th.G.	266	Pleizier, T.T.J.	36-38, 42, 50,51, 63, 200, 287
Lowry, D.	45-46	Plüss, D.	38
Luther, M.	19	Pollack, D.	143, 153, 175-176, 241
Lux, R.	158, 172, 178	Prosman, A.A.A.	20-21
Manen, G. van	263	Rabascha I.C.	30
Marcel, G.	226	Rad, G. von	43, 67-68, 78-80, 166-167, 187-195, 202-204, 237, 251, 271
Maritain, J.	30	Rahner, K.	3, 42, 45-46, 165, 295-297
Martyn, J.L.	30	Ramsay, M.	138, 140
Marquardt, F-W.	37, 115	Ratzinger, J.	42, 57-58, 206, 208
Mathlouti, E.	27	Ratzmann, W.	144
McGrath, A.	249	Rendtorff, T.	145
McMickle, M.	48	Ricoeur, P.	266
Metz, J.B.	160, 205	Riesebrodt, M.	57
Meulen, H. van der	246	Rijst, R. van der	103, 202
Milgrom, J.	239	Rilke, R.M.	8
Miller, K.D.	86, 75, 160-161, 163, 198, 219, 300	Robbins, J.	97
Miskotte, H.H.	47, 248, 271	Romero, O.	48, 54
Miskotte, K.H.	54, 263	Rosenstock-Huessy, R.	162, 164, 273
Mitchell, W.J.T.	27	Sachs, N.	167, 193
Moberly, R.W.L.	12, 239, 301-302	Safranski, R.	21
Möller, C.	79	Sander, G.M.	8
Moltke, J. von	168	Sawicki, M.	301
Morrison, T.	28, 113, 147, 299	Schaafsma, P.	74
Mugabe, R.	134-136, 140	Schmidt, W.H.	78
Müller, U.B.	12	Schneider, P.	168, 173-174, 244
Myers, B.	240, 255	Scholl, H. and S.	168
Nasrallah, L.	7, 16, 19	Schönherr, A.	88, 186-187
Nauta, R.	247	Schori, K.	75
Ndlovu, T.J.	229	Schröder, R.A.	245
Newbiggin, L.	230	Schultze, H.	145
Newman, J.H.	8	Schuster, E.	205
Niebuhr, R.	178	Schweitzer, A.	252
Nieman, J.	57, 301	Selge, K-V.	187, 202
Niemóller, M.	48, 144	Shortt, R.	143, 250
Nierop, J.	4	Shostakovich, D.	29-30, 268-269
Nietzsche, F.	7, 20-22, 167, 188, 193	Sicilia, J.	28-29
Noordegraaf, H.	269	Singgih, E.G.	68
Noordmans, O.	264	Smith, D.	134
Noordzij, J.C.	248	Sobukwe, R.	105
Ntu, Imilonji ka	228	Sölle, D.	68
Nuttal, M.	220, 228	Solzhenitsyn, A.	28
Obama, B.	4	Sonneveld, J.	4
Oberman, H.	35	Srigley, S.M.	30-32
O'Connor, F.	7, 22, 30-32, 94	Staemmler, W.	169
O'Donovan, O.	3-4	Stalin, J.	29-30
Ommen, L. van	84	Stangneth, B.	266
		Stark, C.	3, 36, 300
		Steck, O.H.	199

Stewart-Sykes, A.,	13-14, 272
Stöckl, J.	7
Stoevesandt, M.	143
Stolz, F.	4-5
Strauss, A.	50, 51-52, 59
Talstra, E.	272
Taxacher, G.	113, 147, 194, 299
Taylor, J.	22-23
Thompson, L.	96-97
Tillich, P.	42-46, 78, 88, 299
Timmerman, D.	17-19
Tomlin, G.	230
Tongeren, P. van	7, 20
Tsvangirai, M.	135
Tubbs Tisdale, L.	47-48, 68, 287
Turner, M.D.	48
Tutu, D.	54-55, 56, 57-58, 64, 66, 74-75, 77, 79, 84, 87, 96-106, 110, 112, 113, 115-123, 128, 131, 132, 198-199, 201, 204-206, 208, 220-230, 236, 260, 300
Veenhof, J.	272, 281-282
Velden, M.J.G. van der	273-274
Ven, J. van der	77, 105, 123, 131
Verbrugge, A.	266
Verkuil, J.	54
Verweij, A.	42, 55, 261
Vlok, A.	101, 128
Volf, M.	237
Volkov, S.	30
Vorster, B.J.	96
Vosloo, R.	198
Walshe, P.	97
Ward Howe, J.	161
Watson, K.T.	28, 83, 113
Weber, M.	20, 22-25
Wellhausen, J.	11
Wendel, E.G.	95-96, 183-184, 186
Wertz, F.	59, 62, 63
White, J.B.	103-104
Wilckens, U.	281
Williams, R.	30, 67-68, 74, 122-123, 127, 129-131, 133-143, 162-164, 181, 238, 240, 249-257, 299, 300
Wilson, P.S.	48
Wit, W.J. de	8
Witherington, B.	12
Wolterstorff, N.	37
Wood, R.C.	30
Woods, D.	116
Zantovsky, M.	103
Zimmerling, P.	82-83, 233, 235
Zulu, A.	117
Zwingli, H.	17-19

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