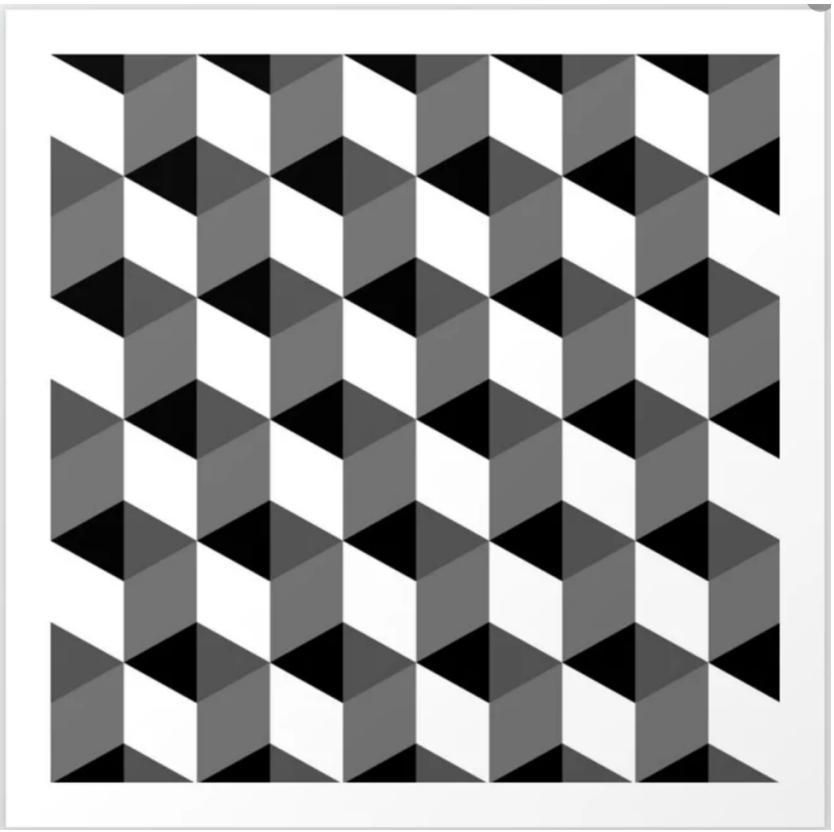
"That which we have seen": Philosophical-Homiletical Foundations towards a Phenomenology of Sermon Preparation and Preaching



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"That which we have seen": Philosophical-Homiletical Foundations towards a Phenomenology of Sermon Preparation and Preaching

(met een samenvatting in Nederlands)

Proefschrift

Ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn
op gezag van de Rector, Prof. dr. H J. Selderhuis,
ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties
in het openbaar te verdedigen te Apeldoorn op 15 Juni, 2021

door

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Geboren op 14 Oktober 1960 te Rotterdam

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Phenomena

Even in smooth stillness
slight noise and motion surface
like wrinkles in water
waver out to far cut corners
a touch trying to dare
soothe deep inner sores
disturbs meditation of mind
now startled by squared circles.
Even serene incense
ritual of wispy curl can clasp
a burning smell, smoldering smoke
instead of sweet savor
when colliding with the impersonal
one, you, they need
transformation including me, us, we, our
glass' perfect mirroring breaking.
Even far beyond eyesight
three heavens among other worlds
surreal mystery appearing in Light
redeeming unsensible times
by solving bitter crossed out gal
into infinite sweet tastes
given perpetual contemplation to behold
Him beholding you.

Even more, the Invisible manifested
voicing an unfathomable feed
into heightened hearing;
You Are Sought Out!

PREFACE

This *præfatio* is more or less an *epílogos*—the afterword of this study stated beforehand, offering an abbreviated rationale and reason for the study, the structure of the study, and acknowledgments.

"How does one relate phenomenology and preaching?" That was the predominant question in my mind after having met Emmanuel Falque at the University of Cambridge in 2018 upon the invitation of Dr. Victor Emma-Adamah. Over two-days, Falque discussed the possible role phenomenology in philosophy plays in the credibility and intelligibility of Christianity. Themes such as Scripture, suffering, death, finitude, metamorphism, the Eucharist, and resurrection were considered in light of phenomenology. The whole experience of these two days offered new vistas and venues of thought. Questions abounded: Is phenomenology in French philosophy a new or postmodern hermeneutic or apologetic? Is a "*Weg zu Gott ohne Gott*" (Husserl) conceivable? Is a "God-experience" (*Gotteserfahrung*) phenomenologically possible? Or, in Falque's words, "How and in what way is God given to be seen and touched today?"[1] These inquiries, as far as I was and still am concerned, had profound implications for the preparation of a sermon or homily. Looking back, my encounter with Falque and his ideas was a turning point in my reflection on the state of Reformed homiletics over the last decade or so. That meeting in Cambridge, the conversations with him,

[1] Emmanuel Falque, *Dieu, la Chair et L'autre: D'irénée à Duns Scot* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2008), 17.

and subsequent discussions with Prof. Dr. Maarten Kater and others gave the impetus to this study.

The following three concerns motivated this study. First, academically, there is a need for Reformed theology and, in particular, Reformed homiletics, more fully to share in the fruit of phenomenology as practiced in recent French philosophy. The work of Jean-Louis Chrétien, Emmanuel Falque, Michel Henry, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and Jean-Luc Marion on phenomenology, Scripture, and theology goes beyond the descriptive but seeks, among other philosophical concerns, the lived experience of the text (scriptural, Patristic, and Medieval). If this approach is sustainable, the application of phenomenology to homiletics in the preparation of a sermon or homily, i.e., the reading and hearing the Word as a lived experience, could be considered in new and complementary ways. As such, this study is structured twofold in a descriptive, conceptual part and a constructive part.

Second, professionally, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS), where I serve, has strategically chosen preaching as the center of historically informed and contemporarily relevant theological education, which is the warrant for its new degree programs in homiletics (Ph.D. and DMin) and its Global Center of Reformed Preaching. An in-depth study of the application of contemporary philosophical trajectories to Reformed preaching, in the context of doctorate work in homiletics, is part of my broader aim to be of service in a meaningful way for the academy and church in general and for PRTS's strategic programming in particular.

Last but not least, there is a personal concern that biblical, Reformed, and experiential preaching is in crisis insofar as it steeped in creeds, confessions, and history at the expense of connecting with non-believing and believing people in a twenty-first-century world. Do the

estrangement and detachment of the propositional exposition of the Word from the lived experiences of the audience contribute to this crisis? Moreover, while maintaining a sense of the importance of biblical, Reformed, and experiential preaching, should not every preacher be concerned with "predictable" sermons and the declension of "traditional" churches, whether or not these two are linked? This observation is not restricted to Reformed congregations but is also noted in the Roman Catholic church. People at the dawn of the twenty-first century who seek to fill the voids in their lives with religion and attend church Sunday after Sunday long for authentic preaching that resonates with the daily experience of life (*Erfahrung*). The openness to religion and experience in a postmodern culture or culture of skeptics is unprecedented. God is not dead but is back in the public square, and thus the importance of the centrality of human experience in the contemporary culture should be recognized by those who preach.

Many of those in French academia who are considered in this study, such as Chrétien, Henry, Falque, Lacoste, and Marion, recognize and wrestle philosophically with the quest of religion, and Christianity in particular, in relation to the current culture. Furthermore, many of these French scholars are committed and confessional Roman Catholics. For this reason, and because of the attention given to the *Lectio Divina* in the Catholic tradition for the preparation of the homily, Catholic reflections on homiletics will be considered as well in this study.

Finally, the philosophical projects of these French phenomenalists consider the text of Scripture, revelation, prayer, liturgy, the Patristics, medieval theology, and mysticism, among other themes and texts which attempt to overcome the object-subject distinction. This form of dualism forced a distinction between the subject and object: the subject is a being with consciousness and experiences (*res cogitans*) who has a relationship with the object; and the

object (*res extensa*) is outside the subject. The subject, then, is an observer, and the object is a thing observed. Translated for the benefit of this study, for example, the one preparing a sermon or homily is the subject observing but not a participant in the text of Scripture (object). The philosophers Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) have attempted to unify this duality through the philosophical practice of phenomenology, describing the structure of the conscious experience—an approach to which the aforementioned French philosophers are deeply indebted. As such, phenomenology should be of interest to those appreciative of a so-called "experiential" preaching.

The central inquiry of this study, then, is whether phenomenology, as practiced in French philosophy, may assist in the preparation of preaching a sermon or homily. I conclude that as phenomenology makes undeniable inroads in philosophy and theology, it should at least be taken seriously for homiletical practice, though the longevity of its contribution remains to be seen.

This study, then, would not have been possible without the support of many. Prof. Dr. Maarten J. Kater, my *Doktorvater*, not only recognized the possibility of the proposed study but was a constant source of encouragement, critical feedback, and pastoral and practical guidance throughout the dissertation project. Our shared concerns regarding experiential but contemporarily relevant preaching gave a deepening dimension to the project. Maarten—with much appreciation, and from the heart, *hartelijk dank*!

Dr. Victor U. Emma-Adamah of Institut Catholique Toulouse—*merci*, *merci beaucoup* is still inadequate. Your critical and insightful philosophical feedback throughout the research and writing of this study was indispensable and saved me from potential pitfalls. Our discussion concerning the status of preaching was extended over the continents of Africa,

Europe and America from its beginning years ago in Bloemfontein, through its continuation in Cambridge and Grand Rapids, and to its current destination in Apeldoorn for now.

The librarians deserve many thanks for their always ready-to-assist attitude in word and deed: Nikè van der Mijden-Groenendijk (Theological University Apeldoorn) and Laura Ladwig and Kim Dykema (Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary): thank you. The latter library hosts the massive collection of philosophical works by the late William Young, the Oxford scholar and professor of philosophy at University of Rhode Island, including an original German edition of the *Husserliana: gesammelte Werke*.

Thank you also to Dr. Jonathon Beeke, registrar and director of admissions at PRTS, who showed interest throughout the study, offered insights and encouragements along the way. With the benefit of my editor, Ian Turner, this study has become readable—at least grammatically. All remaining errors are mine own, however. Dr. Joel R. Beeke, president of PRTS, as well as the faculty and Board of Trustees, are thanked for their ongoing and stimulating interest, support, and encouragement regarding this study.

Last but not least—to Kornelia, my unwavering, supportive wife, and our children: a thank you, *merci, bedankt, 谢谢* (Xièxiè), and *baie dankie* would capture too little but is nonetheless deeply meant.

INTRODUCTION

ὃ ἑωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπα έλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν. καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ

Thus we read the words of 1 John 1:3: "that which we have *seen*" (ὁράω)—literally, "to see," but often with a metaphorical sense of "to see with the mind," or "to perceive with inward spiritual perception"; "and *heard*" (ἀκούω), that is, "to hear" or "listen," and figuratively, "to hear the *vox Dei*"; "*we proclaim*" (ἀπα έλλω)—"to declare" or "report from," which focuses or looks back (ἀπο) on the original source (context) of what is announced, shaping its substance; "also to you, so that you too may have fellowship" (κοινωνία)—properly, "what is shared in common as the basis of community"; "with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."[1]

These Johannine words capture the essence of this study: towards a phenomenology of preaching. To see, hear, and proclaim phenomenologically is to describe the structure of a shared spiritual experience between the pulpit and pew in the sermon or homily.

[1] See, for the rendering in English of the Greek words, for example, Frederick W. Danker, Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida, eds., (New York: United Bible Society, 1988); *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Second Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds., (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2nd edition, 1958); Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York, Cincinnati: American Book Co., 1889); James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham, 1890).

Despite the rise of homiletics scholarship since the 1960s, churches in the West deal with a culture that contests its preaching. The Catholic Church encounters issues of credibility, mainline Protestant churches are numerically in decline, and Reformed confessional churches face increasing challenges in communicating the gospel. Protestant and Catholic preachers encounter a culture of skepticism and complacency. The latter is observed by those attending confessional churches, whether Reformed or Roman Catholic, while the former, skepticism, is the primary mode of life of many people in the megalopolises around the world—not an immediate rejection of Christianity but an uninformed doubt, a questioning attitude, or unbelief concerning religion. This culture, collectively, is a challenge for the preacher and the hearer—the Christian believer and non-Christian believer.[2] Limiting this observation to long-established churches and congregations in the Reformed faith tradition, the following assessment of the church and preaching resonates for many:

> One does not have to read about the church in Kierkegaard's Denmark to know what happens to preaching and teaching when the broad assumption is that all are Christians and need only to be confirmed in what they have already accepted in advance. The clergy predigest every morsel offered through lesson and sermon. The path to discipleship, lest it proves too difficult, is made monotonously smooth. The offense of the gospel, once faced by all those first hearers of the Nazarene, is now removed. The message no longer carries the paradox of God in flesh, placing the hearer in a position of risk and decision. On the contrary, the certainty of faith is guaranteed by reminders of inspiration of scripture, infallibility of dogma…. Christians need not bother themselves further about the hiddenness of God in nature or in history or in a crucifixion. Thanks to centuries of unbroken Christian tradition, ministers can now deliver sermons in which, even to indifferent listeners, God is as obvious as a very rare and tremendously large green bird with a red beak sitting in a tree…. The risk of faith was gone…. The struggle of faith was gone.[3]

[2] This study assumes that all humans have a belief system and a *sensus divinitatis*. Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Alvin Plantinga, *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed., with Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. 1983); John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, F. L. Battles (trans.) (London: S.C.M Press, 1960).

[3] Fred B. Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (Nashville: Abington, 1987; revised and expanded 2002), 21–22.

Søren Kierkegaard stated in this nineteenth-century context of comfortable Christianity, "it is easier to become a Christian when I am not a Christian than to become a Christian when I am one."[4] Yves Congar, OP, complains of twentieth-century preachers "giving dry, technical, dogmatic homilies that did not connect with the life experience of the faithful."[5] These words still resonate at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, the language of preaching, either Reformed or Catholic, is often archaic, descriptive-analytical, and non-transformative for the contemporary audience—whether Christian or not. Gospel preaching has become a descriptive and explanatory event in "an atmosphere," Craddock states, "where it is assumed the gospel has been heard and that now all that remains is supplying more units of information."[6] The sender-message-receiver model of a sermon, thereby, is more the epitome of communicating a series of propositional points rather than connecting pulpit and pew in seeking an experiential encounter with the living God.[7] *What* should be communicated is abundantly clear to biblical and confessional preachers, Catholic and Protestant. Both traditions have a rich heritage of creeds and confessions, exegesis, theology, and practice. Preaching within these traditions becomes

[4] Søren Kiekegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, David F. Swenson, Walter Lowrie (trans.) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941, 1968 ninth printing), 327.

[5] Yves Congar, "Pour une liturgie et une predication 'reelles'," *La Maison-Dieu* (1948) 16:75–87. Cf. Yves Congar, *Liturgical Essays. At the Heart of Christian Worship*, Paul Philibert, trans., ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 1–3.

[6] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 26.

[7] David Buttrick*, Homiletic. Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 56. "Observational language in preaching...turns God into an 'object,' and God's Word into a rational truth." Karla J. Bellinger, *Connecting Pulpit and Pew. Breaking Open the Conversations about Catholic Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 6. "Clergy told me that they thirst for their people to encounter Jesus Christ," but, "We cannot presume that theological concepts are understood by those who listen to them used in a homily. 'Churchy words' have gone flat" (p. 82).

predictable, a piece of information, "autonomous and unrelated to the speaker and hearer"[8] where "there is a great distance between speaker and message" in the sermons—a "nonparticipation between the messengers and message."[9] For the preachers and the listeners, sermons have even "the dead air of familiarity."[10] Yet, in the context of such a rich tradition of Scripture, doctrine, and *praxis*, "being available, does not mean it will be [or is] appropriated."[11] Something is lacking: experience (*Befindlichkeit*).[12] Therefore, it is suggested, the personal or experiential appropriation of the gospel is "the minimum condition for approaching pulpit or podium."[13]

A new hearing is needed—both for the preacher and listener.

As such, this study grows out of a concern for the contemporary relevance of biblical, Reformed, and "experiential" preaching. On one end of the spectrum is a kind of preaching that has deep roots in Scripture and seventeenth-century scholastic handbooks of homiletics and hermeneutics, but it is shaped by the Enlightenment and the (Cartesian) object-subject dichotomy; a separation of transcendence and immanence—dichotomizing the otherness of the *explicatio (Vorstellung)* and the relevance of the *applicatio* (*Erlebnis*). These preaching parts the *doctrina* and the *practica*, or *praxis*—a separation of what the text meant and what the text means, the then/now of the biblical text, and the lived experience of people, among

[8] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 39–40. See also Jos Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus. De meditatie en het preekproces* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok Kampen, 2000), 13–14.

[9] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 39–40. See also, Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, 13–14.

[10] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 17

[11] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 9.

[12] The meaning of the German terms used in this study must be understood primarily in the context of continental philosophy, especially in the works of Husserl and Heidegger. As such, they are used where a meaning and connotation that is more comprehensive than the English rendered equivalent is called for.

[13] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 33.

other life-felt issues. The sermon language is saturated with the words of Scripture but does not resonate with the contemporary vocabulary of the listener. On the other end of the spectrum is another sort of preaching that employs language that accommodates the pluralistic and postmodern contemporary world of the listener but is too often carried on at the expense of understanding the import of message for today in the context of its significance in the world of scripture.

The intersection of these two modes of preaching, however, is the individual and shared horizon of human experience (Falque), a lived experience, a *Befindlichkeit, Erfahrung,* and *Erlebnis,* but also of finitude (Heidegger).[14] As such, the religious connotation of "experience" or "experiential" in the Reformed faith tradition (*bevinding* or *bevindelijk*) shares with those outside that tradition an emphasis on the experience of the human subject.

In other words, if "experience" is a shared phenomenon validated by (Reformed) Christians and non-Christians, preaching should consider the importance of this topic. This consideration would not be novel in so far as it concerns the discipline of homiletics, a branch of practical or pastoral theology, in which many studies address listener experience with a focus on the *delivery* of a sermon or homily in order to create an experiential moment. This study, however, considers the benefits of a *philosophical inquiry of experience* for the *preparation* of a homiletic discourse. Here a question might be raised: what has philosophy to do with homiletics—the apex of theology? Can one begin with real or actual existence or

[14] Experience is a consciousness, awareness, observation, sensation, or perception of things in this world. *Erfahrung* connotes the coherence of life's experiences, while *Erlebnis* is an (emotionally processed) experience of an event. *Befindlichkeit* refers not just to "state of mind" (consciousness) but also disposition, mood, affectedness, and emotion (Heidegger). The continental tradition of philosophy, in particular, has given attention to "experience" (Søren Kierkegaard, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and twentieth-century French philosophy).

experience rather than with some ideal content or something like the idea of God? Can a philosophical approach such as phenomenology be beneficial for preaching? For the informed reader these questions are not completely original, however. Did not Augustine begin his *Confessions* with human experience? With Augustine may one understand God from within or from out of one's own concrete experience of a restless pursuit (experience) rather than on the basis of some abstract theological concept? In other words, can philosophy hold value for homiletics?[15]

Various philosophical endeavors to make Christianity intelligible, credible, and understandable have been attempted in the twentieth century in different ways. One can think of the *Nouvelle Théologie* (ca. 1930–ca. 1960; Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Henri Bouillard, among others), which is often marked by a reconsideration of Patristic theology (*ressourcement*), criticism of modernism, and an apologetic challenge of non-Catholic faiths and the unchurched.[16] As such, *Nouvelle Théologie* was influential to the Second Vatican Council (hereafter, Vatican II) and in turn shaped Catholic homiletics in the context of liturgical renewal and sacramental preaching.[17] Secondly, Radical Orthodoxy (ca. 1990–ca. 2005; John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward) appropriated a number of insights of *Nouvelle Théologie*, launched a philosophical and theological critique of modernity on

[15] Suggestions have been made. See R. H. van der Rijst, "De uitzaaiing van het woord: Homiletiek in het spoor van Derrida," (Tilburg: PhD diss. Tilburg University, 2015), 18–19, "Dat homileten en filosofen met elkaar in gesprek worden gebracht, behoeft nauwelijks verdediging. Inmiddels is dit tamelijk gebruikelijk geworden."

[16] Note, especially, those trying to engage the unchurched, for example, Timothy J. Keller, *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2016); Staf Hellemans and Peter Jonkers, eds., *The Contingent Meeting of a Catholic Minority Church with Seekers* (Washington, D.C: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2015); Timothy J. Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2008); Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).

[17] See for example, Todd Townshend, *The Sacramentality of Preaching: Homiletical Uses of Louis-Marie Chauvet's Theology of Sacramentality* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

several fronts,[18] returned to theology as the highest possible form of human knowledge ("queen of the sciences"), and secured a postmodern reaffirmation of ancient and medieval orthodox theologies.[19] The homiletical impact of Radical Orthodoxy has not gone unnoticed.[20] Thirdly, though not from Europe but predominately from America, is analytical philosophy (ca. 1970; Alvin Plantinga, Nicolas Wolterstorff), which considers Christianity as a contributor to the defense of the thought of free-will and Reformed epistemology, attempting to make theology in the pulpit more intelligible.[21] Last but not least is a certain deployment of phenomenology towards the explication of theological themes as seen within French philosophy (ca. 1970, and recently introduced to the North American scene: Jean-Louis Chrétien, Michel Henry, Emmanuel Falque, Jean-Yves Lacoste, Jean-Luc Marion, and others).

[18] Catherine Pickstock, *Aspects of Truth: A New Religious Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2020); John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015); Graham Ward, *Unbelievable: Why We Believe and Why We Don't* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Ibid., *Christ and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2005); Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing. On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

[19] John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1998); "What is Radical Orthodoxy?" (Freiburg, Switzerland: University of Freiburg, 2015), http://www.unifr.ch/theo/assets/files/SA2015/Theses_EN.pdf (accessed June 30, 2020).

[20] Alison Milbank, John Hughes, Arabella Milbank Preaching Radical and Orthodox (London: SCM Press, 2017); David Schnasa Jacobsen, *Homiletical Theology. Preaching as Doing Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 135, 150; *Lucy Lind Hogan, "Alpha, Omega*, and Everything in Between," Janet Childers, (ed.) *The Purposes of Preaching* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004), 67–82.

[21] Alvin Plantinga*, Knowledge and Christian Belief*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Ibid., *Knowledge of God* (with Michael Tooley) (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); Ibid., *Faith and* Rationality; Ibid., *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.,1974). Nicolas Woltersdorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology. Grand Rapids:* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2015); Ibid., *about God: Selected Essays, Volume I* (ed. Terence Cuneo). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2009); Ibid., *Practices of Belief: Selected Essays, Volume II* (ed. Terence Cuneo) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2009).

Phenomenology can be broadly defined as the sustained attempt to describe experiences (and the "things themselves") without metaphysical speculation.[22] As such, phenomenology may lend itself exceptionally well to this study, especially with the nuance of phenomenology as "attitude" (*fenomenologie als houding*) from Dutch philosopher Ruud Welten.[23] What we have in view is not phenomenology as a new apology, a new hermeneutics, or a new philosophy working toward (practical) theology—though these options cannot be dismissed—but a phenomenology that reveals and describes the lived and spiritual experiences of life, which is so prized in Reformed "experiential preaching." In other words, phenomenology may pay dividends in the preparation of a sermon or homily if it pertains to an "attitude" in life. However, contrary to the way *Nouvelle Théologie,* Radical Orthodoxy, and analytical philosophy has impacted preaching*,* no appropriation of phenomenology for homiletics has been advanced in the literature thus far, either in primary or secondary (or interpretative) sources. What follows, therefore, is such an attempt, but is restricted primarily to the *preparation* of a sermon or homily in light of the philosophical practice of phenomenology, so that a new hearing has "old" hearers refreshed, "new" listeners renewed, and both experientially and spiritually transformed.

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[22] Cf. David W. Smith, "Phenomenology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology (accessed August 5, 2019); Marianne Sawicki, "Edmund Husserl (1859–1938)," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, James Fieser, Bradley Dowden (eds.), https://www.iep.utm.edu/ (accessed August 5, 2019).

[23] Welten's thought is not appraised for a homiletical context but should not be dismissed. Welten may well follow Husserl but gives particular attention to this characterizing of phenomenology as "attitude" (*houding*). Ruud B. J. M. Welten, "Fenomenologie is een houding," C. Bremmers, G.J. Van der Heiden, (eds.), *Fenomenologie als houding*: *Bijdragen aan een fenomenologische wijsbegeerte (*Antwerpen: VUBPRESS, 2018), 107–120; Ibid., "Fenomenologie als houding," F. Koenraadt, A. Mooij (eds.), *Subjectiviteit in strafrecht en psychiatrie* (Amsterdam: Boom Juridische Uitgevers, 2010), 3–14. See also, Ruud Welten, "Fenomenologie met gesloten ogen: Voorwoord bij de Nederlandse vertaling van Michel Henry's Woorden van Christus" in Michel Henry, *Woorden van Christus* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Van Warven), 7–22.

This study proposes, then, a philosophical re-thinking of preaching. More specifically it addresses whether the phenomenology of twentieth-century French philosophy can be of value for the enterprise of preaching. If "experience" is a shared human phenomenon that can be described philosophically, would not such an area of inquiry be of interest to those communicating "God-experience," such as theologians and preachers?

The philosophy of phenomenology is critical to the traditional metaphysical inquires of the nature of reality and being (ontology) and the nature and grounds of knowledge especially regarding its limits and validity (epistemology). Phenomenology is a contemporary philosophy, more recently having "cross[ed] the Rubicon" to theology, a proposal that has not gone unchallenged.[24] Moreover, phenomenology in contemporary French philosophy considers various aspects and themes of human experience—conceivably related to preaching—such as "the face of the Other" (Emmanuel Lévinas), "word" (Paul Ricœur), "givenness" (Jean-Luc Marion), "liturgy" (Jean-Yves Lacoste), "primacy of life" (Michel Henry), "prayer" (Jean-Louis Chrétien), and "metamorphosis" (Emmanuel Falque). For example, Lévinas proposes a phenomenology of the face of the Other to show that the experience of encountering the face of a person is never reducible to a pure "object," or objectified encounter, but is an experience of an "excess"; Ricœur's philosophical insight into the reading of a text offers possibilities for the "experiential" reading of Scripture; Henry's contribution concerning the w/Word of Christ as a living word of a living God to living

[24] Emmanuel Falque, "*Larvatus pro Deo*: Phénoménologie et théologie chez J.-L. Marion," *Gregorianum* 86 (1): 45–62 (2005); Ibid., *Crossing the Rubicon. The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, Reuben Shank (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 25. *Contra* Dominique Janicaud, *Le Tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: Éd. de l'Éclat, 1991).

people—a divine and human word which can be experienced—cannot be dismissed in the context of homiletics.

The thought as to whether an appropriation of phenomenology may benefit preaching needs to be suspended or bracketed for now, but the possible commonality between the concerns of phenomenology and the experiential character of Reformed preaching cannot be overlooked here. Such an experiential focus resonates with Bernard of Clairvaux's reminder in the opening of sermon 3 on the *Canticle of Canticles* that "today we are reading from the book of experience (*hodie legimus in libro experientiæ*) …. It is a sealed source (*fons signatus*) to which the stranger has no access. Only he who drinks from it will still thirst for it."[25] This perspective provides, according to Falque, "the lived experience internal to the text of the tradition" and encourages one "to (re)discover it again today."[26] The value of phenomenology in contemporary French philosophy for Reformed preaching might therefore be closer to the pre-enlightened Christian tradition of preaching than is supposed.[27] Furthermore, the themes of birth, flesh, the body (*Leib* and *Körper*), the Other, anxiety, suffering, and finitude (*Endlichkeit*) are shared by all of humanity—whether Christian or not.

[25] *Sancti Bernardi Opera Omnia* (Antwerp: Joannem Keerbergium, 1616), [542], 566. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Canticle*, Sources chrêtiennes 414 (Paris: Cerf, 1996), vol. 1, 101, Serm. 3, 1; *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, vol. I-IV Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1970–1980).

[26] Emmanuel Falque, *Dieu, la chair et l'autre: D'Irénee à Duns Scot* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008). Ibid., *God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus,* William Christian Hackett (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), xxi.

[27] The medieval and Bernardine spirituality undergirding much of the experiential c/Catholic thought is acknowledged by Bredero, De Reuver, and others. Cf. Adriaan H. Bredero*, Bernard of Clairvaux*: *Between Cult and History* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. 1996); Arie de Reuver, *Verborgen Omgang. Sporen van spiritualiteit in Middeleeuwen en Nadere Reformatie* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2002. Cf. Ibid., *Sweet Communion: Trajectories of Spirituality from the Middle Ages through the Further Reformation*, James de Jong (trans) (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2007).

These shared human experiences are phenomena present in homilies or sermons that are worthy to be appraised philosophically.

The intended religious neutrality of the phenomenological "method" as developed and proposed by Edmund Husserl is not immediately understood as a problem, but rather as an opportunity for critical assessment in this study. Husserl's phenomenological reduction of lived acts of experience describes and prescribes a method that allows one voluntarily to sustain an emerging force of perception that can facilitate conceptual cognition throughout an intentional analysis of experience, thus bringing the "knowing" of wonder into our everyday lives.[28] This prospect is underscored in light of Husserl's own "religiosity" and advancement of phenomenology in recent French philosophy. Although Wright notes that "references to God and religion rarely occur in Husserl's philosophical writings, and when they do occur, they are often relegated to footnotes,"[29] Husserl's "religious" aspect of phenomenology is twofold and should not be dismissed: it offers, first, a philosophical path to God, and in so doing, second, reaches those who have moved away from God. Husserl's 1935 remark is "my philosophy, phenomenology, is intended to be nothing but a path, a method, in order to show precisely those who moved away from Christianity and from the Christian churches the path back to God."[30] Thus, a phenomenology of "God-experience," so essential in preaching and

[28] Cf. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, James Fieser, Bradley Dowden (eds.), "The Phenomenological Reduction."

[29] Terrence C. Wright, "Edith Stein. Prayer and Interiority," Bruce Ellis Benson, Norman Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 135.

[30] Adelgundis Jaegerschmid, O.S.B, "Die letzten Jahre Edmund Husserl (1936–1938)," *Stimmen der Zeit* (1981) 199: 130; Ibid., "Conversations with Edmund Husserl, 1931–1938," Marcus Brainard (trans.), *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* (2001) 1:342. On Husserl's turn to Christianity in a letter to his assistant, Arnold Metzger, see Bruce Ellis Benson, Norman Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 134. Cf. *Husserl: Shorter Works*, Peter McCormick, Fredrick Elliston (eds.) (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 360.

preparing a sermon, should be of interest to every preacher in a culture of skepticism. Furthermore, the "father of phenomenology" stated or possibly confessed that "human life is nothing but a path to God. I attempt to reach this goal without theological proofs, methods, or aids, namely, to reach God without God. I must, as it were, eliminate God from my scientific existence in order to blaze a trail to God for people who, unlike you…do not have the assurance of faith through the Church. I know that my way of proceeding could be dangerous for me were I myself not a man deeply bound to God and a believer in Christ."[31]

The significant contributions of recent French philosophy, furthermore, embraces the "theological turn of phenomenology" (in Marion, Falque, and others).[32] Whereas, traditionally, "first philosophy" was concerned either with metaphysics or theology, only to be reconceived by Heidegger as fundamental ontology, the aforementioned French philosophers suggest that it is "experience" that should be conceived as the fundamental philosophical concern. Criticism of such a philosophical approach was expected and has been raised (by Dominique Janicaud, Jacques Derrida, Maurice Merleau-Ponty), although a Protestant reflection has been reservedly absent thus far. Nonetheless, there is a pressing need for the re-examination of preaching as confessional churches are emptying or growing void of the lived experience of God, Christ, and the Word, and as the disconnect from contemporary, skeptical fellow human beings seems greater than ever. Commitment levels to institutional religion have been in decline, in part due to individualism, secularization, and materialism. Examining how preaching connects to people, and doing so from the perspective of

[31] Adelgundis Jaegerschmid, O.S.B, "Conversations with Edmund Husserl, 1931–1938," Marcus Brainard (trans.), *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Burt Hopkins, Steven Crowell (eds.), (2001) 1:57 (Dec. 1935). See also, A. Ales Bello, "On the Divine in Husserl" *Argument* (2016) 6.2:271-282.

[32] On the "theological turn of phenomenology" see the pages 49-55 of this study.

phenomenology, which was intended, after all, to show the wayward a "path back to God" (Husserl), is therefore of paramount importance.

Realizing that "discoveries are rare, but the search is priceless,"[33] this study aims to wrestle with the principal question: whether phenomenology in twentieth-century French philosophy is relevant and applicable to contemporary preaching, particularly Reformed experiential preaching (see the section, "Research Question," in chapter 1). The next chapter will therefore address phenomenology and homiletics, offer a definition of preaching, consider the origin, development, and debate of phenomenology, and provide an overview of scholarly literature on phenomenology and homiletics relevant to the research. This is followed by stating the research question, sources, and structure of this study with a succinct sketch of its chapters.

[33] Falque, *God, The Flesh and the Other,* 7.

PART 1

A Conceptual Foundation

CHAPTER 1: PHENOMENOLOGY AND HOMILETICS

Introduction

Homiletics: An Exploration Towards a Description

The latter part of the twentieth century, since the 1960s, has seen a renaissance of interest in preaching.[1] Although Carrell notes "preaching research is barely in its infancy,"[2] this attention to preaching is found in both the Protestant and Catholic traditions. Since Vatican II the

[1] Selected publications relevant for this study, in the Roman Catholic tradition are as follows. Primary sources: *The Homiletic Directory*, and other Post-Conciliar Ecclesial Sources Relevant to Preaching. See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20140629_direttorio-omiletico_en.html (accessed December 12, 2019). Secondary sources: Edwards Foley (ed.), *A handbook for Catholic preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016); Gregory Heille, *The Preaching of Pope Francis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015); James M. Reinert, *Preaching the Social Doctrine of the Church in the Mass* (Washington, D.C United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2014*); Preaching the mystery of faith : The Sunday Homily* (Washington, D.C United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012); Todd Townshend, *The Sacramentality of Preaching: Homiletical Uses of Louis-Marie Chauvet's Theology of Sacramentality* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009); Peter John Cameron, *Why preach: Encountering Christ in God's Word* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009); Edwards Foley, *Preaching Basics* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998); Walter J. Burghardt, *Preaching the Just Word* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). For the (Reformed) Protestant tradition: G. Immink, "Naming god's presence in preaching," *HTS teologiese studies / theological studies*. (2019), 75.4: 1–7; G. Immink, *Over God gesproken. Preken in theorie en praktijk* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2018); L.L. Hogan, C.J.A Vos, J. Cilliers, *Preaching As a Language of Hope* (Pretoria: Protea Book House; 2007); F. Gerrit Immink, "Research Report, Homiletics: The Current Debate," *International Journal of Practical Theology* (2004) 8.1:89–121; G. Immink, C. Stark C, *Preaching: Creating Perspective* (Utrecht: Societas Homiletica, 2002); Arie Baars, "Theory and Practice of Preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism," Arnold Huijgen (ed.), *The Spirituality of the Heidelberg Catechism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); H. Jonker, *Actuale prediking* (Nijkerk, Callenbach, 1968); C. W Mönnich, F. J Pop (eds.), *Wegen der prediking* (Amsterdam : Uitgeversmaatschappij Holland, 1959); K. Runia, *Prediking en historisch-kritisch onderzoek* (Kampen: Kok, 1972); Ferdinand P. Kruger, "Verstaanbare prediking is eenvoudige prediking: 'n Prakties-teologiese besinning oor die styl van prediking," *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi*, (2012), 46.2:1–11; Ibid., "Kreatiewe prediking as die sigbaarmaking van ou en nuwe dinge en die verryking van die luisteraksie deur middel van preekgesprekke," *In die Skriflig* (2014), 48.1:1–11; Bryan Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids : Baker Books (1994); Robert G. Hughes, Robert Kysa*, Preaching doctrine : for the twenty-first centur*y (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 1997); Ruthanna B. Hooke, Transforming Preaching (New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 2010); Fritz W. de Wet, Hennie J.C. Pieterse, "Die belang van die verrekening van metateoretiese vertrekpunte vir prediking en wetenskaplike navorsing in Homiletiek," *In die Skriflig* (2012), 46.2:1–9; C.J.H. Venter, "Verklarende (expository) prediking – 'n herevaluering," *In die Skriflig* (2001) 35.1:513–536; N. Droomer, "Heilshistories-verbondsmatige prediking teenoor eksemplaristiese prediking," In die Skriflig (1991), 25.3: 403–422; M.J. Du P. Beukes, "Prediking as kommunikasie," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* (1981), 37.1:1–15; F.W. de Wet, "Uitdagings vir 'n reformatoriese benadering tot prediking in 'n postliterêre kommunikatiewe konteks," *Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* (2007), 72.3:50–67; K. Dijk, *De dienst der prediking* (Kampen : Kok, 1955). The resurgence of homiletics in America since the 1960s is summarized by Welford Hobbie, "Out of the Shadows: The Resurgence of Homiletics/Preaching Since the Sixties," *Affirmation* (1980) 1:21–37.

[2] Lori Carrell, *The Great American Sermon* (Phoenix: Mainstay Church Resources, 1999), 137.

Catholic homily has been reappraised, and in the Protestant tradition, from Barth to Beeke, preaching continues to be of interest.[3] The need remains for a constantly new explanation, however. "How," and not "what," one should preach or prepare to preach is a leading tenet and concern in this study. Although these two aspects are related in preaching, the enduring content as it appears in Scripture ("what"), this revelation or revealed Word, must be recognizable in secular language. This priority of communicability is underscored by the language of Scripture itself—a divine revelation in human words, contemporary and yet comprehending a past world. This sharply contrasts with early modern translations of Scripture, still in use, which contribute to the use of archaic language in preaching.[4] In the Reformed tradition, this archaic use of language is, furthermore, shaped by Protestant scholasticism and the Enlightenment, Cartesianism in particular, resulting in predictable modes and methods of speech. Here, the sad irony is that those who adhere to and advocate classical Reformed and Puritan preaching make themselves incomprehensible in the world of the twentieth-first century, whether they realize it or not. The preacher's use of a dictionary is insufficient for bridging the gap between the world of the text and the world of the modern hearer. Dictionaries may offer context for antiquated words and explain idiomatic expressions or abnormal usages of words, but even in this they can often create an obstacle for the modern preacher and hearer.[5] Trained clergy too often deploy in the pulpit the professional language

[3] Karl Barth, *Homiletics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Know Press, 1991). Foreword by David G. Buttrick; Joel R. Beeke, *Reformed Preaching. Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People.* Foreword by Sinclair Ferguson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

[4] Early modern translations of Scripture include The English Authorized King James Version, 1611; the Dutch *Statenvertaling*, 1637, and confessional language of the early modern era, such as the Belgic Confession of Faith, 1561; the Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647. See other related publications, David Rietveld, "A Survey of the Phenomenological Research of Listening to Preaching," *Homiletic. The Journal of the Academy of Homiletics*, 38.2 (2013): 30–47.

[5] See for example, Martin Manser, Natasha B. Fleming, Kate Hughes, King James Bible Word Book (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011); Ronald F. Bridges, Luther Allan Weigle, *The King James Bible Word Book:*

of theology and ritual to define and describe the most profound words of Scripture, which are often regarded as unbelievable nonsense by one who has never heard the Word. Salvation events are reduced to mere conceptual or propositional abstractions.[6] Preaching becomes a combination of descriptive historical report, theological interpretation, and moral application (taken together, *Erkennen*)—not an experiential reality or lived-experience (*Entäußerung* or *Erfahrung*). This objectivation and abstraction of the Word, furthermore, is shaped and strengthened by a community's acceptance of these inherited forms of speech.

The Catholic Tradition

Many of the French philosophers or phenomenologists considered in this study acknowledge their adherence to the Catholic faith. Falque unashamedly proposes a Catholic hermeneutic as part of his philosophical project, which is why we will consider the Catholic tradition of preaching in this study. Vatican II and its post-conciliar documents mark the renewal of Catholic preaching. Commencing with the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), this revitalization culminates in *The Homiletic Directory* (2014), which "seeks to assimilate the insights of the past fifty years, review them critically, help preachers appreciate the purpose of the homily, and offer them assistance in fulfilling a mission which is vital to the life of the

A Contemporary Dictionary of Curious and Archaic Words Found in the King James Version of the Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994). This work explains over 800 terms of the KJV that have either fallen into disuse or have taken on a dramatically different meaning. See *Statenvertaling* Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, *Verklarende woordenlijst bij de Statenvertaling* (2011). Examples of Scriptural and theological words used from the pulpit but rarely comprehended by (not acquainted) hearers see Rahner "Demythologization and the Sermon," in Rahner (ed.), *The Renewal of Preaching,* 22, 25, 26.

[6] Arie van der Knijff, *Bevindelijk preken. Een empirisch-homiletisch onderzoek naar de bevinding in de prediking binnen de Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Apeldoorn: Labarum Academic, 2019). Knijff's evaluation of sermons preached in the Netherlands Reformed Congregations have the following features, "a high intertextuality, the use of special vocabulary, a pastoral-psychological approach to the audience, and a critical attitude towards society's development" (403).

Church."[7] These "insights," include reminders that, the homily is part of the liturgy;[8] that, "all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture;"[9] and that, "preaching is often very difficult in the circumstances of the modern world. In order that it might more effectively move men's minds, the word of God ought not to be explained in a general and abstract way, but rather by applying the lasting truth of the Gospel to the particular circumstances of life."[10] *The Homiletic Directory*, therefore, alludes what preaching is *not*, and what it should be. Concerning the former, "the sermon was often a moral or doctrinal instruction,"[11] which should be avoided, and a homily "is not a sermon on an abstract topic," nor "simply an exercise in biblical exegesis," nor "the preacher's personal witness."[12] The American Catholic bishops remind preachers that

> generic and abstract homilies which obscure the directness of God's word should be avoided, as well as useless digressions which risk drawing greater attention to the preacher than to the heart

[7] *The Homiletic Directory*, no. 3. The *Homiletic Directory* builds, expands, and explains previous statements and initiatives such as *Dei Verbum* (1965), *Presbyterorum ordinis* (1965), *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975), Introduction (*Præmium*) of the *Ordo Lectionum Missæ* (1981), *Inspiration of the Bible in the Church* (1993), *The Priest and the Third Millennium* (1999), *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (2002), *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), *Sacramentum caritatis* (2007), *Verbum Domini* (2010), and *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). These documents can be found on http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/it.html, see for example, Apostolic Exhortations, and have been accessed between December 15, 2019, and January 28, 2020.

[8] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1962). Cf. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html. See for commentary, *Fulfilled in your Hearing. The Homily in the Sunday Assembly* Washington D.C: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1982); Stephen DeLeers, *Written Text Becomes Living Word: The Vision and Practice of Sunday Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004).

[9] *Dei Verbum* (1965), [21]. Cf. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html. This is reinstated in *Inspiration of the Bible in the Church* (1993, [4.C.3], "the ministry of *preaching*, which should draw from the ancient texts spiritual sustenance adapted to the present needs of the Christian community… "the *homily* which follows the proclamation of the word of God." Cf. https://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm.

[10] *Presbyterorum ordinis* (1965), [4]. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html.

[11] *The Homiletic Directory*, no. 1.

[12] *The Homiletic Directory*, no.6.

> of the Gospel message. The faithful should be able to perceive clearly that the preacher has a compelling desire to present Christ, who must stand at the center of every homily. For this reason, preachers need to be in close and constant contact with the sacred text; they should prepare for the homily by meditation and prayer.[13]

The papal warning concerning preaching that is "purely moralistic, doctrinaire, or simply a lecture on biblical exegesis" is that it "detracts from the heart-to-heart communication which should take place in the homily."[14] Given the importance of the Word of God, "the quality of homilies needs to be improved."[15] Congar complained before that hearers, "find the doctrine offered to them from the pulpit out of touch with their personal needs and their own spontaneous questions…and miss a life-giving response to the questions of the people as well as nourishment for their hearts."[16] This demands a transcendent speaking but also a translational directness whereby secular language transforms to convey sacred language ("how") concerning the enduring content of Scripture ("what"). Such communication requires a serious preparation of reading and preaching Scripture, being theologically attuned, and listening as the world listens.[17] Karl Rahner thus advocates the "demythologization" of the sermon,[18] observing that "many leave the Church because the language flowing from the pulpit has no meaning to them; it has no connection with their own

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[13] *Verbum Domini* (2010), no. 59. Cf. *Preaching the Mystery of Faith,* 29, 33.

[14] *The Homiletic Directory*, no.6.

[15] *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), np. 46.

[16] Cf. Yves Congar, "Pour une liturgie et une predication 'reelles'," *La Maison-Dieu* (1948) 16: 75–87.

[17] Carrell, for example, points out that twenty percent of Catholic preachers in contrast with fifty percent of Protestant clergy see the importance of sermon preparation. Lori Carrell, *The Great American Sermon* (Phoenix: Mainstay Church Resources, 1999), 119, 139.

[18] Karl Rahner (ed.), *The Renewal of Preaching. Theory and Practice*, Concilium theology in the age of renewal vol. 33 (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), 20–38. See also Willard J. Jabush, "An Exploration of the Crisis and New Approaches in Contemporary Catholic Preaching" (Evanston: PhD diss. Northwestern University, 1968), 1.

life and simply bypasses many threatening and unavoidable issues."[19] This is echoed by the American bishops: "tepid or poorly prepared homilies is often cited as a cause for discouragement on the part of laity and even leading some to turn away from the Church."[20] The proclamation, as such, remains in the abstract and is therefore alien to the reality of life (*Dasein*) and the experience of living in a pluralistic and desacralized society estranged of God, Christ, and church. The hearer experiences a cognitive dissonance—tensions of unrealized Christian principles, and conflicting content in ones' consciousness. The question arises, Are theologically and homiletically trained preachers able to find a way of saying something credible to the "ordinary people" who do not speak theology but who know intuitively as they listen? Is the sermon not often "characterized by dogmatizing, by boasting of formal and doctrinaire authority, by moralizing that [is] frequently arrogant and [appears] pharisaical."[21] Moreover, "if a homilist conveys merely…his personal experience, he may have spoken accurately and even helpfully, but he has not yet spoken the Gospel, which ultimately must focus on the person of Jesus and the dynamic power of his mission to the world."[22] The pulpit, furthermore, should not be a place for the discussion of theological problems—the sermon is gospel proclamation (*kerygma*).

The post-Vatican II attention to the revitalization of preaching, therefore, emphasizes that the homily should be "delivered in a context of prayer, and it should be composed in a context of prayer."[23] The homily is part of the liturgy, and "a discourse [on the basis of the

[19] Rahner in preface, Rahner (ed.), *The Renewal of Preaching,* 1.

[20] *Preaching the Mystery of Faith,* 2.

[21] Rahner in preface, Rahner (ed.), *The Renewal of Preaching,* 1.

[22] *Preaching the Mystery of Faith,* 11.

[23] *The Homiletic Directory*, no. 26. Carrell suggest that "the homilist preaches a message that is iconic as a window into God," which first step is "prayer." Cf. Lori Carrell, *The Great American Sermon* (Phoenix:

sacred text] about the mysteries of faith and the standards of Christian life," delivered "in a way suited to the particular needs of the listeners."[24] It is "essential, however…that the preacher makes the Word of God central to his *own* spiritual life,"[25] letting himself "be penetrated by that word which will also penetrate others, for it is a living and active word" (*Evangelii Gaudium).*[26] As such, the sermon is, "born of meditation,"[27] the dialogue between God and his people that leads "to sacramental communion."[28] Thus, the Catholic renewal of preaching accentuates the importance of sermon preparation in the context of prayer (*oratio*) and the personal internalization of the reading of Scripture (*lectio*)—bringing the preacher to an experiential moment and keeping him from being "an empty preacher of the word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly," in the words of Augustine.[29] Accordingly, the *Lectio Divina* "recommends itself to the preacher as a way to meditate on the biblical readings and liturgical texts in a prayerful spirit when preparing his homily. The dynamic of *Lectio Divina* also offers a fruitful paradigm for an understanding of the role of the homily in the liturgy and how this affects the process of preparation."[30] The homily, then, is a meeting point of "sacramental communion"—an experiential connecting moment between the pulpit and the

Mainstay Church Resources, 1999), 130.

[24] *The Homiletic Directory*, no.11.

[25] *The Homiletic Directory*, no. 3. Emphasis mine.

[26] *Evangelii Gaudium,* no. 150.

[27] *Verbum Domini*, no. 7.

[28] See for example, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), *Sacramentum caritatis* (2007), and *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). Cf. http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

[29] *The Homiletic Directory*, no. 26. Cf. *Patrologia Latina*, 38:966. *Sermon* 179, 1.

[30] *The Homiletic Directory,* no. 28.

pew,[31] and "a privileged occasion for an encounter with the Lord."[32] As such, Morneau suggests, preaching is "a spiritual exercise."[33]

The Protestant Tradition

Restricting our survey of Protestant reflections on preaching to the Reformed tradition,[34] a similar concern and attention to the experiential character of the preacher and preaching can be noted in parallel to the post-Vatican II tradition.

Contra Schleiermacher and others, Karl Barth suggests that "the concept of preaching cannot be fixed on the basis of experience"—that is, a subjective moment of feeling—but "is a theological concept which arises in the faith that can only point to the divine reality."[35] As such, Barth defines preaching in two ways,

> Preaching is the Word of God which he himself speaks [*Deus loquitur*], claiming for the purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words that are relevant to contemporaries by those who are called to do this in the church…

and,

[31] Bellinger, *Connecting Pulpit and Pew*. The bond between Word and Sacrament, preaching and Eucharist, is unmistakably present in the Catholic effort of revitalized preaching. Cf. *The Homiletic Directory,* no. 4, "the Eucharist is inseparable from the Word of God"…"the bond between the table of the Word and the table of the altar;" Ibid., 14, "suggests how the members of the community, transformed by the Eucharist, can carry the Gospel into the world in their daily lives."

[32] *Verbum Domini* (2010), no. 60.

[33] Robert F. Morneau, "Preaching as a Spiritual Exercise," Edwards Foley (ed.), *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, 3–13.

[34] See for an overview of developments in homiletics in Germany and The Netherlands from ca. 1965 onwards, Jos Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus. De meditatie en het preekproces* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok Kampen, 2000), chapter 2.

[35] Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Donald E. Daniels (trans.) (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 46. See on Barth's homiletics, for example, Angela Dienhart Hancock, *Karl Barth's Emergency Homilietic: 1932–1933 A Summons to Prophetic Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012); William H. Willimon, *Conversations with Barth on Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

> Preaching is the attempt enjoined upon the church to serve God's own Word, though one is called thereto, by expounding a biblical text in human words and making it relevant to contemporaries in intimation of what they have to hear from God Himself.[36]

This twofold approach of what preaching is rests, in part, on Barth's doctrine of revelation, in which God is "both the Subject and Object, and the link between the two,"[37] and as such is interconnected to Barth's articulation of the threefold Word: revealed, written, and proclaimed (or as kerygmatic in form). For Barth, therefore, a preacher does "not talk *about* scripture but *from* it."[38] While this thought is commendable in a postmodern and secular era with its devaluation of the authority of Scripture, at the same time Barth's view of Scripture as a witness of revelation rather than revelation itself—that Scripture *becomes* God's Word in the transitional moment or event from the pulpit to pew—has not gone unchallenged.[39] This marked moment of revelation, for Barth, is no break of the "totality" of a sermon, as it is "both the explication and the application of the text."[40] Continuities and discontinuities with the classical Reformed tradition of preaching mark Barth's thoughts on homiletics. While the former is concerned with the transmission of (divine) knowledge or propositions, the neo-orthodoxy theologian was motivated by mediation. In contrast with the Reformed tradition, Barth understood the task of preaching not as speaking the Word of God but pointing to

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[36] Barth, *Homiletics*, 44.

[37] Barth, *Homiletics*, 47.

[38] Barth, *Homiletics*, 49.

[39] See for example, Albert Mohler, "Barth's Homiletics deals with theory and practice of preaching, *Preaching,*" (accessed January 28, 2020), https://www.preaching.com/book-reviews/barths-homiletics-deals-with-theory-and-practice-of-preaching/.

[40] Barth, *Homiletics*, 120.

God's Word, as God is the object and subject and the mediation between the two,[41] while in agreement with the Reformed tradition the Word of God is spoken as (propositional) truth. Barth's kerygmatic framework, however, may not have gained promise but may have been a prelude, due to the rise of the New Homiletic, an emerging Protestant paradigm for preaching.

The rise of the New Homiletic is a turning point or major shift in the longstanding tradition of Christian and Protestant preaching and is distinct from classic homiletics, dating back to Augustine. The classic model, merging the biblical kerygma with Greco-Roman rhetoric and oratory, found its apex in the early modern era with the publication of many homiletical manuals.[42] The "New Homiletic" arose in the late twentieth century in response to

[41] Cf. Jantine Nierop, "What should we? What can we?" Rereading Karl Barth's self-dialogue on preaching," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* (2019) 5.1: 111–122, particularly the section on "Homiletics. The Nature of a Preparation for Preaching" (117).

[42] Catholic sources include, Diego Valadés, *Rhetorica christiana: ad concionandi et orandi vsvm accommodata, vtrivsq facvltatis exemplis svo loco insertis; qvae qvidem ex Indorvm maximè deprompta svnt historiis. Vnde praeter doctrinam, svma qvoqve delectatio comparabitvr* (Perugia: Petrumiacobum Petrutium, 1579); Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae, sivè, de ratione concionandi* (Colongne: Birckmannica, 1582) 139–174; Juan de Jesús Maria, *Ars Concionandi Compendio Script*a (Cologne: Joanne, Crithium, 1610); Diego Pérez de Valdivia, *De sacra ratione concionandi* (Barcelona: Petru Mail, 1588); Diego de Estella, *De modo concionandi liber* (Cologne: Arnold Mylij, 1586), 1–80; Agostino Valiero, *De rhetorica ecclesiastica, sive de modo concionandi, libri tres. Unà cum tribus praelectionibus eiusdem, & pulcherrima ecclesiasticae huius rhetoricae synopsi* (Cologne: Gervinum Calenium, & haeredes Quentelios, 1575). Aurelius Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana, libri IV* (for example, Leipzig, 1520).

Reformed sources include William Perkins, *Prophetica, sive de Sacra et unica ratione concionandi tractatis* (Cambridge: Johannis Legate, 1592); Ibid., *The Arte of Prophecying or Treatise concerning the sacred and onely true manner and method of Preaching* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1607); Lucas Trelcatius Jr*., Ecclesiastes sive Methodus & ratio formandi sacras Conciones, Opuscula Theologica Omnia* (Leiden 1614), 392–428, John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes, Or, A Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching as it falls under the Rules of Art* (London: Printed by M.F. for Samuel Gellibrand, 1646); Samuel Maresius, *Systhema theologiae* (Groningen: Franciscus Bronchorst, 1645), 615–623, *Brevis Methodus Sacrarum Concionus ad populum habendarum*; William Chappell, *Methodus concionandi* (London: M.F. sumptibus Timoth. Garthwaite, 1648); Ibid., *The preacher, or the art and method of preaching: shewing the most ample directions and rules for invention, method, expression, and books whereby a minister may be furnished with such helps as may make him a useful laborer in the Lords vineyard* (London: M.F. sumptibus Timoth. Garthwaite, 1648; Johannes Martinus, *Praxeos populariter concionandi rudimenta, quæ exhibent præcepta, imprimis de modo analysin, observationes & applicationes genuinè* (Groningen: Franciscus Bronchorstius, 1657); Johannes Hoornbeeck, *Disputationis Theologicæ De Ratione Concionandi* (Utrecht: Johannis à Noortdyck, 1645–26); Gisbertus Voetius, *De publica Verbi Divini Tractatione,* as found in *Politicæ Ecclesiasticæ* (Amsterdam: Joannis à Waeberge, 1663), 606–631; David Knibbe, *Manuductio ad oratoriam sacram* (Leiden,: J. Luchtmans, 1675); Guilielmus Saldenus, *Concionator sacer, sive de concionibus ecclesiasticis* (The Hague: Willem Eyckmans, 1678); Petrus van Mastricht, *De Optima Concionandi Methodo παραλειπόμενα In usum Theologiae Theoretico-Practicae Qua*

changes in the culture, communication, and the church. Reacting against propositional preaching, representatives and theorists of the New Homiletic stressed the need for "biblical preaching" which for them meant dialogical preaching, narrative preaching, and inductive preaching.[43] Furthermore, Fred Craddock proposed the inversion of the deductive approach of preaching into an inductive approach, as well as the creation of listener experience, suggesting, furthermore, that a sermon adhere to the form and genre of a biblical passage.[44] Here, the "old homiletic" originating from Scripture—beginning with "Thus says the Lord"—is contrasted with the New Homiletic, which starts with the needs of the hearers. The former aims for instruction, while the latter is concerned with meeting the pastoral needs of the listener through problem-solution "movements" rather than (three) points in the homily.[45] The New Homiletic, according to Gibson, is rooted in the new hermeneutics, particularly as it

Duabus Disputationibus (Utrecht: Meinardi à Dreunen, 1681). Note, these Catholic and Reformed sources are discussed in Adriaan C. Neele, *Before Jonathan Edwards. Sources of New England Theology* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[43] Elizabeth Achtmeier, *Creative Preaching* (Nashville: Abington, 1980); Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (1987); Richard L. Eslinger, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletical Method* (Parthenon Press, TN, 1987); Donald E. Gowan, *Reclaiming the Old Testament for the Christian Pulpit* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980); Ralph L. Lewis, Gregg Lewis, *Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1983); Charles L. Rice, *Preaching the Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot. The Sermons as Narrative Art Form* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980; expanded edition, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

[44] Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985); O. Wesley Allen Jr., "The Pillars of the New Homiletic," O. Wesley Allen Jr. (ed.) *Renewed Homiletics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2010), 1–18; Charles Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination: The Preacher and Contemporary Literature* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1970); Ibid., *Preaching the Story*; Ibid., *The Embodied Word: Preaching as Art,* 1991); Henry H. Mitchell, Celebration and Experience in Preaching (Nashville: Abington Press, 1991); Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (2001).

[45] See for example, T. Pleizier, *Religious Involvement in Hearing Sermons: A Grounded Theory Study in Empirical Homiletics* (Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers, 2010); H.J.C. Pieterse, "Grounded theory approach in sermon analysis of sermons on poverty and directed at the poor as listeners," *Acta Theologica* (2010) 30 (2): 113–129; R.J. Allen, "The turn to the listener: A selective review of a recent trend in preaching," *Encounter* (2003) 64(2): 167–196; M.A Mulligan, D.Turner-Sharazz, D.O. Wilhelm, and R.J. Allen, *Believing in preaching: What listeners hear in sermons* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005); G. Immink, "Homiletics: The current debate," *International Journal of Practical Theology* (2004) 8: 89–121; T.G. Long, "And how shall they hear? The listener in contemporary preaching," T.G. Long, G.R. O'Day (eds.), *Listening to the word: Studies in honor of Fred B. Craddock* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 167–188.

relates to language.[46] Rudolf Bultmann appropriated Martin Heidegger's existentialist philosophy for biblical hermeneutics, which was extended by Ernst Fuchs and Gerard Ebeling who viewed the Word as word event instead of revelation.[47] This "language event" (*Sprachereignis*) constructed the meaning and reality "in which faith first entered into language," and so faith became "available as an existential possibility (*Möglichkeit*) within language, the 'house of being.'"[48] The New Hermeneutic, Wesley Allen Jr. explains, "argues that proper interpretation of Scripture requires that one be existentially invested to allow the Word to act upon you. Not only do interpreters ask questions of the text, the text asks questions of the interpreter." For the preacher, preaching, and the people in the pew, the implications of this hermeneutic are significant, as Allen Jr., continues: "To read Scripture as a depository of content misses the point. To read Scripture truly is to have an experience of, an encounter with, the Word of God which demands that the reader make a decision for authentic existence." [49]

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[46] Scott M. Gibson, "Critique of the New Homiletic," Haddon Robinson, Craig B. Larson (eds.), *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching. A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), "The new homiletic has its roots in the hermeneutical work of Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs. For them, the alleged separation between the theology of the pulpit and the people in the pews was a threat to preaching…. How may its words reach through the preacher's own understanding so that when they are repeated, they will be the listener's words? How may the Word of God become a living word which is heard anew?" For an expanded essay of this chapter see Scott M. Gibson, "Defining the New Homiletic," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* (2005) 5.1:19–28.

[47] D. Congdon, "Is Bultmann a Heideggerian theologian?" *Scottish Journal of Theology,* (2017) 70.1:19–38; John Macquarie, *An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger And Bultmann* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955); Ernst Fuchs, *Hermeneutik* (Bad Cannstatt: Müllerschön, 1954); Ibid., *Marburger* Hermeneutik (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck) 1968); J. M. Robinson and J.B.Cobb (eds.), *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row,1964); Ky-Chun So Hooks, *Ebeling: History of Hermeneutics and New Hermeneutics* (Seoul: Salim: 2006); Gerard Ebeling, *Einführung in theologische Sprachlehre* (Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr, 1971).

[48] Allen Jr., "The Pillars of the New Homiletic," Allen Jr. (ed.) *Renewed Homiletics*, 5. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus* Frankfurt A.M: V. Klostermann, 1949); Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings: Nine Key Essays, plus the Introduction to* Being and Time*,* David Farrell Krell (trans.) (London: Routledge, 1978), 208.

[49] Allen Jr., "The Pillars of the New Homiletic," Allen Jr. (ed.) *Renewed Homiletics* 6.

New Homiletics, then, in summary, marks a shift from or reaction against classical, rhetorical, but often propositional homiletics as practiced for centuries in the Christian tradition. The exploration of the biblical text and its meaning aims for a transformative event: a listener experience.

Preaching, Experience, and Buttrick

Within the scholarship of New Homiletics, two aspects deserve further consideration: the attention to "experience" and the work of David Buttrick. The discussion that follows first evaluates "experience" as understood in relation to (a) Catholic preaching, (b) narrative preaching, and (c) Reformed experiential preaching and secondly appraises Buttrick's ground-breaking work *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*—a pivotal work in homiletic scholarship.

Catholic Preaching

In broad strokes, preaching in the mid-twentieth century has undergone a major change in the mainline Protestant churches and, with the outcome of Vatican II, the Catholic church.[50] Catholic preaching is cognitive-propositional and experiential—a "contemplation and study" and "the sure gift of truth…through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities."[51]

[50] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) §52, "By means of the homily, the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year. The homily is strongly recommended since it forms part of the liturgy itself…It should not be omitted except for a serious reason"; *Presbyterorum Ordinis: The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests,* § 4: "The preaching of the word is required for the sacramental ministry itself, since the sacraments are sacraments of faith, which is born of the word and is nourished by it. This is especially true of the liturgy of the word within the celebration of Mass where there is an indivisible unity between the proclamation of the Lord's death and resurrection, the response of the hearers and the offering itself by which Christ confirmed the new covenant in his blood. In this offering the faithful share both by their prayer and by the reception of the sacrament."

[51] The handing on of Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, II.8: "This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her."

The preaching of the Word, however, is inseparable from the celebration of the Eucharist—the visible experience of the Word, Christ. It is the "paschal mystery that informs human experience" (Luke 24:13–35).[52] The experiential character of the sermon addresses "the real questions of human experience," and "in light of the encounter on the road to Emmaus, an essential element of all good preaching is evident: reflecting on our personal and collective experience in the light of the Paschal Mystery." Thus, preaching comes through the Word (audible), which ultimately culminates in the Sacrament (visible), is informed by cognitive-proposition and experience, and is offered to both the individual and communal life.

Regarding the mainline Protestant churches, neo-orthodox preaching, with a focus on doctrinal content, shifted to narrative preaching, with attention to the hearer-experience.[53] Amid these homiletical transformations, Reformed preaching, however, remained fairly static, continuing to give attention to the biblical-exegetical, doctrinal exposition and practical application of the Word, a call to repentance and faith, and moral living (sanctification).[54] Relevant for this study is the degree of commonality between narrative preaching, with its appropriation of the New Hermeneutic, among other influences, and Reformed experiential preaching, with its attention to the human experience, though from a different perspective. Therefore, a further, succinct review of both approaches is warranted.

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[52] *Preaching the Mystery of Faith,* 14–16.

[53] This is particular applicable for American Protestant mainline churches. H. Grady David, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 157: "[W]e preachers forget that the gospel itself is for the most part a simple narrative of persons, places, happenings, and conversations. It is not a verbal exposition of general ideas. Nine-tenth of our preaching is verbal exposition and argument, but not one tenth of the gospel is exposition. Its ideas are mainly in the form of a story told." The rise of American evangelicalism with its primarily expository preaching.

[54] Although the worship experience may differ with confessional Presbyterian or Reformed churches the rise of American evangelicalism has a similar attention with its primarily expository preaching.

Narrative Preaching

Representative study on narrative preaching is found in the work of Charles Rice, Fred Craddock, and David Buttrick. These "New Homileticians" with others, such as Eugene Lowry, Morris Niedenthal, David Randolph, and Edmund Steimle, proposed narrative preaching in contrast to cognitive and propositional, doctrinal or truth-oriented sermons, either by narrating a story in the sermon or by modeling the sermon in a narrative form.[55] The term "narrative preaching" is nuanced by Randolph to suggest that the story is the point, that a preacher should show but not tell; in Rice "narrative" underscores the significance of using extrabiblical narratives in preaching; in Cradock's view, inductive sermons develop like a good story, moving *from* examples *to* a thesis, taking the congregation through an encounter with the text; in the "blending" approach of Steimle, "narrative" entails weaving together the biblical narrative and one's own story; and Lowry's work focuses on the narrative, sermonic plot.[56] Despite the nuances, a common thread in narrative preaching is human experience, the "'experiential event' evoked by the sermon."[57] Campbell notes five contributions of these

[55] These two approaches are fairly broad, and differentiation (narrative hermeneutics, narrative semantics, narrative enculturation, narrative worldview) is shown in John McClure, "Narrative and Preaching: Sorting It All out," *Journal for Preachers* (1991), 15:24–29.

[56] Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1979, 2001 4th edition); Ibid., *Overhearing the Gospel* (revised and expanded edition Chalice Press, 2002); David Randolph, *The Renewal of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969); Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (2001); Ibid., *Doing Time in the Pulpit: The Relationship Between Narrative and Preaching (Nashville, TN:* Abingdon Press, 1989); Ibid., *The Homiletic Beat: Why All Sermons Are Narrative (Nashville, TN:* Abingdon Press, 2012); Morris Niedenthal, Edmund Steimle, Charles L. Rice, *Preaching the Story* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1980; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003); Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination*. See also, Mike Graves, *The Story of Narrative Preaching: Experience and Exposition: A Narrative* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015); Austin B. Tucker, *The Preacher as Storyteller. The Power of Narrative in the Pulpit* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008); Mike Graves, David J. Schlafer (eds.), *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching*: Essays in Honor of Eugene L. Lowry (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008); Richard L. Eslinger, *The Web of Preachin*g: *New Options In Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 2002).

[57] Charles L. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus. The New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997; reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 120. See also, Kees van Dusseldorp, *Preken tussen de verhalen. Een homiletische doordenking van narrativiteit* (Utrecht: Kok, 2012); *Michael Giebel, Predigt zwischen Kerygma und Kunst. Fundamentalhomiletische Überlegungen zu den*

narrative homileticians: a turn from Scripture in favor of topical sermons; enriched forms of preaching; supplementing or replacing the traditional, deductive sermon structure including three-points and application with renewed attention to the indicative nature of the gospel; the consideration given to head and heart, mind, will and affections; and finally, concern for the role of imagination. "Despite these contributions," Campbell points out (or, perhaps, thanks to them), the mainline Protestant churches in which such narrative preaching takes place are declining, not to mention their lack of theological reflection and failure to connect with the culture.[58] The interest of this study with regard to narrative preaching, however, is on the aspect of human experience or the experiential moment in the sermon.

The focus of attention on the experiential moment in the narrative sermon lies in the attention of the listener. Not the intellect, but rather the individual experience of the hearer, is emphasized. "At *best*, propositional statements viewed formally," Lowry argues, "can be no more than dead skeletons of what once was lived experience…. At *worst*, propositional thought by its very nature distorts and even reforms the experiential meaning so that it is scarcely recognizable."[59] The revelatory, experiential, and transforming event is created through the "homiletic plot" for Lowry.[60] The form and focus of the sermon are outlined as a plot that orders the experience, not the understanding, of the gospel. Rice echoes "experience" as central to the sermon, and values a redirecting of "theology away from propositional

Herausforderungen der Homiletik in der Postmoderne (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

[58] Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 121.

[59] Eugene L. Lowry*, Doing Time in the Pulpit: The Relationship Between Narrative and Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 79–80. See for a critical evaluation of Lowry's theory, C.J.H. Venter, "Ordering ideas or ordering experience? E.L. Lowry's homiletical plot structure—an exploration and evaluation," *In die Skriflig* (2007) 41:1–22.

[60] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (2001), 36.

dogmatism"—that is, away from the biblical text—"toward the realm of human experience."[61] Textual preaching, as propositional didacticism, according to Rice, inhibits an experiential event or moment from happening for the auditor in the sermon.[62] Craddock, concurring for the most part with Rice, extends the argument by advocating a more participatory and open-ended experience for the listener where the language is of contemporary idiom—in words that "create and give meaning to the human experience."[63] Craddock envisions a mutual experience for preacher and listener: "because the particulars of life provide the place of beginning, there is the necessity of a ground of shared experience…. these common experiences…are for the indictive method essential to the preaching experience."[64] The God of the biblical text, then, is primarily known through the experience, and not by an understanding anchored in the Word and accompanied by the Spirit. As Campbell observes, "the experiential focus of contemporary narrative homiletics can result in a theological relationalism that makes God too dependent on immediate human experience"[65]—thus an "experiential relationalism" where the hearer's experience determines whether or not one relates to the sermon. The focus in preaching on experience is still prevalent, as Cilliers

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[61] Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination*, 64. Here, Rice follows the experience theory of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Paul Tillich.

[62] Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination*, 61–63. See also for such individual experiential-event model, John C. Holbert, *Preaching Old Testament: Proclamation and Narrative in the Hebrew Bible (*Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991).

[63] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 34, 42. For an extensive review of Craddock's position see Charles L. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus. The New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997; reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 125–135.

[64] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 58.

[65] Charles L. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus. The New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997; reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 142. Campbell notes that experiential narrative preaching has theologically, linguistically, and communally limitation. Theologically, making "God too depended on immediate human experience"; linguistically, "by linking the notion of the Word-event to human experience, contemporary narrative homileticians understand the language of preaching too narrowly (143); communally, because of the limited "attention that contemporary narrative homileticians have given to the role of preaching in building up the community of faith" (143–144).

recently attests,[66] "although many classical works on preaching, especially within the Reformed tradition would take as point of departure the question of understanding, that is, how to do an exegesis of a biblical text in such a manner that it makes sense (is understandable) to present-day listeners of sermons." His homiletic work is an aesthetical approach that "does not exclude the question of intelligibility, but places it within aesthetical frameworks, such as our multi-sensing of space and time."[67] Appraising Cilliers's work, Thomas G. Long notes that he "is clearly nudging us away from message-centered preaching toward an experiential approach."[68] Cilliers's concern is the understandability of the sermon by contemporary listeners, which turns out to be based less on the text but more on "a new understanding and experience of time and space which we could describe as the *event of Kairos within the strange space of grace*."[69] "Experience," for Cilliers, is very much a horizontal and human experience within or outside the space of worship where preaching enters into one's sensory experiences—"i.e., preaching as hearing, as seeing, as touching, as tasting, as smelling, etc."[70] That is not to say that Cilliers does not leave room for the Spirit's work—on the contrary, the experiences occurring in a space, created in preaching, becomes

[66] Johan Cilliers, *Timing Grace: Reflections on the Temporality of Preaching* (Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA, 2019; Ibid., *A Space for Grace: Towards an Aesthetics of Preaching* (Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA, 2016); Ibid., "Die optiek van homiletiek: Prediking as om-raming van perspektief," *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* (2013) 53. 10.5952/53–3–4–249; Ibid., "Between fragments and fullness: Worshipping in the in-between spaces of Africa," *HTS Theological Studies* (2012) 69. 1–6. 10.4102/hts. v69i2.1296.

[67] Johan Cilliers, "Between dwellings and doors: spatial perspectives on preaching," *HTS Theological Studies* (2017), 73(2): a3858, doi:10.4102/hts.v73i2.3858.

[68] Thomas G. Long, "Review A Space for Grace: *Towards an Aesthetics of Preaching*," *Acta Theologica* (2017) 37 (2): 216–219. Long is the Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, and leading American homiletician. Long notes in the review that Cilliers's æsthetic approach resonates strongly with the liturgical work of Don E. Salier, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

[69] Johan Cilliers*, A Space for Grace,* 159. Italics in the original.

[70] Cilliers*, A Space for Grace*, preface.

"a space for grace, a neighborhood of and for imagination, a *chora* of the Spirit."[71] Cilliers work, then, can be placed in the wider context of the New Homiletics with attention to hearer-experience—an emphasis that is not going away anytime soon, as O. Wesley Allen Jr. recently assessed:

> Given that the movement has been around for nearly forty years, given the rise of postmodernity, and given the decline of the mainline church, the New Homiletic is experiencing a midlife crisis of sorts. Many people are looking for the next major move in preaching. But if the current homiletical literature is an appropriate measure, it is not likely that such a move will be an abandonment of the New Homiletic so much as it will be an extension and adaptation of it.[72]

In conclusion, narrative preaching as represented in the works reviewed is a departure from the long-held Christian tradition of cognitive-propositional homiletics. The attention to preaching an experience of the gospel over or in the place of propositional religious truth is thereby developed and argued primarily from the listener's perspective. A departure,

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[71] Cilliers*, A Space for Grace,* 31. Italics in the original. Cilliers's work attest of an attempt of falling within the Reformed tradition of preaching, while at the same time offers creative insights, which in my estimation are formed within an isolated South African context though with a fractured past and present. It is therefore not always clear where Cilliers is heading with his homiletics project. Long critical appraisal notes that one who "is seeking a detailed and specific homiletic manual, one will be disappointed." Cf. Thomas G. Long, "Review A Space for Grace: *Towards an Aesthetics of Preaching*," Acta Theologica (2017) 37 (2):218. Positive appraisal of Cilliers take place primarily within the South African academic community. See for example, W. Wessels, "Review. *Timing Grace: Reflections on the Temporality of Preaching*," *Acta Theologica* (2020) 40(1):162, I want to conclude with three appreciations for *Timing Grace*. First, I appreciate that Cilliers so adequately reminds us of our historical roots, in which we find excellent and well-timed sermons. Secondly, I appreciate that Cilliers takes on contextual matters in such an excellent and well-phrased manner. Thirdly, I appreciate the sermons that Cilliers includes at the end of each chapter. In recent years, very few, if any, South African sermons have been published, and I am grateful for Cilliers' contribution." See also, J. Janse Van Rensburg, "Narrative Preaching: Theory and Praxis of a New Way of Preaching," *Acta Theologica* (2010), 23.2.:11–33.

[72] Allen Jr., *The Renewed Homiletic*, 18. This assessment seems most recently confirmed by David Schnasa Jacobsen, "Promissory Narration: Toward a Revised Narrative Homiletic in an Age of Identities," *Homiletic* (2020) 45.1:4–12; Dave Bland, *Stephen Farris, So, Tell Me A Story: The Art of Storytelling for Preaching and Teaching* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018). *Contra* this assessment is also the recent work of Protestant evangelical (reformed) homileticians such as, Bryan Chapell, Abraham Kuruvilla, Kenneth Langley, and Paul Scott Wilson. Cf. Scott M. Gibson and Matthew D. Kim (eds.), *Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

furthermore, from Word-centered preaching is a cultural accommodation that emphasizes imagery (the sermon as storytelling) that (somewhat redundantly) evokes human experiences that are already present. Finally, the hermeneutic (New Hermeneutics) underlying the New Homiletics (which encompasses narrative preaching) differs from classic biblical hermeneutical concerns, such as Revelation, Scripture, the biblical text, and spiritual meaning or experience.

Reformed Experiential Preaching

Representative for consideration of Reformed experiential preaching is the recent work Joel R. Beeke,[73] who sees the approach as "not merely informative, imparting knowledge about the Bible and theology…emotional, warming hearts and producing strong feelings…moralistic, instructing and exhorting in what is right and wrong." In other words, such preaching is more than cognitive-propositional, though "these elements are present in good preaching."[74] Beeke not only offers a historically substantiated description of "experience" but also offers a working definition: "Reformed experiential preaching is preaching that applies the truth of God to the hearts of people to show how things ought to go, do go, and ultimately will go in the Christian's experience with respect to God and his neighbors."[75] The subjective Christian's experience, then, is tested by the standard of

[73] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*. Note, Beeke's description of "experiential preaching" is unique in recent homiletic reflections, though the term "experiential" is not used by other homileticians it resonates with Beeke's work. See for example, Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994; 2nd ed. 2005, 3rd ed. 2018).

[74] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 23–24.

[75] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 41. The historical roots of "experience" in relationship to preaching is found, according to Beeke in the work of John Calvin and William Perkins. Cf. Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 24–25, and 47–51. Furthermore, Part II (pp. 97–350) of Beeke's *magnum opus* on preaching offers a grand historical overview and affirmation of "Reformed experiential preaching" from the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation to the twentieth century preachers such as Gerard Wisse (1873–1957) and Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981). This working definition resonates with a broader and Dutch Reformed context as described in Van

objective biblical truth which is preached discriminatorily to believers and non-believers, is applicable to life, and is Trinitarian in character. The human experience, important as it is in narrative preaching, is thus replaced by a particular experience—that is, the spiritual experience of the Christian. The storytelling aspect of the narrative homiletic method is replaced by preaching as a "spiritual exercise of satisfying the appetite of the soul."[76] As such, Reformed experiential preaching resonates more with the Catholic attention to cognitive-propositional understanding and spiritual experience—though the culmination of the Word in the Eucharist is absent—and comports with the attention of New Homiletics on listener experience, but not without qualification. Reformed experiential preaching, according to Beeke, though rooted in the Word, "addresses the whole range of the Christian's experience by preaching through the whole range of Scripture" which resonates with experiences such as misery, deliverance, and gratitude.[77] "When a preacher preaches this way," Beeke asserts, "something resonates from the pulpit into the believer's soul."[78] The attempt to bridge the gap between text and audience, however, should be an ongoing concern for the contemporary preacher, but not merely from a methodological perspective, as suggested by Beeke:

> preaching is not just a homiletic method but a spiritual exercise of satisfying the appetite of the soul. The Scriptures use the language of sense perception to communicate that spiritual realities produce true experiences of the soul, not just mental ideas.[79]

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der Knijff, *Bevindelijk preken,* 109–116.

[76] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 38.

[77] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 35.

[78] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 35.

[79] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 38.

Furthermore, according to Beeke, this experiential preaching "often grows out of the preacher's *own* experience of Christ"[80]—a notion remarkably similar to aspects of Catholic preaching, as well. Thus, the "Reformed experiential preacher receives God's Word into his heart and then preaches to the minds, hearts, and lives of his people."[81] It is suggested, then, that this articulation of experiential preaching may bridge the preacher and listener in their shared experience of the Word. Where narrative preaching contains a strong dimension of horizontal human experience, Reformed experiential preaching is marked predominantly by a vertical and spiritual experience of the Christian. That is not to say that narrative preaching leaves no room for the Spirit and spiritual experience or that Reformed experiential preaching is closed to the concerns of daily life in the world.

David Buttrick

The *second* aspect of New Homiletics scholarship under consideration here is the work of David Buttrick as represented in his outstanding study, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*. In it he offers a theoretical perspective on the phenomenology of language—the structure of language in relation to human consciousness.[82] His focus, in particular, is on "what" the audience experiences when a sermon is preached. Although Buttrick does not consider himself a phenomenologist, his work has unmistakable features of a phenomenological

[80] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 39. Emphasis mine.

[81] Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 41.

[82] This point of Buttrick's study has not gone unchallenged. See for example, L. Susan Bond, *Trouble with Jesus: Women, Christology, and Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Chalice Press, 1999). Although Bond stand in continuity with Buttrick, in part, she sees the presupposition of a common ecclesiastical identity and consciousness, which is critical to Buttrick's project as problematic. See also Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen, *Dialogical Preaching: Bakhtin, Otherness and Homiletics* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 92–94; Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching*, 196, "Buttrick frequently refers to the latter elements of a Christian consciousness, those of biblical literary and missional praxis, but does not attend much to the others [i.e., the worldly consciousness]."

approach to preaching and the positive appraisal it has received has been hyperbolic.[83] He observes the ongoing objectivization of Scripture and biblical words in preaching:

> We are now moving out of an age in which rational objectivity was the order of the day in the pulpit discourses. Yet, in sermons, most preachers are third-person observers; they talk *about*. Preachers talk about the Bible age as if it were an object to be analyzed. They talk about grace as if it were something laying around to be looked at.[84]

Instead, the central question in preaching should be "how we want congregations to hear our sermons."[85] Buttrick suggests that the postmodern hearer is better served by "actualities of lived experience" as "preaching does not persuade in the sense of arguing the truth of the gospel; preaching sets the gospel in lived experience, genuine experience, so that truth will be acknowledged."[86] Therefore, Christian preaching is a "bringing out" in view the word whereby the hermeneutical orientation of the introduction of a sermon should focus on the consciousness of a congregation—a "shared consciousness between preacher and audience in which some image or idea may become focal" and "I" and "you" distinctions are avoided.[87] This approach of a "common shared vocabulary" thus advances what many New Homiletic books suggest—"that introductions must begin with people with specific needs or experiences of a congregation."[88] Furthermore, the "hermeneutical consciousness" Buttrick

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[83] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structure* is "The most substantial work on the subject since the nineteenth century…[It] is due to stand as a monumental work in the field of homiletics for the balance of the century." "Unrivaled in our time for its sophistication and comprehensiveness." Cf. Donald K. McKim, "Homiletic: Moves and Structures," *The Reformed Journal* (1988) 38:18–22; "*Homiletic* is the most encyclopedic work in the modern period," Buttrick volume honored as year's best, *Preaching* (1991).

[84] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 55.

[85] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 91.

[86] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 33.

[87] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 92.

[88] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 188, 91.

proposes implies that the introduction of the sermon should "bracket out" the historicity of the biblical text, which otherwise would "make the sermon unbelievable."[89] The focus of this hermeneutical orientation in the sermon introduction, moreover, should eliminate the kind of enumeration "advocated by Augustine," which "introduces time-consciousness."[90] In the remainder of the sermon, the preacher should speak but one language of consciousness, a metaphorical language, which circumvents an "object" and "subject" dichotomy. The metaphorical language is not a language of subjectivity that rejects objectivity, as is noticeable in "pietist preaching that fills pulpits with rehearsals of feeling and odd discussions of inwardness," which "is a theological disaster."[91]

Therefore, the importance of how language functions marks Buttrick's work, showing that the "meaning" of the biblical text is "never objective and rationalistic" but is "formed in consciousness out of the interplay of language and the lived experience."[92] The preacher, for Buttrick, should possess a twofold consciousness, an intentionality—awareness of a field of meaning formed by the text (or lived experience, or theological idea) but also consciousness of a congregation, a collection of people in a particular time, place and cultural moment. Preaching is thus a "peculiar speaking of language," a perceptive language, and "is aimed at communal consciousness, the consciousness of the congregation and preacher."[93] In such preaching there is a two-way direction of intention: text and people, as "our sermons will

[89] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 90.

[90] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 69.

[91] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 56.

[92] Eduard R. Riegert, "Homiletic. Moves and Structure," *Consensus* (1988) 14.1:135.

[93] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 295.

intend a structure of (text) meaning into the consciousness of a congregation."[94] As such, this will bridge "God's past-tense revelation…and people's present-tense situation"[95] while addressing both the "in-church" and "out-church" people.[96] In a *variation sur un thème de Calvin*, Buttrick asserts, "true and sound preaching consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."[97]

The thrust of Buttrick's sermonic method, then, is that preaching is achieved not by a classic homiletic threefold approach— reading the text (exegesis), interpreting the text (exposition), and applying the text (application)—but through a threefold process, preaching in the modes of immediacy (narrative texts, i.e., the scriptural text molds the sermon structure), reflection (non-narrative texts), and praxis (relating experience to the gospel rather than the gospel to experience, in that a human situation is the point of departure rather than a biblical text). A sermon is a sequence of moves, where a "move" is deliberately different than "points" but is rather a "module of language" or "rhetorical unit" of approximately four minutes in length that is designed "to form in [the hearers'] consciousness…as a gestalt of modeling, imaging, affective attitudes, and concept."[98] The shape of a move is "determined in an interaction of theological understanding, an eye for oppositions, and actualities of lived experience."[99] The togetherness of theological reflection and the lived experience of the w/Word or mediation constitutes a move, and "must form as a single understanding in

[94] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 294.

[95] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 114.

[96] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 225.

[97] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 262.

[98] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 28.

[99] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 33.

communal [and imitating] consciousness."[100] Preaching, for Buttrick, is (Barthian) mediation: "it mediates theological meaning to contemporary consciousness."[101] In summary, Buttrick's pivotal contribution in homiletics is suggesting the sermon to be the creation of a co-participating experience of pulpit and pew, and the recovery of a signifying language for preaching.[102] As such, preaching "opens to us salvific new life and discloses the reality of God-toward-us."[103]

Buttrick's work of homiletic architecture did not go unchallenged on the grounds of hermeneutics (for its "New Hermeneutic" methodology)[104] and theology (for its refutation of redemptive history).[105] Moreover, the attention Buttrick gives to the phenomenology of language, in particular to accommodate the hearer, may not constitute a phenomenology of preaching *per se*, specifically as it relates to the preparation of the sermon.

A provisional evaluation

The attention to preaching in the latter part of the twentieth century is noteworthy in the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Most of the Catholic thought in this regard is rather unified as it resonates with and is bound to (*Magisterium*) the post-conciliar reflections of Vatican II.

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[100] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 50.

[101] Riegert, "Homiletic. Moves and Structures," 136.

[102] The importance of language, and hermeneutics of the philosophers (phenomenologists) Paul Ricœur and Hans-George Gadamer comes to mind, here. Cf. Robert Reid, Jeffery Bullock, David Fleer, "Preaching as the Creation of an Experience: The Not-So-Rational Revolution of the New Homiletic," *Journal of Communication & Religion* (1995), 18.1:1–9; Jeffrey Kisner, "Homiletic and Hermeneutic: Buttrick and Gadamer in Dialogue," *Journal of Communication & Religion* (1989), 12.2:10–23.

[103] Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, 451.

[104] Tim Sensing, "An Assessment of Buttrick's Homiletic," *Restoration Quarterly Restoration Quarterly*, (1993) 35.3:175–189; David L. Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads: Homiletics and Biblical Authority," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society,* 43.3 (2000): 489–515.

[105] Stephen Platten, "Homiletic. Moves and Structures," *Sage Journal* (1988), 243–244, "For theological reasons salvation history is refuted."

Protestant thought on preaching, however, is more diverse. Regarding the former, the homily ought to be a spiritual exercise, undergirded by the *Lectio Divina*, while the Protestant tradition is marked by a major transition from the sermon as rooted in classical rhetoric and oratory to preaching as shaped by the New Homiletic. The attention to "experience"—either horizontally oriented (narrative preaching) or vertically dimensioned (Reformed experiential preaching), almost reveals a dichotomy that is potentially bridgeable by contributions of phenomenology, as is to be seen. Buttrick's contribution here is noteworthy considering his attention to phenomenology—though primarily a phenomenology of language whereby the sermon is understood from the perspective of the hearer. Absent from these studies on preaching and homiletics, both Catholic and Protestant, is a philosophical consideration—particularly a phenomenology of preaching. How, then, might preaching be approached and conceived of philosophically?

Preaching: Towards a description

In general, preaching has been defined as a "characteristic of Christianity" purposed for the church "to hear religious instruction and exhortation," and an "integral part of divine worship."[106] Preaching as human speech is much different than a kind of "speech communication that happens to be about God"; it is the "declaration of the gospel."[107] Preaching, therefore, can be defined as the delivery of a sermon or homily being a doctrinal instructive and spiritual edifying discourse based on the Word or words of Scripture. Preaching, furthermore, has various forms, such as expository, textual, topical or thematic,

[106] John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation of Delivery of Sermons* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), iv.

[107] Ian Pitt-Watson, *A Primer for Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 14; P.T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 5.

doctrinal, narrative, or alternative models (problem/solution; need/plan; plan/motivation; deductive/inductive; information/communication).[108] These forms, taken together, may well fall within a rationalistic understanding of communication, i.e., sender-message-receiver.[109] A sermon, then, is a presentation of propositional points, as well as descriptive and prescriptive in nature. The sermonic method moving from *explicatio* to *applicatio*, declaring the Word as "eternal truth" is, moreover, a preaching of abstract argumentation. A "profound gulf is opened up," introducing a sharp dichotomy between exegesis and a theology tending towards a spiritualization of the meaning of the Scriptures.[110] The words of Scripture, the biblical text, is treated in the "then-and-now" and overshadows a consciousness of experiencing the text. Such a hermeneutic results in preaching that treats Scripture as "a repository of eternal truths" and "thus perpetuates the subject-object split and forces excessive reliance on emotionalism and pietism for effectiveness."[111]

In contrast to the attention given to listener experience (New Homiletic),[112] the Catholic and Reformed understanding of the experiential character of the preacher and preaching

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[108] Michael Duduit (ed.), *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 63–134. See also, Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Handbook of Preaching* (Los Angeles: L.I.F.E Bible College, 1983), 24–39; Paul S. Wilson, *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching* (Abingdon Press, 2008). See also, Samuel T. Logan, Jr., "The Phenomenology of Preaching," in Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (ed.), *The Preacher and Preaching. Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1986), 129–160.

[109] See for objections to the nature of such preaching, Buttrick, *Homiletic. Moves and Structures,* 175–177.

[110] *Verbum Domini. Post-Synodical Apostolic Exhortation* (Rome: Vatican, 2010). Cf. http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apostexhortations/documents/hfben-xviexh20100930verbum-domini.html.

[111] Riegert, "Homiletic. Moves and Structures," 135.

[112] Rietveld, "A Survey of the Phenomenological Research of Listening to Preaching," 30–47; Marianne Gaarden, & Marlene R. Lorensen, "Listeners as Authors in Preaching: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives, *Homiletic* (2013) 38.1: 28–45; Pleizier, *Religious Involvement in Hearing Sermons*; Hanneke Schaap-Jonker, *Before the face of God. An Interdisciplinary Study of the Meaning of the Sermon and the Hearer's God Image, Personality and Affective State* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2008), 47–48; Ronald J. Allen, "Listening to Listeners: The Board Reflects Critically on the Study," *Encounter* (2007) 68.3:71; Franciska Stark, *Proeven van de Preek: Een praktisch-theologisch onderzoek naar de preek als Woord van God* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2005), 470;

resonates more with the classical formulation of Aquinas that sees preaching as an act of communicating "the fruits of contemplation" to others—a description of a sermon with which this study agrees.[113] A sermon understood as such is a result of reading, meditating on, and praying over Scripture—or taken together, "contemplation," which is understood as a meditating form of prayer, a transformative appropriation of what is read, a passing beyond the biblical text, image, and concept to an experiential encounter with the Word.[114] This

John S. McClure et al., *Listening to Listeners* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004) 181–82; Lora-Ellen McKinney, *View from the Pew* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson, 2004); Lori Carrell, *The Great American Church Survey* (Wheaton: Mainstay, 2000); Lucy Rose, *Sharing the Word* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997), 89–118; John S. McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 48–58; Hendrik J.C. Pieterse, *Gemeente en prediking* (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1991), 20–34; Karl F. Daiber et al. *Predigt und Horen: Ergbnisse einer Gottesdienstbefragung. Band II: Predigten, Ananlsen und Grundauswertung* (Munchen: Kaiser, 1983), 184, 303–11.89–90, 218–19; Hans van der Geest, *The Impact of Personality in Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 31–49; Johannes G.M. Sterk, *Preek en toehoorders: sociologische exploratie onder katholieke kerkgangers in de Bondsrepubliek Duitsland* (Nijmegen: Instituut voor Toegepaste Sociologie. 1975); Jeffery C. Campbell, "The Role of the Audience in the Preaching Event: A Discussion between Expository Preaching and the New Homiletic" (PhD Diss. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014).

[113] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III, Q. 40, A. 1, Ad 2, "sed vita activa secundum quam aliquis praedicando et docendo contemplata aliis tradit" (that form of active life in which a man, by preaching and teaching, delivers to others the fruits of his contemplation). All references in this study of Thomas Aquinas originate from digital edition of Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, [1920–1935]) as found http://www.logicmuseum.com/wiki/Authors/Thomas_Aquinas/Summa_Theologiae (accessed January 2019–December 2020).

[114] See for various definitions of contemplation Philip Sheldrake (ed.), *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 211, "Religiously contemplation sometimes refers to meditation. But the chief concern here is with contemplation as an intensification of a transforming awareness of divine presence. Contemplation transforms ones' spiritual resources and effects a deeper practice of virtue"; Glen G. Scorgie (ed.), *Dictionary of Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 370, "Contemplation is sometimes used interchangeably with mediation, though there is overlap and interaction between them, they are two distinct forms of spiritual practice. The ancient method of praying Scripture or *lectio divina* indicates that meditation is the second movement and contemplation the culminating fourth movement. Meditation is more mental and cognitive reflection while contemplation is more affective and attentive gratitude…Richard of St. Victor (1111–1173) observed that "meditation investigates, contemplation wonder." Thomas White, an English Puritan, drew a similar distinction using the bridal language of the Song of Songs: "Meditation is like the kindling of fire and contemplation more like the flaming of it when fully kindled. The one is like the spouse seeking Christ and the other like the spouse's enjoying of Christ.""; Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality*: *Forms*, *Foundations*, *Methods,* John Vriend (trans.) (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 342–344. It should be noted, however, that this study limits the definition of contemplation to the following*,* A. Poulain, "Contemplation," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), "The different states of mystical union possess twelve characters. The first two are the most important: First character, the presence felt (By experimental knowledge it is understood that which comes from the object itself and makes it known not only as possible but as existing, and in such and such conditions), and Second character, the interior possession (manifests His presence makes that presence felt in the way of an interior something with which the soul is penetrated; it is a sensation of absorption…of immersion") (accessed June 24, 2020 http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04324b.htm).

contemplation is a lived experience of the living Word (*viva voce* and *Dei verbum*) that is a shared meeting point for the communicator and auditor.[115] As Augustine suggested, "He is a vain preacher of the word of God without, who is not a hearer within."[116] Here, one recognizes the importance of preaching-related themes in various recent studies in phenomenology: r/Revelation, w/Word, hermeneutics, prayer, and liturgy.[117] Such an understanding of sermons makes preaching a part of the practice of *Lectio Divina*. In other words, if a sermon is communicating and sharing "the fruits of contemplation," such a discourse, then, is the culmination of the *lectio, meditatio,* and *oratio* of the Word. The sermon, then, is the result of a transformative, appropriated experience reflecting on Scripture. This understanding, then, advances the basic definition of a sermon or homily as the delivery

[115] See for example*, Dogmatic Constitution on Diving Revelation "Dei Verbum*" (Documents of Vatican II, November 1965); 40th anniversary of the *Dogmatic Constitution on Diving Revelation "Dei Verbum*" (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005); *Angelus* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), "Among the many fruits of this biblical springtime I would like to mention the spread of the ancient practice of *Lectio divina* or "spiritual reading" of Sacred Scripture. It consists in pouring over a biblical text for some time, reading it and rereading it, as it were, "ruminating" on it as the Fathers say and squeezing from it, so to speak, all its "juice," so that it may nourish meditation and contemplation and, like water, succeed in irrigating life itself. One condition for *Lectio divina* is that the mind and heart be illumined by the Holy Spirit, that is, by the same Spirit who inspired the Scriptures, and that they be approached with an attitude of "reverential hearing."

[116] Augustine, *The Confession of St. Augustine* (New York: Airmont Publishing Co., 1969), 78. See also, Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, U.K: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 234, "In the present life, contemplation must rely upon the mediation of the Ideas, the intelligible expression of Divine Truth….In this regard Augustine frequently describes the act of contemplation in language appropriate to mystical experiences—those special instances when the soul enters into an intimate and loving union with God."

[117] See for primary texts, Jean-Luc Marion, "What Do We Mean When We Speak of Revelation?" (Chicago: Lumen Christi Institute, 2019). Cf. https://www.lumenchristi.org/event/2019/01/what-do-we-mean-when-we-speak-of-revelation-jean-luc-marion (accessed January 7, 2020); Ibid., *Givenness and Revelation*, Stephen E. Lewis (trans.) (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Adam Y. Wells (ed.), *Phenomenologies of Scripture* (New York: Fordham University, 2017); Jean-Louis Chrétien, "The Wounded Word: A Phenomenology of Prayer," in Dominique Janicaud (ed.), *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 147–175; Ibid., *L'Arche de la parole* (Paris: PUF, coll. Epiméthée, 1998). Cf. Ibid., *The Ark of Speech*, Andrew Brown (transl.) (New York: Routledge, 2003); Bruce Ellis Benson, Norman Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); Paul Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations. Essays in Hermeneutics*, D. Ihde (trans.) (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1974); Ibid., *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John Thompson (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1991).

of a discourse to a gathering of people (congregants), and encompasses a more holistic model in which a sermon can be considered phenomenologically.

Phenomenology: An Exploration Towards a Description

Origin

The philosophy of phenomenology may contribute to the modern quest for certainty. René Descartes (1596–1650) proposed a method of radical doubt, *cogito ergo sum*, as foundational to certainty—a method strongly opposed by some early modern Reformed theologians and philosophers but advanced by Emmanuel Kant. Kant's philosophy in this quest for certitude is recognized but partly in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology.[118] Where Kant distinguished between noumena (the way *things are in themselves*) and the phenomena (the way *one experiences the things*), Husserl suggested that one's *cogitationes,* one's perceptions, thoughts, memories, and ideas may not represent truthfully the things in themselves, but one's experience of them is certain. Husserl's method of phenomenology aims to describe phenomena as they are presented to or intended by the first-person experience in consciousness. As such, it gives weight to subjective experience—to the extent that it means the first-person conscious experience of the subject. To attain this, the

[118] On Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), father of the twentieth century phenomenology movement, see Konrad Cramer und Christian Beyer, *Edmund Husserl, 1859–2009: Beiträge aus Anlass der 150. Wiederkehr des Geburtstages des Philosophen* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011); J.N. Mohanty, *Edmund Husserl's Freiburg years, 1916–1938* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Verena Mayer, *Edmund Husserl* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2009); Kevin Hermberg, Husserl's phenomenology : knowledge, objectivity and others (London ; New York : Continuum, 2006); Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity, 2005); Steven Spileers, *Edmund Husserl bibliography* (Dordrecht, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999); Natalie Depraz, Dan Zahavi (eds.), *Alterity and facticity: New perspectives on Husserl* (Dordrecht, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998); Barry Smith, David Woodruff Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Husserl* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Early modern Reformed anti-Cartesians include Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706), and Anthonius Driessen (1684–1748). Cf. Aza Goudriaan, *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy, 1625–1750* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006).

phenomenological reduction is a first but critical step where one's attention to the presented phenomena intentionally focuses on and performs a 'reduction' of it, purely experiencing it in one's consciousness while methodologically suspending any verdict or determination of assumptions about the phenomena's existence. One intentionality sets such determinations aside, in a "bracketing" or *epoché*, suspending particular presuppositions, assumptions, or inquiries concerning existence, non-existence, and the subject-object distinction. This is not to say that for Husserl beliefs do not matter, only that he allows the phenomena to present itself, and experiences it as presented. This conscious (*Bewußtsein*) experience (*Erfahrung*) opens a way to or manifests the givenness of what is perceived (phenomenon). In *Logical Investigations* (*Logische Untersuchungen*, 1900–1901), Husserl describes the nature and structure of intentionality, the mereological structure of meaning, and the interrelation of truth, intuition, and cognition, among other epistemological inquiries. These studies were developed further into what he called transcendental phenomenology—"a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness."[119] Husserl suggests in *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (*Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, 1913) that the phenomenologist can develop an a-theistic and unprejudiced rationalization of one's views of oneself and the world, and inquire about their logical interconnections through intentionality.[120]

[119] Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (London, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1994), 49.

[120] See for a dictionary of terms, such as phenomenology, intentionality, and other terminology related to philosophy, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Edward N. Zalta et al. (eds.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2011—). Cf. https://plato.stanford.edu. See for general works on phenomenology relevant for this study, Brill *Studies in Contemporary Phenomenology*, Chris Bremmers, Gert-Jan van der Heiden, Peter Reynaert (eds). Cf. https://brill.com/view/serial/SCP; Fordham *University Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*, John D. Caputo (ed.). Cf. https://www.fordhampress.com/series/perspectives-continental-philosophy/. Journals include,

The main concern for Husserl, then, is the systematic and deliberate thinking through, a *meditatio*, a thoughtful probing with the mind, to know what was before concealed, and to study the structures of consciousness and the phenomena appearing in acts of consciousness. Phenomenology, as such, can be differentiated, then, from the Cartesian method of analysis which sees the world as sets of objects acting upon and reacting with one another. Furthermore, phenomenology in the realm of religion draws on Husserl's concept of *epochē*, the "bracketing" or suspension of judgment, the setting aside of our biases, everyday understandings, theories, beliefs, and habitual modes of thought. Gerardus van der Leeuw, a Dutch Reformed theologian and philosopher of religion, proposed in *Phänomenologie der Religion* that phenomenologists of religion suspend their beliefs about religions to describe them in their own terms from a standpoint that is "empathetic" with their respective adherents.[121] This notion of bracketing should not be underestimated, as this "methodological atheism" and "absence of every presupposition," though not opposed to religious faith but only to the impact of faith when one is philosophizing, may offer, according to Martin Heidegger, a leveling ground with the world in which one lives.[122]

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[121] Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, P. Siebeck, 1933). Cf. Ibid., *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology (London:* G. Allen & Unwin, Limited, 1938), 645–646. Van der Leeuw notes, "at the same time I bear in mind that this is possible only in light of one's own experience, and that this can never be freed from its own religious determinateness." He asserts, however, that it is the task of theology to decide that religious phenomena (for example Gospel "appearance") "has its roots in any ultimate 'reality'" (646).

[122] Heidegger's thought is nuanced, though, as "he seeks to overcome the Husserlian supposition that phenomenology should be understood as a presuppositionless "rigorous science." Instead, Heidegger wants to go beyond the conscious, intentional sphere of phenomenological immanence. He does this first with being-in-the-world, in which Dasein goes together with a world in a way that goes beyond intentionality." Cf. J. Aaron Simmons, Bruce Ellis Benson, *The New Phenomenology. A Philosophical Introduction* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 41, 41. Heidegger revised Husserl's phenomenology, as a "phenomenology of the unapparent," a thought that is considered in the late twentieth century French phenomenologist, such as Jean-Luc Martion.

Phenomenology, then, is a philosophical method of inquiry based on the premise that reality consists of objects, events, and intentions ("phenomena") as they are perceived or understood in the human consciousness ("noesis" or act of consciousness); phenomenology also studies structures of conscious experience—a certain awareness one has of the experience while living through or performing it, as experienced from a subjective or first-person point of view, along with its "intentionality," "the way an experience is directed toward a phenomena ("noemata") certain object in the world.[123] As Maurice Merleau-Ponty underscores, "phenomenology allows itself to be practiced and recognized as a manner or style [of thinking],"[124] which Emmanuel Lévinas nuanced, saying, "phenomenology is a method for philosophy, but phenomenology—the comprehension effected through a bringing to light—does not constitute the ultimate event of being itself." [125]

[123] Cf. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Edward N. Zalta et al. (eds.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2011—), "Phenomenology." Furthermore, three major types of phenomenology can be distinguished, Realist Phenomenology (or Realistic Phenomenology): Husserl's early formulation, based on the first edition of his *Logical Investigations,* which had as its goal the analysis of the intentional structures of mental acts as they are directed at both real and ideal objects (Alexander Pf nder (1871–1941), Max Scheler (1874–1928), (2) Transcendental Phenomenology (or Constitutive Phenomenology): Husserl's later formulation, following from his *Ideas* (1913), which takes the intuitive experience of phenomena as its starting point, and tries to extract from it the generalized essential features of experiences and the essence of what we experience, setting aside questions of any relation to the natural world around us (Oskar Becker(1889–1964), Aron Gurwitsch (1901–1973) and Alfred Schutz (1899–1959), and (3) Existential Phenomenology: Heidegger's expanded formulation, as expounded in his *Being and Time* (1927), which takes as read that the observer cannot separate himself from the world (and so cannot have the detached viewpoint Husserl insisted on). It is therefore a combination of the phenomenological method with the importance of understanding oneself in one's existential world (Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), Emmanuel Lévinas (1906–1995), Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). Cf. *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, Lester Embree et al. (eds.) (Dordrecht, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). The third type, existential phenomenology is of most interest in this study.

[124] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: La Librairie Gallimard, 1945), viii. Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald A. Landes (trans.) (*London, New York: Routledge, 2012, 2014), viii.*

[125] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), xvi, "La phénoménolgie est une méthode philosophique, mais la phénoménolgie—compréhension de par la mise en lumière—ne constitue pas l'événement ultime de l'être lui-même." Cf. Ibid., *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority,* Alphonso Lingis (trans.) (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 28.

Development and Debate

In the development of phenomenology Husserl's work was followed, critiqued, and appropriated either because of the need to improve and advance the program of Husserlian phenomenology or due to elements within the nature of phenomenology itself needing development.[126] Since the work of Husserl, phenomenology is recognizable as a distinct discipline but still related to philosophy, addressing issues such as epistemology, ontology, logic, and ethics, which were staples throughout twentieth-century continental and, in particular, French existential philosophy. Within the latter, two transitional moments evidenced a move from methodological considerations to theological implications. That is to say, the development and debate centers around the problem of what the boundaries or the poles of phenomenology and theology are, if any.

The first transitional moment since Husserl and Heidegger proposed phenomenology as rigorous science is seen in Lévinas's work, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* (1930), which is foundational for his phenomenological work on "the face of the Other" and "the trace of God" and informs his *magnum opus, Totality and Infinity (Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité*, 1961)—a rethinking of the meaning of existence in terms of the ethical transcendence of the other.[127] Whereas either metaphysics or theology

[126] Martin Heidegger was influenced by Husserl's "reflective phenomenology" though developed in contrast a "hermeneutic phenomenology." Cf. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Hermeneutics and Reflection: Heidegger and Husserl on the Concept of Phenomenology*, Kenneth Maly (trans.) (Toronto University Press, 2013). Heidegger's influential work of existential philosophy, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1927; Ibid., *Being and Time, John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (trans.) London: SCM Press, 1962*), focusses through fundamental ontology on the meaning of being (*Dasein*). The work falls outside the direct scope of this research, though encounters with Heidegger's work are present via the French philosophers considered in this study.

[127] Cf. Bergo, Bettina, "Emmanuel Lévinas," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/Lévinas (accessed January 30, 2020).

represented a "first philosophy," or fundamental ontology (Heidegger), Lévinas departs from these two approaches and designates ethics as "first philosophy," describing and interpreting the event of encountering another person.[128] In so doing, Lévinas reevaluated Husserl's phenomenological method and "reconceived Heidegger's ontological difference as an irreducible separation between being and the good we enact." By reorientating phenomenology from ontology to ethics, Lévinas introduced an innovative existential dimension into the philosophy, while also advancing Husserl's phenomenology, which may be inherent to phenomenology itself (as noted elsewhere). Whereas Lévinas's phenomenology centers on ethics, Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricœur concentrate on perception and text interpretation, respectively.[129] These philosophers arguably applied a minimalistic approach to phenomenology, respecting the intended neutrality of Husserlian phenomenology and leaving the "boundaries" of the disciplines of philosophy and theology in place—though some have suggested that Lévinas already crossed that boundary.[130] A maximalist approach to

[128] Lévinas work demands a re-interpretation in light of the "theological turn," particular considering the other as Other who is encountered in the Word by the preacher, and the other (person) by the preacher encountered in the pew. DeLay suggests, "But is there perhaps more in the face of the other than what even Lévinas allows? If Lévinas himself will always pause short of it, are not we ourselves entitled to see in the neighbor's face what the eyes of faith throughout the centuries have traditionally seen in it? Are we not under the gaze of the one true Face, the one of the Savior…" Steven DeLay, *Phenomenology in France. A Philosophical and Theological Introduction* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2019, 38. See also, Merold Westphal, "Thinking about God and God-Talk with Lévinas," K. Hart, M. Signer (eds.), *The Exorbitant: Emmanuel Lévinas Between Jews and Christians* ((New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); J. Bloechl (ed.), *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

[129] Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*; Ibid., *Phenomenology of Perception*; Paul Ricœur, *Le Conflit des interprétations; essais d'herméneutique* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1969); Ibid, *The Conflict of Interpretations*; Ibid., *From Text to Action*; Ibid., *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976). The thought of Ricœur will be considered in chapter one of this study.

[130] Paul Olivier, "Diaconie et diachronie: de la phénoménologie à la théologie," La métaphysique d'Emmanuel Lévinas, Dominique Janicaud (ed.), *Noesis* (2000) 3. Cf. http://journals.openedition.org/noesis/5. Others have suggested that Heidegger's "phenomenology of the unapparent" is the key sources for the theological turn in philosophy. See Dominique Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: L'Éclat, 1991), 17–22.

phenomenology would appropriate Husserlian phenomenology for philosophical-theological motives.[131] This maximalism is observed in French and Catholic philosophers who belong to the next phase of phenomenology: the "new phenomenology" or "theological turn."[132]

Thus the second transitional moment can be characterized as the so-called "theological turn," and has been a debated issue within philosophy since the publication *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (*The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology,* 1991).[133] Dominique Janicaud contends that the intended neutrality of phenomenology is contested by theological inquiries that surpass the boundaries of philosophy. Janicaud's thought was challenged in 2001,[134] followed by his response.[135] This "theological turn" in phenomenology, then, deserves an elaboration, as it is fundamental to our research—towards a phenomenology of preaching.[136]

Janicaud raised the question "of analyzing the methodological presuppositions permitting a phenomenologist (or by which a phenomenologist might believe him- or herself

[131] For the use of the terms "minimalistic" and "maximalist" see Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology "Wide Open" After the French Debate*, Charles N. Cabral (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 4–10.

[132] The term "new phenomenology," as distinct from "classical" phenomenology has been suggested by J. Aaron Simmons, Bruce Ellis Benson, *The New Phenomenology. A Philosophical Introduction* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), asserting, "we have defined new phenomenology as a particular philosophical trajectory, rather than a school or movement from which one might expect doctrinal purity" (45–46). This study will not adhere to the term "new phenomenology" seems to be contrary to its appropriation to a variety of phenomena, including those of theological nature.

[133] Dominique Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: L'Éclat, 1991).

[134] Dominique Janicaud, Jean-Francois Courtine, et al., *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001). This text will be used for the discussing the debate.

[135] Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology "Wide Open": After the French Debate*, Charles N. Cabral (transl.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

[136] Thomas Söding. Klaus Held (eds.) *Phänomenologie und Theologie* (Freiburg, Basel: Herder, 2009); Ian Leask, "Was There A Theological Turn in Phenomenology?" *Philosophy Today* (2018) 62.1: 149–162; Jack Reynolds, "The Implicit and Presupposed Theological Turn in Phenomenology," *SOPHIA* (2008) 47: 261–279; Michel Haar, "Philosopher à l'âge de la science," *La quinzaine littéraire* (1991), 592:22.

permitted) to open phenomenological investigations onto absolute Transcendence while putting aside the Husserlian concern for rigor and scientificity."[137] In scrutinizing the works of twentieth-century French phenomenologists, he distinguishes between "philosophical genealogy and methodological legitimacy."[138] He classifies the work of Lévinas as belonging to the former, but it remains an open question as to whether Lévinas belongs to the latter (to the theological turn, or "swerve"). It is certain that the integrity of "methodological legitimacy" is transgressed by Marion, according to Janicaud. In fact, the "status of phenomenology…between a metaphysics that has been 'overcome'; and a theology that has been made possible"[139] "has been able to pursue itself authentically only under the figure of phenomenology."[140] In *Reduction and Givenness* (*Réduction et donation: recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie*, 1989), Marion proposes three reductions in phenomenological approach: transcendental, existential, and "pure, almost unqualifiable," which correspond with Husserl, Heidegger, and Marion, respectively, says Janicaud.[141]

Marion's phenomenological work is set out in *Réduction et donation: Etudes sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie* (1989), a historical study of phenomenological method that suggests a future direction for phenomenological research. What is given by the reduction is, for Husserl (transcendental), constituted objects, and for Heidegger (existential), the "phenomenon of Being"; but for Marion, the gift itself (givenness), asserting "It reduces to the *interloqué,* by leading events [regarding] I or even Dasein back to its pure and simple

[137] Janicaud et al, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, 35–36.

[138] Janicaud et al, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, 49.

[139] Janicaud et al, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, 52.

[140] Jean-Luc Marion, Guy Planty-Bonjour (ed.), *Phénoménologie et métaphysique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), 7.

[141] Janicaud et al, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, 57.

figure as an auditor…It gives the gift itself."[142] Describing the structures of phenomena from the basis of givenness, Marion claims to have succeeded in describing certain phenomena that previous metaphysical and phenomenological approaches either ignore or exclude. In fact, Marion claims that traditional metaphysics has come to an end and that metaphysical inquiries can now be approached phenomenologically. Stronger yet, Marion writes, "phenomenology, therefore, attempts to *complete* metaphysics and, indissolubly, to bring it to an end."[143] Critiqued by Derrida, Janicaud and others,[144] Marion published *Étant donné: Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (1997),[145] a more theoretical work examining phenomenological givenness, the saturated phenomenon, and the gifted/given, an appraisal that resulted in *Du surcroît* (2001), which provides an in-depth account of saturated phenomena.[146] Givenness, then, according to Marion, is not reducible but to itself, and so is freed from the limits of any other authority, including intuition; a reduced given is either given or not given. Going beyond Husserl and Heidegger, Marion states, "so much

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[142] Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger and Phenomenology*, Thomas A. Carson (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 204. Here Marion offers an overview of phenomenological reduction of Husserl, Heidegger and himself, in terms of, to whom are the things in question led back by reduction; what is given by reduction; how the things in question are given/what the horizon is; how far the reduction goes, what is excluded.

[143] Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, 1. Emphasis mine. See also, Christina M. Gschwandtner*, Reading Jean-Luc Marion: Exceeding Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

[144] Jacques Derrida, Richard Kearney, and Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion," John D. Caputo, Micheal J. Scanlon (eds.) *God, the Gift* (Bloomington, IN: Indianan University Press, 1999), 54–78; Janicaud et al, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*), 61–66, *contra* Marion; Andrew C. Rawnsley, "Practice and Givenness: The Problem of 'Reduction' in the work of Jean-Luc Marion," New Blackfriars, (2007) 88.1018:690–708.

[145] Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997): Ibid., *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Jeffery L. Kosky (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[146] Jean-Luc Marion, *De surcroit: études sur les phénomenes saturés* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001); Ibid., *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, Robyn Horner, Vincent Vernaud (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). See also, Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting excess*: *Jean-Luc Marion*, *saturated phenomena, and hermeneutics (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010);* Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

appearance, so much Being…. the more the reduction reduces (itself), the more it extends givenness," or "so much reduction, so much givenness."[147] Thus givenness is what the reduction accomplishes, and any reduced given is reduced to givenness. The more a phenomenon is reduced, the more it is given. The "saturated phenomena" (such as divine revelation, for example)[148] overwhelms the observer with their comprehensive and complete givenness, such that they are not shaped by the particulars of the observer's cognition at all.[149] In summary, Marion's phenomenology opened a way to metaphysical questions, and inquiries that were theological in nature could be addressed, such as prayer, liturgy, God, and the Word of God.[150] Lacking in these studies is an attention to preaching: the preparation of the sermon, and the sermon as meeting point between pulpit and pew.

Although Marion fails, according to Janicaud, to render "precise methodological work" in phenomenology, as "philosophy and theology are two,"[151] phenomenologists such as Michel Henry, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and Emmanuel Falque expanded Marion's approach by "crossing the Rubicon."[152] Falque asserts,

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[147] Marion, *Reduction and Givenness,* 203.

[148] Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, Stephen E. Lewis (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[149] Cf. Brook *Mason, "Saturated Phenomena, the Icon, and Revelation: A Critique of Marion's Account of Revelation and the Redoubling of Saturation," Aporia* (2014) 24.1: 25–37. See also, Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift. Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001); Ibid, *Jean-Luc Marion: a Theo-Logical Introduction* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005).

[150] Jean-Luc Marion, "Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Relief for Theology," Thomas A. Carlson (trans.) *Critical Inquiry* (1994) 20.4:572–591; Tamsin Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion: Apparent Darkness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

[151] Janicaud et al, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, 99; Chrétien, "The Wounded Word," 147–175; Michel Henry, *C'est moi la vérité. Pour une philosophie du christianisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1996.); Ibid., *I Am the Truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, S. Emanuel: Stanford (trans.) (Stanford University Press, 2003).

[152] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*; Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Expérience et absolu: Questions disputées sur l'humanité de l'homme* (Paris: PUF, 1994). Ibid., *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

> theology and philosophy were and have always been "spiritual exercises." Utterly forgetful of this fact, we wrongly separated metaphysics from phenomenology and dogmatic theology from biblical theology, or even from mystical [i.e., experiential] theology.[153]

This study, then, is appreciative of the existential-phenomenological approach as it developed from Marion to Falque, but takes the critique of Janicaud seriously. In other words, this study seeks a *via media* between minimalist and maximalist approaches of phenomenology. The reason for this choice of *via media* is, on the one hand, a hesitation to dismiss altogether Husserl's non-theological aim in phenomenology, which offers a possible common ground between the churched, the unchurched, and the non-churched. On the other hand, the proposal of Falque, in particular, offers new possible common ground pertaining to shared human experience. In other words, the starting point is not philosophy or theology but a shared human experience of "finitude" (Falque). As a result, the median position offers the possibility of a phenomenology of preaching and (more precisely) the preparation of a sermon, and the consideration of "theological" inquiries, such as meditation, prayer, liturgy, and "to hand down to others the fruits of contemplation" (*contemplare et contemplata aliis trader*)—that is, preaching.[154]

Research Question, Sources, Structure, and Sketch of the Study

The review of the scholarly literature on preaching and phenomenology shows that the former lacks attention to the latter, and the latter to the former. The limited phenomenological concern for preaching (Buttrick) is restricted to the phenomenology of the language of a sermon and the perspective of the hearer. Furthermore, absent from the philosophical reflections related to preaching, such as the reading of the text, prayer, and liturgy (Chrétien,

[153] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon,* 24.

[154] Aquinas*, Summa Theologiae,* III, Q. 4–45.

Henry, Lacoste, Marion, Ricœur) is proper attention to the phenomena of preaching from a sermon or homily *perspective.*

This study is written from a (Reformed) Protestant perspective, though with a strong retrieval of twentieth-century French philosophy (phenomenology) as well as medieval and post-conciliar Catholic sources on philosophy and theology. On balance, then, this study is more concerned with the preparation than the oral delivery of a sermon. As such, this approach more so reflects a model from the pre-enlightenment era[155] than it does contemporary models of homiletics, but in a new way—by way of phenomenology.

The central research question of this study, then, is whether phenomenology can be of value to homiletics. More precisely, Are implications, if any, from the phenomenology of late-twentieth-century French philosophy of value for the preparation of the sermon or homily? The fact of the immediacy of the experience of the life of God in preaching, and the essence of the preacher's own prior experience with God in sermon preparation, among other considerations, lend sufficient support to the experientially-oriented, principal inquiry of this study. The sermon (*die Sache selbst,* Husserl) is thus understood as a result of the reflective, meditative, and prayerful reading of Scripture, whose collective fruit, contemplation, is shared as a testimony, witness, and confession.

The sources primarily considered for this study include the work of phenomenologists Jean-Louis Chrétien, Emmanuel Falque, Michel Henry, Edmund Husserl, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and Jean-Luc Marion, though limited to issues related to homiletics, such as Scripture and

[155] See footnote 42 above for sources of homiletical handbooks of the pre-enlightenment era.

prayer, as well as interpretative commentary on their work.[156] The nature of these works is philosophical, though they contain religious and theological content. Therefore, it should be kept in mind, throughout this study, that these French phenomenologists offer (philosophical) *possibilities* and not necessarily (theological) *actualities*. Furthermore, these philosophers are/were part of the Catholic faith tradition in the context of a strongly secularized France. Their concern about an intelligent Christianity cannot be dismissed, despite assurances that their work is strictly philosophical.

The structure of this study consists in two parts—part 1, a conceptual foundation, and part 2, a constructive proposal. The former is strongly descriptive and explorative, presenting

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[156] Selected primary sources relevant for this study include, *Husserliana: Edmund Husserl Gesammelte Werke*, Ulrich Melle (ed.) (New York:Springer) 42 vols.; Emmanuel Lévinas, *La Théorie de l'Intuition Dans la Phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1930); Ibid., *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris Librairie Gallimard, 1945); Michel Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); Ibid., *C'est moi la vérité. Pour une philosophie du christianisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1996); Jacques Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France,1967); Dominique Janicaud, *Une Généalogie du spiritualisme français. Aux sources du bergsonisme: Ravaisson et la métaphysique* ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1969); Ibid., *Le Tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française*, Combas: Éd. de l'Éclat, 1991); Jean-Luc Marion, *Dieu sans l'être* (Paris: Librarie Arthème Fayard, 1982); Ibid., *Réduction et donation: recherches sue Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989; Ibid, *Étant donné*; Ibid., *De surcroit*; Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Expérience et absolu: Questions disputées sur l'humanité de l'homme* (Paris: PUF, 1994); Jean-Louis Chrétien, *L'Appel et la Réponse* (Paris: Minuit, 1992); Ibid., "The Wounded Word," 147–175; Emmanuel Falque, *Le passeur de Gethsémani, Angoisse, souffrance et mort, Lecture existentielle et phénoménologique* (Paris: Cerf, 1999); Ibid., *Métamorphose de la finitude. Essai philosophique sur la naissance et la resurrection* (Paris: Cerf, 2004); *Dieu, la chair, et l'autre, D'Irénée à Duns Scot* (Paris: PUF, 2008); Ibid., *Les noces de l'Agneau, Essai philosophique sur le corps et l'eucharistie* (Paris: Cerf, 2011); Ibid., *Passer le Rubicon. Philosophie et théologie: Essai sur les frontiers* (Bruxelles: Lessius, 2013); Ibid., *Le livre de l'expérience, D'Anselme de Cantorbéry à Bernard de Clairvaux* (Paris: Cerf, 2017). The original publication will be consulted, though English translations of the original publication will be used primarily throughout this study.

For secondary literature, see overviews, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Christian Beyer, "Edmund Husserl,"https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/husserl/; Bettina Bergo, "Emmanuel Lévinas,"https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/Lévinas/; Frédéric Seyler, "Michel Henry," https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/michel-henry/; Leonard Lawlor, "Jacques Derrida," https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/derrida/ (accessed November 26, 2019); Steven DeLay, *Phenomenology in France*. Christian Dupont, *Phenomenology in French Philosophy: Early Encounters* (Dordrecht, Heidelberg: Springer, 2014); J.N. Mohanty, *The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl: A Historical Development* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008); R. Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Dermot Moron, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000).

the scholarship of homiletics and phenomenology, disclosing the lack of interaction of both fields, and offering an overview of the use of the phenomenology of the aforementioned French philosophers in the reading of Scripture and prayer. As such, part 1, first, serves as an indicator as to whether phenomenology can inform the preparation of a sermon, and second, serves as an indispensable background to the constructive proposal in part 2. The constructive proposal advanced by this study explores the use of phenomenology, considers its possible limitations, proposes a contemplative phenomenology, and conceives of the sermon as witness, testimony, and confession.

The principal inquiry of this study, then, is developed, along with the present sketch of the argument, in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 2, "Phenomenology and the Reading of Scripture," offers an appraisal of various aspects of Husserl's philosophical approach to phenomenology, such as the *epoché*, intentionality, phenomenological reduction, and (inter)subjectivity in the reading of the w/Word. Ricœur's thought on text interpretation, and Marion's views on r/Revelation, must also be considered as the former has expressed reservations on the import of theology for philosophy, while the latter critically embraces the "theological turn" in phenomenology. Here, a contributive interplay with Michel Henry's work (*Parole et religion: La parole de Dieu*, *C'est Moi La Verité*, and *Paroles du Christ*) will assist in evaluating phenomenology for the preparation of a sermon: its prospect and limitations.

Chapter 3, "Phenomenology and Prayer," will consider the phenomenology of prayer in relation to the preparation of a sermon, particularly in light of insights from Jean-Louis Chrétien's *The Wounded Word: A Phenomenology of Prayer*. Chrétien suggests that the language of prayer is that of struggle, the opening of a wound, and that the one who calls to

the transcendent other becomes vulnerable and reveals oneself in the presence of God, the very same One who speaks in his Word. Chrétien's phenomenological thought on prayer will be assessed on its merits and limitations for sermon preparation.

The constructive proposal of the study is advanced in Chapter 4, "Contemplative Phenomenology and Homiletics," which considers the *contemplatio* of the w/Word. In fact, the contemplation is the culmination of cogitation, mediation, and prayer, but as a lived experience, as witness and testimony, that is shared in the public discourse, the sermon, or homily. The transformative beholding of God in Christ is a "givenness," or gracious gift, shared in imperfect language but experienced ("seen and heard") by the preacher and hearer. The phenomenology of liturgy will be weighed (in Lacoste, among others), evaluating the proposal to conceive of the sermon, on phenomenological grounds, as contemplation.

Each chapter will open with an overview of relevant literature, followed by a critical appraisal of primary sources, and will end with a preliminary assessment of the relation of these works to the preparation of a sermon.

The provisional end of the journey, "Conclusion and Prospect," revisits, evaluates, and appraises the principal research question in light of the research and dialogue with the secondary (or interpretative) literature. It highlights the present study's attempted contribution to scholarship and reevaluates whether phenomenology in twentieth-century French philosophy has implications for sermon preparation and Reformed experiential preaching in particular. As such, it is hoped that this study, born out of concern for the contemporary relevance of biblical, Reformed, and experiential preaching, may contribute to the reaching of the churched and unchurched with the Word: "that which we have seen and heard we

proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

CHAPTER 2

PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE READING OF SCRIPTURE

Introduction

To address the question as to whether phenomenology is of value to homiletics, or more precisely, whether phenomenology as practiced in French philosophy since the latter part of the twentieth century can inform the preparation of a sermon or homily, attention must be given to the phenomenological reading of Scripture—the primary source for the Christian preacher and foundation for the sermon.[1] Questions abound, but this chapter restricts itself to three main inquiries: What does it mean to read Scripture phenomenologically? What limitations does one encounter, if any? Finally, what is the reading process? The chapter will close with a preliminary appraisal of the phenomenological reading of Scripture.

The reading of Scripture in the Christian tradition is varied in terms of hermeneutical and exegetical approaches, contemplative practices, meditation, and prayer. One who reads Scripture in a certain *sense* is not reading Scripture, whether one reads it only as a historical text (in a *literal* or historical sense), as a *spiritual* text (in an allegorical, tropological or moral, or anagogical sense), or reading with various literary devices and forms in mind. One who reads the Bible "simply" or cursorily is not necessarily experiencing Scripture. One who is

[1] Scripture is understood in this study as expressed in the *Belgic Confession of Faith*, articles 2–7. Cf. *Confession de foy, faicte d'un commun accord par les fidèles qui conversent ès Pays-Bas, lesquels désirent vivre selon la pureté de l'Evangile de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Chris*t (Geneva: Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1561). This Reformed confessional statement is understood *in se*, without theological considerations for this study.

conditioned to read or hear Scripture as confessional truth gives way to an objectivation of Scripture—not an experiencing of Scripture. Furthermore, dialectical thinking leads to interpretative challenges in the reading of Scripture,[2] whereby the Catholic exposition of the Word is primarily oriented towards the historical-critical method[3] which becomes foundational for the formation of a homily. The Reformed exposition of Scripture tends toward grammatical-analytical, exegetical, and redemptive-historical hermeneutical considerations, as well as particular conversion or salvation narratives, limited as they may be.[4] Each of these approaches undergirds the production of the sermon, whether in Reformed, redemptive-historical or experiential preaching, the Catholic Paschal mystery, or New Homiletics. In other words, certain hermeneutical and exegetical approaches as well as contemplative practices are foundational for certain homiletic practices. Such practices, then, bear on both the preacher and congregant. Since the main concern of every preacher ought to be the intelligibility of the biblical text as a shared experiential event, culminating in the sermon, for both the *homiletician* and *audience*, the question presses itself to the fore: "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30).

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[2] See for example, Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948), "Die Heilige Schrift," 505–830.

[3] *Dei Verbum* (1965), III.12, VI.23. For a critical assessment see William Joseph Levada, "Dei Verbum – Forty Years Later" (Rome: Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm, 2005). Cf. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20051010_dei-verbum-levada_en.html (accessed May 19, 2020); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *The Interpretation of Scripture. In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method* (New York | Mahwah, N.J: Paulist Press, 2008). The Catholic reading of Scripture is guided by an adherence to revelation, Scripture, Tradition, and magisterium. See for a call of Catholic self-critique but not disbandment of the historical-critical method, Pope Benedict XVI (em.), *Light of the World*: *The Pope*, *The Church and the Signs of The Times* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010).

[4] By conversion and salvation narrative reading of Scripture is meant the reading of a biblical passage conform a particular *ordo salutis*, preparationism, or experiential model or way and manner of conversion. See for example, in Dutch Reformed context, Arie van der Knijff, *Bevindelijk preken. Een empirisch-homiletisch onderzoek naar de bevinding in de prediking binnen de Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Apeldoorn: Labarum Academic, 2019), 199–241, "Het beschrijven van een geloofsweg met kruispunten."

This question is of paramount importance at the dawn of the twenty-first century, religiously postmodern, nihilistic, and skeptical as it is, but particularly in light of current interest in individual human experience—from Christian believers and non-believers alike. In other words, Is there an understanding of the reading of Scripture that affects and transforms the human experience? Contemporary Christian believers and non-believers are suspicious of confessional, doctrinal, and moralistic preaching—whether openly acknowledged or not. In certain cases, moreover, the language of the pulpit differs significantly from that of the pew—a language which was formed in one's reading of Scripture and in adherence to one's view of Scripture, confessional stance, and expectations. Furthermore, a certain reading of Scripture by an imposed method that predetermines the meaning may "silence" God's self-peaking, as the Christian faith confesses the divine authorship of Scripture. Rather, the reading of Scripture should draw its method from what the biblical text gives. Biblical scholars, whose commentaries are used by preachers, far too often assume their methods from natural sciences, implicitly or explicitly.[5] Furthermore, treating the text of Scripture as text "as is,"

[5] For example, the bible commentary of Matthew Henry, widely used by Reformed and evangelical preachers, resonates with the reasonableness of Christianity of the era. See also, David P. Murray, "Matthew Henry (1662–1714): The Reasonableness and Pleasantness of Christianity" (PhD thesis Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, November 2019). The question, raised by the French philosopher and phenomenologist Jean-Luc Marion, is Christianity only reasonable when it agrees with the same things said by pure reason? Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, Stephen E. Lewis (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3–32. Many scholars have commented on the limitations of scientific approaches to Scripture, including: Brevard S. Childs*, Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); James Smart, *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church: A Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University, 1974); David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 37 (1980) 27–38; Joseph Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today," *This World* 22 (Summer 1989); Richard John Neuhaus, gen. ed., *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989] 1–23); Lewis Ayres and Stephen E. Fowl, "(Mis)reading the Face of God: The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999) 513–28; Joel B. Green, "Scripture and Theology: Failed Experiments, Fresh Perspectives," *Interpretation* 56 (2002) 5–20; Craig Bartholomew, C. Stephen Evans, Mary Healy, Murray Rae, ed., *Behind the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003). Cf. Angela Kim Harkins, "Theological Attitudes towards the Scripture Text," *Theological Studies* (2006) 67:498.

open to scientific inquiry like any other text, may call into question the sacred status of the biblical text. The historical-critical method, for example, may have contributed, not without validity, to the *desacralization* of Scripture, as a conversion or experiential narrative approach may lead to the *objectivation* of Scripture—both depriving the reader of an experiential moment or encounter with the biblical text.

The question of Acts 8:30, then, is often answered hermeneutically, exegetically, theologically, doctrinally, and practically within a confessional context, which impacts the sermon in terms of reading, "hearing," and experiencing the biblical text. This intersection, that of the reading and experience of Scripture—foundational in the formation of the sermon—is where phenomenology as practiced in French philosophy since the latter part of twentieth century could be implemented in the service of homiletics and the homiletician.

Phenomenology and Scripture: A Survey

The reading of Scripture phenomenologically is a more recent consideration in French philosophy, developing out of what Janicaud dubbed the "theological turn" of the 1990s. As such, the phenomenological reading of Scripture is still in its infancy,[6] though Wells suggests a direction it has taken: "a phenomenological approach to Scripture aims to shift the center of biblical studies from science to Scripture itself."[7] Whether phenomenology offers a new mode of reading or a renewed understanding of Scripture is to be seen. The question for now is, What does it mean to read Scripture phenomenologically?

A phenomenology of Scripture offers a suspension of Catholic and Reformed biblical

[6] Cf. Adam Y. Wells, "Biblical Criticism and the Phenomenology of Scripture," in Adam Y. Wells (ed.), *Phenomenologies of Scripture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 12.

[7] Wells, "Biblical Criticism and the Phenomenology of Scripture," 1.

interpretative methods, as suggested above. "Rather," according to Wells, "phenomenology starts with Scripture itself, allowing Scripture to 'give' itself freely."[8] The setting aside of presuppositions, as required in a Husserlian phenomenology, enables the text to give itself in all its fullness. As such, phenomenology "must begin with a radical openness to Scripture, rigorously avoiding the temptation to declare at the outset what Scripture can or must mean."[9] Robyn Horner asserts, "the overall methodological point should be kept in mind: what is given should be interpreted in keeping with its character, and not dismissed too easily as impossible *in advance.*"[10] This point is taken into consideration by French phenomenologists who have dealt with Scripture—in general by Jean-Louis Chrétien,[11] and specifically by Jean-Luc Marion on r/Revelation,[12] Emmanuel Falque on specific passages of Scripture, and Michel Henry on the w/Word, and the *Words of Christ*.[13] Furthermore, comprehensive reflections are noted in Catholic (philosophical) attention to the "Road to Emmaus" (Luke 24:13–25),[14] and phenomenological considerations are given to passages such as, Genesis

[8] Wells, "Biblical Criticism and the Phenomenology of Scripture," 6. As such, this approach and understanding stand in contrast with reader-response criticism with an indispensable role of the reader which is essential to the meaning of a text. See further below "*A Phenomenological Reading of Scripture.*"

[9] Wells, "Biblical Criticism and the Phenomenology of Scripture," 7.

[10] Robyn Horner, "Towards a Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Methodology for Theology," *International Journal* of *Practical* Theology (2018) 22.2:172. Italics in the original.

[11] Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Under the Gaze of the Bible*, John Marson Dunaway (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

[12] Jean-Luc Marion, "What Do We Mean When We Speak of Revelation?" Lecture at the University of Chicago, January 16, 2019. Cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mj87iRta-4Q (accessed December 2, 2019); Ibid., "On a Possible Epistemology of Revelation," Lecture at University of Chicago on May 6, 2015. Cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaQ_DjwL2Zg (accessed December 2, 2019).

[13] Michel Henry, *Paroles du Christ* (Paris: Seuil, 2002). Cf. Ibid, *Words of Christ,* Christina M. Gschwandtner (trans.) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

[14] Edward Foley (ed.), *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), xiv-xxi; Henry, *Paroles du Christ*; Ibid., *Words of Christ*, 119–120; Jean-Luc Marion, "The Recognized Him; and He Became Invisible to Them," Modern Theology (April 2002) 18.2: 145–152; Shane Mackinlay, "Eyes Wide Shut: A Response to Jean-Luc Marion's Account of the Journey to Emmaus," Modern Theology (July 2004) 20.3: 447–456; Post-conciliar documents *The Homiletic Directory* (2014), II.1.D (51); *Verbum Domini* (2010), no. 54, 74; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), I.6.

22:1–19, Matthew 5:38–48, Luke 15:11–32, John 8:2–11, Romans 7:7–25, 1 Corinthians 12:12–20, 24–26, and Ephesians 4:1–4, as found in *Phenomenologies of Scripture*. Here, philosophy and biblical studies are presented as two convergent disciplines where phenomenology proposes to see the given meaning of the biblical text—to allow Scripture to speak for itself, and as an alternative to the "methodological morass" of *Bibelwissenschaft*.[15] But these phenomenological readings of Scripture have not gone unchallenged, as Walter Brueggemann and Dale Martin demonstrate. The former asserts that "the theoretical formulations of phenomenology are not of much help or guidance to an exegete,"[16] and the latter commends the phenomenological approach to the reading of Scripture "as meditations" rather "than strictly historical-critical exegesis."[17] Furthermore, Gschwandtner sees the use of Scripture by Henry, Marion, and Falque in their phenomenological work as problematic, contending that "there is little justification of this use of Scripture in philosophical reflection or even explicit thinking about how such passages are meant to function."[18] The philosophical considerations of Scripture by these phenomenologists, furthermore, lack distinction between theology and philosophy—though "Falque, at least in principle, distinguishes more clearly

[15] Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture,* 44–64 (Jean-Luc Marion on the concept of sacrifice, Gen. 22), 65–87 (Jean-Yves Lacoste on existence without enemies, Matt.5), 88–113 (Kevin Hart on the parable of the prodigal son, Luke 15), 114–124 (Robyn Horner on Jesus and the women caught in adultery, John 8), 125–143 (Jean-Louis Chrétien on who is the "I," Rom. 7), 144–158 (Jeffrey Bloechl on community and body of Christ, I Cor. 12), 159–178 (Emmanuel Housset on humility, gentleness, and patience as Christian character, Eph. 4). See a response to the proposals of the aforementioned philosophers, Christina Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture" Marion, Henry and Falque on the Person of Christ," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* (2018) 17.2:281–297. See for general studies on phenomenology and Scripture, Peter Ochs, "From Phenomenology to Scripture: A General Response," *Modern Theology* (2000) 16.3: 341–345; Kevin Hart, "The Reduction of Scripture," *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* (2014) 13.1:1–14; Stephanie Sheehan, "A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Transcendental Phenomenology Through the Lived Experiences of Biblical Leaders," *Emerging Leadership Journeys* (2014) 7.1:10–20.

[16] Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture,* 179.

[17] Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture*, 189, 196.

[18] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 281–282.

between 'philosophical' and 'theological' aspects his work…but then goes on to meld them even more fully than the other two"—Henry and Marion.[19] Therefore, Gschwandtner suggests more consideration of Ricœur's "hermeneutically sensitive use of Scripture in philosophy."[20] This point is underscored by the fact that it was Ricœur, who, well before the 1990s, gave attention in French philosophy to phenomenology and Scripture.[21] His exegetical and hermeneutical-phenomenological reflections have been appraised as falling within the proper Husserlian philosophical and methodological boundaries.[22] As such, it is argued, Ricœur's phenomenology falls outside of the approaches critiqued as part of the "theological turn."[23] Although this might be reason to exclude Ricœur's thought from the consideration of Scripture and phenomenology,[24] one should pause, considering the recent attention given to

[19] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 291–292.

[20] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 292–294. This "hermeneutically sensitive use of Scripture in philosophy" is also shared, for example, by Aaron Pidel, S.J., "Ricœur and Ratzinger on Biblical History and Hermeneutics," *Journal of Theologica Interpretation* (2014) 8.1:193–212; Mark I. Wallace, "From Phenomenology to Scripture? Paul Ricœur's Hermeneutical Philosophy of Religion," *Modern Theology* (July 2000) 16.3:301–313; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[21] Paul Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, with André LaCocque, David Pellauer (trans.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Ibid., *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, Kathleen Blamey, John B. Thompson (trans.), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1986, 1991); Ibid., *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, Lewis S. Mudge (ed.) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Ibid., *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Don Ihde (ed.), trans. Willis Domingo *et al*. (trans.) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969, 1974.). On Rico

[22] Dominique Janicaud, *Le Tournant Théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: Éditions de l'éclat, 1991), 13, "Le tournant théologique est évidemment contenu *in ovo* dans ce genre d'interrogation; mais Ricœur s'est bien gardé de franchir le pas, Ses scrupulus méthodologiques l'ont conduit à multipier les précautions herméneutiques préalables à tout passage de la phénoménologie à la théologie." Janicaud appraisal of Ricœur is challenged by Eileen Brennan, "Paul Ricoeur and the 'Theological Turn' in French Phenomenology," *Philosophy Today* (Winter 2018) 62.1: 163–179. See also, John M. Cogan, "Immanence and the Radicality of the Phenomenological Reduction in Husserlian Phenomenology: A Defense of the "Theological Turn"," (Carbondale: PhD diss. Southern Illinois University, 2004).

[23] Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology "Wide Open" After the French Debate*, Charles N. Cabral (trans.) New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 5–6.

[24] Ricœur, though, was *philosophically* attentive to Scripture. See, for example, Ricœur's reflections on Gen. 2–3, and 44 Exod., 3:14, and 20:13, Ps. 22, Song of Songs, Ezech. 37:1–14, Zech. 12:10 in Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically.*

this Protestant philosopher concerning his impact on homiletics.[25]

The recent attention in French philosophy to read the biblical text phenomenologically, though not unchallenged, then, reinforces the inquiry, What does it mean to read Scripture phenomenologically?

In exploring the nature of reading Scripture phenomenologically, three representatives of French phenomenology whose work is relevant to the issue of sermon or homily preparation will be considered: Marion on r/Revelation, Falque on the function of the biblical text within phenomenological work, and Henry on the w/Word, and the *Words of Christ.* Works are chosen by hermeneutical relevance and reviewed in chronological order. In regard to the former, Marion's recent thought on "*r*evelation" is a result of a related theme, "givenness," which originates in an earlier work from the 1990s.[26] His consideration of "*R*evelation" is thereby hermeneutically of interest, as Scripture is understood by Christians as a revealed and given (*donné*) divine Word.[27] As such, Revelation precedes the human reading of Scripture. The (religious or theological) phenomena of r/Revelation and Scripture, furthermore, can be

[25] Lance B. Pape, *The Scandal of Having Something to Say: Ricoeur and the Possibility of Postliberal Preaching* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013); Jacob D. Myers, "Preaching Philosophy: The Kerygmatic Thrust of Paul Ricœur's Philosophy and Its Contribution to Homiletics, *Literature & Theology* (June 2013), 27.2: 208–226; F.-X. Amherdt, "The Hermeneutics of Paul Ricœur: Implications for Homiletics and Practical Theology, in J. Verheyden, T.L Hettema, P. VandeCasteele (eds.), *Paul Ricœur Poetics and Religion* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2011), 167–188. Furthermore, Jean-Luc Marion, Emmanuel Falque, and other French phenomenologist acknowledge their indebtedness to Ricœur.

[26] Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*; Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997): Ibid., *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* Jeffery L. Kosky (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[27] *Confession de foy, faicte d'un commun accord par les fidèles qui conversent ès Pays-Bas, lesquels désirent vivre selon la pureté de l'Evangile de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Chris*t (Geneva: Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1561), II, "[Dieu] se donne à cognoistre à nous plus manifestement & evidemment par sa saincte & Divine Parole, à laquelle il se donne à cognoistre autant clairement aux hommes qu'il est se besoin gen cester vie & pour leur salut"; *Canones, et decreta sacrosancti oecumenici, et generalis concilii Tridentini* (Compluti: Petrum Robles & Franciscum Cormellas, 1564), 29, sess. Iv, Decretum de canonices Scriptures; *Dei Verbum* (1965), I.2–6.

treated in philosophical work. Although Husserl's method is agnostic or "atheological,"[28] phenomena that are theological in nature are appropriate themes of philosophical inquiry.[29] Falque, a student of Marion, permits Scripture to function within his phenomenological work for a methodological reason: the lifting of the veil between the disciplines of theology and philosophy. Thus he holds in view both historical reason, in his work on patristic and medieval text and phenomenology, and hermeneutical reason, in his idea that phenomenological understanding is transformative in light of Scripture. Last but not least, Henry's philosophical work on the w/Word (*Verbe*, *Parole*) is Christological in essence, maintaining that Christ's word is understood as human and divine but also that an experiential understanding of the biblical text is fostered in Christ only. *Words of Christ*, thereby, is Henry's last and culminating work, and unashamedly Christian.[30] Each of these sections will be concluded with a preliminary appraisal as to whether their approach is useful for the preparation of a sermon.

2.1 Jean-Luc Marion on r/Revelation

If the practice of phenomenology includes consideration of the reading of Scripture, one has to take into account the character of Scripture as revealed w/Word.[31] The topic of

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[28] Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel VII: Wissenschaftlerkorrespondenz* Karl and Elisabeth Schuhmann (eds.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994) 7: 237.

[29] Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl. Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005, 16–17, "Although his [Husserl] phenomenological approach was 'atheological'...[he] saw phenomenology as progressing ultimately to theological questions and treating scientifically what had previously been symbolized in religion."

[30] *Paroles du Christ* (Paris: Seuil, 2002) *Words of Christ*, C. Gschwandtner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) can be read as a concluding argument on Christianity, following *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair* (Paris: Seuil, 2000). Cf. *Incarnation. A Philosophy of Flesh*, K. Hefty (trans.) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), and *C'est moi la vérité. Pour une philosophie du christianisme*, Paris: Seuil, 1996). Cf. *I Am the Truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, S. Emanuel (trans.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[31] Christian confessional and theological statements include, *Dei Verbum* (1965), I-III, in particular I.2, "Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1;15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His

revelation in French philosophy has been presented as a disclosing of and an encounter with the Other (Lévinas), the Living One to living human beings (Henry), and most recently as an ongoing topic of reflection scattered throughout the writings of Jean-Luc Marion.[32] Furthermore, his reflection moves from the concept of "revelation" to "Revelation"—a distinction insisted on, which has not gone unchallenged.[33] What does the "Sorbonite" philosopher understand by r/Revelation? In order to answer this question, a succinct review will be given of the context of Marion's reflection on r/Revelation, the characteristics of revelation with a lower-case "r" versus that of Revelation with an upper-case "R,"[34] and a preliminary appraisal of Marion's thought on revelation for the preparation of a sermon.

Context

"What is needed," Horner asserted recently, "is a way of thinking about revelation which permits some kind of credible dialogue about it to take place within contemporary thought and culture."[35] One who should have such a "credible dialogue" is the preacher—at least with

love speaks to men as friends"; *Belgic Confession of Faith* (1561), art. 2, "First, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book…leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, …Secondly, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation.

[32] His thoughts on r/Revelation are found, first, as the Gilford Lectures at the University of Glasgow (2014), and published as *Givenness and Revelation*, with a second revision as *Das Erscheinen des Unsichtbaren: Fragen zur Phänomenalität der Offenbarung*, Alwin Letzkus (trans.) (Freiburg: Verlag Herder GmbH, 2018), followed by a French publication (forthcoming) of which the introduction chapter was discussed by Marion at the Lumen Christi Institute, University of Chicago, January 16, 2019, entitled, "What Do We Mean When We Speak Of Revelation." See also J.-L. Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," *The Visible and the Revealed*, transl. C.M. Gschwandtner et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Mikkel B. Tin, "The Phenomenon of Revelation: Jean-Luc Marion's Outline for a Phenomenology of Religion," Svein Aage Christoffersen et al, *Transcendence and Sensoriness* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 86–109. Works that addresses r/Revelation, include, Marion, *Being Given,* 234–241; Ibid., *In Excess. Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, Robyn Horner, Vincent Berrand (trans.), (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 168, "revelation."

[33] Brock M. Mason, "Saturated Phenomena, the Icon, and Revelation: A Critique of Marion's Account of Revelation and the 'Redoubling' of Saturation," *Aporia* (2014) 24.1:25–28.

[34] In what follows "revelation" with lower-case r and "Revelation" with upper-case R will be written as revelation and Revelation, respectively.

[35] Lecture, Robyn Horner, "A Phenomenology of Revelation: Contemporary Encounters with Saint Ignatius

oneself: biblically, confessionally, and philosophically. Biblically understood, revelation finds its apex in the incarnate Word, Christ. Confessionally, revelation is taken seriously by the Catholic (*Dei Verbum*) and Reformed (*Confessio Belgica*) expressions of faith concerning divine self-revelation. Philosophically, Jean-Luc Marion reflects on revelation phenomenologically, though it will be seen that a way forward is opened for conceiving of revelation in a manner "that is neither solipsistic nor excluded in principle from academic discourse."[36]

Traditional philosophy, based as it is upon the principle of sufficient reason, determines *a priori* what kinds of phenomena are possible to consider, thereby excluding ahead of time the phenomena of revelation that do not fall under this determination of possibility. This exclusion can be annulled, according to Marion, on the basis of the fact that part of the essence of phenomena is that they first give *themselves* to consciousness for experience. In other words, their pure givenness, *without* a priori determination opens the way on a phenomenological register for the *possibility* of "revelation"—not the *actuality* and content of "Revelation," both of which belong to theology—for the criteria for phenomena are writ large without discrimination. Marion recognizes a range or category of phenomena that would comprise the things of revelation in which the phenomena that come into conscious experience are beyond the intuition, intentionality, and the creation of the subject to whom they appear. They are phenomena that are purely *given* to me and are in excess of or contain more than I can understand or intuitively deduce from them. He calls these "saturated

Loyola," 2 at Loyola University, Chicago, April 14, 2016. Cf. Colby Dickinson, Hugh Miller, Kathleen McNutt (eds.), *The Challenge of God: Continental Philosophy and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition* (London: T & T Clark, 2020), 69–86.

[36] Lecture, Robyn Horner, "A Phenomenology of Revelation" (n.p.).

phenomena" and further develops the notion with the paradox of the exemplarity of the experience: experiences that are invisible, unforeseeable, unbearable and intolerable, and absolute. The unbearable, for example, is a bedazzlement "that can be universalized to every form of the intuition of an intensity surpassing the degree that a gaze can sustain," and the absolute is that which "evades any analogy of experience" (*contra Kant*).[37] According to Marion, what is given in intuition fills or surpasses intentionality. If so, this may open new venues for describing the structure of experiences involved in the preparation of a sermon—encounters with the w/Word (Henry). For Marion, a particular type of saturated phenomenon is revelation, the phenomenon "that concentrates in itself the four senses of the saturated phenomenon."[38] Marion asserts, "what is experienced in revelation can be summed up as the powerlessness to experience whatever it might be that one experiences."[39] The example of the narrative of the woman with a hemorrhage in Luke 8:43–48 (cf. Mark 5:24–34) may suffice to elaborate this point.[40] Taking Marion's categories, one identifies the narrative as describing an

[37] Marion*, Being Given,* 201–215.

[38] Marion's attention to r/Revelation must be understood in the context and part of his thought on the saturated phenomena, which include his reflections of the event, the idol, flesh and the icon. See Marion*, Being Given,* 199–212. Describes these four senses, the event, which saturates by its quality (being unforeseeable and unrepeatable); the idol, which saturates by its quantity (its excessive visibility); flesh, which saturates by relation (it is absolute); and the icon, which saturates by modality (it is resistant to all constitution). See also Jean-Luc Marion*, Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Jeffery L. Kosky (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 227–228. That is revelation as phenomenon appear saturated (1) invisible according to *quantity*, (2) unbearable according to *quality*, (3) absolute according to *relation*, and (4) irregardable according to *modality*. Noted here is the inversion of Kant's categories with regard to the possibility of experience. See for a description of each type of saturated phenomenon, Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 318–342; Ibid., *Being Given*, 228–247. For a helpful introduction of saturated phenomena, and revelation, see Robyn Horner, Jean-Luc Marion. *A Theo-logical Introduction* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 123–134; Christiana M. Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion. Exceeding Metaphysics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007); Ibid., *Degrees of Givenness. On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014).

[39] Marion, "The Possible and Revelation," in *The Visible and the Revealed*, 9.

[40] Here, I follow, in part, the lecture of Robyn Horner, "A Phenomenology of Revelation: Contemporary Encounters with Saint Ignatius Loyola," 4–7 at Loyola University, Chicago, April 14, 2016.

event which by definition is "unforeseeable."[41] Furthermore, "in terms of quality, the scene functions technically as an idol: there is too much to see, which means that what we see of it is always too little. In terms of relation, we are not able to determine a reason for what has happened to the woman and Jesus' part in it; we cannot explain it in terms of causality. And in terms of modality, the given is invisible: while the woman witnesses to Jesus, we see neither the healing nor his divinity *as such*."[42] Thus, revelation in this passage of Scripture, as saturated phenomena "can only be recognized by the effect [not the visible] that they produce in their witness."[43]

Characteristics

The philosophical question, then, for Marion, is what allows revelation to be conceived of in its phenomenality. He is not enquiring immediately whether there is a positive divine revelation or not, but rather what kinds of phenomena qualify to express the possibility of revelatory opening (whether a manifestation, something visible, and apparition, etc.). Marion suggests that revelation, basically speaking, is an unforgettable or memorable experience in the normal course of life, as most things are forgotten at the end of the day. This also applies to visible phenomena, which appear and then vanish out of sight. There are, however, exceptions, according to Marion, in that some appearances manifest themselves only to one, address one, affect one, and transform one. Consider the basic example of learning to ride a bike.[44] There is an instruction manual and an instructor to teach one how to ride, and the new

[41] Marion*, Being Given,* 207. Cf. Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomena, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 132.

[42] Horner, "A Phenomenology of Revelation" (n.p).

[43] Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion*. *A Theo-logical Introduction*, 124. Sentence modified, AN.

[44] Marion refers to his experience of learning to ski. Cf. Lecture Lumen Christi Institute, University of Chicago, January 16, 2019, "What Do We Mean When We Speak Of Revelation."

bicyclist struggles to get it right: getting on the bike while holding the bike upright, balancing while pedaling, steering while staring at the road, breaking while balancing the bike and trying not to fall off the bike, etc. This is repeated various times, sometimes frustratingly. One day, however, one tries it again, and eureka! One rides the bike—one can't explain it, but one says, "I did it." One finds out or discovers how to ride a bike—it is a revelation, a surprising disclosure, a previously unknown fact, which was made known in a deeply affecting way. It is an experience not easily forgotten. A biblical example, often cited by French phenomenologists reflecting on concepts of disclosure, illustrates a similar point from Luke 24:13–35. The two on the road to Emmaus are joined by the risen Christ, though "their eyes were kept from recognizing Him." Cleopas and his companion were familiar with Christ, "a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people," who was condemned to death, and crucified. Moreover, they were (re)acquainted with Moses, the Prophets, and "all the Scriptures" concerning Christ, who at the table "took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight." He disclosed and revealed Himself, and this affected them as an unforgettable experience: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?... how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."

In fact, the manifestation of Christ is an example of a phenomenon of revelation, according to Marion, and accords with the four proposed modes of saturation.[45] Phenomenologically, and not theologically, he asserts that Christ, according to quantity (the event), gives Himself as an unforeseeable event, "for as the lightning comes from the east and

[45] What follows in this paragraph rests upon Marion, *Being Given*, 236–241.

shines [shows itself] as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:27). Christ, who is the I am before Abraham was born (John 8:58), is for Marion, the "characteristic of a paradox that is perfectly unforeseeable because intuition saturates every prior concept quantitatively." In terms of quality (an idol), the exhaustive saturation of Christ overwhelms and is unbearable, asserting, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). His resurrection, ultimately, exemplifies this point, as "the women left the tomb…trembling (τρόμος, quaking, fear) and bewildered, (ἔκστασις, ecstasy, amazement) (Mark 16:8). Here Marion remarks that this terror is "allied with its opposite, joy" (Matt. 28:8), marking the paradox of "two registers of the same intuitive saturation." Thirdly, in terms of relation (a flesh), this saturated phenomenon, Christ appears as an "absolute phenomenon, one that annuls all relation because it saturates every possible horizon into which relation would introduce it." His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36) and His work "exceeds the horizon of this world:—they "demand other horizons and other worlds." Finally, Marion suggests, according to modality (an icon), that Christ appears as an "*irregardable*" phenomenon, regarding His own as witness "rather than some transcendental I" constituting Him to one's own liking.

The question, then, can be raised, What characterizes this revelatory experience? According to Marion, there is a threefold transformation. First, one's being in the world is not the same as before, when one was not able to ride a bike or when "their eyes were kept from recognizing Him." Before, it was an inaccessible world, but now, it is opened up or disclosed to one. Second, what is revealed to one is not only a revealed world, but one is revealed to oneself—one is not the same as before. The horizon of the "limited" world of before is expanded with bike rides, but also one has different experiences, socially, for example, by

joining a bike riding club and enjoying the new status of membership in it, or (re)joining those who also knew that Christ was risen. Thus, this triple transformation encompasses a change of one's being in the world, a newly revealed world; oneself is revealed with different experiences; and one is admitted or received in a new social context, which is transformed. This transformative phenomenon of revelation is revealed to one, transforms one, which, according to Marion, is different than Husserl's definition of a phenomenon. Husserl asserted that the transcendental "I" constituted a phenomenon; one constructs the phenomenon. Marion proposes, however, that there are phenomena that constitute one, unforgettable phenomena that are revealed to one from the outside, events that are not foreseen, which cannot be intentionally produced or reproduced. It happens once for all, and if other such events come, they will be different from the first. Thus, such a phenomenon is different than the classical and metaphysical approach to phenomena that is constituted through a synthesis of our own intuition and understanding—the thing as it appears to an observer, and reproducible (Kant).[46] Furthermore, the "I" is not the efficient cause of such phenomena but, according to Marion, if it could be said, the phenomenon is the efficient cause of the one (who experiences it). For example, a preacher delivers the same sermon twice, but with different results, ranging from an engaging to an inattentive response from the audience. What the preacher says and means, and what is understood, are different things. In other words, is the preacher the efficient cause of the reception of the word? No, there is something else that causes one to receive the word as it is experienced by the listener, whether or not one is (in)attentive, which is given and appropriated by the Spirit. In summary, there is a

[46] Kant distinguished between phenomena (constituting one's experiences) and noumena (constituting reality, the things themselves).

phenomenon that is experienced as revelation, a phenomenon that was not intentionally decided, constituted, or produced by oneself. The phenomenon confronts one, comes to or upon one; it is experienced while one does not see it, and it impacts and transforms one. Yet, at the same moment, it remains un-understandable to one, at least partially. Furthermore, the phenomenon finds its origin elsewhere, whatever that elsewhere is. The description of such phenomena deserves consideration in philosophy, according to Marion, for it gives itself as revelation. This understanding of revelation, with a small "r," falls within the boundaries of the definition of the phenomena described by Husserl (*Ideas* I, §24, 1913) and Heidegger (*Being and Time*, section 7, 1927) as that which gives itself by itself, and which appears without yielding to previous principles.[47] As such, the phenomenon of revelation is a phenomenon which comes by itself without asking for authorization, and is unconditioned, according to Marion. Therefore, for Marion, the possibility of revelation or apparition, as a self-given phenomenon, so far as it is given, is not limited by the subject's understanding.[48] The phenomenon of revelation, "I," is revealed from itself and appears in the mode of what gives itself. Thus, for Marion, revelation only manifests itself as a gift, independent of the one receiving it.[49] Revelation as gift, paradoxically, does not function in an exterior relationship between giver and receiver but is offered as an interior quality of the gift. Revelation as such (a pure givenness) changes then the "I" into a "me." Tin notes, "much in religious life loses

[47] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesiansche Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), Husserliana Band I:92; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie, Edwards Robsinson (trans.) (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 49–55.

[48] Cf. Mikkel B. Tin, "The Phenomenon of Revelation: Jean-Luc Marion's Outline for a Phenomenology of Religion," Svein Aage Christoffersen et al (eds.), *Transcendence and Sensoriness. Perceptions, Revelation, and the Arts* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 90, "though he sees two limitations, *horizon* and the *I*."

[49] Jean-Luc Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," *The Visible and the Revealed*, Christina M. Gschwandtner et al (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 80.

[then] its meaning…. [it] deprives the I of any possibility of directing itself intentionally towards it, and…seems impossible for the believer to prepare for it, to deserve it, to accommodate the revelation, that prayer and penitence, devotion and invocation lose their focus" and "will be of no use if the revelation is radically unforeseeable."[50] Such a contention might problematic for the history of religion, according to Marion, but for him it is about the conditions for the possibility of revelation. Marion, however, could also make an assertion as a philosopher and a Christian. That is, could he not appraise revelation phenomenologically as an event of grace as an unmerited gift? Revelation reveals itself as a gift, and the experiencing subject is subjected to revelation as a witness, according Marion. The witness experiences but does not always fully understand.

Change

The way Marion proposes the *possibility* of "*r*evelation" as a phenomenon within the boundaries of the accepted phenomenological method is different from the (theological) association of the word "revelation" in religious studies which is commonly understood as "*R*evelation," a divine or supernatural disclosure to human beings of the truth or knowledge of something relating to human existence or being in the world. Here, Marion asserts that there is a distinction between religion that is not based on revelation (Buddhism, for example), and religion based on revelation (Christianity, Judaism), which shifts "revelation" to "Revelation," respectively.

According to Marion, however, there are three parallels of the characteristics of

[50] Mikkel B. Tin, "The Phenomenon of Revelation: Jean-Luc Marion's Outline for a Phenomenology of Religion," Svein Aage Christoffersen et al (eds.), *Transcendence and Sensoriness. Perceptions, Revelation, and the Arts* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 97.

r/Revelation. There is, *first*, the subject or beneficiary of the revelation, the believer as witness. Marion suggests that the unique character of Revelation is that it is impossible to trace the limits of this phenomenon (in contrast to the knowledge of an objective phenomenon): the more one receives, the more (if considered) it can be meditated on, and thus the more one may comprehend or grasp it. In fact, the more one understands it, the more one knows how to understand so little or large a part that is not yet understood. On the one hand, it brings new clarity to the mind, a new experience; but on the other hand, there the experience is one of partial understanding. One can be a witness experiencing the phenomenon without yet having a full understanding of it, as Scripture attests in the account of Moses before the burning bush in Exodus 3, and the healed man in John 9. In other words, the witness knows the facts but not the meaning of the facts. The witness, then, is a reversal of the transcendental subject—one who testifies even when full understanding is absent, though with a certainty testimony.

Secondly, and in more recent reflections of revelation, Marion identifies resistance, that is, that the concept of revelation can undergo change in one's comprehension through the experience of the revelation.[51] When scientific concepts do not fit empirical results, the original concept is advanced so as to accommodate the empirical results. For example, a narrowly defined concept of the inspiration of Scripture may lead to an understanding of the Holy Spirit dictating word-by-word to the writer of the biblical text versus an organic inspiration of divine and human authorship.

Thirdly, when one considers Revelation, one must consider paradoxes, as there is no

[51] Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, 45–47.

predicate in revelation, but only paradox. Since Locke and the Enlightenment, Marion reminds us, the classical understanding of the reasonableness of Christianity is only acceptable when it agrees with the same things asserted by pure reason. *R*evelation, then, is optional and irrational, or on the level of reason, there is a spontaneous rationality to revelation which, in fact, is not revelation; or, one may say, there is an irreducible revelation that is irrational as far as reason is concerned. The question here is, As language is predicative, what is meant by "rational"? For example, Moses's question, "What is his name? What shall I say unto them?" is answered, "I am that I am…. I am has sent me to you" (Ex. 3:14). That is the paradox; it contradicts predicative logic. The point on paradox is crucial because in order to establish the experiential validity of the "saturated phenomena" (whose occurrence necessarily transgresses the representational subject as the horizon of meaning and possibility of experience), Marion must turn to another logic. That is, when it comes to these types of phenomena, the subject, even the phenomenological subject, no longer defines what is *possible* for experience. Instead, it experiences something which, by definition, transgresses the boundaries of possible experience. Thus, Marion must turn to another logic, one elaborated in theology (De Lubac) and in existential philosophy (Kierkegaard), that of the paradox.[52] One says something that is contradictory, which at the same moment makes perfect sense, such as, "whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will

[52] Jean-Luc Marion, "Le témoin et la paradoxe. Remarques sur la phénoménalité dans le texte biblique," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 11, "Le paradoxe définit, parmi les phénomènes que j'expérimente indiscutablement, ceux qui n'adviennent (comme des événements) qu'en *contre*-disant les conditions de mon expérience, donc ne s'imposent qu'en m'imposant une *contre*-expérience. Il faut suivre, ici encore, Kierkegaard… [The paradox defines, among the phenomena that I experience indisputably, those which only occur (as events) by counter-saying the conditions of my experience, and therefore only impose themselves by imposing a counter-experience on me. We must follow, again. Kierkegaard…"], Ibid., 12, "Ou bien, comme le remarque parfaitement H. de Lubac, il faut distinguer « les paradoxes d'expression : on exagère pour "faire valoir" » et les « paradoxes réels », qui supposent une antinomie résistante…"[Or, as H. de Lubac perfectly observes, we must distinguish between "paradoxes of expression: one exaggerates in order to 'assert'" and "real paradoxes," which presuppose a resistant antinomy…"]. Dr. Victor Emma-Adamah is acknowledged.

keep it" (Luke 17:33). "Theologically," Marion extrapolates, "the event of Revelation implies that transition of what does not show itself to that which makes itself visible."[53]

Appraisal

If r/Revelation can be conceived of phenomenologically, as proposed by Marion, the following preliminary appraisal is offered. First, Compaan asserts that Marion's proposal of the possibility of revelation, rather the actuality of Revelation, "is not unproblematic and raises at least two huge problems in terms of phenomenology."[54] These "huge problems" are Derrida's suspicion that Marion's concept of givenness may lead ultimately to the idea that any gift is a divine gift, and Janicaud's concern that Marion's concepts regarding the possibility of revelation may become theological truth claims. If the preparation of a sermon, however, is concerned with a proper non-theological understanding of concepts, such as revelation, Marion's philosophical proposal may be of benefit to the audience—to both the confessional believer and the skeptic, helping them grasp the possibility of revelation. Horner's suggestion to have a "credible dialogue" may be a challenge and opportunity for those preparing a sermon. The challenge is to consider Marion's argument philosophically and not theologically—that is, giving serious thought of Marion's *possibility* of revelation, its context and character, *without* considering its *actuality*. In regard to the former, to consider Christ as the ultimately saturated phenomenon, the revealed One of the invisible One (Col. 1:15), the One who reveals Himself to His own (Luke 10:22, John 14:21, Gal. 1:16), and the

[53] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, Christina M. Gschwantner et al. (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), xi.

[54] Auke Compaan, "The revelation of Christ as an impossible impossibility: a critical reading of Jean-Luc Marion's contribution to the post-modern debate in phenomenology, philosophy of religion and theology," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* (2015), 1.1: 68. The article helpfully summarizes Marion's work, though rehearses predominantly earlier scholarship, including that of Jacques Derrida, Dominique Janicaud as interlocutors and Robyn Horner as commentator of Marion's work on r/Revelation.

One who reveals one to oneself (John 3:20, Eph. 5:13)—"a phenomenon *par excellence*."[55] Concerning the latter, the *actuality* of revelation, the character of revelation transforms and affects one experientially (*Befindlichkeit*). These philosophical considerations, then, can function in the preparation of a sermon that is contemplated within confessional boundaries, such as the *Dei Verbum* and *Confessio Belgica*. If r/Revelation is understood in relational terms, the One revealing to one through His Word, the Christian faith assents that the Divine speaks to one in the depths of experience. As Horner underscores, "it is not enough that I hear God's Word spoken in general terms; I must hear it addressed to me directly, and that requires not only the repetition of the *kerygma* but also and especially that Word speaking in the speaking circumstances and shape of my own life—God speaking to me."[56] The Christological apex of Marion's philosophical possibility of revelation, in light of the relational potentiality of r/Revelation through the sermon, is noteworthy—if divine givenness contains a Christological moment in word and sacrament, then the possibility of Christ revealed in the lived experience cannot be excluded, particularly in the homiletic event. Secondly, Marion's argument in favor of the *possibility* of revelation, without straying into Revelation (*actuality*), may seem initially to constrain the Christian and confessional preacher (the one preparing a sermon) from connecting revelation and experience. Yet, it may at the same time offer the possibility of a common language for the believer and non-believer to consider Marion's argument with the realization that revelation is a personal, experiential encounter. Thirdly, the limits of phenomenology, in its consideration of revelation as a possible phenomenon, should not be overlooked. The objections that have been raised are

[55] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, Christina M. Gschwandtner et al. (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), xi.

[56] Horner, "A Phenomenology of Revelation" (n.p).

valid in so far as these concern biblical, and not philosophical, studies. However, the integrity of Marion's distinct attention to philosophical concerns is widely acknowledged, though some see too many religious or theological overtones in his work. These identified limitations, however, will be re-considered, after turning to Emmanuel Falque.

2.2 Emmanuel Falque on Philosophy, Theology, and Scripture

Emmanuel Falque elegantly exploits Scripture in his philosophical works, which "draw ardent support and suspicious resistance."[57] Tentative support can be found in Benjamins's appraisal of Falque's *opera*, while "suspicious resistance" comes from Gschwandtner's assessment of Falque's Christology.[58] The work of the honorary dean of the faculty of philosophy at the *Institut Catholique de Paris*, however, is worth evaluating in the context of the phenomenological reading of Scripture. The question is how the biblical text functions or operates within philosophy and *vice-versa*, and the answer may assist in determining whether phenomenology can be applied to the process of the preparation of a sermon.

Falque focusses throughout his work on specific passages of Scripture, such as Luke 10:38–42 (on Jesus, Martha, and Mary), as well as subjects found in Scripture. His primary focus, however, is on themes shared by common humanity, such as birth, suffering, death, finitude, and the Christian belief in the resurrection, referring widely to Scripture in his triptych, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, and *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*.[59] Three characteristics can be distinguished in Falque's philosophical *œuvre*

[57] Joseph S. O'Leary, "Passer le Rubicon: Philosophie et théologie. Essai sur les frontiers," *The Journal of Theological Studies* (Oct. 2013) 64.2: 841–845.

[58] Jacob Benjamins, "De fenomenologie van Emmanuel Falque. Nieuwe richtingen in de Franse filosopfie en theologie," *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* (2018) 58.1:80–90; Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 289–292.

[59] Emmanuel Falque, *God, The Flesh and the Other, From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus* (Evanston, Illinois,

concerning the use of Scripture: methodological considerations, philosophical concerns, and implications for the biblical text. These three features are intertwined, implicit, or explicit at times. Sometimes these features are philosophical in nature, and sometimes they are theologically oriented. Gschwandtner notes, "Falque, at least in principle, distinguishes more clearly between 'philosophical' and 'theological' aspects in his work…. but then goes on to meld them even more than the other two [Marion and Henry]." Thus, at stake here is a methodological consideration, the first point of appraisal.

Methodological Considerations

The introduction chapter has appraised the relationship between philosophy and theology in general, including Falque's thought. The concern here, however, is what the implications of the relationship of philosophy (phenomenology) and theology for the reading of Scripture are phenomenologically, if any. First, and broadly, Falque is sensitive to "believers" and "non-believers" as he seeks a phenomenology to serve as a "*common grammar* with our contemporaries whose first language is the language of the human *per se*—finitude or humanity without God."[60] Phenomenology, as such, however, should not be understood as a shared idiom between church and world, or as a substitute of natural theology, as suggested

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Northwestern University Press, 2015), 82–102 (Luke 10:38–42). Note: Falque discusses this passage of Scripture in the context of a sermon of Meister Eckhart, as does John D. Caputo, *The Insistence of God. A Theology of Perhaps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 39–56; Emmanuel Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude. An Essay on Birth and Resurrection* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2012), 1, 4–6. See also, Emmanuel Falque, "The Hidden Source of Hermeneutics. The Art of Reading in Hugh of St. Victor," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy - Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française* (2017) 25.1:121–131.

[60] Emmanuel Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon. The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, Reuben Shank (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 133. Italics in the original. Falque echoes here John-Paul II address to the bishops of Western Canada (1999), "We need a new apologetic, geared to the needs of today...Such an apologetic will need to find a common "grammar" with those who see thing differently and do not share our assumptions, lest we end up speaking different languages even though we may be using the same tongue." For a critical multi-panel appraisal of *Crossing the Rubicon,* see https://syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/crossing-the-rubicon/ (2018) (accessed May 26, 2020).

by Gschwandtner.[61] Phenomenology ought to be practiced, for Falque, following Ricœur (Protestant) and Lévinas (Jewish), "independently of any belief or faith conviction,"[62] and its argumentation should be accessible to all, and "possibly shared unanimously."[63] Every worldview, however, discloses "a certain way of seeing the world," and all people have experiences, including religious experiences. It is here that phenomenology, as philosophical practice, offers, for the French phenomenologists, a pathway to theology, and Falque "thinks philosophy offers theology the intelligibility of its own claims."[64] Philosophy and theology—and by extension biblical interpretation, for Falque, mutually enrich each other in their "crossing from [the biblical text] to philosophy and philosophy to [the biblical text]."[65] The meeting of these two disciplines—philosophy and biblical interpretation—while intending to preserve the autonomy of both, can be fruitful as understood through human experience and language. As such, it would not exclude phenomenological considerations for the reading of Scripture, as Falque widely deploys the biblical text throughout his philosophical work. In fact, on the one hand, his concern for the believer is less about trying "to-be-believed by others" and more about presenting one's faith as believable to oneself—to think of God differently. Falque's work is concerned with making Christianity "credible," and not only believable, at the same time that it shows its philosophical fruitfulness.[66] His regard, on the

[61] Christina Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University press, 2012), 5ff. *Contra* Falque, see Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, 82.

[62] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 40.

[63] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 40.

[64] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 3.

[65] Cyril O'Regan, "Emmanuel Falque: Eucharistic Crossings Between Philosophy and Theology," *Church Life Journal* (June 6, 2018). Cf. https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/emmanuel-falque-eucharistic-crossings-between-philosophy-and-theology/ (accessed May 22, 2020). The quote is a variation on Falque's words, "crossing from theology to philosophy and philosophy to theology."

[66] Alain Saudan *Penser dieu autrement. Introduction a l'oeuvre d'Emmanuel Falque* (Meaux: Germina, 2013). Cf. See Introduction chapter of this study.

other hand, for the integrity of the "nescient" non-believer is equally important.[67] Phenomenology, then, for Falque, offers to both the believer and non-believer a possibility of thinking of God nowadays in a world where He sometimes seems to have no place, a sentiment resonating with Bonhoeffer's assertion that

> we cannot be honest unless we recognize that we have to live in the world *etsi deus non daretur* [as if there were no God]. And this is just what we do recognize—before God! God himself compels us to recognize it. So our coming of age leads us to a true recognition of our situation before God...The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God.[68]

That such view of humanity and its philosophical consideration should be taken seriously by preachers today in reading and proclaiming the biblical text goes without saying. A sermon, then, is prepared neither for "insiders" nor "outsiders" but having a common humanity in view. If Falque's argument on philosophy and theology can be sustained,[69] one can see that phenomenology, methodologically, is applicable to the reading of Scripture, homiletics, and the preparing of a homily—though not without its challenges.

Philosophical Concerns

The project of phenomenology for Falque is a practice of philosophy, consisting of philosophy *per se*, Scripture, and the Church Fathers. Philosophy, the love (φιλο) of wisdom (σοφία), according to the fundamental nature of knowledge or experience, aims for the art of

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[67] Cf. Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 1–2.

[68] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Eberhard Bethe (ed.) (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971), 360. Cf. Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 1–3. See on phenomenology and postmodernity, for example, Michael McGravey, "Jean-Luc Marion and Gianni Vattimo's Contributions for the Postmodern Faith" (Pittsburgh: PhD diss., Duquesne University, 2018).

[69] Martin Koci, Jason Alvis (eds.), *Transforming the Theological Turn. Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020).

living (*ars vivendi*). His use of Scripture, then, aims to clarify philosophical concepts, whereby, *mutatis mutandis*, the text of Scripture is enlightened by a phenomenological reading. More precisely, Falque argues *contra* Gschwandtner that the practice of phenomenology "is not reduced to the simple usage of the natural light (philosophy) in order to clarify the supernatural (theology). On the contrary, by using another light...the believer, like the phenomenologists, will uncover the light of another intentionally dwelling within."[70] Here the reading of Scripture is, however, marked by a deemphasis, but not dismissal, of textual hermeneutics (Ricœur) in favor of a Catholic hermeneutics, as will be discussed below. His appeal to the *patres*—that is the Patristic and (early) medieval era—is not only meant to clarify matters of philosophy but also to underscore the obliteration of the distinction between the disciplines of philosophy and theology, which was absent in ancient times as well. Flowing from this general concern, Falque, secondly, suggests that the "universal scope of philosophy cannot end on the threshold of theology."[71] Philosophical inquiries on birth, body, voice, anguish, anxiety, and death are enlightened by scriptural evidence. The result is twofold or bi-directional: the passage or text of Scripture is philosophically, interpretatively enriched, and the Word enriches philosophy. Theology arising from Scripture or the "theological itself may modify the philosophical to the point of transforming its structure and even making it secondary...even if it remains a *hapax legoumenon*."[72] Thus for Falque, "the better one theologizes, the more one philosophizes,"[73] which may lead to the "revision of the

[70] Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, 82.

[71] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 138. See also Emmanuel Falque, "Philosophie et théologie: Nouvelles frontiers," *Études* (2006), 404.2: 201–210.

[72] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 52.

[73] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 24, 107, 139, 147.

commonplace of phenomenology itself."[74] These philosophical concerns, then, have implications for the reading of Scripture in the process of preparing a sermon.

Scriptural Reflections

In order to appraise Falque's use of the biblical text within philosophy, one has to address his view on biblical or textual hermeneutics. First, Falque commends Ricœur's "Protestant hermeneutic," which is centered on the meaning of the text—a possible adherence to the notion of *sola scriptura*, the return to Scripture as text.[75] The "autonomy of the text," for the philosopher from Nanterre, is furthermore reached through the concept of distanciation, which consists of a triple reduction or *epoché*: a distancing (*Verfremdung*) from the one who wrote the text (author), receives the text (reader), and to which the text refers (the referent). In the context of its time, both admiration for the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation and theologically articulated textual exegesis had come to a standstill. Ricœur's textual focus is praised by Falque, not only because Ricœur's hermeneutical approach is "Husserl's great legacy," but because it appeared "as a defining moment, 'the appearance of the subjectivity of the reader' and 'the appropriation (*Aneignung*) of the text, its application (*Anwendung*) to the present situation of the reader.'"[76] In short, Ricœur proposes the capacity "to understand oneself 'in front of the text'" and to expose "ourselves to the text"—"receiving from it an enlarged self.'"[77]

[74] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 56. Falque argues, thereby, that philosophy can "liberate theology," and on the other hand transforms theology also philosophy.

[75] Falque especially commends Ricœur's "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics" (1975) and "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" (1975).

[76] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 33.

[77] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 34. Cf. Ricœur, *From Text to Action,* 87–88.

Ricœur's textual hermeneutics, then, for Falque, delivers from historical-critical exegesis, and aims for *praxis*—a movement from text to action that is in "a tropological sense" turning the text into one's own transformation.[78] Falque, then, commends Ricœur's hermeneutic, "centered on the *meaning of the text*," and its concept of distanciation, which gives the text "autonomy," and as such, follows the premises of Husserlian phenomenology, prohibiting a confessional reading of Scripture, as Ricœur affirms: "biblical hermeneutics," that is, a Protestant reading of Scripture, "receives an important warning from philosophical hermeneutics: it must not be too quick to construct a theology of the Word."[79] Here a distinction can be made between a phenomenological reading of Scripture and the biblical text itself—a thought suggested by Sokolowski and proposed by Nemes.[80] Such a reading of Scripture can be done within the boundaries of the church and tradition only, according to Nemes, which is a rejection of the idea of *Sola Scriptura.*[81] This Protestant concept of biblical authority over tradition approaches and reads the Word from a "metaphysical perspective." A phenomenological approach, however, according to Nemes, "emphasizes the order of appearances in human consciousness as the only medium of access to 'the things themselves.'"[82] Such a reading of Scripture, moreover, equates with the spiritual sense, which

[78] Cf. Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 34. Falque adheres to a classical Catholic four-fold sense of Scripture. See Ricœur, *From Text to Action,* 105–226, "From the Hermeneutics of Texts to the Hermeneutics of Action."

[79] Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 93.

[80] Robert Sokolowski, "God's Word and Human Speech," Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture*, 20–43.

[81] Steven Nemes, "On aspects of a proto-phenomenology of Scripture in Origen," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* (2018) 60(4): 499–517. *Contra* Nemes, see Godina Bojan, "Sola & Tota Scriptura—Intrabiblical Phenomenology," *Scientia Moralitas International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* (2017) 2.1:37–58. Bojan proposes that Scripture itself affirms this Protestant and Reformed principle. In fact, the Bible has requested these precise methodological steps [of phenomenology] in its instruction manual…in an application-oriented manner" (53).

[82] Nemes, "On aspects of a proto-phenomenology of Scripture in Origen," 516.

merits "the designation of 'saturated phenomenon,'" following Marion.[83] Yet, Falque critiques Ricœur for remaining at the boundaries of philosophy, which he sees as programmatic for his philosophy, and concludes, "Ricœur is a man of the opening and breakthrough, but never crosses the threshold,"[84] while observing acutely that Ricœur's philosophy, though taking place in a Protestant context, "seems paradoxically to have had a greater impact in Catholicism."[85] Therefore, Falque, while acknowledging a great debt to Ricœur, pursues a Catholic hermeneutic that is "anchored...in *corporeality* as the center and heart of the activity of interpretation."[86] For Falque, a Catholic hermeneutic includes, first, a stress of the fourfold sense of Scripture, which should not be dismissed too easily, as he asserts, in addition to recognition of the importance of the literal and tropological sense: "today the time has come to deploy an allegorical sense—that is, what you are to believe—and even an anagogical sense, or that for which you must aim."[87] Moreover, Scripture must be understood as "a life that addresses itself to a life. It is a Living Being that turns towards a living being or," according to Falque, "*a body that speaks to a body*."[88] This leads Falque from the Word to the Eucharist—imperative for a confessional Catholic.[89] This is illustrated,

[83] Nemes, "On aspects of a proto-phenomenology of Scripture in Origen," 509. For Marion's thought on this see below "Marion on r/Revelation."

[84] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 141.Falques critique is that Ricœur in (1) *Finitude and Culpability* (1960) discusses fallibility and sin but not addresses grace and redemption, "without which its meaning—even its philosophical meaning—is in a certain way obscured or at least amputated" (140), (2) *Conflict of Interpretations* (1969), in which "the revealed is contemplated without being...affirmed" (141) in the context of textual hermeneutics, (3) *Time and Narrative* (1983) that lack attentions to concepts of eternity and resurrection, and (4) *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2000) where forgiveness is considered "but never in the sense of a divine action coming to transform everything."

[85] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 40.

[86] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 30. Italics in the original.

[87] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 35.

[88] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 31. Italics in the original.

[89] See on the relation body and Eucharist, Emmanuel Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb. Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*, George Hughes (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

according to Falque, in the experience of the disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), where Christ's hermeneutic of the text "chronologically" precedes the Eucharist, though the latter is the foundation of the former.[90] Falque's concern is the possibility of a detachment of the text from the Word (*Parole*) and the word from sacrament (Eucharist), as seen in the work of Ricœur, who maintains the Protestant concern that a Catholic hermeneutic of corporeality, as proposed by Falque, may overshadow the Word by the prominence of the Eucharist. However, before allowing a Protestant dismissal of this direction, one must realize that Falque's main concern is that the Word "live in us" and cause us to experience the Bread of Life in participation with the eucharistic bread, which becomes part of and lives in the participant. Although it cannot be denied, at least from a Protestant perspective, that the biblical text can become inferior to corporeality (per Falque's Catholic hermeneutic), one could envision advancing Ricœur's hermeneutic centered on the meaning of the text and restraining Falque's hermeneutic centered on the corporeality. Leaving aside the outcome of the ninth-century Radbertus-Ratramus controversy on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist,[91] the dichotomy of the sacred Word and sacrament can be overcome by a "*c*atholic" hermeneutic—that is, a phenomenology of the Living Word living in one through *Word*, as attested in Psalm 119:103, Jeremiah 15:16, and Ezekiel 3:1–3,[92] and through the *sacrament* to "feed and nourish your hungry and thirsty souls with my crucified body...as *this*

[90] Cf. Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 49. With reference to the *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (1965), III. 18, "the faithful are nourished in the Word of God at the double table of the Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist."

[91] Ratramnus (d. 868) understood the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist spiritual (*spiritualiter*), while Paschasius Radbertus (785–865) emphasized the true presence of the body of Christ (*corporaliter*). Falque adheres to the latter. Cf. Emmanuel Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb. Eris, the Body, and the Eucharist*, 191, 195, 208.

[92] Respectively, "Your words were found, and I did eat them;" "Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart;"" How sweet are *Your words* unto my taste! yea *sweeter than honey* to my mouth!

bread is broken before your eyes."[93] Christ as the Living Word feeds one with his crucified body as assuredly as this bread is broken before one's eyes. The phenomenology of the text leads to Christ (Henry), whose body is represented in the bread. Thirdly, Falque echoes, moreover, Claude Romano's assertion that "authentic hermeneutics is phenomenology and phenomenology is accomplished only as hermeneutics…. Hermeneutics and phenomenology would be the flowing of a same 'essence,' of a same bud."[94] Janicaud differs on this point, asserting, "phenomenology and hermeneutics remain, as much in their origin as in their relatively recent autonomisation, more disjointed than joined."[95] Falque, however, proposes a co-dependency: "it is no longer a matter of thinking hermeneutics *and* phenomenology but hermeneutics *is* phenomenology."[96] The text, therefore, is described phenomenologically (for experience) and interpreted hermeneutically (for meaning). As such, Falque suggests that "the phenomenality of the text overtakes a hermeneutics of the text"[97] so that the word can be experienced by the reader as a "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*)—in terms of Husserlian phenomenology as "intentional" lived experiences[98]—but not experienced exclusively as a text. Two examples may suffice to show Falque's thought on reading the biblical text.

First, a phenomenological reading of Mark 14:32–43 highlights Christ's threefold experience in the Garden of Gethsemane: Christ in relation with his three disciples

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[93] *Catechesis Religionis Christianae, Qvae Traditvr In Ecclesiis Et Scholis Palatinus* (Heidelberg: Michael Schirat, 1563), 29; *Biblia, dat is: De gantsche H. Schrifture* n.p., 1641), "Formulier om het Heylighe Nachmael te houden," 26. See also Jean Calvin, *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (Geneva: Oliva Roberti Stephani, 1559), IV.17.1.

[94] Claude Romano*, Au cœur de la raison*, *la phénoménologie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), 874.

[95] Janicaud, *Phenomenology "Wide Open": After the French Debate*, 48.

[96] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 47.

[97] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 50–54.

[98] That is, "through its eidetic essence as 'a consciousness of.'" Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*: *General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2014, reprint), 253.

(*intersubjectivity*, Husserl), Christ in relation with "the cup" (*Angst*, Heidegger), and Christ in relation to His Father (*abandonment*, Sartre). His lived experience precedes the reader's experience of the text. "In this case," according to Falque, "we are first and foremost facing neither the *text*, although the text may set us in motion, nor *ourselves* from whom we must first learn to turn away in order to see him truly as he is showing himself."[99] In other words, the "epiphany internal" of the text or its "own phenomenality" is manifested without words but is experienced.[100]

Secondly, a reading of the account of Jesus, Martha, and Mary (Luke 10) is illustrative for Falque's use of Scripture and phenomenology. The common reading of this passage elevates Mary's disposition to Jesus over Martha's preoccupation with hospitality, which, Falque suggests, should be reversed. The evangelist highlights Martha, the one who received Jesus into her home—the place where He resides. The focus is not the exteriority—Mary sitting in His presence, but interiority, which gives Martha to practice to live in the world, and the *epoché*, and *detachment* from the Lord as "thing" (*Abgeschiedenheit*), which she desires for her sister.[101] Instead the possible negative reading of "you are concerned for yourself" (Martha), the reading could be "you are watchful," Martha being concerned for Mary who is not able to live "according to the mode of reduction." That is, Martha is being "in" Him—a "'reduced' presence of the Lord in Martha or of Martha in the Lord withdraws in some sense from the objective mode of their relation." Therefore, Jesus's word, "one thing is necessary," should be understood, according to Falque, as saying that "God is not *objectively given*

[99] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 51. Italics in original.

[100] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 52.

[101] Cf. Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 84.

exteriorly but is *intentionally engendered interiorly*."[102] This phenomenological reading of Scripture, however, is embedded in Falque's discussion on the sermons of Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–c. 1328) on the passage. This is not uncharacteristic for Falque to explicate Scripture phenomenologically together with the reading of the "church fathers and the medievals *philosophically*—up to and including the corpus of theology."[103] Three reasons can be identified for such a reading: to underscore the mutually beneficial unity of the disciplines theology and philosophy, the transformation of philosophy through the reading of the fathers, and the fresh reading of the biblical text—a reading that was recognized in the past and is now rediscovered through the practice of phenomenology. The suggested approach of Falque in reading Scripture via a phenomenological hermeneutic, then, is strikingly different than reading with a view of the interpreter as the location of meaning (Heidegger), the understanding of God as the "Totally Other" who cannot be known through reason or human experience (Barth), the hermeneutics of recollection and suspicion (Ricœur), or interpretation before the face of the Other (Lévinas) and other post-historical hermeneutics, including the New Hermeneutic.[104]

Appraisal

By his methodological proposal of breaking through of the boundaries of philosophy and

[102] Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, 93.

[103] Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, xxi. *Italics* in original. Here Falque reads philosophically Augustine, John Scotus Erigena, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Bonaventure, Origin, Aquinas, Duns Scotus in addition to Eckhart. See also, Emmanuel Falque, "The Hidden Source of Hermeneutics. The Art of Reading in Hugh of St. Victor," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* (2017) xxv.1:121–131. Other French phenomenologist also appeal to Eckart, see Michel Henry, "Christianity. A Phenomenological Approach?" *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* (2018) xxvi.2:95.

[104] See for a comprehensive discussion on the crises of historical meaning, and post-historical hermeneutics, B.H. McClean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

theology, Falque goes beyond Marion's upheld distinction of the disciplines. Falque's methodological concern and his practice of phenomenology, then, may alleviate concerns related to philosophy and biblical exegesis (per Gschwandtner, Brueggemann, Martin, and others). In other words, if Falque's crossing of the Rubicon is sustained, philosophy justifiably can be deployed in reading Scripture phenomenologically. As such, phenomenology is a new or alternative hermeneutic that is applicable to biblical studies or, even more daringly, phenomenology cancels the distinction between disciplines, offering a venue for an alternative or new reading of Scripture. That such a reading comes with surprising results is seen in the meditation on the Luke 10 narrative, which shifts the traditional focus on Jesus and Mary to Jesus and Martha. However, one should take into consideration Falque's appeal to the Patristic and medieval authors to support this reading. Falque can justify this appeal because of his views on philosophy and theology, though the weight and significance of these authors can be challenged. In other words, it is one thing to observe that a certain reading of Scripture is noted in the past, but having philosophy and phenomenology interact with the biblical text in that way is questionable historically (beyond Gilson) and methodologically (beyond Ricœur). Finally, the phenomenological reading of Scripture by Falque often ends in the Eucharist with a transubstantiated Word, which functions in the broader context of his philosophical work (*God, the Flesh, and the Other*). This might spark theological tension with a Protestant reading of Scripture, but it also may offer a phenomenological reappraisal of the Lord's Supper within the Reformed tradition.[105] Those preparing a sermon, however, may benefit from Falque's phenomenological approach

[105] See for a phenomenological reappraisal of the Eucharist, Kevin J. Connors, "Phenomenology of the Eucharist: A Reflecting on Traditioning" (PhD diss. Victoria University of Wellington, 2018).

to the biblical text in three ways: a position on the borderlands between philosophy and theology advances Marion's thought on the possibility of r/Revelation. Falque's proposed obliteration of philosophy and theology through phenomenology opens a way for conceptualizing the actuality of the revealed Word. Secondly, Falque's proposed confessional hermeneutic may offer restraint to an individualistic reading of Scripture that is inherent to the practice phenomenology. Although his proposed Catholic hermeneutics may meet resistance, the function of communal and confessional reading should not be dismissed *a priori*. Thirdly, the intimate and phenomenological connection and continuum of the visible Word, the biblical text, and the Eucharist, directs a sermon to Christ, and facilitates the experience of the words of the text (1 Cor. 11:23–30): as "I have given my body to the death of the cross, and shed my blood for you; and as certainly feed and nourish your hungry and thirsty souls with my crucified body, and shed blood, to everlasting life, as this bread is broken before your eyes, and this cup is given to you, and you eat and drink the same with your mouth, in remembrance of me." Phenomenologically, this is one "seeing" of the w/Word in along a continuum from the biblical text to the elements of Holy Communion, nourishing and feeding on Christ from His body to my body, from His blood to my blood—a transformative experience through the w/Words of Christ.

2.3 Michel Henry on the "Words of Christ"

Paroles du Christ is a philosophical work, as Henry is neither a biblical exegete nor a theologian. This is important to clarify, even as his three final works mark the uniqueness of Christianity—though appraised philosophically.[106] In fact, according to Henry, the truth of

[106] See *C'est moi la Vérité. Pour une philosophie du christianisme* (1996), *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair* (2000) and *Paroles du Christ* (2002). Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, Susan Emmanuel (trans.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Ibid, *Incarnation: A*

Christianity, as presented in Scripture, justifying itself and not requiring external evidence, cannot be reduced to biblical criticism, exegesis, or historical analysis.[107] As such, the word of Christianity, taken at face value, is often overlooked by philosophers, and ignored in its claims by biblical scholars.[108] Moreover, and relevant in the context of the discussion on the phenomenological reading of Scripture, Henry's work, *Words of Christ*, in particular, is significant for two reasons in relation to this study: the Word (*Verbe*, *Parole*) and preaching.[109] After reviewing these, we will conclude with an appraisal of the possible implications of Henry's phenomenological reflections for preaching.

The Word (*Verbe, Parole*)

Henry's *Words of Christ* is concerned with Christ's words and Christ as the Word of God. It surveys the synoptic Gospels, and as such is broader in its appeal to Scripture than the Gospel of John, as in *C'est moi la Vérité*. Henry's survey considers, first, the words of Christ as a human being speaking to humans about themselves in their own language; second, speaking about Himself, presenting Himself as the Word (*Verbe*) of God; third, how Christ's word differs from human speech; and fourth, how humans are capable of hearing and understanding this Word, "which is not theirs but that of God."[110] The first two points will be

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Philosophy of Flesh, Karl Hefty (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Pres s, 2015); Ibid., *Words of Christ*, Christina Gschwandtner (trans) (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 2012); Ruud Welten, "God is Life. On Michel Henry's Arch-Christianity," Pieter Jonkers, Ruud Welten (eds.), *God in France. Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 119–142.

Note: Section 2.3 does not address Henry's critique of classical Husserlian phenomenology.

[107] Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 1–11.

[108] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 68, "[T]his word in which the immanent self-revelation of Life is accomplished differs in every way from all those in the world. It is not paradoxical in the least to observe…that it remains unknown to philosophers, linguist, and any number of exegetes."

[109] A brief exposition of his philosophy is found in the Chapter 1 of this study and serves as a wider context of *Words of Christ.*

[110] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 9.

considered in this section, while the last two considerations will be discussed under "preaching." Henry asserts, "if Christ's nature is twofold, one can image that his speaking (parole) is also dual"— not a duplicity of words, but a different and distinct human and divine word. It is necessary to understand this distinction, as many people neither hear Christ's word nor find these words intelligible, and as such "many did not believe and continue not to believe."[111] The intelligibility of Scripture is at stake for Henry, as it is for Marion (revelation), Chrétien (Bible), and Falque (theology). Why is this important to Henry? For centuries the Word of God was unreservedly accepted and "immediately lived as such," but such has declined in modern times—a modernity "which is constantly on the verge of collapse into its own nothingness" (Sartre, Derrida).[112] In a world where the prospects of science and technology are increasing and, according to Henry, destroying the roots of culture and the value of the individual human beings,[113] how can one distinguish and listen to the words of Christ?

Here Henry's concept of Christ's words about humans themselves and about Himself is useful. In regard to Christ's words about humans, Henry asserts that His word reveals the human heart, the interiority where "one is human in distinction from all 'things'" where one experiences oneself. [114] "Things" has to do with the visible and the exterior, which are foreign to life and yet are the object of human preoccupation, according to Henry. Furthermore,

[111] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 6.

[112] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 8.

[113] This the main argument of Michel Henry, *La barbarie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987, 2004). English translation by S. Davidson and published as *Barbarism* (London/ New York: Continuum, 2012). Henry is deeply concerned about the "techno-scientific alienation from life." Cf. Christina M. Gschwandtner, "The Truth of Christianity? Michel Henry's *Words of Christ*," *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* (2014) 13:13.

[114] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 12.

Christ's critique of the human condition relates also to the religious establishment, the Pharisees, who are primarily concerned with outward things and human traditions.[115] The "heart," however, describes human reality, essentially the affective dimension of life. Real living, then, consists in "experiencing oneself," being revealed to oneself."[116] Thus human life is not reduced to a scientific or biological description, but is understood as experiencing oneself emotively, as articulated in Mark 7:21.[117] Christ's word, according to Matthew 15:11–20, Mark 7:14–23, and other places in the gospels that speak about the heart, discloses what humans really are in themselves. In this way Henry challenges one concept of reality by showing the true human condition per Christ's word, concluding that "human nature is marked by an evil which is held in the heart. Not improvement but complete transformation is required. A transformation so radical that it properly signifies a change of nature, a sort of transubstantiation…a regeneration—in the sense of a new birth."[118] As such, one's world is turned upside down, causing a "radical upheaval," when Christ speaks to human beings about themselves.[119] Several observations are in order concerning Henry's reading of Scripture. First, he advances a humanistic-philosophical reading, evident in the opening pages of *Words of Christ*: "Let us be content for the moment to observe how in these words one sees this

[115] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 11, "Then the disciples approached and said to him,' Do you know that the Pharisees took offence when they heard what you said?"; Ibid., 16, "beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them…"

[116] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 73.

[117] "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery…" Cf. Henry, *Words of Christ*, 112–13. Nota bene, although Henry discusses here the most essential of the human condition, he does not disregard the premier status of human in creation. Ibid., 14–15, "When speaking to humans about themselves, Christ also continuously place before their gaze their superiority over the entire universe." And therefore, "I [Christ] tell you, do not worry about your life…"

[118] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 23.

[119] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 28–29.

supposed human system."[120] Gscwandtner therefore assesses Henry's thought as "far more inclusive" to other religious traditions, or more qualified, that Henry is drawing from the Christian text positing the philosophical argument contra the sciences (biology is not life, visible vs. invisible phenomena, exteriority vs. interiority) rather than contra other religions.[121] Yet, reading the Words of Christ in the context of Henry's concluding *œuvre* (*C'est moi la Vérité, Incarnation*), the construction of his philosophical argument has been drawn exclusively from the Christian Scripture, not the Koran or Hindu texts (Vedas, Samhitas, and other texts). Second, he reads the text as is—the words of Christ to people are the same words spoken then and now. The words of Christ as recorded in the texts of the gospels are "authentic documents…whose origins are beyond doubt."[122] Furthermore, for Henry, there is no historical context, Ricœurian distanciation is considered, and no biblical hermeneutics and exegesis is exercised, other than reading the biblical text phenomenological. "His relation to the text," according Gschwandtner, "is rather ambivalent," ignoring past theological disputes over biblical texts, like "This is my body."[123] Furthermore, for Gschwandter and others, Henry's approach to the biblical text is a "serious problem,"[124] and his "rejection or at least suppression of hermeneutics I find deeply troubling."[125] Therefore, questions have been raised concerning the work of Henry and other French phenomenologists.

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[120] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 20.

[121] Gschwandtner, "The Truth of Christianity? Michel Henry's *Words of Christ*," 1, 9. Henry's apathy for sciences should be read in a French context that present sciences as the only version of truth and "imposes its parameters on all other version of truth" (10).

[122] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 6–7.

[123] Christina Gschwandtner, "Can we hear the voice of God? Michel Henry and the Words of Christ?" Bruce Ellis Benson, Norman Wirzba (eds.), *Words of Life: New theological Turns in French Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 150.

[124] Gschwandtner, "Can we hear the voice of God? Michel Henry and the Words of Christ?" 154–156.

[125] Gschwandtner, "Can we hear the voice of God? Michel Henry and the Words of Christ?" 154.

For example, Does the immediacy of Christ's word leave room for responding to that Word? Does the "immediacy" experienced in the heart lead to solipsism and reduction of the divine word? Here, the experiential character of Christianity is doubted when one "knows its Truth in one's heart. Yet this 'knowing' seems a very dangerous one without hermeneutic judgments guiding one's interpretation of the message of the heart," according to Gschwandtner.[126] Moreover, does the phenomenological reading of Scripture, as suggested by Henry and others, open the door to possible misreading? Furthermore, as it has been questioned, Is the response by the French phenomenologists to the contemporary nihilistic and consumeristic culture not too exclusive, i.e., addressed only from a Christian perspective?[127] Gschwandtner's critique, though, may be fueled by a lack of appreciation for Henry's argument, which finds a more balanced perspective and assessment in John Behr's recent work. On Henry's work, Behr observes that "the First Epistle of John, which appears to begin with a worldly manifestation ('what we have heard ...seen with our eyes'), but abruptly breaks with the phenomenality of the world, for what has been heard and seen is 'the Word of Life', so that what is 'proclaimed' is 'the eternal Life that was with the Father and manifest to us' (1 John 1:1–5). In this self-revelation of Life we attain to Life and thus the Word." Therefore, "by reading Scripture…we can be recalled, because of our originary identity with Christ as living ones in the Living One, from our absorption in the appearances of this world, to encounter Christ in the *pathos* of life: Henry's phenomenology is therefore also a reading of

[126] Gschwandtner, "Can we hear the voice of God? Michel Henry and the Words of Christ?" 155.

[127] See for example, Gschwandtner, "The Truth of Christianity? Michel Henry's *Words of Christ*"; Ibid., "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture: Marion, Henry, and Falque on the Person of Christ," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* (2018), 17.2.

Scripture." [128] Finally, if "life" is essential to Christianity, as suggested by Henry, how does such phenomenology distance itself from its history, and from "all ecclesiastical and dogmatic perspectives?"[129] Henry, in particular, is questioned about his dismissal of established hermeneutics in the discipline of biblical studies and exegesis,[130] Christian bias, a deficiency of a more religiously inclusive approach in his philosophical work, and a seemingly lack of realization that religion nowadays is more practiced in the private than public sphere. But for the philosopher of southern France, and flowing from his phenomenology of life, if God is the absolute Life and life-giving one, manifested in Christ as the Living One, as it is for Henry, the immediacy of Christ's words are living words to living people, then and now. Furthermore, Henry resonates with Marion and Falque that his philosophical work is first and foremost to have an intelligent Christianity—a philosophy practiced in the service of the remaining believing Christian community, a minority, and not immediately as an apologetic philosophy, and much less, theology, to this world.

The question is, however, how does Christ know the deepest essence of the human condition, as He speaks to them about themselves, "sons of God"? "Who is he to possess such knowledge?"[131] Henry raises more questions about the paradoxical "Beatitudes": Who can speak like this? Who has knowledge of the nature of this Kingdom? If one "sticks to the (biblical) texts," which is "contrary to the atheistic and mendacious exegesis of the nineteenth

[128] John Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel: A prologue to theology* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), the chapters 6 and 7 in particular. Dr. Victor Emma-Adamah is acknowledged.

[129] Carla Canullo, "Michel Henry: from the Essence of Manifestation to the Essence of Religion," *Open Theology* (2017) 3:175.

[130] Dale Martin and Walter Brueggemann in Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture.*

[131] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 43.

century,"[132] one notes that Christ's word is acknowledged as speaking with authority (Matt. 7:28), which creates distance between Him and the audience (Matt. 7:11, 23). The One who has no sin, but whose word "spoken to humans about their own human condition" reflects "back on himself."[133] This can only be "grasped," according to Henry, when one understands Christ as the Son of Man, who has an "interior" relation with God, is the same one who asserts that He will give the kingdom to those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, are meek, hungry, thirsty, and are the persecuted ones. In fact, Henry asserts, the claims by Christ must logically lead to the question of His identity. Noteworthy, is the absence of any theological discussion (Trinity); rather, it is restricted to the reading of the biblical text, the authentic and valid word of Christ. This word "revealing itself to itself…speaks to us of itself," and as such is human and divine."[134] Henry summarizes his argument about the legitimacy of Christ's word about Himself as follows:

> Christ spoke to humans, inasmuch as he spoke to them as a human being…. this human language is not the language of God. Yet according to John, Christ is none other than the Word [*Verbe*] of God, that is to say his Word [Parole]. It is only when we come to know the nature of this Word (Parole] that we will be in a position truly grasp what it says to us….The full justification of Christ's divine status will only be able to come from God's word [parole] itself…It can only come from the Word [Verbe].[135]

In other words, there is an intimate relationship, a continuum, between the manifestation or appearing of the word ("what it says to us") and the Word itself (*Parole* and *Verbe*), which is experience.[136] Moreover, this Word is the Word of Life, as attested in the prologue of the

[132] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 46.

[133] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 48.

[134] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 74.

[135] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 63.

[136] Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, Girard Etzkorn (trans.), (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff,

Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word [*Verbe*] and the Word was with God and the Word was God…. in him was Life (John 1:1, 4)."[137] In fact, according to Henry, "all the characteristics of this word depend on the characteristics of the Word of Life."[138] How, then, does one know that God is life, Henry inquiries? The philosopher of Montpellier replies, "Not via our thinking, according to the shaky reasons of an understanding which undertakes to reflect on God without knowing why, and trying to grasp some aspect of him," he sees "precisely nothing. We know it because we are living beings…living only if they carry Life in themselves not as a secret unknown to them but as that itself which they experience without cease…as their own essence and their very reality."[139] Thus, a phenomenological reading of the Johannine prologue leads Henry to the possibility of having an experiential knowledge of God, the Life-giving One, whose Life one carries in oneself. Moreover, this Life-experience is only through Christ, according to Henry, asserting that absolutely only "Christ knows this Life, Christ knows God (John 7:29)." Therefore, "by virtue of being the Word [*Verbe*]…Christ speaks a completely different word [*Parole*], the Word [*Parole*] of Life. He is this Word [*Parole*]."[140] As Geschwandtner observes here, "Religious experience, then, is essentially verbal in character"—a thought that will be revisited.

Appraisal

The proposed phenomenology of Henry bears immediate results for preaching, and its implication for preaching is offered by his attention to Christ's preaching. This word of Christ

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1973), 80.

[137] Cf. Henry, *Words of Christ*, 74–76

[138] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 78.

[139] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 82. Italics in the original.

[140] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 89. Italics in the original.

to human beings about themselves and Himself, Henry suggests, "is difficult for humans to hear the Word [*Parole*] of God," which can be seen throughout Christ's preaching.[141] From the well-educated Pharisee (Nicodemus) to the "humblest" Samaritan woman, Christ's word is heard with an initial or persistent incomprehension (John 3:3–4; John 4:10–11). Henry sees the most explicit evidence of problematic human listening to Christ's word in the parables. The reading of a parable, for Henry, is a phenomenological exercise, a "phenomenon which arises from common experience" and moves "toward what one does not know or has not yet seen, except through a veil…according to Paul's formulation" (1 Cor. 13:12).[142] Christ's preaching aims to "elevate the human spirit by detaching it" from transient and vain worldly affairs, and opens one "to what alone matters."[143] Gschwandtner comments on Henry that the preaching of Christ "turns upside down our false conceptions of ourselves and our attachments to the world, which ultimately alienate us from life."[144]

The importance of comprehension is underscored by Christ asking, concerning the parable of the sower and seed, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?" (Mark 4:13). Accordingly, Henry reads the Markian text synoptically, noting that what the sower sows is actually the Word of God, a seed falling in one's "heart." This is the place where the Word is received—presented in "manifold ways in which the heart behaves in regard to this Word that is constitutive of its being."[145] These "manifold ways" are in fact describing the reception of the Word [*Parole*] and conditions of

[141] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 91.

[142] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 92.

[143] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 93.

[144] Gschwandtner, "The Truth of Christianity? Michel Henry's *Words of Christ*," 5.

[145] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 93.

the heart: a rejection or acceptance of the Word; a distorting evil in the heart, or a heart "in the purity of its original condition, that of the Son generated in the self-revelation of life" (interiority).[146] Henry sees in the rejection not only a deprivation of salvation ("some seed fell along the path") or a state of being scandalized by the Word ("other seed fell on rocky ground"), but he offers an extensive appraisal ("Other seed fell among thorns") in which the hearing of the Word is prevented by sin and evil, which, for Henry, in the deepest sense, "the most immediate and the most widespread" is it the failure to admit the source of one's own life. Human beings in themselves are powerless unless Life is given (John 19:10–11), according Henry. Therefore, "the illusion which makes the ego its own foundation does not merely distort the manner in which humans represent themselves to themselves, and therefore their relationship to the world and to things…It completely subverts the place where we are given ourselves in absolute Life, namely our 'heart.'"[147] In other words, the words of Mark 4:19 echo the human condition as found in Mark 7:21 (see above), whereby the "I" takes the center of its experiences, is directed to the "things" of the world (exteriority)—"making of them as many idols."[148] The source of one's existence and experience, Life, is replaced by the ego-subject—it chokes the w/Word.

How then is it still possible to hear Christ's Word? Henry explores this question in the last chapter of *Words of Christ*. The first possibility is offered, Henry reminds us, though Christ's word is the Word of God [*Parole*], and He identifies Himself with the Word [*Verbe*], He—the Son of God by generation, speaks to human beings—sons of God by creation, in a

[146] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 93–94.

[147] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 97.

[148] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 98.

language that is their language. No mediation or interpretation is required because of the immediacy of this word. Secondly, Henry reads in Scripture, "whoever is born of life hears the Word [*Parole*] of Life…. those whom he predestined he also called (Romans 8:29–30)."[149] The speaking (calling) and the hearing of the Word are like the eye by which Gods sees one, and the one by which one sees oneself are but one and the same eye—in an experiential and not pantheistic sense. In other words, according to Henry, "the possibility that humans have to hear the Word [*Parole*] of God is consubstantial with them." Christ's word is not only human and divine, Word of God, but is "valid also for all those in which this Word [*Parole*] speaking—for all the sons [and daughters]."[150] For all those who have the Life in them, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me (Gal. 2:20). "The possibility for humans to hear the word of Christ in their hearts," Henry suggests, "is precisely that of comprehending the Scripture." The hearing and understanding of Scripture, then, coincides in the "heart" (interiority), the "only adequate definition of the human."[151] Philosophically speaking, Christ's words, then, for Henry, function to instantaneously erase any distance between phenomenon and phenomenality, and a such one can hear these words now, in our "hearts." The hearing of this Word, moreover, overcomes the noise of the world (exteriority), but speaks to the heart, being one with one's suffering, pain, and joy as one experiences it. Christ's speaking this word to humans, to those on the road to Emmaus, discloses them to themselves ("foolish and slow of heart to believe") and Himself to them ("beginning with Moses and all the prophets"). He is "the only source that opens the understanding of the

[149] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 103.

[150] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 104–105.

[151] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 107. Italics in the original.

sacred text to us." [152] This opening of the text to the hearer, moreover, is not only by creation or predestination, Henry suggests, but by the Spirit. This differs from Gschwandtner's appraisal of *Words of Christ*, asserting that one's hearing ultimately depends "on our ability to hear the divine word."[153] For this, Henry resorts to Christ's preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth, an "extraordinary event" that discloses the "relationship of the sacred text to the Spirit" (Luke 4:18–21). The referent in the text passage is "clearly indicated as the Spirit of the Lord."[154] And yet, those in Nazareth who since childhood knew Christ, whose fame was increasingly known throughout the region, did not only recognize but also rejected His word. Henry responds with the question, Why? "Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God" (John 8:47). Such hearing in the heart is an experiential, spiritual understanding. If the "Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16), the question of what "it means to see or feel, to experience Christ's word," must be dismissed within Henry's philosophical framework of reading the Christian text.[155] Furthermore, concerning experiential hearing, Gschwandtner's observation on the verbal character of religious experience receives, here, another and additional dimension—that of the Spirit. It is the Spirit, according to Henry, who has produced the biblical text, and who is the same who permits one "to know the Spirit," to hear

[152] Henry, *Words of Christ*, 120 ff.

[153] Christina M. Gschwandtner, "What About Non-Human Life? An "Ecological" reading of Michel Henry's Critique of Technology," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* (2012), 20.2:123. Emphasis mine.

[154] Gschwandtner notes that Henry is here in agreement with the basics of philosophy of language, the relationship between what is being said (utterance) and what is being talked about (referent). See, Gschwandtner, "The Truth of Christianity? Michel Henry's *Words of Christ*," 8.

[155] *Contra* Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 289, and François-David Sebbah, *Testing the Limits: Derrida, Henry, Lévinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition*, Stephen Barkers (trans.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

and understand. This is most visible, for Henry, in the Eucharist—the Word of Life broken for the one with a heartfelt hearing of Christ's word, the Word of God.

Thus, the phenomenological or philosophical reading of Scripture leads Henry to conclude that the possibility of hearing the Word is offered to all of humanity (creation) but only heard by those who are of God (predestination) and have consubstantial "Spirit-ual" understanding. The theological or spiritual outcomes of such reading of the words of Christ in Scripture are not unfamiliar from the perspective of the Reformed tradition, for which Henry offers possible philosophical underpinnings. Henry suggests, a "web of relations established between the phenomenology of life and the dogmatic content of Christianity is covered. The affinity can be read behind the vocabulary."[156] However, the question seems to be justified as to whether Henry first establishes the phenomenological assumptions and then qualifies these with the biblical text. Gschwandtner affirms this, asserting that "the Scriptural texts" are employed "as evidence or illustration of his prior phenomenological insights"[157] in Henry's work, and these "Christian" references are "exploited for their phenomenological content."[158] Two considerations can be given to reappraise this affirmation. First, could it not be that Henry works within the context of the philosophy of language, evaluating the biblical text accordingly, and especially phenomenologically? Secondly, for Henry, the essence and reality of Christianity is life, following the teaching of John's Gospel that God is Life (John 1:1–4). Husserlian phenomenology with its "intentional elucidation" is not sufficient, but only a phenomenology of life is sufficient for the task, according to Henry. More precise, Henry

[156] Henry, "Christianity. A Phenomenological Approach?" 98.

[157] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 291.

[158] Christina M. Gschwandtner, "What About Non-Human Life? An "Ecological" reading of Michel Henry's Critique of Technology," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* (2012), 20.2:123.

asserts with restraint the possibility of "phenomenology of life and Christianity," which is "congruent to the point that the reality at stake in them is the same and their problems are also the same."[159] In other words, there is congruity rather than confirmation. His dismissal of traditional hermeneutical and exegetical considerations, or "responsible reading" thereby, seems to be problematic for some—though reading the text phenomenologically is also a hermeneutic.[160] The concept of the "immediacy" of the w/Word is refreshing for preaching, as it moves from statements of propositional truths to implications for Christian living. Henry's "immediacy" leaves no room for words without action—they belong together for those who hear Christ's word.

Provisional Remarks on Marion, Falque, and Henry

Having considered the work of Marion, Falque, and Henry relevant for the phenomenological reading of Scripture, the following observations can be made at this point in the study. First, Scripture as revealed w/Word can be conceived of philosophically through a phenomenological reading (Marion). Notably, a reading destined to a common language for the believer and non-believer with the realization that revelation is a personal, experiential encounter. This consideration offers possibilities for the reading of Scripture for those preparing sermons within and outside confessional boundaries, as all three French philosophers reviewed above are concerned with the intelligibility of Christianity, arriving at a common grammar of language that is understood within and outside the sacred space. The experiential and existential character of the biblical text can speak to the human condition,

[159] Henry, "Christianity. A Phenomenological Approach?" 97, 102, "the essential congruency of a phenomenology of life and of Christianity is discovered."

[160] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 293.

phenomenologically considered, as proposed by Henry. Secondly, Falque's methodological proposal of breaking through the demarcation of philosophy and theology warrants a qualified phenomenological reading of Scripture. Moreover, such reading opens alternative and sometimes new insights into the meaning of the biblical text. Falque affirms, thereby, that such reading is not outside the catholicity of the Christian biblical interpretative tradition. Last but not least, Henry's contribution to the experiential understanding of Scripture through the Word, Christ, opens new vistas for the one preparing a sermon—classically and catholically rooted and contemporarily relevant. In summary, provisionally, a phenomenological reading of Scripture as practiced by these French philosophers offers promise. Hermeneutically, taking the words of the biblical text *as is* in its pure phenomenological manifestation, liberates one from having to adhere to certain accepted readings (redemptive historical approach, historical critical method, and conversion narrative readings) and commentaries. However, the fact that another or alternative (philosophical) hermeneutic is being introduced through phenomenology must be acknowledged. In other words, the reading of Scripture is a hermeneutic of phenomenology. Hermeneutical phenomenology explores the role of presuppositions in understanding (Ricœur), while phenomenological theories of textual reception (Iser) investigate how literary works are understood differently by audiences with different interpretative conventions (reader-response theory and criticism). Phenomenology is distinctive in its focus on human experience.[161] Phenomenology as applied to hermeneutics indicates that the boundary between phenomenology and Scripture is a fluid one.[162] Exegetically, the phenomenological reading of Scripture may, at times, offer less than a

[161] See Paul Armstrong, "Phenomenology," *John Hopkins Guide for Literary Theory and Criticism* (2005)

[162] See, Glenn Whitehouse, "Ricoeur on Religious Selfhood: A response to Mark Wallace," *Modern Theology* 1(2000) 6:3:322.

traditional understanding of the biblical text. Experientially, phenomenology offers a path for describing one's experiences in encountering the biblical text, and above all the Christ of Scripture—for believers and non-believers.

Potential Limitations and Some Observations

The potential of the reading of Scripture phenomenologically has been seen so far, in light of the issues raised in the introductory chapter—namely, that phenomenology could be considered another hermeneutic—at least as an alternative to the New Hermeneutics undergirding the New Homiletic. But such an appraisal of phenomenology as a hermeneutic must be tempered by the recognition that phenomenology, although hermeneutical in its ability to read and interpret phenomena, remains distinguished by its solid anchoring in experience—the experience of the interpreter. Thus, "reading Scripture phenomenologically"—a construct that may have its limitations—involves interpretation only on a secondary level. It is first a standing in the manifestation of Scripture.[163] Furthermore, the hermeneutical starting point in French phenomenological work (the objective biblical text—a starting point shared by Reformed experiential preaching) differs from that of narrative preaching, which find its subjective origin in the listener. Moreover, Falque's "Eucharistic reading" of Scripture should not immediately be dismissed philosophically in light of Henry's reflection on the Word, Christ. The Catholic theological implications may differ those of a Reformed perspective with regard to the one preparing a sermon, but the

[163] Dr. Victor Emma-Adamah is acknowledged for the nuance concerning "phenomenology as hermeneutics." He noted, "L'interprète (l'herméneute) reste celui qui a d'abord et toujours fait la preuve et a épreuvé son propre expérience (personal communication). In other words, one has to be careful not to collapse this crucial distinction. Otherwise, it would transpose phenomenology simply into a hermeneutical framework.

philosophical consideration reveals an intimate closeness and continuum between the Word and Christ—textual and sacramental.

Along with the potential value of the phenomenological reading Scripture, the aforementioned critique of Gschwandtner, and others, however, should be taken seriously. Marion, Falque, and Henry are philosophers who are unapologetically confessional Catholics. In other words, it may seem that the phenomenological project is being besieged by a specific confessional reading of Scripture, accepting the Word *in se*. Did not Husserl's "atheological" method of phenomenology intended to suspend such judgements about meaning (*actuality*) and instead to foster a focus on the description of experience (*possibility*)? This is of critical importance considering Gschwandtner's above-mentioned critique, which particularly centers on Christ, the living Word. As such, it is contested *contra* Marion that the possibility of phenomenology (philosophy) ought not to transfer into actuality (theology);[164] this is particularly underscored by the fact that "most...of [the] biblical verses [are] taken entirely out of their original context" and that "the descriptions of Christ are simply taken at face value."[165] Here, two issues are at stake: the veracity of Scripture, as accepted by Marion, but not readily so by Gschwandtner.[166] Marion's philosophical project halts at the threshold of theology—though he sees theological phenomena such as r/Revelation as belonging to phenomenology, and not the task of doing theology—a tension in Marion's work not

[164] This is my reading of Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," in which is acknowledged, however, "Marion stresses the issue of "possibility" in the strongest terms and claims that this allows him to speak of Christ without venturing into theology..." (283).

[165] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 285.

[166] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 283, "Most of them [biblical references] are mere phrases of biblical verses, taken entirely out of their original context. Christ appears out of nowhere..." Here, one detects a dichotomy between biblical criticism and exegetical considerations, and phenomenology—an issue that is not at stake for Marion.

resolved.[167] Gschwandtner is more reserved and restricted in his method of phenomenology in relation to theological phenomena. In fact, Ricœur's philosophical approach to Scripture is more widely endorsed.[168] It remains therefore to be seen whether Falque's critique of Ricœur can be sustained. Furthermore, in terms of methodology, according Gschwandtner, Falque melds philosophy and theology "even more than" Marion. This is more problematic for the critic than for Falque, however: it is precisely the trajectory Falque pursues, as "the difference between philosophy and theology consists less in *what is studied* (the object), than in their specific *points of departure* (from below or from above), their proposer *ways of proceeding* (heuristically or didactically), and the *status* of the objects analyzed (according to the category of possibility or effectiveness)."[169] Falque suggests, moreover, that "rather than dividing philosophy and theology up into two utterly separate worlds, we will practice the one as well as the other, seeing in ourselves a new mode of unity.... Indeed, the whole of French phenomenology, whether or not understood in terms of a theological turn has this particularity: it was and still is able to deploy *philosophema* that are at the same time *theologoumena.*"[170] Gschwandtner sees this as particularly challenging concerning the person and work of Christ when Falque asserts "that Christ shows us what it truly means to be

[167] See for example, Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu de soi* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008). Cf. Ibid., *In the Self's Place: The Approach of St. Augustine*, Stanford University Press, 2012; Ibid., *De surcroit: études sur les phénomenes saturés*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001). Cf. Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*.

[168] Gschwandtner sees Ricœur's Protestant adherence to *sola Scriptura*, however, as restrictive as well, and his philosophy project should be more inclusive, such as liturgy and sacrament. Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 294, "Admittedly, Ricœur's analysis of religious meaning is strongly Protestant in its almost exclusively emphasis on Scripture and needs to be supplemented by a similar analysis of the sacramental and liturgical dimensions of the Christian identify of ecclesial communities, including the ways in which these liturgical dimensions situate and inform their reading of Scripture."

[169] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 22. See further the Introduction chapter of this study on Falque's articulation of relationship of philosophy and theology.

[170] Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 158.

human," and when he "appears to require a stance of faith in Christ."[171] Here, the hermeneutical premises of phenomenology and faith, as well as the crucial importance of Christ, for Falque, appears not to be shared by Gschwandtner. This divergence from Falque emerges even more pointedly considering Henry's claim of the exclusivity of Christ and Christianity. "Any consideration of hermeneutics," Gschwandtner suggests, "would defeat the very point Henry is trying to make because it would introduce mediation and distance."[172] Henry's point is that Scripture is a living Word, and in particular Christ's word is human and divine speech. "What does it mean to see or feel this, to experience Christ's word to be "effective" in us," Gschwandtner inquires?[173] Marion's response includes the transformative experience of r/Revelation with Christ as the saturated phenomenon *par excellence*. Finally, the reading of Scripture of the considered French phenomenologist is limited in its scriptural interaction almost exclusively to the gospels and Johannine and Pauline writings, at the expense of the Hebrew Scriptures. More important, nonetheless, is that the critique of Gschwandtner, and others, invites us to consider the process or the nature of a phenomenological reading of Scripture in more detail.

Reflections for Homiletics

If a phenomenological reading of Scripture is possible, which is possibly suggested, and to be considered in the preparation of a sermon or homily, a question arises: What is the reading process? How does reading the text of Scripture in a phenomenological way look?

[171] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 291.

[172] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 288.

[173] Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture," 289.

Biblical scholars, such as Brueggemann, suggest that the "close reading" of the text, practiced by many exegetes today, may lack the "technical nomenclature of the style of" phenomenologists but is preferable for the reading and interpretation of Scripture over a phenomenological reading.[174] Such an *explication de texte*,[175] however, differs from phenomenology—the practice describing the structure of experience or the meaning (essence) as produced in the consciousness. Phenomenology is not necessarily the same as emphasizing the importance of the role of the reader in constructing the meaning of the text. Therefore, in what follows, a suggested process of practice of the phenomenological reading of Scripture for preachers in the sermon preparation phase is sketched. The points of orientation for constructing this practice are insights appropriated from the philosophical work of Edmund Husserl, Wolfgang Iser, and Paul Ricoeur that are applied to the reading of Scripture. This proposed reading practice, then, evolves in three phases: reduction, disclosure, and appropriation or apprehension.

Reduction

Phenomenology as a presuppositionless philosophy, methodologically suspending and bracketing assumed knowledge, describes the structures of the experience, of what is given in experience, the givenness of the phenomenon (consciousness, in particular), and the situatedness of the human subject and the text. As such, reading Scripture phenomenologically includes *epoché* and reduction. The former means to bracket what Husserl calls "the natural attitude," the pre-critical view that already makes presumptions

[174] Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture*, 186.

[175] A French formalist method of literary analysis that allows for minimal reader response, i.e., "close reading."

about what is or is not, and which has already made judgements about the matter under investigation—in this case, the biblical text. The phenomenological reduction, as a subsequent step, is like placing a series of lenses over what appears so that particular types of phenomena can come into view more fully—the conditions for the possibilities of something.[176]

Fundamentally to the project of phenomenology is Husserl's definition of the *epoché*, as a first reduction (*reducere* means to withdraw, to lead back), which identifies and sets aside any thetic attitude that may affect one's reading. For example, the often-assumed distinction in biblical hermeneutics and exegesis between the natural and supernatural must be bracketed; a redemptive historical approach of reading the biblical text must be suspended. The *epoché* is followed by a formal "reduction" (as a second step in the phenomenological method) of the consciousness or experience of the subject itself, as the constituting source of phenomenal objects—a leading back to its constitutive or inherent and innate origin. In such a way, according to Husserl, the Cartesian subject-object schema is rejected.[177] Furthermore, the origin of the phenomena precedes, and thus offers the possibility for, whatever presents itself as an object for consciousness. For Marion, however, consciousness is a response to that which gives itself. He asserts, "the receiver therefore does not only receive what gives itself—it allows that given to show itself insofar it gives itself…. phenomenality is not grasped; it is

[176] Husserl, first reduction, Heidegger second reduction, and Marion third reduction, "givenness."

[177] See Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Dorian Cairns (trans.) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), §93, 227–231; Ibid., *The Crises of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, David Carr (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), § 16–21, 73–83. Note, the origin to which the reduction leads are *Dasein,* for Heidegger, or the *meontic* Absolute, for Fink, or "givenness," for Marion, and "the event," for Romano. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung.* Band 8, 1927, S. 1–438; Eugen Fink, *VI. Cartesianische Meditation. I: Die Idee einer Transzendentalen Methodenlehre* (The Hague: *Martinus Nijhoff,* M. Nijhoff, 1988); Claude Romano, *L'Événement et le Temps* (Paris: Épiméthée, 1999).

received."[178] "The given" discloses the way that consciousness constitutes the object-world. The question whether the revealed Word and the text of Scripture can be incorporated into or understood via Husserlian phenomenology, with its "conditions of possibilities," therefore, can be answered in the affirmative—especially in light of the aforementioned understanding of r/Revelation advanced by Marion.

The reduction that takes place in reading the text of Scripture is a reduction to *being before God* (*coram Deo*), according to Lacoste. The biblical text summons one, beyond one's choosing and willing.[179] The reading experience of Scripture is an exposure before God, and the knowledge of Him is not propositional knowledge but pre-predicative knowledge, that of acquaintance or familiarity.[180] Therefore, reading Scripture phenomenologically can be done at the levels of the *epochē* and the reduction.[181]

Paul Ricoeur's concept of the twofold need for understanding and explanation is also appropriated for the reader of the biblical text, the preacher. However, the two-step dialectic model "understanding" or comprehension (*Verstehen*)—the exegetical task of the historical-critical method that reconstructs authorial intention—and the "explanation" (*Erklären*) of the text is too limited.[182] The former, understanding, is excluded from the exegetical process,

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[178] Marion, *Being Given,* 264.

[179] Mark I. Wallace, "From Phenomenology to Scripture? Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Philosophy of Religion," Modern Theology 1(2000) 6:3: 301.

[180] See for example Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute. Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, Mark Raftery-Skehan (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

[181] As Horner notes, though in general terms but appropriated here, "We see this in two ways: first, at the level of the *epochē*, it is more properly phenomenological not to exclude the possibility of God from the beginning, but to open oneself to the possibility of whatever gives itself...Second, at the level of the reduction to givenness, the liturgical reduction...In this way, we allow a space for God to interrupt our analysis." See Robin Horner, "Towards a Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Methodology for Theology," *International Journal* of *Practical* Theology (2018) 22.2: 173.

[182] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 71–88, "Explanation and Understanding."

according to Ricoeur. The "understanding," then, is a reading of the text through three steps, the first naiveté, critical inquiry, and the second naiveté. The first naiveté is a noncritical textual reading—an "understanding" that "will be a naïve grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole."[183] But by reading the text multiple times, a dialogue often arises, whereby the reader inquiries, speculates—while the text also asks questions. The first naiveté, moreover, could take place in the context of meditation and prayer towards a fuller apprehension of the biblical text, suggested by *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*.[184]

In summary, the first suggested step in the reading process is reduction (Husserl) and first naiveté (Ricoeur) whereby the reader suspends all preconceived ideas about the text and presupposed thoughts concerning the text, but encounters and is encountered by the "givenness" (Marion) of the biblical text. Prayer and meditation may assist the Christian preacher to become "free" of confessional-hermeneutical and interpretative conceptions, so that the biblical text can manifest and open itself to the reader.

Disclosure

The phenomenological reading of Scripture, furthermore, constitutes ways the text can be *konkretisiert* (realized) or experienced. Contrary to the reader-response theory of literature, phenomenology is not concerned with the ontology of the literary text or ontological value of the text. The phenomenological reading of the words and sentences of the text of Scripture is existential, setting in motion a process: the appearance and the lived experience of the actual content of the text.[185] Such a practice of conscious reading (*Bewusstsein*) is the bringing to

[183] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 74.

[184] Meditation and prayer will be discussed more fully later in this chapter, and the next chapter, respectively. Foley (ed.), *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, 225.

[185] What follows is, in part, a reinterpretation and appropriation of Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A

fruition of the text, as Husserl stated: "every originally constructive process is inspired by pre-intentions, which construct and collect the seed of what is to come, as such, and bring it to fruition."[186] In other words, the individual words or sentences together sketch out or preview what is to come but also shape an expectation or "pre-intention." Furthermore, in such a way, the world presented by the text of Scripture begins to disclose itself not only in a literal sense, i.e., the sentence as propositional statement, but aims at something beyond— an experiential sense. This disclosing gains in intentionality by the practice of rereading the text. In fact, the reread text is a new text bringing to light new aspects not seen before. The mind is focused with another (new) awareness of the text, and the memory evokes a past reading which combines with the present reading and a future expectation—a kaleidoscopic process of retrospection and anticipation, recollection and formation of (new) perspective. Such a manifestation of the text, moreover, is often accompanied by unexpected perceived directions of the text, stripping even more one's presumptions, preconceptions, and preconceived ideas of the biblical text.[187] Assumed knowledge, theological or otherwise, may be an obstruction in the first reading. As such, the rereading of the text offers an alteration from the first reading, often enriched and at times corrected, though the second or later reading is not always "truer" but more precisely, from a different perspective, advances the retrospection. The givenness of the text reveals itself to the reader as a reality—a dimension of the coming together of text and reader, i.e., *gestalt*, which "at best is a configurative meeting," a "seeing-things-together," not the true meaning of the text.[188] This configurative meaning, however *pars pro toto*, is

Phenomenological Approach," *New Literary History* (1972) 3.2:279–299.

[186] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins, Gesammelte Werke* 10:52.

[187] This may include confessional, theological, and commentarial presupposition but also historical-critical, and other hermeneutical considerations.

[188] Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," 289.

indispensable for the recognition or opening up of an unaccustomed experience. In other words, the process of disclosure is twofold: the biblical text opens up and the reader is exposed by it. The configurative meaning, moreover, is a result of the interplay between a deductive and inductive reading of the text. As such, a phenomenological reading of Scripture differs from the inductive approach of the New Hermeneutic, which is foundational for the New Homiletics. On the other hand, a phenomenological approach of reading the text offers the emergence of interpretative possibilities rather than actualities. Such possibilities arise from the dynamic process of reading: as we go "forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decision, we form expectations, we are shocked by their non-fulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject," resulting in "a defamiliarization of the reader" which he thought he recognized.[189] In this process, the givenness of the text, furthermore, reveals also the reader and one's own disposition and experiences. In order to appropriate the text *in se*, one needs to leave behind, bracket, or suspend the familiar experiences and assumed knowledge. The disclosing of the text, then, makes one cognizant of aspects of the text, which would otherwise remain concealed, and opens one to reorientation, though the possibilities for the reader are restricted by the text. One's own and "past" presuppositions are overtaken by the "present" of the intervening and unfolding experience of the text. The text of Scripture becomes a living event along the line of Shaw's Undershaft, "You have learnt something. That always feels at first as if you had lost something."[190] In other words, something happens to the reader while in the process of reading: "identification." This can be described as a transformative experience, as part of the process, which aims at something beyond, whereby

[189] Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," 293.

[190] Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara* (New York: Brentatno's, 1917 [1907]), 132, Act III, Undershaft.

the reader assimilates an aspect or attribute of the text, and the distance of the now (oneself, or subject) and then (event, text of Scripture, or object) vanishes. One "forgets" criticism, commendation, and commentary, experiencing that the text "takes on" its "full existence in the reader."[191] The subject-object dichotomy thus disappears, and the reader is seized by and internalizes the "thoughts of the author."[192] Thus, in the interaction of reader and text, the reading is led by the text of Scripture. Iser remarks that the literary "text and reader no longer confront each other as object and subject, but instead the 'division' takes place within the reader."[193] If this assertion is made for a secular text, should this be excluded for the reading of a sacred text? The objection can be raised, as asserted by Al-Haba, that phenomenology has an "intransitive conceptualization of reading"—a reading that "is anti-theological…. for it delinks meaning from prior reality or origin, and therefore the conceptualization of language and meaning is also anti-theological. It promotes multi-readings because in the theological transitive theory" one closes the meaning "in a prior reality, origin and ground."[194] Phenomenology describes the structures of experience, however, while reader-response criticism attempts "to *construct* meaning with the help of the...text."[195] Here, Paul Ricoeur's second step in "understanding" of the text should be considered: the critical inquiry.

The critical inquiry advances the first stage of comprehension (*Verstehen*) of the biblical text for the one preparing a sermon. It comprises seeking an explanation (*Erklären*)—a

[191] George Poulet, "Phenomenology of Reading," *New Literary History* (1969), 1:54.

[192] Cf. Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," 297–298.

[193] Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," 298

[194] Mohammed Abdullah M. Al-Haba, "Reader Response Theory in the Phenomenology of Reading with the text and the Readers as its Focal Point," *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* (2013) 8.6:85.

[195] Zoltán Schwáb, "Mind the Gap: The Impact of Wolfgang Iser's Reader-Reader Response Criticism on Biblical Studies—a Critical Assessment," *Literature & Theology* (2003) 17.2:178, fn. 1.

comprehension achieved by scrutinizing the inquiries and validating the speculations of possible interpretations mediated through distanciation.[196] In summary, in the phase of disclosure, the preacher not only encounters but now wrestles with the biblical text which discloses itself in front of the reader, who becomes vulnerably exposed to the text.

Appropriation

The biblical text might appear many times over the course of a regular and intense engagement with Scripture in the preparation of sermons, always familiar but nevertheless always new, demanding ever more a reflective reading and further interpretation, availing one of deeper insight into the "who" of the text of Scripture that orients one's world.[197] According to Lacoste, the one undertaking the "divine reading" as part of a daily commitment of faith might in this context be deeply moved by a particular text or fragment. "Careful discernment and critical reflection may yield a sense that God has spoken to the individual by means of the reading."[198] Horner comments on Lacoste's vision of the *lectio divina* as moving "along a continuum from language (a technical tool of communication) to a 'word-act' (which takes the form of an appeal to the listener and also moves her or him) to a 'word-event' (which happens when the listener not only hears the world but also accepts it, even if it is not fully

[196] A. Joseph Dorairaj, "Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of the Text," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* (2000), 27.4: 405, "In Ricœur's hermeneutics, alienating distanciation is not looked upon negatively in a historicist manner as that which needs to be overcome or bridged. On the contrary, distanciation turns out to be the very condition of interpretation because it paves the way for semantic autonomy." See also Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, Part II. Distanciation is understood by Ricœur as distanciation (a) from the author, (b) from the situation of the discourse, and (c) from the original audience. Cf. Paul Ricœur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," David Pellauer (trans), *Philosophy Today* (1973) 17.2: 134. However, Ricœur's concept of distanciation resonates with the Husserlian *epoché*, and distanciation does not go unchallenged, see Pierre Bühler, "Ricœur's concept of distanciation as a challenge for theological hermeneutics," Jozef Verheyden, Theo L. Hettema, Pieter Vandencasteele (eds.) *Paul Ricœur. Poetics and Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 151–165.

[197] Cf. Horner, "Towards a Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Methodology for Theology," 158.

[198] Horner, "Towards a Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Methodology for Theology," 168. Cf. Lacoste, *Reserches sur Parole* (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 59; Horner in Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture.*

understood)."[199] Paul Ricoeur's third step in "understanding" is, lastly, the second naiveté and moves to an appropriation of the results of the critical inquiry, "the actualization of meaning for someone"—"what has to be appropriated is the meaning of the text itself," the "configuration of the human story in light of the divine plot of the story of Jesus in a dynamic way as the direction of thought opened up by the text."[200] Where is the meaning of the text located, then? It is, according to Ricoeur, an appropriation of the text unfolded in front of a disclosing text.[201] Ricoeur: "Interpretation is completed as appropriation when reading yields something like an event...which is an event in the present moment."[202] This interpretative event, then, is for the preacher an experiential appropriation of the biblical text. This experiential moment opens a way to proclamation, as Mary Margaret Pazdan, OP, recapitulates: "Ricœur's distinctive contribution to 'understanding' and 'explanation' is not a linear progression…. rather preachers discover that it is a spiral between *first naiveté* and *critical inquiry* until the proclamation (*second naiveté*) emerges."[203]

The process of reduction, disclosure, and appropriation slows down the reading pace, and tend towards the practice of meditative reading. The reduction or *first naiveté* in the reading

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[199] Horner, "Towards a Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Methodology for Theology," 68.

[200] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 92. These three steps of "understanding" find a parallel in Ricoeur's concept of *mimesis* ("*imitatio*"), which can be appropriated for the reader of the biblical text, the preacher. Pape advances this concept of Ricoeur of noting, "[T]he preacher's engagement with the biblical text during sermon preparation can be grasped in three mimetic moments." Hilkert explains these moments with an analysis of the Emmaus narrative, as "the threefold pattern of prefiguration of past human experiences [*mimesis*-1], configuration of the human story in light of the divine plot of the story of Jesus [*mimesis*-2], and refiguration of imagination and life through the ongoing process of conversion [*mimesis*-3]." This three-fold structure of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration echoes the triple process of first naiveté, critical inquiry, and second naiveté, whereby the latter and nimesis-3 coincide as experiential appropriation of the biblical text. Cf. Pape, *The Scandal of Having Something to Say*, 123; Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 93–94.

[201] Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* (1979), 34.4:217.

[202] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 92.

[203] Cf. Mary Margaret Pazdan, "The 'New Hermeneutics'," Foley (ed.), *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, 226.

process could be practiced in the context of mediation and prayer, therefore, in order to nurture the appropriation or experiential apprehension of the biblical text. In fact, it is suggested that meditation is indispensable and integral to the appropriation of the biblical text by the phenomenological reading of Scripture. The practice of meditation inherently belongs to the practice of phenomenology from Husserl onward.[204] The practice of such apprehensive reading resonates with meditation, according to Aquinas, following Bernard of Clairvaux, stating, "'Meditation' would seem to be the process of reason from certain principles that lead to the contemplation of some truth."[205] The words in the text gives one notional and possibly assenting knowledge, but meditative reading gives more than can ever be imagined, as "it is written, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things...God has revealed [ἀπεκάλυψεν, to uncover, bring to light] to us through the Spirit'" (1 Cor. 2:9, 10a). Here, the thought of Aquinas on meditation is helpful. "Meditation," he asserts, "would seem to be the process of reason from certain principles that lead to the contemplation of some truth,"[206] a "survey of the mind while occupied in searching for the truth,"[207] a "beholding."[208] This truth is obtained in two ways, according to Aquinas: from

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[204] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, D. Cairns (trans.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer 1988); Ibid., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—Third Book: Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences*, T. E. Klein and W. E. Pohl (trans.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1980); Ibid., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989); Linda E. Patrik, "Phenomenological Method and Meditation," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (1994) 26.1:37–52; Stephen D. Edwards; David J. Edwards, "An integral investigation into the phenomenology and neurophysiology of Christian Trinity meditation," *HTS Theological Studies* (2012) 68,.1: 138–147. See also Chapter 2.

[205] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, IIª-IIae q. 180 a. 3 ad 1, "Meditatio vero pertinere videtur ad processum rationis ex principiis aliquibus pertingentis ad veritatis alicuius contemplationem." This and other texts of Aquinas are found at www.corpusthomisticum.org and www.logicmuseum.com/wiki/Authors/Thomas_Aquinas.

[206] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIª-IIae q. 180 a. 3 ad 1, "Meditatio vero pertinere videtur ad processum rationis ex principiis aliquibus pertingentis ad veritatis alicuius contemplationem."

[207] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIª-IIae q. 180 a. 3 ad 1, "meditatio autem est intuitus animi in veritatis inquisitione occupatus."

[208] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIª-IIae q. 180 a. 3 ad 2, "Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut dicit Glossa Augustini ibidem, speculantes dicit a speculo, non a specula. Videre autem aliquid per speculum est videre

God, “in so far as he receives from the tradition of Holy Writ,” and study, “which requires meditation.”[209] Meditation is situated between cogitation and contemplation, for Aquinas, following Richard of St. Victor.[210] This makes the thought of Aquinas on meditation meaningful for the phenomenology of the reading of Scripture—seeking “the knowledge of God’s works, so that he might be led by them to God.”[211] The meditation on Scripture precedes the contemplation. The latter is the testimony of what has been “seen” and “heard” in the meditation. Understanding (*intelligere*), for Aquinas, is more than what is outwardly observed; it is a reading inwardly (*intus legere*),[212] a grasping of “what a thing is,” according to Aquinas—there is more than mere words, because, “under words lies hidden their meaning.”[213]

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causam per effectum, in quo eius similitudo relucet. Unde speculatio ad meditationem reduci videtur.” (According to a gloss [Cf. De Trin. xv, 8 of Augustine on this passage, "beholding" [speculatio] denotes "seeing in a mirror [speculo], not from a watch-tower [specula].” Now to see a thing in a mirror is to see a cause in its effect wherein its likeness is reflected. Hence "beholding" would seem to be reducible to meditation).

[209] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIª-IIae q. 180 a. 3 ad 4 Ad quartum dicendum quod homo ad cognitionem veritatis pertingit dupliciter. Uno modo, per ea quae ab alio accipit. Et sic quidem, quantum ad ea quae homo a Deo accipit... et lectio, secundum quod accipit ex eo quod per Scripturam est traditum. Alio modo, necessarium est quod adhibeat proprium studium. Et sic requiritur meditatio.” (Man reaches the knowledge of truth in two ways. First, by means of things received from another. On this way, as regards the things he receives from God...and "reading," in so far as he receives from the tradition of Holy Writ. Secondly, he needs to apply himself by his personal study, and thus he requires "meditation.").

[210] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* IIª-IIae q. 180 a. 3 ad 1 “Unde idem Richardus dicit quod contemplatio est perspicax et liber animi contuitus in res perspiciendas; meditatio autem est intuitus animi in veritatis inquisitione occupatus; cogitatio autem est animi respectus ad evagationem pronus.” (Richard says again (De Grat. Contempl. i, 4) that “contemplation is the soul’s clear and free dwelling upon the object of its gaze; meditation is the survey of the mind while occupied in searching for the truth: and cogitation is the mind’s glance which is prone to wander.”)

[211] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* IIª-IIae q. 180 a. 4 ad 1 Ad primum ergo dicendum quod David cognitionem operum Dei quaerebat ut ex hoc manuduceretur in Deum. Unde alibi dicit, meditabor in omnibus operibus tuis, et in factis manuum tuarum meditabor, expandi manus meas ad te.” (David sought the knowledge of God’s works, so that he might be led by them to God; wherefore he says elsewhere (Psalm 142:5–6): "I meditated on all Thy works: I meditated upon the works of Thy hands: I stretched forth my hands to Thee.”)

[212] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIª-IIae q. 8 a. 1 co, “[Q]uod nomen intellectus quandam intimam cognitionem importat, dicitur enim intelligere quasi intus legere.” (Understanding implies an intimate knowledge, as “intelligere” (to understand,) is the same as “intus legere (to read inwardly).

[213] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* IIª-IIae q. 8 a. 1 co, “[C]ognitio autem intellectiva penetrat usque ad essentiam rei, obiectum enim intellectus est quod quid est... sub verbis latent significata verborum.” (Intellective knowledge, therefore, penetrates into the very essence of a thing, because the object of the intellect is “what a

Ending this chapter and asking whether a phenomenological reading of Scripture is possible and profitable, the preliminary conclusion seems to point to the affirmative, though not without challenges. On the one hand, underscoring the affirmative, in light of new possibilities of phenomenology for reading Scripture obliterates a binarity of philosophy and theology. The use of a phenomenological method that is supposedly "philosophical" and independent upon a theological subject (Scriptures). The relationship argues that precisely in certain phenomenological approaches, this dichotomy is rejected on historical grounds (especially Marion), and on methodological grounds (especially Falque). Furthermore, the subject-object dichotomy disappears when the text of Scripture is appropriated by the reader (*Aha-Erlebnis*). On the other hand, human reason, the "natural light of our understating," is finite and is limited in its reach, and therefore, can only grasp the ultimate or spiritual essence of things by an enlightened mind given by the Holy Spirit.[214] For this prayer is required, which will be considered in the next chapter.

thing is...under words lies hidden their meaning").

[214] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIª-IIae q. 8 a. 1 co., "Lumen autem naturale nostri intellectus est finitae virtutis, unde usque ad determinatum aliquid pertingere potest." (Now the natural light of our understanding is of finite power; wherefore it can reach to a certain fixed point); Ibid., IIª-IIae q. 8 a. 4 co., "Spiritus sanctus... ita etiam per donum intellectus illustrat mentem hominis ut cognoscat veritatem quandam supernaturalem." (The Holy Ghost... enlightens the human mind, so that it knows some supernatural truth).

CHAPTER 3

PHENOMENOLOGY AND PRAYER

Et quomodo invocabo deum meum...
quoniam utique inme ipsum eum invocabo, cum invocabo eum?

Introduction

Augustine begins his *Confessions* with a prayer—essentially inquiring, What does it mean to call on God?[1] Prayer is not only essential to the religious life but also indispensable for the preparation of a homily or sermon, an integral part of the divine reading (*lectio divina*) of Scripture. Prayer concerns both the One to whom the prayer is prayed and the one who prays. In regard to the latter, prayer disposes, discloses, and exposes one before God. The book of Psalms is saturated with prayers, and "informs, transforms, and conforms believers" in "an intensification of experience."[2]

The reading of Scripture and prayer are indispensably interwoven in the Catholic tradition.[3] This is particularly underscored for the preparation of a homily—"the reading [of

[1] *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, Henry Chadwick (trans., ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991), 3, I.2, "And how shall I call upon my God...since, when I call for Him, I shall be calling Him to myself?"

[2] Bruce Ellis *Benson* and Norman *Wirzba eds*., The *Phenomenology of Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 2. See for example, the Book of Psalms, Pss. 4, 10, 13, 17, 22, 25, 28, 39, 42, 43, 51, 70, 71, 82, 85, 130, and 143.

[3] *Dei Verbum* (1965), no. 25, "prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for "we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying"; *Sacramentum caritatis* (2007), no. 45, "To this end, the faithful should be helped to appreciate the riches of Sacred Scripture found in the lectionary through pastoral initiatives, liturgies of the word and reading in the context of prayer (*lectio divina)*"; Ibid., no. 72, "…Prayer should follow reading, and reading follow prayer…"; Ibid., 82, "Such attention to the prayerful reading of Scripture must not in any way lead to a dichotomy with regard to the exegetical studies which are a part of formation. The Synod recommended that seminarians be

Scripture] in the context of prayer."[4] As such prayer is understood as a hermeneutical key, which comes to fruition in the liturgy.[5] The aspect of prayer in relation to preaching is also found in the Reformed tradition—though mostly implicit, from Barth to Beeke. Both, however, underscore the relationship between prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit—a dimension not explicitly stated in the Catholic tradition concerning the preparation of a sermon. Barth states, "we cannot preach without praying," as the sermon has "to do with God alone"; one is "summoned to pray," reaching the "limit" of what can be said by humans—"here at the point where the Spirit himself must represent us."[6] Beeke, likewise, notes, "Reformed experiential preaching is marked by prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit."[7] Noteworthy in this tradition is the work of Douma, who formulates prayer as indispensable in relation to the meditation on and appropriation of Scripture in the preparation of a sermon.[8] In fact, Douma conflates the Reformed attention to the *Spiritus Sanctus* with the Catholic attentiveness to the *oratio* and *meditatio*, asserting that "the aim of meditation is, in the

concretely helped to see *the relationship between biblical studies and scriptural prayer*"; Ibid., 86. "the need for a prayerful approach to the sacred text as a fundamental element in the spiritual life of every believer…":

[4] *The Priest and the Third Millennium* (1999), II.1, "There is an *essential relationship between personal prayer and preaching*. From meditating on the Word of God in personal prayer, comes that spontaneous «primacy of witness of life which discovers the power of the love of God and makes his word convincing. Effective preaching is another fruit of personal prayer"; *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), III.145, "reading God's word in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us. This prayerful reading of the Bible is not something separate from the study undertaken by the preacher to ascertain the central message of the text"; Ibid., II.2, "The principle source for preaching is naturally Sacred Scripture, deeply meditated in personal prayer and assimilated through study and adequate contact with suitable books'; *Sacramentum caritatis* (2007), no. 45; *The Homiletic Directory* (2015), 26, "in the preparation of homilies, study is invaluable, but prayer is essential. The homily will be delivered in a context of prayer, and it should be composed in a context of prayer

[5] *The Homiletic Directory* (2015), no. 11 [on the homily], "…prayers provide a useful hermeneutic for the preacher's interpretation of the biblical texts"; Ibid., no. 23, "The Liturgy itself is prayer…"

[6] Karl Barth, *Homiletics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Know Press, 1991), 86.

[7] Joel R. Beeke, *Reformed Preaching. Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People.* Foreword by Sinclair Ferguson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 80.

[8] Jos Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus. De meditatie en het preekproces* (Kampen: Uitegverij Kok, 2000), 117, "De meditatie is meditatie van de Schrift, waarbij het gebed de onmisbare voorwaarde is en de aanvechting het veld van beproeving opdat het Woord in het lezen, horen en overdenken innerlijk wordt toegeëigend."

context of the sermon process, an attentive, receptive and prayerful listening of the Word of God whereby the meditator is transformed in the image of Christ through the Holy Spirit."[9] The connectedness of prayer and meditation, transforming the one praying through appropriating the words of Scripture resonates, however, with Urs von Balthasar's work on prayer—an act of contemplation, "an inward gaze into the depths of the soul…beyond the soul to God"—which "is why," the Swiss Catholic theologian continues, "the Word of God is never something settled for good…but something that comes forth ever anew, unexpected and unpredictable." This is a "contemplative listening" to the Word "in prayer"—essential to preparing a homily.[10] The recent reclaiming of contemplative prayer in Protestantism as a spiritual practice is notable, though one is challenged at times by the interrelating reflections of prayer, mediation, and contemplation.[11] Although the precise meaning of these terms are often unobserved, the centrality of prayer is unquestionable in relation to the reading, meditation on, and contemplation of Scripture.

Prayer, then, belongs to the human religious experience, as Ricœur asserts that prayer is "the most primitive and original act of language that gives form to religious experience."[12] But does it belong to philosophy and the phenomenological practice of philosophy? For

[9] Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus,* Stellingen I, "Meditatie is, in the context van het preekproces, een opmerkzaam, ontvankelijk en bidden luisteren naar het Woord van God met als doel dat de mediterende door de Heilige Geest wordt omgevormd naar het beeld van Christus." See also Ibid., 122–124, "Meditatie als vorm van omgang met de Schrift."

[10] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer*, A.V. Littledale (trans.) (New York: Paulist Press Deus Books, 1961), 20, 36.

[11] John H. Coe, Kyle C. Strobel (eds.), *Embracing Contemplation. Reclaiming a Christian Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019); Martin Laird, *An Ocean of Light*: *Contemplation*, *Transformation, and Liberation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[12] Paul Ricœur, "Lamentation as Prayer," André LaCocque, Paul Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically. Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, David Pellauer (trans.) (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 212.

example, it can be argued that petitionary prayer has been considered philosophically.[13] Although the individual character of prayer may challenge the premises of the Husserlian intended neutrality of phenomenological inquiry, the recent "theological turn" in French philosophy opened a way for the phenomena of prayer to be studied.[14] In fact, three themes have been considered in *Phenomenology of Prayer*: ineffectuality, intentionality, and directionality,[15] together with other publications on the topic of phenomenology and prayer.[16] Finally, and restricted to the French practice of phenomenology, Jean-Louis Chrétien's work

[13] Scott Hill, "Aquinas and Gregory the Great on the Puzzle of Petitionary Prayer," Ergo (2018) 5.15:407–418; Scott Davison, *Petitionary Prayer: A Philosophical Investigation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); P. Pössel, B. Aranda, R. Geist, K.L. Ladd, A.W. Banister, "Petitionary Prayer: Immature but Common in Christians? A Descriptive and Exploratory Study," Ralph L. Piedmont (ed.), *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Allison Krile Thornton, "Petitionary Prayer: Wanting the Change the Mind of the Being Who Knows Best," Unpublished lecture at Innsbruck Summer School of Analytic Theology (2014); Caleb M. Cohoe, "God, Causality, and Petitionary Prayer," *Faith and Philosophy* (2014) 31.1:24–45; Nicholas D. Smith, "Philosophical Reflection on Petitionary Prayer," *Philosophy Compass* (2013) 8 (3):309–317; Michael J. Murray, "Does God Respond to Prayer? Michael L. Peterson, Raymond J. VanArragon (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 246–260. The consideration of prayer in philosophy follows Aquinas, asserting "prayer (*oratio*) is spoken reason (*oris ratio*). Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIª-IIae q. 83 a. 1 co, "Respondeo dicendum quod, secundum Cassiodorum, oratio dicitur quasi oris ratio;" Ibid., IIª-IIae q. 83 a. 10 s. c, & IIª-IIae q. 83 a. 10 co. "…oratio est actus rationis…" ("prayer is an act of reason").

[14] See Introduction chapter of this study. See for recent work on the topic of phenomenology and prayer Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology of Prayer*, introduction.

[15] Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 4, "The first them is that we do not really know how to pray and so are constantly in the state of learning."; Ibid., 6, "A second them is that our prayers always go "beyond." We always pray more than we intend and, in doing so, becoming more than we are."; Ibid., 7, "the third them is that prayer leaves us with a tricky balance. On the one hand, to pray is to pray to *someone* or *something*. Prayer cannot simply be without direction at all. On the other hand, to spell out that direction fully proves ultimately impossible and even undesirable. Prayer requires that we constantly negotiate this tension." Italics in original.

[16] See for example, Christina M. *Gschwandtner*, "*Mystery Manifested:* Toward a Phenomenology of the Eucharist in Its Liturgical Context," *Religions* (2019), 10, 315:1–18; Claudia Welz, "A *Theological Phenomenology* of Listening: God's 'Voice' and 'Silence' after Auschwitz," Religions (2019), 10, 139, 1–17; Benno A. Blaschke, "Consciousness of God *as God is*: The Phenomenology of Christian Centering Prayer" (PhD diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2017); K. Hoshikawa, M. Staudigl, "A Schutzian Analysis of Prayer with Perspectives from Linguistic Philosophy," *Human Studies* (Dec. 2017) 40.4: 543–563; Andrew Prevot, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality Amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015); Marîa Raquel Fischer, "Para Una Fenomenologîa de la Plegaria, For a Phenomenology of Prayer," Cuestiones Teológicas (2012) 39.92: 283–301; Rob Veerman, "Considering the Concepts of God and Human Being in the Phenomenology of Prayer," *Bijdragen, International Journal in Philosophy and Theology* (2012), 73(1):85–100; Ola Sigurdson, "Prayer, Subjectivity, and Politics," Jonna Bornemark, Hand Ruin (eds.), *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers* (Huddinge: Södertörn University, 2010), 267–290; Ibid., Hans Ruin, "Saying the Sacred: Notes Towards a Phenomenology of Prayer," 291–310.

on prayer,[17] together with *Experience and the Absolute* by Jean-Yves Lacoste, are fundamental for this study.[18]

This chapter, then, will consider the phenomenology of prayer in general, followed by an appraisal of the works of Chrétien and Lacoste on the topic. The chapter will conclude with an evaluation of the foregoing for homiletics, contributing to the main inquiry of this study: whether phenomenology in twentieth-century French philosophy is applicable to and has implications for contemporary preaching, and Reformed preaching in particular.

[17] Jean-Louis Chrétien, "The Wounded Word: A Phenomenology of Prayer," in Dominique Janicaud (ed.), *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 147–175; Ibid., *The call and the response*, Anne A. Davenport (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); Ibid., *L'Appel et la Réponse* (Paris: Minuit, 1992); Jean-Louis Chretien, *The Ark of Speech*, Andrew Brown (trans) (London, New York: Routledge, 2004); Ibid., *L'Arche de la parole* (Paris: PUF, 1998); Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped for*, Jeffrey Bloechl (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); Ibid., Ibid., *L'inoubliable et l'inespéré* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991). Secondary literature on Chrétien's work see, *Clifton Stringer, "Reduction* to the Triune LORD in the Phenomenology of Jean-Louis Chrétien: A Bonaventurean Appearance After Husserl," *Modern Theology* (2019, 35.2:223–243; Timothy Troutner, "Jean-Louis Chrétien's Wounded Word," *McGrath Institute for Church Life Journal* (Notre Dame University, July 5, 2019). Cf. https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/jean-louis-chretien-wounded-word-falls-silent/ (accessed December 6, 2019); Silvianne Aspray, "An Augustinian response to Jean-Louis Chrétien's phenomenology of prayer," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, (2018) 79:3, 311–322; Jérôme de Gramont, "L'Aventure de la Parole Selon Jean-Louis Chrétien," *Comprendre* (2017) 19.2:0–30; Andrew L. Prevot, "*Responsorial Thought:* Jean-Louis Chrétien's Distinctive Approach to Theology and Phenomenology," *The Heythrop Journal* (2015), 56.6: 975–987; Roland Boer, "The Pure Givenness of the Call / Event: Between Alain Badiou and Jean-Louis Chrétien," *Colloquium* 44.2 (Nov 2012), 163–175; Norman Wirzba, "The Touch of Humility: An Invitation to Creatureliness," *Modern Theology* (2008) 24.2:225–244; Mark Wallace, "The Ark of Speech," *Theological Studies* (2007) 68.3:728–729; Peter Jonkers, Ruud Welten (eds.) *God in France. Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005); Ibid., *God in Frankrijk*. *Zes hedendaagse Franse filosofen over God*. Budel: *Damon, 2003);* Andrew Tallon, "Unforgettable and Unhoped for," *Theological Studies* (2004) 62.2:442–443; Philippe *Grosos, "L'irréversible excès.* Sur la phénoménologie de Jean-Louis *Chrétien,*" *Revue de théologie et de philosphie* (2003) 53.3:223–239.

[18] Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and The Absolute. Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, Mark Raftery-Skehan (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); Ibid., *Expérience et absolu*. *Questions disputées sur l'humanité de l'homme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (Épiméthée), 1994); Kenneth J. Wardley, *Praying to a French God: The Theology of Jean-Yves Lacoste* (London, New York: Routledge, 2014); Joeri Schrijvers, *An introduction to Jean-Yves Lacoste* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

Phenomenology and Prayer: A Survey

General Considerations

Prayer in philosophy has been appraised as a "disinterested delight" in contrast to an I-centered private petitionary and We-centered corporate public prayer.[19] The philosopher Merold Westphal defines prayer as "a deep, quite possibly the deepest decentering of the self, deep enough to begin…dismantling or, if you like, deconstructing that burning preoccupation with myself."[20] It is a kenotic moment, an emptying of oneself, a naked disclosing *coram Deo*, and a surrender at the cross. This self-emptying imitates the incarnated One coming into the world (κενόω, Phil. 2:7), showing Himself (an appearing, and thus appropriate to be considered phenomenologically) by becoming nothing, taking the form of a servant, "one that culminates in the Cross."[21] Furthermore, prayer is being called by and into the presence of the One: "En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage *me voici*" (Lévinas). Prayer is a "here I am" (Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Mary) or "it is me" (*me voici*), moment, whereby the "gaze of the 'other' turns the nominative 'I'…into the accusative 'me'."[22] Prayer, then, is a response to being called (call/response, Chrétien). In the "decentered-self" one is removed "from the center of a universe governed" by "*conatus essendi* and my acts of *Sinngebung*"; learns to

[19] Cf. Merold Westphal, "Prayer as the Posture of the Decentered Self," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 14.

[20] Merold Westphal, "Prayer as the Posture of the Decentered Self," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 15.

[21] James R. Mensch, "Prayer as Kenosis," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 65, 71, "[Prayer] is, rather, an imitation of the divine in its action of kenosis." On the act of surrender in prayer see also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIª-IIae q. 83 a. 3 ad 3, "…quod orando tradit homo mentem suam Deo…" ("By praying man surrenders his mind to God")

[22] B. H. McLean, Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 262. See also Jacques Derrida commentary on Lévinas "*En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici*," in *Textes pour Emmanuel Lévinas*, ed. François Laruelle, 21–60 (Paris: Jean-Michel Place Éditeur, 1980).

listen to the One whose presence is inseparable from his absence; learns to listen in solitude and silence (*das Geläut der Stille*, Heidegger); and learns to listen to the "Word of God as found in Scripture."[23] Prayer, as such, is a gift or received as a gift and "being gifted" (Marion), as Wirzba asserts: "and so we find ourselves in the unusual position of needing to pray for the ability to pray,"[24] or in Lukan words, "Lord teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Prayer as decentered-self is moreover a detachment "from ourselves in order to see and use all things in and for God"[25]—an abandonment of autonomy. As such, detachment also implies belonging and disposability—an availability, as with Mary ("be it unto me according to your word") or Christ ("nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will").[26] In the words of Aquinas, prayer is made "not in order to make known to Him our needs or desires but that we ourselves may be reminded of the necessity of having recourse to God's help in these matters," not that "we may change the Divine disposition, but that, by our prayers, we may obtain what God has appointed."[27] Thus, prayer transforms one from self-centeredness through de-centeredness to an attainment of more consciousness or self-understanding. Urs von Balthasar asserts, "The

[23] Cf. Merold Westphal, "Prayer as the Posture of the Decentered Self," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 19–20.

[24] Norman Wirzba, "Attention and Responsibility. The Work of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 95.

[25] Thomas Mertin, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Norfolk, Connecticut): A New Directions Book, 1949), 21. Italics in original.

[26] See for a philosophical discussion of intersubjective relationships: *disponibilité* and *indisponibilité,* Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, Robert Rosthal (trans./ ed.) (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1964). Cf. Merold Westphal, "Prayer as the Posture of the Decentered Self," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 22–23.

[27] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* IIª-IIae q. 83 a. 2 ad 1, "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod non est necessarium nos Deo preces porrigere ut ei nostras indigentias vel desideria manifestemus, sed ut nosipsi consideremus in his ad divinum auxilium esse recurrendum"; Ibid., ad 2," Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut dictum est, oratio nostra non ordinatur ad immutationem divinae dispositionis, sed ut obtineatur nostris precibus quod Deus disposuit."

more the soul finds God, the more it forgets itself and yet find itself in God."[28] As such, prayer belongs to the inner life, which is part of the religious life, for Husserl, who notes that a "phenomenological theory of religion requires, or rather, *is* for the most part…a return to *inner life*."[29] Husserl, in turning to Christianity, understood prayer in terms of the inward turn of his transcendental phenomenology.[30] Prayer, then, must be understood as a mode of intentionality, as all consciousness is intentional for Husserl: "in real genuine prayer, the praying I is not directed outwardly but inwardly."[31] Thus, prayer is an act of interiority or "one of the interior cognitive activities of the soul…. Interiority does not close off the world but allows the world to penetrate us deeply."[32] Thus, prayer is an encounter, where the exterior encounters the interior, and vice-versa: "prayer calls (*vocare*) to the other, calls the other to come in (*in-vocare*), to be present in some way, and calls forth (*pro-vocare*) the other in order to arouse or entice the other to respond…calling the other into the gathering of relationship (*con-vocare*)."[33] Thus, prayer includes vocation, invocation, provocation, and convocation. Before "I" am a *subject* calling to the Other, "I" am the *object* of the Other's call."[34]

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[28] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer*, A.V. Littledale (trans.) (New York: Paulist Press Deus Books, 1961), 20.

[29] Edmund Husserl to Wilhelm Dilthey, 5–6 July 1911, *Husserl: Shorter Works*, Jeffner Allen (trans.), Peter McCormick, Fredrick Elliston (eds.) (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 206.

[30] Cf. Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 134.

[31] James G. Hart*, "A Précis of an Husserlian Philosophical* Theology," Steven Laycock, *James Hart* (eds.), *Essays in Phenomenological Theology* (Albany: SUNY, 1986), 148. This quote is located within Hart's discussion "A Husserlian Theory of Prayer" (147–152).

[32] Terrence C. Wright, "Edith Stein. Prayer and Interiority," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 138–139.

[33] B. Keith Putt, ""Too Deep for Words." The Conspiracy of a Divine "Soliloquy," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 143.

[34] B. Keith Putt, ""Too Deep for Words." The Conspiracy of a Divine "Soliloquy," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology of Prayer*, 143, Emphasis mine.

Treanor evaluates biblical accounts of private and public prayer and notes differences, or "apparent contradictions," reconciling both by suggesting that such prayers are the "same phenomenon manifesting itself in two different ways."[35] Biblical (Matt. 6:9, 18:20; 1 Cor. 12:27) and philosophical (Augustine, Buber, Marcel, Lévinas) accounts shows, according to Treanor, that communal or public prayer accentuates a common humanity as being in the *imago Dei* with God as "our Father."[36] Lévinas, for example, emphasizes the liturgical and communal function of prayer.[37] On the other hand, private prayer, as an act of personal piety, Treanor suggests (Matt. 6:5–6), is a spiritual exercise of the individual, like giving alms and fasting. Whether prayer is private or intersubjective, however, is not necessarily to be given in an eidetic definition. Treanor suggests that an authentic prayer—whether private or public, is an act of love or has "kinship with love."[38] Any philosophical reflection on prayer, then, can resort to similar reflections on love—inadequately describable though experienced.

The practice of prayer needs to become a participatory rather than a "spectatorial" experience, as Marion observes: "the constituting subject is succeeded by the constituted witness."[39] Marion's thoughts on prayer "ultimately fail to take account of the ecclesial and corporate dimension of prayer" and "lacks the communal, social, and ethical dimension," which is present in the work of Lévinas, according to Gschwandtner,[40] who identifies three

[35] Brian Treanor, "Plus de Secret. The Paradox of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 155.

[36] Brian Treanor, "Plus de Secret. The Paradox of Prayer," 155–158.

[37] Emmanuel Lévinas, "Éduction et Prière," *Difficile liberté: Essais sur le Judaïsme* (Paris: Édition Albin Michel, 1976), 374–379.

[38] Brian Treanor, "Plus de Secret. The Paradox of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer,* 166.

[39] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and Revealed*, 44.

[40] Christina M. Geschwandtner, "Praise—Pure and Personal? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenologies of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 174, 168. See also on intersubjectivity and corporate

problems in Marion's reflection of prayer: (1) his emphasis on pure prayer ("protecting of God"), (2) his marginalization of ethics, *contra* Lévinas, and (3) his definition of love.[41] Marion discusses prayer via two different approaches: (1) the function of prayer, and the kind of language it uses; prayer transgresses the metaphysical function of language,[42] and (2) phenomenological prayer is a loving exchange of gazes between the praying person and God; "to pray is to open oneself to a gaze coming from elsewhere but me." This divine-human gaze is mutual, "crossing" and in communion. Prayer, for Gschwandtner reading Marion, "serves to establish fellowship with God across an infinite distance that is never erased, the distance toward other human beings is not crossed."[43] This seems to contradict the words of Scripture from God's point of view: "the LORD is near to the brokenhearted" (Ps. 34:18); "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth" (Ps. 145:18)—and from a human perspective: "Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night" (1 Kings 8:59). For Marion, prayer is ultimately "no longer to say but to listen: to be said, recognized, and 'loved by goodness.'"[44] Prayer should be a moment of wonderment and worshipping silence, transformative from one speaking to the One (God, for Marion)—to the One addressing one. This highlights, first, Marion's concern about idolatry or speaking to God falsely, which Gschwandtner calls "prayer as

prayer, including the "body of Christ" as community. Christ ascended body, to the Eucharistic body and Christ's body, the Church—this a liturgical notion (175–177).

[41] Christina M. Geschwandtner, "Praise—Pure and Personal? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenologies of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology* of *Prayer*, 176.

[42] Marion, *In Excess*, 143.

[43] Christina M. Geschwandtner, "Praise—Pure and Personal? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenologies of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology of Prayer*, 181.

[44] Christina M. Geschwandtner, "Praise—Pure and Personal? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenologies of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology of Prayer*, 170.

protection of God."[45] Secondly, this underscores Marion's phenomenology of givenness, whereby the phenomenon comes to one, the passive recipient, and not the I which controls the phenomenon. For Marion, prayer becomes God's doing rather than one's (inadequate) action in speaking, one who sees the icon as the instrument of communion and encounter between the divine and human,[46] not as the Pauline text of Romans 8:26 depicts the Spirit as having a predominant function in the life of prayer. Marion's understanding of the nature and "pure form" of prayer, then, is that of a "very individualistic" and "personal experience."[47] His phenomenology of prayer is influenced by his general phenomenology of the given, though with attention to his phenomenological account of love. Gschwandtner qualifies or restrains the critique, pointing out "that prayer is not the primary concern in any of Marion's texts."[48]

Jean-Louis Chrétien

The philosophical thought of Jean-Louis Chrétien on prayer is present throughout his *œuvre*, complex as it is, and culminating in "The Wounded Word: A Phenomenology of Prayer," in *Phenomenology and theology* (*Phénoménologie et théologie*, 1992), and *The Ark of Speech* (*L'Arche de la parole,* 1998).[49] Therefore, a selected examination of his work will assist in capturing his thought on prayer.

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[45] Christina M. Geschwandtner, "Praise—Pure and Personal? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenologies of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology of Prayer*, 169–172.

[46] Here Marion's work on the icon overshadows his reflections related to prayer.

[47] Christina M. Geschwandtner, "Praise—Pure and Personal? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenologies of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology of Prayer*,169.

[48] Geschwandtner, "Praise—Pure and Personal? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenologies of Prayer," Benson, Wirzba (eds.), *Phenomenology of Prayer*, 181.

[49] Jean-Louis Chrétien*, L'inoubliable et l'inespéré* (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1991); Ibid., *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, Jeffrey Bloechl (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); Ibid., *L'Appel et la Réponse* (Paris: Minuit, 1992); Ibid., *The Call and the Response*, Anne Carpenter (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); Ibid., *L'Arche de la parole* (Paris: PUF, coll. Epiméthée 1998); Ibid., *The Ark of Speech*, Andrew Brown (trans.) (New York: Routledge, 2003); Ibid., "La parole blessée. Phénoménologie de la prière" in Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-François Courtine, *Phénoménologie et théologie*

In response to the reservations of Janicaud, and to a certain extend Ricœur,[50] that theological topics and religious experiences ought to be excluded from philosophical considerations, and in particular the phenomenological, Chrétien asserts, "prayer is the religious phenomenon *par excellence,* as it is the human act that alone opens up the religious dimension…. With prayer, the religious phenomenon begins and ends."[51] This assertion is possible, for Chrétien, as he does not examine cataloguing various forms and expressions of prayer philosophically, limits the phenomenological description of prayer "as an *act of speech*."[52] But as *parole* has different connotations,[53] several interwoven aspects of prayer characterize Chrétien's thought on prayer: speech, voice, and word.

Speech

Speech, for Chrétien, has much to do with listening and silence. The first act of human speech, which is naming things, is preceded by listening to the divine speech, according Chrétien, following the Genesis account of Adam naming the animals: "man has already listened, and so he has already replied," he asserts, "even if his reply was a silent one."[54] One listens and is able to listen "because I am called."[55] Therefore, only those who are called can

(Paris: Criterion, 1992), 41–78. Cf. Dominique Janicaud (ed.), *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 147–175. Although the later work includes the same chapter of the former publication, the context of both works is different contributing to a more comprehensive articulation of Chrétien's thought on prayer.

[50] Ricœur has reservations, due to the nature of religious experiences, which are "culturally mediated…inseparable from languages, history and context." Cf. Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, Anne Carpenter (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), viii.

[51] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 17.

[52] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* ix; Ibid., *The Ark of Speech,* 18–19. Italic in original.

[53] "La parole blessée" has been translated as the "wounded word," or "wounded speech." See respectively, the *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"* and *The Ark of Speech.*

[54] Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, Andrew Brown (trans.) (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1–2.

[55] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 19.

listen to the Word and give voice to Scripture—prayer. Chrétien appeals to Calvin, asserting that true listening is a dying of oneself: "We must die to ourselves entirely if we are to become capable of hearing God's" call.[56] In other words, "when I really listen *with* the other to what he himself, as he speaks, is listening to or has listened to, then it is really *he* to whom I am listening."[57] Chrétien therefore notes that "listening requires patience, effort, hard work, and obedience."[58] Prayer, therefore, commences with listening, which is attentive to the call and to silence. In regard to the latter, silence is a precondition of listening (*Stille*), for Chrétien, or of an act (*Schweigen*).[59] The silence of *Stille* aims "to manifest oneself to God in silence, to present in a naked and wordless form one's spirit and heart before him."[60] As such the "art" of being silent involves a withdrawal from people, so that one may learn to converse with God.[61] In Christianity, Chrétien observes, Christ crossed "through silence in all its forms, from the silence of childhood to the silence of death and descent into hell, by way of those times when he kept silent in the face of certain questions as well as those times when he withdraws in silence to pray…. Only Speech Incarnate could redeem human silence."[62] The silence of *Schweigen*, then, is an act of suspending speech. When one momentarily pauses in prayer, there is a suspension and privation of speech in order to listen to another speech

56 Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 21. Cf. *Commentaires de Jehan Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Lib. Ch. Meyrueis et Co., 1855), III. 78, "…il faut que nous mourions du tout à nous-mesmes, pour ester faits propres à ouir la vocations de Dieu."

[57] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 10.

[58] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 68. Cf. Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 9, "We have been listened to even before we speak."

[59] Cf. Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, 45. Chrétien notes this is not an absolute distinction., however.

[60] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, 47, and 32.

[61] Cf. Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, 46–47.

[62] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, 71.

emerging.[63] The silent pause in prayer, for Chrétien, is a passive but expectant listening.[64] Therefore, he asserts, "speech is born from silence,"[65] and is the source of speech, and as such "speech itself comes from silence and tends towards it, just as it never ceases to accompany it. It comes from the silence that always precedes it, and which it interrupts or breaks."[66] Thus, silence precedes and expectantly suspends speech in prayer, which echoes with Mary who "treasured up (συντηρέω, keeping close, guarding, preserving) all these things, pondering (συμβάλλω, encountering, considering, consulting) them in her heart" (Luke 2:19, which may capture Luke 10:39)—a description in accord with Chrétien's phenomenology.

Voice

While listening is attentive to silence, equally or even more important to Chrétien is the attentiveness to the call, a voice to be heard. This aspect of prayer must be understood within the framework of Heideggerian call-response structure, but with this difference: for Chrétien call and response are in disproportion, *contra* Heidegger, as the excess of the call is greater than the response ever can give. Davenport suggests that Chrétien's attention to "the infinite disproportion between the Word that calls….and the words that we utter in response" remains "shackled in metaphysics."[67] Chrétien suggests that "we speak only for having been called, called by what there is to say…. We speak for having heard."[68] The call awakes, opens up,

[63] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, 48–75.

[64] Cf. Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 41.

[65] Cf. Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 39.

[66] Cf. Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 39–40.

[67] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* xxiii. It could be argued that Chrétien works out a religious dimension of Heidegger's ambiguous call-response structure. Cf. Philippe Grosos, "L'irréversible excès. Sur la phénoménologie de Jean-Louis Chrétien," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* (2003) 135:223, "En ce sens, l'apport de Heidegger lui est essentiel. Et pourtant, elle n'en constitue nullement un simple prolongement. Tirant profit d'une part des ambiguïtés heideggeriennes…"

[68] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 1.

and discloses though there is distance between the caller and the one called and yet no delay from when "call is sent out and the moment at which it is received."[69] He continues, "the ability to hear presupposes that we belong to the call, and that nothing in us" is "foreign to this belonging. We must belong in order to be able to hear."[70]

Word

This call is most visible for Chrétien through the Word and the words of Scripture, and it "does not appeal to a preexisting possibility in us of listening to it…as though we were the ones calling the call. It always brings with itself its own possibility, which is to say the listener."[71] As a variation of Chrétien's formulation, "the call that solicits us through [the Word] changes its meaning, and scope, and changes therefore as well the sense of our response, when…it becomes God's call."[72] Chrétien reminds one that the Augustinian tradition is wary of the immediacy of divine speech made directly to the postlapsarian human soul.[73] Chrétien contends, that only Scripture, an outside word, "that reaches us by means of a

[69] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 21.

[70] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 28. This notion of belonging differs from *Nouvelle Théologie* as found in Henry De Lubac, *Surnaturel: études historiques*, (Paris: Aubier, 1946), which deals with the inquiry how human persons in the natural state can be interiorly directed to the order of grace that fulfils them, "without in the least possessing this grace in anticipation, and without being able at all to claim it for themselves." See on this point, and the "inscription of the call upon the being's nature," Joshua Davis, "The Call of Grace. Henri de Lubac, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and the Theological Conditions of Christian Radical Phenomenology" in Bruce Ellis Benson, Norman Wirzba (eds.) *Words of Life*: *New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 186–187. The Dutch phenomenologist Gerardus van der Leeuw, moreover, noted before Chrétien this "belonging" in the context of prayer as "…a mode of relationship between the Body of Christ and the exalted Savior; hence prayer is only *in* Christo." G. van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion* (Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1933); Ibid., *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 427. On the character of prayer as dialogue see also G. van der Leeuw, *Inleiding tot de Phaenomenologie van den Godsdienst* (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn N.V, 1948), 120–121.

[71] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 22.

[72] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 15. The original, "The call that solicits us through beauty changes…"

[73] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 50.

voice, is supremely necessary to us."[74] This is furthermore underscored in Chrétien's reminder that God in Christ, the Word, has taken a human voice: there is thus a relationship—a singularity—between His voice and the voice of one who belongs to Christ. And so, following Augustine in his Psalms commentary, Chrétien says "we form with him one single man, head and body. So, we pray towards him, by him, in him: and we speak with him, and he speaks with us. We say in him, and he says in us the prayer of this psalm." Praying the psalms, for Chrétien, is appropriating one's work to oneself. How does this appropriation of speech take place? It does so in the singularity of speech.[75] At the moment prayer begins there is a recollection and gathering of thought; it is a "motion to collect oneself inwardly is aimed neither at guarding oneself nor at regarding oneself: inner silence gathers always around the other as its goal: self-concentration never focuses on one's own center. The Word indeed contains all things and is contained by nothing. It flows to us from inside and out."[76] In other words, in prayer the divine Word becomes one word, and thus, "prayer attains its highest form in submersion, while the dialogue type of supplication, on the other hand, always remain word and entreaty."[77] Furthermore, this call results in a manifestation, an appearing, and thus "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17). If Scripture is the voice of God, then the text of Scripture becomes properly visible precisely when it speaks to us and we question

[74] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 50.

[75] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 30.

[76] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 67. Cf. Ibid., 22, ""Prayer itself, in so far as it is speech, is alone capable of really gathering me and recollecting me."

[77] G. van der Leeuw*, Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 428–429.

it. It must speak to us in order for us to see it as beautiful.[78] Moreover, following Hugh of St. Victor, "God's Word appeared visibly to us once (*semel*) wrapped in human form, and now each day (*quotidie*) the very same word comes to us under the cover of a human voice (*idem ipsum humana voce conditum*)."[79] Christ, the living Word once in human form, comes now to us through the living words of Scripture. This *viva vox Dei* thus becomes visible in the Word, and so one's eyes listen, or in the words of Chrétien, "not only does the eye listen, it sees truly only by listening."[80] Thus, the invisible call becomes visible in the Word and precedes any human response, as silence precedes one's speech. This call can only be heard, and so responded to, by those belonging to the call, according to Chrétien.

His reflections on prayer are written with a strong religious and Christian perspective, noting that "in the constitution of the meaning of prayer its addressee is absolutely essential," though as a phenomenologist "one does not posit the existence or non-existence of the latter…. the fact remains that the way we address him, name him, speak to him, the nature of what we ask of him and feel able to ask from him, the fear or the trust with which the person praying turns to him, all depend on the being of this addressee as he appears to the believer."[81] Praying to the God of Christianity, one addresses "God always so *de profundis*, from the depths" of one's hidden or manifested distress, particularly from the depth of sin.[82] And, yet the circularity of prayer is such that when one begins to pray, one learns that one doesn't

[78] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 35, "If beauty is the very voice of things, the face-to-face encounter through which beauty grips us is not in its essence a speechless contemplation but a dialogue. Visible beauty becomes properly visible precisely when it speaks to us and we question it. It must speak to us in order for us to see it as beautiful."

[79] Cf. Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 69. Hugh of St. Victor, *De Verbo Dei*.

[80] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* 35.

[81] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 18

[82] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 24.

know how to pray, and one "gives thanks for his prayer as for a gift from God."[83] "Prayer itself, in so far as it is speech," then," is alone capable of really gathering me and recollecting me." [84] Prayer is a sort of kenosis, an emptying of oneself before the Other. In the disclosure of the self in prayer there is an appearing of oneself. "If prayer plays a privileged role in disclosing human finitude as a summons to infinity,"[85] this exposure "wounds" the one who prays, brings one to self-destitution—a poverty so extreme that one lacks the means to provide for oneself (Rev. 3:20, Song 5:2–8). The more one experiences the Other, the more one forgets oneself, and thus "all prayer…dispossesses us of our egocentrism."[86] Prayer, then, returns one to oneself in its work of dispossessing and exposing. This is strengthened in the realization that it is God who brings matters into memory or recollection (Ps. 90:8) but also who works a non-remembrance, a "forgetting" (Isa. 43:25).[87] With an implied allusion to the *sensus divinitatis,* Chrétien notes "the unforgettable presence of God to memory forms one of the elements of the image of God in us. This image can be covered over or deformed by evil, but it could never be destroyed."[88] This divine presence in prayer does not imply or depend on one seeking, desiring or tending toward God, "for it is only if God manifests himself to us,

[83] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 24.

[84] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 22.

[85] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response,* xviii. This thought resonates with Nicolas of Cusa on being summoned in prayer. Cf. *Nicolas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism. Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of the* Visione Dei, Jasper Jopkins (trans., ed.) (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2nd edition, 1988), 97, "Draw me, O Lord, because no one can come unto You unless he be drawn by You. [Draw me] so that, being drawn, I may be freed from this world and be joined unto You..."

[86] Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, ix. On forgetting and Chrétien see Jason W. Alvis, "Faith and Forgetfulness: Homo Religiosus, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Heidegger," *Religions* (2019,) 10, 264:8. Alvis asserts, "For the overcoming of such egocentrism and nihilistic self-enclosure, forgetting provides faith a necessary supplement. Forgetting helps instantiate an active attempt to overlook what seems to yearn for our attention (by "putting away of the old") in favor of something else...something new."

[87] Ps. 90:8, "You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence;" Isa. 43:25 "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins;" Micah 7:19, "You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

[88] Chrétien*, The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, 88.

precedes us, and foresees us that a desire for him is possible. He alone had and can have the initiative."[89] As such, "the highest moment of the spiritual life is one of finding without seeking"—it is a gift.[90]

Chrétien, moreover, follows Bonaventure in a twofold description of prayer: "The one makes of prayer an elevation of the mind towards God; the other, a request for God to grant what is suitable for us."[91] The first dissociates prayer from an act of speech, for Chrétien, and the second implies vocal prayer, though he raises the question in light of silent or mental prayer: "where does vocal prayer begin and where does it end?"[92] This is a relevant inquiry, as a meditative *lectio* of Scripture tends to the *oratio* of the words of Scripture: a reading that is prayed or a vocally prayerful reading.[93] This emphasis on the voice, the vocal prayer over silent prayer, thus leads to the implication that the body, to which the voice belongs, is not suspended or bracketed in prayer.[94] Vocal prayer as such, for Chrétien, becomes a self-manifestation, self-exposure, agonic, and transformative before the invisible other.[95] This vocal prayer, this speech finds its origin not in oneself. Chrétien writes that "all prayer

[89] Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, 89.

[90] Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, 110. Cf. Ibid., 113.

[91] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech, 29.* Cf. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, Dominic Monti (trans., ed.) (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 207. Cf. Saint John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, E. Buytaert (trans., ed.) (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1956), III:24, 267, "Prayer is an uprising of the mind to God or a petitioning of God for what is fitting."

[92] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 32. Chrétien asserts, "If authentic vocal prayer is always accompanied by mental prayer, as St. Theresa of Avila claims, "this distinction can no longer be claimed to describe rigorously the phenomenon of prayer" (18), and "The contrast between *vocal prayer* and *silent prayer* is, however, more complex than it appears," as seen with Hannah in 1 Sam. 2 (31).

[93] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 32.

[94] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 32, "To pray vocally is to make the body an essential element of prayer." The relative emphasis of Chrétien on vocal over silent prayer resonates with Aquinas's affirmative answer to the question, "Whether prayer should be vocal?" Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* IIª-IIae q. 83 a. 12 arg.

[95] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 25, "This manifestation of self to other through speech is agonistic and transformative, as it is in dialogue and conversation with the other in an encounter in which our truth is at stake. The person before God is drawn into involvement only in and through prayer."

confesses God as giver, by dispossessing us of our self-centeredness, in a speech that at every instance the addressee alone, in our eyes, makes possible."[96]

Appraisal

Chrétien's thought on the phenomenology of prayer is multifaceted, and as such this appraisal is limited and provisional. Essentially, he understands prayer as an act of speech, and thus prayer is anthropophany rather than theophany.[97] This may allow him to circumvent the concerns of Janicaud and Ricœur concerning the fundamentals of phenomenology, though the religious and particularly Augustinian overtones characterize the work of Chrétien. Therefore, one may ask, Can a phenomenological description of prayer be void of theology or metaphysics? Although numerous sources of theology are consulted, Chrétien aims to work within the parameters of phenomenology.[98] These sources of Christian theology—used reluctantly at times—function less as benchmarks for the lived experience of prayer and contribute more as sources in themselves—thus, as a bracketed belief system. This raises the question, though, as to whether this enables him to *define* the essence of prayer phenomenologically without resorting to theological sources. Aspray asserts, "the question remains whether this style [following Husserl's phenomenology] is fitting for defining the

[96] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 22. Thus, one manifest oneself to oneself, as lacking everything as one manifest oneself to the One, the origin of every good and every gift (James 1:17).

[97] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 19, "prayer…is first and foremost an anthropophagy, a manifestation of man."

[98] See for authors and works of Christian theology used, including, Aquinas, Augustine, Bellarmine, Bonaventure, Calvin, Cassian, John of the Cross, Pascal, among others, Chrétien*, The Unforgettable and the Unhoped*, 133–135; *The Ark of Speech,* 165–170; Ibid., *The Call and the Response*, 135–144. Delfino assert on this point, "[T]he philosophical reader has the burdensome task of separating out the philosophy from the theology." Cf. Robert A. Delfino, "Chrétien, Jean-Louis, The Call and the Response," *The Review of Metaphysics* (2005), 58.4: 884.

ritual nature of prayer."[99] Or, is Chrétien modifying Husserlian / Heideggerian phenomenology by the inclusion of theological sources and thereby obscuring the demarcation of both disciplines?[100] That is not to say that his contribution concerning speech, silence, call, response, voice, and vocal prayer are not helpful in *describing* prayer phenomenologically. These phenomenological considerations show that prayer, for Chrétien, is an act of speech born in silence through listening to the divine *Parole* (Luke 2:19). The intentionality of one praying, as though to meet the invisible gaze, is a self-manifestation, a kenosis, and a vulnerable disclosure that originates not in the one praying. Prayer, then, commences with an initiative outside humanity, whereby the one praying becomes visible to the Invisible in an event where the divine Word and human word merge—a continuum, a word-transition without discontinuity, an apprehension and appropriation (*toeëigening*) of the divine Word. In other words, for Chrétien, human words are "wounded" by the over-taking call of the Other, and thus one's words are disproportional to the divine Word; it is an

[99] Aspray, "An Augustinian response to Jean-Louis Chrétien's phenomenology of prayer," 320, "Chrétien follows the phenomenological style established by Edmund Husserl. Insofar as he follows Husserl, however, it comes as no surprise that his account of prayer must fall back on the self, as the phenomenological style cannot value any speech which is not 'descriptive' and thus ultimately self-referential." This observation is correct but seems somewhat less nuanced. Husserl's phenomenology always returns to the seat of conscious experience but that does not necessarily qualify as being self-referential as such. Also, it does not appreciate enough that Husserl was one of the most rigorous thinkers in philosophy of intersubjectivity, so that ultimately, the self is not referentially *incurvatus in se*. Dr. Victor Emma-Adamah is acknowledged for this correction on Aspray's observation.

[100] Chrétien style of phenomenology resonates of what Jean-Yves Lacoste and Emmanuel Falque Cf. Emmanuel Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, Reuben Shank (trans.) (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016), 158, ."Rather than dividing philosophy and theology up into two utterly separate worlds, we will practice the one as well as the other, seeking in ourselves a new mode of unity"; Jean-Yves Lacoste, *From Theology to Theological Thinking*, W. Chris Hackett (trans.) (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 81–82, "Can we, in fact, mark out a theological field and a philosophical field? We can trace a nice line of demarcation between theology and mathematics (this does not prohibit a theological interest in the ontic status of mathematical objects). Yet between theology and philosophy everything seems as if we cannot."

"asymmetrical relationship of gift bestowal and dependence."[101] But there is another disproportionality as well. Chrétien's philosophical reflections on prayer intend to adhere to a phenomenological bracketing of the actuality of faith, God, theology, and metaphysics. This reduction, then, attempts to suspend the "Thou" (God), the One to whom the prayer is directed in Christianity, while the "I," the one who prays, cannot be bracket in his or her totality—another disproportionality, one which Chrétien does not work out. Furthermore, the phenomenological bracketing of God poses potential problems. Aspray asserts, "Augustine intimates that prayer is not only a means to focus one's attention, but also a kind of *ontological intensification* of a creature's presence to God. Chrétien's method does not allow for this intimation."[102] Stringer, on the contrary, suggests that "Chrétien's work…makes senses if we locate Chrétien's own phenomenological voice and attitude within an older meaning of the word 'reduction'…. The act of reduction, for Chrétien…returns thought to the Triune LORD via the human mind, rather than only, as for Husserl, to the pure heights of human consciousness."[103] On the other hand, Chrétien's reflection on the voice, whereby divine voice is made visible in the Word, Scripture, and Christ, who took on the human voice, shows another phenomenological consideration that should not be overlooked. Prayer to the God of Christianity, then, is mediated by Christ interceding for the praying one—a singularity

[101] Jacob Holsinger Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine. Contemplation and the Practice of Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 142. The citation originates in a different context, i.e., the relationship of Creator and creature, but can be applied to the situatedness of prayer.

[102] Aspray, "An Augustinian response to Jean-Louis Chrétien's phenomenology of prayer," 320. Emphasis mine. Aspray is more critical of Chrétien's thought, here, than Biebighauser asserting, "for Chrétien is not nearly so bound to the Heideggerean project of denying some sort of speculative or metaphysical dimension to Augustine's thought, and so his equally insightful hermeneutical approach to Augustine is not nearly so often derailed by a prior methodological (even ideological) commitment." Cf. Jeffrey Biebighauser, "Augustine and the Phenomenological Tradition," (PhD diss. University of Nottingham, 2012), 16.

[103] Clifton Stringer, "Reduction to the Triune LORD in the Phenomenology of Jean-Louis Chrétien: A Bonaventurean Appearance After Husserl," *Modern Theology* (2019) 35.2: 228.

of voice, whose words are transformed—sanctified, theologically speaking, to be heard. Thus, the phenomenological reading of Scripture, and its appropriation—the owning of the words of Scripture, the inverted experience of "being read" by Scripture—is advanced by prayer and is an inverted experience of an act of divine speech. The reading of Scripture transitions into a praying of Scripture whereby the divine Word becomes one's own word in prayer—a new horizon of meaning. The continuum from the *oratio* to the *contemplatio* is often not discernable but is a *Befindlichkeit.*

Jean-Yves Lacoste

Lacoste's phenomenological reflection on prayer is primarily articulated in *Experience and the Absolute*.[104] Here and elsewhere in his *œuvre*, these reflections relate to his thought on liturgy and experience. In regard the latter, Lacoste's works are broadly aimed at exploring "the human aptitude to experience."[105] His articulation of a phenomenology of prayer, if one can speak of such, takes place within the context of his work on liturgy. As such he differs from Chrétien, who, as noted before, specifically developed a phenomenology of prayer as "prayer is the religious phenomenon *par excellence.*"[106] Therefore, liturgy, as understood by

[104] Wardley, *Praying to a French God. The Theology of Jean-Yves Lacoste*. Wardley's main source to summarize Lacoste's phenomenology of prayer is *Experience and the Absolute* (2004; *Expérience et absolu*, 1994) alongside readings of Lacoste's works *Heidegger et la question de* Dieu (2009), *La Phénoménalité de Dieu* (2008), *Présence et parousie* (2006), and *Note sur le temps*. Essai sur les raisons de la mémoire et de l'espérance (1990). Consulted for this section, Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*; Ibid., *Expérience et absolu*.

[105] Joeri Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," *The Heythrop Journal* (2005) xlvi:315.

[106] Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech,* 17. What experience is, for Lacoste, particular in relation to knowledge, will be explored below.

Lacoste, will also be surveyed, contributing to his thought on prayer, understanding his "task of phenomenology to be inherently hermeneutical," according to Horner.[107]

Liturgy

Liturgy is not necessarily Christian worship, for Lacoste, but one's life *coram Deo*, before God. As such, liturgy is a distancing from the world, and his reflections on liturgy involve non-religious logic, subverting the Heideggerian logic of being-in-the-world.[108] Liturgy, then, is understood as a certain bracketing of the world, a "life lived before God...not at the measure of Dasein of the mortal"; it is "the facts, gestures, and sayings of people in the presence of God."[109] Horner comments, "the liturgical reduction does not mean that God is somehow brought within the dimension of the horizon but that the world ceases to be our determining horizon."[110] Liturgy, therefore, is broadly understood as the relation of human beings to God, though the connection to the Eucharist is not completely dismissed.[111] Lacoste defines liturgy as that which "designates...the logic that presides over the encounter between man and God writ large," adding, "I am not denying that this encounter is also attested to in worship...but the limits of what I understand here by 'liturgy' exceed the limits of

[107] Robyn Horner, "Words that reveal: Jean-Yves Lacoste and the experience of God," *Continental Philosophy Review* (2018) 51:175.

[108] Cf. Horner, "Words that reveal: Jean-Yves Lacoste and the experience of God," 174; Wardley, *Praying to a French God*, 19, *"Lacoste's Experience* and the *Absolute contrasts* a *liturgical 'being-before-God'* [*coram Deo*] to *Heidegger's 'being*-in-the-*world'.*""

[109] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, 174; Ibid., *Le monde et l'absence*, 16–17; Ibid., *Recherches sur la parole*, 202.

[110] Horner, "Words that reveal: Jean-Yves Lacoste and the experience of God," 174. Cf. Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 43–44.

[111] Cf. Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," 315; In Peter Jonkers, Ruud Welten (eds.), *God in France. Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005)*,* liturgy is defined as the "relation of men and women to God" (207)

worship."[112] As such, liturgy is a "transgression," for Lacoste, exceeding "being-in-the-world and the relation to the earth"[113] with the capacity to subvert a specific place. He notes that "the experiential practice of liturgy can open up a space where neither world nor earth is interposed between man and God."[114] Furthermore, and as such, liturgy is an "unhappiness of consciousness" forged by the here and now and the *eschaton*, as Lacoste asserts; "its unhappiness...lies in its unawareness of the fact that being-in-the-world and being-before God are thoroughly intertwined."[115] Therefore, "liturgy is an act of freedom,"[116] according to Lacoste, and Schrijvers remarks that it "is an explicit choice for God," explaining that "theologically, one must understand this as follows: while restlessness is the condition to *receive* the Word of God, liturgy and exposition are those acts that, through praying, *answer* to and praise that Word."[117] This alternation between phenomenology and theology, here, a notion of religion, is not easily subverted in the discussion on liturgy, neither by Lacoste nor his interpreters.[118] Furthermore, this exposing before God is more than that: not only is it a "desire to see and experience God," but also as a coming before God as a decentered self of modern subjectivity and at his disposal.[119] According to Schrijvers, the "the essential of the

[112] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 2.

[113] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 20–22.

[114] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 28.

[115] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 68.

[116] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 22.

[117] Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," 318. Cf. Lacoste, "Batir, habiter, prier,"*Revue Thomiste* (1987) 87:357–390. Emphasis mine.

[118] Although Lacoste notes that *Experience and the Absolute* is not a study of "religious experience" and the term "religion" is avoided, he slips into a discussion of liturgy being synonymous of worship. See Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 197 fn. 17.

[119] Jonkers, Welten (eds.), *God in France*, 209. Furthermore, "Over and against the autonomy and the activity of the modern project Lacoste posits the *radical passivity* of the liturgical experience. Modern subjectivity undergoes a crisis..." (212).

liturgical experience" is "a consenting to deliver my being into God's hands—one can say that the believer is...in the hand of the potter."[120] Liturgy, then, exposes and discloses one before the Absolute, in which the world is temporally suspended.[121]

Experience

Lacoste's thought on experience in *Experience and the Absolute* concentrates primarily on liturgical experience. In other words, if liturgy is about the relation of human beings and God, how does one define liturgical experience? Lacoste notes, ''Man's relation to God takes place, not in the element of feeling (*Gefühl*) or of immediate 'knowledge' ['*savoir*' *immédiat*] (*Wissen*), but in that of 'knowledge' ['*connaissance*'] (*Erkenntnis*).''[122] Thus, for Lacoste, *contra* Schleiermacher, knowledge is an *experiential* knowledge, a "*connaissance par mode de familiarité*" (knowledge by acquaintance).[123] A possible and resulting implication, therefore, is the impossibility of God's absence in prayer—"otherwise one would simply not pray."[124] The experience of proximity and presence is conflated, like one preparing a meal today for tomorrow—it "anticipates the future already prepared…. liturgy is thus an anticipation of the Kingdom of God…. it is *as if* God is present in prayer."[125] The liturgical

[120] Jonkers, Welten (eds.), *God in France*, 213, 214.

[121] Cf. Schrijvers, *An Introduction to Jean-Yves Lacoste*, 57.

[122] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, 91. Horner notes, "the oft-noted distinction between *connaissance* (personal knowledge or acquaintance) and *savoir* (conceptual knowledge) becomes highly significant in each of Lacoste's works, but extremely difficult to maintain absolutely." Cf. Horner, "Words that reveal: Jean-Yves Lacoste and the experience of God," 176.

[123] Jean-Yves Lacoste, *La phénoménalité de Dieu. Neuf etudes* (Paris: CERF, 2008), 207. See also, Horner, "Words that reveal: Jean-Yves Lacoste and the experience of God," 176–178. Horner asserts, however, "Laccoste constantly wrestles with the notions both of knowledge and experience." On the concept of *Erkenntnis*, see Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen,* vol.II, *Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1901).*

[124] Schrijvers, *An Introduction to Jean-Yves Lacoste*, 76.

[125] Jonkers, Welten (eds.), *God in France.* 209. Schrijvers offers the example of today's food preparation with the anticipated meal of tomorrow. With this in mind one noted that if the meal is postponed, the experience

experience is one of anticipation and expectation. In other words, per Lacoste, it is the immanent experience of "the gap that separates presence and parousia," in which the "unrealized" is made to "appear to us as such."[126] Lacoste, furthermore, asserts rather theologically that "God can be closest to us (and there is no greater proximity than that to which Christology bears witness) even though the senses know him only as an absence."[127] Therefore, for Lacoste, the relation between human beings and God takes "shape in an experiential mode": the "refusal" of such "finds here a string" of "*a posteriori* justification."[128] The liturgical experience, as exposure, then, "entails an ontic act, most commonly understood as prayer."[129] Thus, the liturgical experience is an experiential knowledge acted out in prayer, but also, as Schrijvers reads Lacoste, "in liturgical experience, human beings turn over their lives to God in order to receive God's Word."[130]

Prayer

Lacoste, then, reflects on prayer within the framework of liturgy and liturgical experience. Prayer, therefore, is a moment in which the world is bracketed, and in which one exposes oneself before God—an impoverished turning of oneself over to God in order to receive his Word.[131] The Word demands a leaving of "the world *as* world, where one is

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of anticipation is lengthened not cancelled. Note, however, Lacoste does not assert that this experience "*as if* God is present," implicates *that* God is present.

[126] Jean-Yves Lacoste, "The Phenomenology of Anticipation" in Neal DeRoo, John P. Manoussakis (eds.), *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 28. A parallel notion with the theological concept of "already" and "not yet," as found, for example in Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans*,* 1953).

[127] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 191.

[128] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 191.

[129] Schrijvers, *An Introduction to Jean-Yves Lacoste*, 59.

[130] Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," 321.

[131] Cf. Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 32–35; Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," 320.

without God."[132] On the relation of Word and prayer, Lacoste asserts, "theology may encourage us to read biblical texts but is not the final works on them—theology is an act of listening to the biblical text, a silence that also enables prayer: To read this text is to read before God; hence it is to make one's reading a liturgy, a work of prayer."[133] This silence in prayer coincides with a resting, as prayer temporarily appeases a "restless desire of God."[134] This Augustinian thought suggests, *contra* De Lubac and Rahner, "that the human capacity for God does not arise from an existential predisposition but in an existenti*ell* [and graced] decision."[135] The silence and resting is kenotic, an emptying of oneself for the Absolute. Schrijvers notes, "the truth of our being is our kenotic emptying of ourselves for an other,"[136] while Černý raises the question, "If the 'liturgy'," for Lacoste, "is an *encounter* between God and the human, can the human be treated…'*kenotically*?'"[137] Lacoste asserts, affirmatively, that "man takes hold of what is most proper to him when he chooses to encounter God," especially as man "accepts an existence in the image of a God who has taken humiliation upon himself—when he accepts a *kenotic* existence."[138] Prayer, as such, is an encounter that is

[132] Cf. Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," 319. In prayer one enters a non-place and non-time, according to Lacoste. Cf. Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, 53–54.

[133] Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Présence et parousie* (Geneva; Ad Solem, 2006), 187. Translation per Wardley, *Praying to a French God*, 25.

[134] Cf. Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute,* 41; Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," 324.

[135] Horner, "Words that reveal: Jean-Yves Lacoste and the experience of God," 174 (Rahner); Henri de Lubac, *Le Mystere du Surnaturel* (Paris: F. Aubier, 1965). De Lubac proposes that human beings in their natural state can be interiorly directed to the state of grace that completes them.

[136] Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," 321.

[137] J. Černý, "Experience and the absolute: disputed questions on the humanity of man," *Communio viatorum* (2006) 48(2):179.

[138] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, 194.

an act of "exposition" but also a place "where God turns to men and women to give them a new future and beginning."[139]

Appraisal

The phenomenology of Lacoste either oscillates methodically between philosophy and theology, or is the specific character his modus of philosophy. On the one hand, for example, prayer is understood as a free, human act of coming into the presence of the Absolute, while on the other hand, this act *coram Deo* is theologically understood as "the work of God in man."[140] The latter would fall outside of the intended phenomenology as articulated by Husserl and Heidegger, or, one could say, Lacoste extends the realm of such phenomenology. If the latter is the case, it aligns with Gschwandtner's characterization of Lacoste's philosophy as "deeply theological" and "profoundly influenced by phenomenology."[141] If the former is the case, the purported tension between philosophy and theology underscores Lacoste's view that the Absolute is "optional," as he phenomenologically articulates the *possibility* of the relation of human beings and God.[142] This possibility, however, in the description of prayer in the context of liturgy and experience, offers insights that may serve the preparation of a sermon in several ways. First, the understanding that liturgy is one's life is *coram Deo* not only pertains to the study, preparing a sermon, but also to the pulpit, delivering a sermon. The sermon, then, is a liturgical act—an act of presence before God. Second, if this coming before

[139] Schrijvers, "Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy," 323.

[140] Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, 46, "author of his own presence before God... (even though theology might deem this act of presence itself to be the work of God in man."

[141] Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 183.

[142] See for a Christian apologetic character of Lacoste's work *Gschwandtner, Postmodern Apologetics? 163–183.*

God is a kenotic moment—leaving the world *as* world, being summoned and exposed by the Word, and emptying oneself—then prayer is an indispensable liturgical act in the preparation of a sermon. Thus the question of how the phenomenology of prayer advances the phenomenology of reading Scripture cannot be dismissed. Furthermore, in which ways does the work of both Chrétien and Lacoste differ from, agree with, or contribute to a phenomenology of prayer? These questions will be considered in the homiletical evaluation.

Reflections for homiletics

If prayer concerns both the One to whom prayers are offered and the one who prays, a phenomenological description of prayer is articulated from the perspective of the latter. We will consider some of the questions arising from the above review of philosophical considerations on the topic of prayer: What may phenomenology offer in describing prayer? What are its limitations, if any? How may a phenomenology of prayer advance a phenomenology of reading of Scripture? How does a phenomenology of prayer relate to the preparation of a sermon? The foregoing philosophical reflections and inquiries will be considered with particular attention to the work of Chrétien and Lacoste in describing a phenomenology of prayer for homiletical purposes.

Considering the work Chrétien, Lacoste, and other phenomenologists in relation to prayer, the following description of the experience of prayer in the process of preparing a sermon is proposed. First, the assumption of an understanding of one's life before God (*coram Deo*) is established. The one who prepares a sermon lives in the real world (*Wirklichkeit*) but in the realization of being-in-the-world and life-world (*Lebenswelt*), while

not belonging to the world but to an Other.[143] The invisible One is made visible through the Word, a divine speech, which is read in sermon preparation. In fact, this Word calls, demands a response, and awakens one to an act of speech—prayer. This process becomes transformative when one transitions from the reading of Scripture to prayer—that is, praying Scripture. There is a continuum from an intellectual sight of the w/Word to another modality of sight (another perception), an ocular prayer . The visible word (Scripture) is *mutatis mutandis* present in the invisible Word (Christ), which in turn is manifested sacramentally as well. With these preliminaries in place—which challenge the premises of a Husserlian-Heidegerian intended neutrality of phenomenology, consideration can be given to a phenomenological bracketing, or *epoché*, and reduction pertaining to prayer.

Prayer as a liturgical moment commences with a bracketing of the world, a distancing, a suspending oneself from and a leaving behind of the world, such that, in prayer, the restless life comes to rest—in a silence before God. It situates one in the presence of God, "whose mystery and transcendence is such that it obviates all competitive dualisms."[144] The distance between God and the praying one fuses in silence (Ps. 34:18; 145:18). This silence discloses and disposes one, leading to a confrontation with oneself, an *Erkennen* of one's impoverished condition before the One who calls (Ps. 130:1), and disposes one to listen to the divine speech, the Word. This *Bewußtsein* coincides with a further reduction, that of a kenotic experience, as suggested by both Chrétien and Lacoste. In this being emptied of oneself, or kenotic moment, the act of seeing the words of Scripture transforms into an act of seeing and listening to the voice of

[143] Chrétien's thought on "belonging" resonates with an early modern Reformed formulation as found in the Heidelberg Catechism, answer one "That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ," which articulation precedes the exposition of prayer as well.

[144] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 108.

God. There is an intentionality when prayer becomes ocular: "a waiting with the eyes, opening them in silence, expectation, and attention."[145] This "seeing" is transformed into a gazing of sustained attention, in silence, inclining to hear divine speech.[146] "In order to see," the true meaning of the w/Word, one must come to overturn one's life to God. [147] As such, prayer is a gift and "is like entering into the Eucharistic liturgy: we 'gather up' the heart" and "recollect our whole being" in the presence of God.[148] The experience of being in the presence of the One, as in communion, grants a knowledge by acquaintance. This experiential knowledge of the words of Scripture is apodictically received through prayer, which as an act of speech enables one to speak the Word. Through prayer one transforms from a spectator of the Word into a participant of the w/Word. Thus, what does it mean to call on God? "How can I call on you to come if I am already in you?" [149] Augustine prayed, "*Voca me, ut vídeam te*" (Call me, that I may see you).[150]

By way of conclusion on the phenomenology of prayer, the reading of Scripture phenomenologically cannot proceed without prayer. As such, phenomenology is affirmed here as profitably applicable to the preparation of a sermon. The participatory reading of the Word is deepened by prayer. Therefore, these indispensable conceptual aspects—the phenomenologically considered reading of Scripture and prayer—are appropriately

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[145] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 202.

[146] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), IV.3.iii, 2715–2717.

[147] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 241.

[148] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, IV.3.iii, 2711.

[149] *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, Henry Chadwick (trans., ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991), 3.

[150] *Psalterium Davidis, cum canticis sacris & selectis aliquot orationibus* (Venetia: Balleoniana, 1739), 400.

foundational for a constructive proposal, to be considered in the next chapter.

PART 2

A Constructive Proposal

CHAPTER 4

CONTEMPLATIVE PHENOMENOLOGY AND HOMILETICS

Introduction

One who preaches hands over "the fruits of contemplation" to others.[1] This chapter, then, builds on the preceding chapters, and aims to offer a constructive proposal on whether phenomenology is relevant for and can be applied fruitfully to the process of the preparation of a sermon or homily. It will be proposed that classic or Husserlian-Heideggerian phenomenology may have limitations, but that a contemplative phenomenology holds promise for homiletics. With Scripture as its source, contemplative phenomenology offers a perspective on the sermon or homily as a sharing of experiential knowledge—a knowing beyond all knowing or "unknowing": a contemplation which is "beyond philosophy, beyond speculative theology."[2] The sermon is the fruit or result of a contemplative encounter with God in Christ through the Word, a practice in which one recognizes the manifesting of God as a transformative experience, which challenges the limits of language, and yet is called to be "handed over" (*contemplata aliis tradere*) to the hearing of others.

A contemplative phenomenology, if it is possible, differs from a phenomenology of contemplation. The latter would consider the nature and extent of contemplation and, in the

[1] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* III, Q. 40, A. 1, Ad 2, "sed vita activa secundum quam aliquis praedicando et docendo contemplata aliis tradit" (that form of active life in which a man, by preaching and teaching, delivers to others the fruits of his contemplation). See also the Introduction chapter of this study.

[2] Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Abbey of Gethsemani, Inc., 1961; New York: New Directions Publishing, 2007), 1.

context of this study, its implications for sermon preparation. Although such considerations cannot be ignored, the main thrust of this chapter concerns the relationship between contemplation and phenomenology, their possible mutual benefits, and their emerging results in a contemplative phenomenology. Contemplative phenomenology, it will be argued, offers a possibility for the one reading and praying Scripture in the preparation of a sermon to transition from the role of spectator or observational reader to that of a participant. A key understanding supporting the possibility of contemplative phenomenology is participation in a divine encounter. This participation in the divine (Word) manifests itself twofold: witness (the object of contemplation) and testimony (the subject who contemplates)—both of which are indispensable for the one preparing and preaching a sermon. Beyond witness and testimony lies confession—a public declaration or proclamation. Therefore, it is proposed in this chapter that our reflections on participatory, contemplative phenomenology—involving witness, testimony, and confession—brings this study full circle in its concern to further the relevance of biblical, Reformed, and experiential preaching—"that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you"—and to increase its potential to reach the churched and the unchurched with the Word—"so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

Accordingly, this chapter proceeds with a discussion of contemplation that proceeds toward a proposal for a contemplative phenomenology, which will be described in terms of the presence of and our participation in the divine, followed by a discussion of its twofold manifestation: witness and testimony, and a phenomenological reflection on confession. Examples of practicing phenomenology in the reading of Scripture and prayer will accompany these reflections. The chapter will conclude with an evaluation of the possibility

for a contemplative phenomenology to inform and profitably contribute to the preparation of a sermon.

Phenomenology and Contemplation: A Survey

The term "contemplation" requires clarification in the context of homiletics, as confusion about the meaning of the word may lead to unnecessary misunderstanding. For example, the interchangeable use of meditation and contemplation, the idea of an associated lack of historical inquiry, the connotation with mysticism, the distorted meaning of spiritual formation or spiritual practices and exercises, and influences of neo-Gnostic and Roman Catholic spirituality on contemporary evangelicals are potential pitfalls in appropriating the concept of "contemplation" for a phenomenology of homiletics.[3]

First, this study considers contemplation as articulated in the Western philosophical and theological tradition, and as such excludes any reflection on Eastern contemplation as found in Zen Buddhism, and the like,[4] as well as in late medieval and contemporary mysticism.[5]

Secondly, this study considers contemplation more specifically as expressed in the Christian tradition—that is to say in *catholic* Christian tradition. Although the term

[3] See for a critical evaluation from a biblically, historically, and overall Reformed perspective, John H. Coe, Kyle C. Strobel (eds.), *Embracing Contemplation*: *Reclaiming a Christian Spiritual Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

[4] The spirituality of the contemplative Thomas Merton goes beyond Catholicism. The Merton scholar William Shannon, however, notes that Merton sees parallels between the Western and Eastern tradition of contemplative spirituality, including "(1) the priority of experience over speculation; (2) the inadequacy of words to articulate religious experience; (3) the fundamental oneness of all reality; (4) the realization that the goal of all spiritual discipline is transformation of consciousness; and (5) 'purity of heart'. . . liberation from attachment." Cf. Thomas Merton, *On Eastern Meditation*, Bonnie Thurston (ed.) (New York: New Directions Publishing (Reprint edition), 2012), xiv

[5] Contemporary mystical writings may have their origin in late medieval mysticism. See Bernard McGinn, "The Changing Shape of Late Medieval Mysticism," *Church History* (1996) 65: 2: 197–219, among other works of McGinn.

"contemplation" is more commonly used in the Roman Catholic tradition,[6] the early modern Protestant tradition and particularly the Puritan tradition were well acquainted with contemplation.[7] Thomas White (d. 1672) notes that "contemplation is more like the beatifical vision which the angels have of God in Heaven. Meditation is like the kindling of fire and contemplation more like a fire when fully kindled; the one is like the spouse seeking Christ

[6] See for the Catholic resurgence of the term since Vatican II, including but not limited to the preparation of a homily, *The Homiletic Directory* (2015), III.27[Sermon] Preparation, "Finally, *lectio divina* concludes with contemplation (*contemplatio*), during which we take up, as a gift from God, his own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask ourselves *what conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us?* …Rom. 12:2… Contemplation aims at creating within us a truly wise and discerning vision of reality, as God sees it, and at forming within us "the mind of Christ" (1 *Cor* 2:16); [33], "A preacher has to contemplate the Word, but he also has to contemplate his people;" *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), [150, On personalizing the word], "Whoever wants to preach must be the first to let the word of God move him deeply and become incarnate in his daily life. In this way preaching will consist in that activity, so intense and fruitful, which is "communicating to others what one has contemplated" [Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* II-II, q. 188, a. 6]. For all these reasons, before preparing what we will actually say when preaching, we need to let ourselves be penetrated by that word which will also penetrate others, for it is a living and active word...;" *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1993), IV.3.iii, [2715] "Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus;" *Dei Verbum* (1965), II.8, "This tradition [Handing on Divine Revelation] which comes from the Apostles develop in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching...;" *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) [2] distinguishes between action and contemplation. See also, Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 1, "Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life.... Contemplation is, above all, awareness of the reality of that Source....For contemplation is a kind of spiritual vision to which both reason and faith aspire, by their very nature, because without it they must always remain incomplete. Yet contemplation is not vision because it sees "without seeing" and knows "without knowing." It is a more profound depth of faith, a knowledge too deep to be grasped in images, in words or even in clear concepts."

[7] Tom Schwanda, "To Gaze on the Beauty of the Lord": The Evangelical Resistance and Retrieval of Contemplation" Coe, Strobel (eds.), *Embracing Contemplation*, 95–117; Ibid., *Soul Recreation: Spiritual Marriage and Ravishment in the Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Isaac Ambrose*" (Durham: PhD Diss. Durham University, 2009); Tom Schwanda, J. I. Packer, *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-mystical Piety of Puritanism* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2012). See for selected Puritan and Reformed primary sources on contemplation, Thomas Adams, *The happiness of the church, or, A description of those spirituall prerogatiues vvherewith Christ hath endowed her considered in some contemplations vpon part of the 12. chapter of the Hebrewes : together with certain other meditations and discourses vpon other portions of Holy Scriptures* (London: G.P. for Iohn Grismand, 1619); Isaac Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus: a view of the everlasting gospel, or, the soul's eyeing of Jesu*s (London : Printed for Richard Chiswell, Benj. Tooke, and Thomas Sawbridge, 1680 [1658]); Ibid., *Het sien op Jesus: een ghesicht des eeuwigen euangeliums; of des ziels-ooginghe op Jesus* (Amsterdam: Jacob Benjamin, 1664); Theodorus à Brakel, *De trappen des geestelyken levens* (Amsterdam: Wed. Abraham van den Burgh, 1680 [1670]); Adam Gib, *Kaina kai palaia : sacred contemplations: in three parts* (Edinburgh : Neill and Co., 1786); Matthew Hale, *Contemplations moral and divine by a person of great learning and judgment* (London: Printed for William Shrowsbury, 1676); James Hervey, *Meditations and contemplations* (Edinburgh: Printed for Alexander Donaldson, 1774, 26th edition); Richard Sibbes, *Divine meditations and holy contemplations* (London: Tho. Cotes for Iohn Crooke and Richard Sergier, 1638).

and the other is like the spouse enjoying Christ. Contemplation is one effect and end of meditation."[8] Schwanda summarizes the Puritan understanding of meditation and contemplation: "meditation" is "the active use of the mind to engage God through reading and praying of Scripture…. The key is the active and intentional reflection, or *ruminatio*, on whatever we are considering. Contemplation is a loving attentiveness or grateful gazing on God. It is experiential and savoring rather than discursive or mental dissection."[9] Furthermore, concerning the Reformed tradition of homiletics and spiritual practices, the work of Jos Douma is noteworthy. Two caveats are in order, however. First, the relationship between contemplation and meditation is not always clearly distinguished. Douma asserts, for example, that contemplation (*contemplatio*) and the contemplative life, devotion (articulated by *Devotio Moderna,* stressing meditation and the inner life, for example), inner life, or mystical life are more commonly known in the Catholic tradition.[10] This leads Douma to associate contemplation loosely with meditation, and as such, characterize meditation as a contemplative discipline.[11] Such a meditative-contemplative attitude, for Douma, does not effectuate the divine presence but expresses a waiting receptivity.[12] In sum, Douma's assessment of contemplation is primarily restricted to the Catholic tradition and related to meditation—an appraisal that is understandable in the context of Douma's study on the importance of the mediation in the "sermon process," but questionable in light of historical-

[8] Thomas White, *A method and instructions for the art of divine meditation with instances of the several kindes of solemne meditation* (London: Printed for Tho. Parkhurst, 1672), 16–17.

[9] Schwanda, "'To Gaze on the Beauty of the Lord.' The Evangelical Resistance and Retrieval of Contemplation," Coe, Strobel (eds.) *Embracing Contemplation*, 100.

[10] Jos R. Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus. De Meditatie en het Preekproces* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2000), 77–80.

[11] Cf. Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, 114. Meditation, for Douma, is a prerequisite or preparatory step to contemplation.

[12] Cf. Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, 198 ff.

philosophical considerations as discussed below.[13] Furthermore, the association of the term "contemplation" with Catholicism is fractured in the Protestant tradition. Tillis notes, from a Protestant perspective, that "tones of devotion, meditation, and prayer are promising, but words like contemplation and concerns over the connection with Roman Catholicism foster feelings of hesitation,"[14] and that "among Roman Catholics, there is no tension concerning the practice of *Lectio Divina* by laity or clergy, for they are proponents of it. In the broader evangelical world, there is some disagreement as to the value of the system, especially in sermon preparation."[15]

Thirdly, and lastly, this study considers contemplation primarily from a philosophical perspective, though, as will be seen, the theological dimension cannot be excluded. The

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[13] The "sermon process" consist of the preparation and delivery of the sermon, for Douma. Cf. Douma, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, 20, "Wat is the betekenis van de meditatie voor het preekproces? De uitwerking van het antwoord op deze vraagstelling vraagt om twee invalshoeken die worden gevonden door het begrip preekproces te ontbinden in de factoren *preekvoorbereiding* en *preek*." Italics mine. Other studies that link meditation and contemplation include, Phileena Heuertz, *Mindful Silence: The Heart of Christian Contemplation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018). The distinction of meditation and contemplation, however, is recognized in the early modern Reformed tradition—resonating with the medieval understanding of contemplation. See for example, White, *A Method and Instructions for the Art of Divine Meditation,* 4–5. Jonathan Edwards described and defined contemplation from ca. 1716 to ca. 1746, "The Mind" in *WJE* 6:374, "It is the act of the will in bringing its ideas into contemplation, and ranging and comparing of them in reflection and abstraction"; Ibid., "Subjects to be Handled in the Treatise on the Mind" in *WJE* 6:392, "How the mind would be without ideas except as suggested by the senses. How far reasoning, contemplation, etc. depend on this"; A sermon on Isa. 5:20 (1729) in *WJE* 44:147, "[The] great part of that work of a Christian ought to be contemplation," and, *Religious Affections*. *WJE* 2:49, "And as it is with the love of the saints, so it is with their joy, and spiritual delight and pleasure: the first foundation of it, is not any consideration or conception of their interest in divine things; but it primarily consists in the sweet entertainment their minds have in the view or contemplation of the divine and holy beauty of these things, as they are in themselves." This is not to say that the early modern Reformed tradition appropriated wholesale the Catholic thought on contemplation. For example, although well informed by Catholic sources, Richard Baxter, like other early modern Reformed described and defined contemplation with their own discernment. Cf. Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie and cases of conscience directing Christians how to use their knowledge and faith...* (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevill Simmons, 1673), 309, VI. Tit. 4, "What is a Contemplative Life? and what is an Active obediential life? Answ. Every active Christian is bound to somewhat of contemplation... to make the exercises of his mind on things sublime and holy, and the affecting of his heart with them, to be his principal business."

[14] Stephen Andrew Tillis, "Reading to Preach the Beneficial Nature of Lectio Divina for Sermon Preparation" (PhD Diss. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 62.

[15] Tillis, "Reading to Preach the Beneficial Nature of Lectio Divina for Sermon Preparation," 16.

dichotomy of philosophy and theology may be annulled or canceled through the practice of contemplation or contemplative phenomenology. Therefore, although in this study contemplation is understood as it is articulated in the catholicity of the Western Christian intellectual and philosophical tradition, more nuancing is required to consider how contemplative phenomenology may be fruitful for the preparation of a sermon or homily.

The connection between contemplation and phenomenology may not be recognizable at first sight. However, when one considers that phenomenology is a practice of philosophy, the roots of contemplation are seen to originate in ancient philosophy. The latter requires elaboration as the former has been discussed in the introduction chapter.

The word "contemplation" may connote a more general understanding concerning the human activity of regarding something with attention (contemplative attitude) or a specific understanding concerning devout meditation (contemplative life).[16] Sherman describes the former as "'generic contemplation'"—"a form of a human activity involving the exercise of sustained attention and the cultivation of awareness leading to states of subjective expansion, wonder, tranquility, illumination, or communion."[17] This definition conveys that contemplation is more than an accumulation of knowledge; there is a subjective dimension as well. This resonates with the Western contemplative tradition, which is rooted in antiquity,

[16] See for a more detailed discussion on the range of lexical meaning, for example, "Contemplation" Merriam Webster Dictionary https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contemplation (access October 6, 2020); Jacob Holsinger Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine. Contemplation and the Practice of Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 3–6; Edyta M. Imai, "Contemplation and the Human Animal in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas," (PhD diss. Loyola University 2011), 3–8; Kevin Hart, "Contemplation: Beyond and behind," *Sophia: international journal of philosophy and traditions* (2009) 48.4:435–440.

[17] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 3.

where *theōria*, translated in Latin as *contemplatio,* belonged to philosophy.[18] *Theoria* (Gr. Θεωρέω) describes more than "to see," as it includes thinking, discerning, and attributing meaning through observation. One makes sense of what is seen, but does not necessarily grasp its *true* meaning. Mediated by an encounter, Sherman suggests, contemplation moves beyond what is seen and looked at.[19] This understanding seems promising but may be an overly generous interpretation as *theōria* primarily remains defined as an act of viewing, observation, and spectatorship.[20] In other words, there may be terms and categories that are too limited for describing the structure of experiences.[21]

The ancient Greeks used a range of words for "to see"—a range of meaning is also found in Koiné, or New Testament Greek, as one notes a difference between θεωρέω or θεωρία and ὁράω, i.e., a broadening of meaning. The latter denotes a seeing or becoming acquainted by experience: to realize, comprehend, to be admitted to witness or to be in the presence of a god or, in an existential sense, to experience something, or have a (spiritual) perception—a notion

[18] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 6–10; Kevin Hart, "Contemplation: Beyond and behind," *Sophia: international journal of philosophy and traditions* (2009) 48:435–437. Hart, however, also notices a certain return of contemplation in the more recent philosophy, both analytical and continental. See also Mauro Bonazzi, Thomas Bénatouïl, *Theoria*, *Praxis, and the Contemplative Life after Plato and Aristotle* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012).

[19] Cf. Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 8. Sherman notes, "Interestingly, there is an almost proto-sacramental sense to this Platonic vision.

[20] *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, Franco Montanari (ed.) (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 941; Peter A. Angeles, *Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 47, 292; F.E. Peters*, Greek philosophical terms*: *a historical lexicon* (New York: New York University Press, 1967). Dr. Marjolein de Blois is acknowledged bringing this to my attention. See also Gerhard Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1954), 5:315–367.

[21] The nineteenth century German philosopher Schelling already allude to this. F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie* (Stuttgart und Augsburg: F. B. Gottafscher Verlag, 1857). Cf. Ibid., *Philosopie de la mythologie*, Alain Pernet (trans.) (Grenoble: Jerome Millon, 1994), 90, "Le premier but d'une explication est de rendre justice à son objet, de ne pas le ravaler, de ne pas en réduire la portée, ni de l'amenuiser ou de la tronquer, sous prétexte de le rendre plus aisément comprehensible. La question se pose ici, non pas de savoir quelle vue il faut du phénomène pour pouvoir l'expliquer conformément à une philosophie, mais, inversement, quelle philosophie est requise pour être de plain-pied avec l'objet, à sa hauteur même?" Dr. Emma-Adamah is acknowledged.

found in ancient Greek philosophy as well as biblical Greek.[22] In order words, this difference in the range of meaning may account for the transition from the sense of a spectator (θεωρία) to a participant (ὁράω). The likelihood of the latter is strengthened by the occurring phrase "seeing and hearing." Here, seeing is "more highly estimated than hearing" and constitutes "the totality of sensual and spiritual perception."[23] The suggested distinction highlights a more nuanced degree of meaning regarding "seeing," and the different senses should not be understood as extreme ends on the spectrum of the meaning of "seeing." It is the "spectator" or "observer" connotation of *theōria* that suggests a possible limit to human seeing in philosophy, while *horáō* may suggest a new horizon of seeing beyond what appears, opening an experiential sense of the word. Defining contemplation in this way as found in ancient Greek philosophy and the New Testament Scriptures is foundational for what follows. Therefore the meaning of contemplation, philosophically considered, comprises both *theōria* and *horáō* and includes a range of senses from merely that of a spectator to a participatory comprehension of the object considered. Such participatory comprehension can be recognized as experiential knowledge, an understanding that is experienced.

Contemporary philosophers such as Jean-Luc Marion, Emmanuel Falque, Jacob Sherman, and others, have underscored the possibility of experiential knowledge. Their

[22] *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, 1478; *Peters, Greek philosophical terms*, 210; William D. Mounce, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 34; *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti*, Joseph H. Thayer (trans., rev., enlarged) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961 reprint), 452; Frederick W. Danker, Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 169; *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida (eds.) (New York: United Bible Society, 1988), Index; *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Second Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich (eds.) (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2nd edition, 1958), 360, 577–578.

[23] *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), Geoffrey W. Bromiley (trans.) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 5:341.

projects—though differently argued, aim to remove the intellectual difficulties from acknowledging the intelligibility or plausibility of faith through what could be described as a contemplative experience of God.[24] For this Marion, Falque, Sherman, and others turn to the Christian contemplative tradition, though for philosophical and not necessarily theological reasons.[25] These writers understood that certain sources of the Christian contemplative tradition could be read philosophically and offer a philosophical underpinning to their phenomenological and philosophical projects. For example, Marion's phenomenology of givenness and the concept of the saturated phenomenon offer possibilities for the contemplative practice of philosophy. This possibility is offered by Marion through the *ressourcement* of the mystical theology of the Neoplatonic philosopher Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. late fifth or early sixth century). The main emphasis in the Areopagite works *On the Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology* is on the ineffability of God, and thus on the "apophatic" or "negative" approach to God. After a continuum process of ascension from material things to spiritual realities and an eventual stripping away of all created beings in "unknowing," the soul arrives at "union with Him who transcends all being and all knowledge."[26] This contemplative ascent proceeds beyond the limits of thought, and "one can no longer speak of…metaphysics or even of a 'Greek' horizon," according to Marion.[27]

[24] Cf. Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 60.

[25] These philosophers do not dismiss Scripture altogether, but it seems to co-inhabit space with the Tradition.

[26] *Christianity. History, Belief, and Practice*, Matt Stefon (ed.) (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2012), 185. See also Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divines Names and Mystical Theology*, C.E. Rolt (trans., ed.) (New York, London: The Macmillan Co., 1920),

[27] Jean-Luc Marion, "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking It," 27. Cf. Ibid., *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (New York: Fordham University, 2002), 154.

Sherman, however, notes a limitation in Marion's approach: though "phenomenology opens the possibility of contemplation," it "cannot participate in the contemplative event itself."[28]

Sherman turns primarily to *De Visione Dei* by Nicolas of Cusa (1401–1464) to suggest the integration of contemplation and philosophy through the concept of participation. Cusa suggests a way of seeing a thing, in his case an icon of Christ, that will bring about a participatory experience.[29] The way one ultimately sees is not via the icon but through Christ himself—it is reverse intentionality, as "it is really we who are being seen."[30] How does this way of seeing unfold? Cusa illustrates this with a kind of phenomenological description of seeing a nut tree. Cusa gazes on the tree, ascending and progressing "through various modes of sight in order to perceive various modes of being."[31] He moves from eyesight to the eye of the mind, which presents the tree in a new modality, seeing the tree in the seeds and its seminal power, but asserts, "I must pass beyond all seminal power that can be known and conceived and must enter into that ignorance wherein remains no seminal power or seminal force at all…. And so, I see that this tree is a certain unfolding of the seed's power and that the seed is a certain unfolding of Omnipotent Power."[32] Thus, the tree is seen throughout, but with different "eyes" unfolding along different modes of sight in a participatory vision in which he is given to experience God. He asserts, "you have led me to the place where I see Your Absolute Face to be (1) the natural Face of every nature, (2) the Face which is the

[28] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 61.

[29] See also, Jean-Luc Marion, "Seeing, or Seeing Oneself Seen: Nicolas of Cua's Contribution in *De visione Dei*," Stephen E. Lewis (trans.), *The Journal of Religion* (2016) 96.3:305–320.

[30] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 176. Sherman notes here as well, "Jean-Luc Marion has placed this iconic reversal near the center of his account of saturated phenomena."

[31] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 201.

[32] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 201.

Absolute Being of all being, (3) the Art and Knowledge of everything knowable." But this is a divine givenness of seeing, as Cusa concludes: "Therefore, no one will apprehend You unless You give Yourself to him."[33] Thus, a participatory vision of the things in themselves through various modes of sight is a gracious given of the seeing of the Absolute. It is an encounter with the "Cause and Maker" of what is seen, perceived, and experienced.

While Marion appeals to Dionysius, and Sherman to Cusa, Emmanuel Falque turns to another figure in the Christian contemplative tradition, Meister Eckhart, to explicate experiential knowledge, which is an experience of *Abgescheidenheit*, "the abandonment or suspension of creature (*epochê*)" which "constitutes the starting point from which I liberate myself from creatures in order to give every place to the Creator," from which "a new vision of the world resurfaces…. 'The eye in which I see God is the same eye in which God sees

[33] Jasper Hopkins, *Nicolas of Cusa's Dialetical Mysticim. Text, Translation, and Interpretative Study of the* Visione Dei (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985, 3rd edition, 1996), 690–693, "[23] I turn toward this large and tall nut tree, whose Beginning I seek to see. And with the sensible eye I see that it is large, spacious, colored, laden with branches, with leaves, and with nuts. Then with the mind's eye I see that this tree existed in its seed not in the manner in which I here behold it but potentially… [24] Next, I reflect upon the entire seminal power of all the trees of various species—a power that is contracted to each species. And in the seeds I see the trees in potency. If, then, I wish to see the Absolute Power of all the powers of such seeds (this Absolute Power is the Power that is also the Beginning and that gives power to all seeds). I must pass beyond all seminal power that can be known and conceived and must enter into that ignorance wherein remains no seminal power or seminal force at all.…I see this nut tree not as in its own contracted seminal potency but as in the Cause and Maker of that seminal power. And so, I see that this tree is a certain unfolding of the seed's power and that the seed is a certain unfolding of Omnipotent Power… [25] Moreover, I see that in the seed the tree is not a tree but is the seminal power, and the seminal power is that from which the tree is unfolded, so that in the tree there can be present only what proceeds from the seed's power. Similarly, in its own Cause, which is the Power of powers, the seminal power is not seminal power but is Absolute Power. And so, in You my God the tree is You Yourself my God; and in You it is the Truth and Exemplar of itself. Likewise, too, in You the seed of the tree is the Truth and Exemplar of itself…[26] 0 God, You have led me to the place where I see Your Absolute Face to be (1) the natural Face of every nature, (2) the Face which is the Absolute Being of all being, (3) the Art and Knowledge of everything knowable. So whoever merits to see Your Face sees all things plainly, and nothing remains hidden from him. He who has You, O Lord, knows and has all things. He who sees You has all things, for no one sees You except him who has You. No one can approach unto You, because You are unapproachable. Therefore, no one will apprehend You unless You give Yourself to him." Note, according to Milbank, Cusa suggests in God potentiality and actuality are one. Cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVrUQ4Lk6wk (accessed Dec.1, 2020).

me.'"[34] Accordingly, there is an interiorization of God in the self as one becomes "poor in spirit." Eckhart asserts that "the poorer" one "is in spirit, the more he is detached…the more truly he possesses all things, and the more they are his own."[35] Thus, spiritual appropriation follows detachment, a reduction of the I *Coram Deo*.

Reflections for Homiletics

Contemplative knowledge, for Marion, Falque, and Sherman, then, is an experiential, transformative knowledge of what is seen. These contemporary philosophers turn to the Christian contemplative tradition in support of their philosophical project, which aims to overcome metaphysics and the object-subject dichotomy, and to describe the knowledge, and in particular God-knowledge, as an experiential, participatory event.

Although these proposals hold promise, articulating philosophy and phenomenology in new and fresh ways, the question arises concerning the sources in this form of *ressourcement*—particularly in the context of homiletics and the preparation of a sermon or homily. In other words, if texts and concepts from the Christian contemplative tradition can be used to explicate philosophy and phenomenology in new and promising ways, can the text of Scripture also be considered? Three reasons may favor such a consideration: first, θεωρία and ὁράω, understood in a range of senses for "contemplation," i.e., spectator and participant, are both found in ancient philosophy and the New Testament. Secondly, if the Christian contemplative tradition offers descriptions to support proposals for the idea of experiential

[34] Emmanuel Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus,* William Christian Hackett (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 96. Falque points out the indebtedness of Husserl, Heidegger, and Henry to Meister Eckhart concerning detachment (*Abgescheidenheit*) and reduction as "bracketing" (*epoché*). Cf. Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other,* 77–82.

[35] Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, Maurice O'C Walshe (trans., ed.), Bernard McGin (rev.) (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 2009), 373 (sermon seventy-four, Pf. 86).

knowledge, the Christian Scriptures offer them as well. The centrality of Scripture, which is foundational for a sermon, is a far more informative source than the Christian contemplative tradition, whose source *is* Scripture. Thirdly, there is a Reformed understanding of "mystical," which is articulated in terms of *unio mystica cum Christo*, that of union and communion as expressed in the catholicity of the tradition resonating with Scripture and its exposition, on the Song of Songs, for example.[36] John Murray asserts concerning this nature of union as spiritual and mystical that

> it has been customary to use the word mystical to express the mysticism which enters into the exercise of faith. It is necessary for us to recognize that there is an intelligent mysticism in the life of faith. Believers are called into the fellowship of Christ and fellowship means communion. The life of faith is one of living union and communion with the exalted and ever-present Redeemer…. [H]e communes with his people and his people commune with him in conscious reciprocal love (1 Pet. 1:8).[37]

It is a "mysticism on the highest plane. It is not the mysticism of vague unintelligible feeling or rapture. It is the mysticism of communion with the one and true living God…only because it is communion with the three distinct persons of the Godhead."[38] In other words, "mystical" participation may be articulated through union and communion with Christ. This is not the "blurred confusion of rapturous ecstasy," per Murray, but "faith solidly founded on the

[36] See for a Reformed understanding of the concept *unio mystica*, for example, Wim van Vlastuin*, "The promise of unio mystica*. An inquiry into the functioning of a spiritual-theological concept in the Heidelberg Catechism," A Huijgen, E.A. de Boer (eds.), *Spirituality of the Heidelberg Catechism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 174–192; Ibid., "Unio mystica cum Christo glorificato. In Dialogue with Van de Beek about the Consequences of His Eschatology for Soteriology," Paul van Geest, Eduardus van der Borght (eds.), *Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth. Essays in Honour of Abraham van de Beek* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 413–427; Clive Chin, "Unio Mystica and Imitatio Christi: The Two-dimensional Nature of John Calvin's Spirituality" (Dallas: PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002); Ronald Gleason, Ronald, "The Centrality of the Unio Mystica in the Theology of Herman Bavinck" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2001).

[37] John Murray, *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 169.

[38] Murray, *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied*, 172.

revelation deposited for us in the Scripture…receiving that revelation" from the "inward witness of the Holy Spirit" or *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*.[39]

What is proposed here is the consideration of a contemplative phenomenology that resonates with the union and communion language as found in Scripture and the catholicity of the Christian tradition, as distinct from Sherman's proposal of contemplation and the practice of philosophy, and also differing from the French philosophers practicing phenomenology, such as Marion, Falque, and others.

Contemplative phenomenology, it is proposed, finds its source not in the Christian contemplative tradition but in the very source of that tradition, Scripture and Christ.[40] As the Christian contemplative tradition offers language philosophically or phenomenologically to articulate a concept of experiential knowledge, a paradoxical knowing of the unknown, a "contemplation of divine truth,"[41] and a transformation of philosophy and phenomenology, Scripture itself may offer language to articulate this contemplative and experiential knowledge as well: a divine-human language superior to the sources of Christian contemplative tradition.

Towards Contemplative Phenomenology

> *Lectio* est sedula Scripturarum cum animi intentione inspectio; *meditatio* est studiosa mentis actio occultae veritatis notitiam ductu propriæ rationis investigans. *Oratio* est devota mentis intentio in

[39] Murray, *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied*, 173. See also, John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, I.7; *Confessio Gallicarum Ecclesiarum* (1566), art. 4.

[40] This does not dismiss the notion that Scripture itself is a result of tradition, shaped divinely (2 Tim. 3:17) and humanly (for example, the Catholic or Western canon was set at the Council of Rome, 382).

[41] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIª-IIae q. 180 a. 4 co, "Principaliter quidem ad vitam contemplativam pertinet contemplatio divinae veritatis, quia huiusmodi contemplatio est finis totius humanae vitae… completivum est ipsa contemplatio divinae Veritatis."

> Deum pro malis amovendis et bonis acquirendis. *Contemplatio* est mentis in Deum suspensae elevatio, æternæ dulcedinis gaudia degustans.[42]

Thus the experience of reading *(lectio)* Scripture is the purposeful or intentional inquiry of the Scriptures with the attention of the soul (*animus*). Meditation (*meditatio*) is the studious action of the mind (*mens*), seeking out the knowledge of hidden truth by the leading of its own reason. Prayer (*oratio*) is the devoted attention of the heart to God for the removal of evil or the acquisition of good things. *Contemplatio* is a certain elevation of the mind suspended above itself in God, tasting the joys of eternal sweetness. Thus, reading seeks, meditation finds, prayer asks, and contemplation tastes.[43] These, then, are different modes of cognition in which a transition is noticed from spectator to participant from the *lectio* via the *meditatio* and *oratio* to the contemplation, which can be described as an expanded horizon, a seeing "above the mind" and a "tasting." This is experiential language rooted in Scripture (Ps. 34:8, עַם, taste, perceive; 1 Peter 2:3, εὔομαι, taste, experience) and see (הָ, to see) that the Lord is sweet (יִ , agreeable, good to the sight and the taste). It is a consciousness "suspended above itself," that surpasses itself "in God" (Eph. 3:19; Phil. 4:7). It is a foretaste, an experience of the eschaton or eternity ("tasting of the joys of eternal sweetness," Ps. 16:11; "in Your presence is fulness of joy; at Your right hand *there are* pleasures forevermore," Ps. 140:13). The culmination of contemplation through these participatory, cognitive modalities, therefore, is a sermon.

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[42] S. Bernardi, *Opera Omnia, Patrologiae cursus completes, Series latina*, J.P.Migne (ed.) (Paris, 1862), 184:476, Scala Claustralium sive Tractatis de Modo Orandi, I.1. The work is ascribed to Guido II of Carthusia.

[43] Guigo II, *The Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations,* Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., James Walsh, S.J. (transl.) Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1978, 68–69.

If contemplation, then, is a participatory comprehension and experience, or an experiential knowledge of the object considered or encountered, phenomenology is appropriate for the study of the structures of such consciousness as experienced.[44] Contemplative phenomenology, then, aims to describe the structure of consciousness of a participatory experience. Scripture offers a rich source for those seeking (*Suchen*) to investigate (*Untersuchen*) a description of the structure of experiential knowledge (*Befragtes*)—a knowledge that surpasses understanding. As Heidegger asserts, "in what is asked about there lies also that which is to be found out by the asking [*das Erfragte*]; that is what is really intended (*eigentliche Intendierte*)."[45] What follows, then, is a survey of Scripture which brings about (*relevo*, to raise or *reliëf*) the consciousness and intentionality of participatory experience or experiential knowledge.

The structure of the experiences described in Scripture are multifaceted—while preparing a sermon or homily one may encounter a range of such experiences. The first of what is observed in Scripture is the appearance of the phenomenon: unexpected, dazzling, and overwhelming (Isa. 6:1–8; Daniel 7–10; Ezekiel 1, 8; Zech. 1:1–6:15; Acts 9:3–9, 10:9–16; Rev. 1:9–20; chaps. 4–22). It is an encounter which finds its origin outside oneself, and is initiated by that which is encountered, and is often recognized as *non-aluid* or as an Otherness ("divine"): "the word of the Lord came" (Jer. 2:1; Ezek. 26:1, 31:1, 32:1; Acts 9:5, 10:14). In

[44] See David Woodruff Smith, "Phenomenology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/ (accessed November 10, 2020), "experience from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions."

[45] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (trans.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962; 1st edition 1927), 24.

other words, one who is preparing a sermon and reading Scripture may have read the words of the text many times before (*Anschauung*), but suddenly, unexpectedly the words of the text appear in a different way (*Bewußtsein*)—in an encounter with the text as experiential *Wahrheit.* Such an encounter is expressed in Scripture, secondly, as a phenomenon which is "seen."[46] This is a word that is seen that was not seen before. Ezekiel may have gone to the river regularly (Ezek. 1:1), but the appearance came unexpected and expressly to him (Ezek. 1:3)—a word and an appearance which was seen. The invisible became visible through the encounter of the word—a grasping of a reality that was not seen before. The grasping of the encountered phenomenon is given by the Other, who initiated the appearance or phenomenon in the first place. It is manifested, shown, made "visible" to the one who encounters the phenomenon. That which appears (φαινόμενον, *phainómenon*, to come to light, to cause to appear, "thing appearing to view," John 1:5, 5:35; 2 Peter 1:19; 1 John 2:8) becomes manifest (φανερόω*, phaneróō,* to become apparent or "graspable" (Mark 4:22; Rom. 1:19; Eph. 5:13; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 John 3:2, Rev. 3:18). The horizon of the mind is opened and widened (Luke 24:31–32) in a revelatory moment (Marion). St. Paul explicates this grasping as a Spirit-given manifestation and spiritual understanding:

> these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.[47] The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to

[46] See, for instance, Isaiah 2:1: "The word that Isaiah...saw concerning"; Amos 8:1: "The words...which he saw"; Micah 1:1: "The word of the Lord that came to Micah...which he saw"; Habakkuk 1:1: "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see; and Revelation 22:8: "And I John saw these things and heard them."

[47] Or "interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language" or "comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things but is himself to be judged by no one (1 Cor. 2:10–15).

Thus, contrary to Nicolas of Cusa, for whom the "visionary mind must plunge into a cloud [*murus paradisi*, a wall of paradise] and risk disorientation, blindness, even madness...in order to see beyond reason,"[48] a contemplative phenomenology rooted in Scripture offers a continuum rather than a threshold to be crossed. St. Paul asserts, "*The Spirit* [νεῦμα] *bears witness together with* [συνμαρτυρεῖ] our spirit [πνεύματι]" (Rom. 8:16), and St. John and others were "in the spirit"; i.e., their whole being was absorbed in the vision of things celestial (Ezek. 3:12; Acts 10:10; Rev. 4:2*).*[49] This (spiritual) seeing is captured by a range of experiences: (1) in the language of that which is recognized—something that is known (Isa. 6:1–2; Acts 9:12); or (2) by comparative or metaphorical language—a phenomenon that has the likeness of something else (Ezek. 1:5, "the likeness of"; Dan. 7:4 "like a lion"; Rev. 13:2, 14:2); or (3) inadequate or deprived language—something that is an unrecognizable phenomenon (Ezek. 1:16, 28, "The appearance of"); and, last but not least, (4) non-language—an unrecognizable phenomenon which cannot be expressed in language (Ps. 19:2, "no speech nor language"; 2 Cor. 12:4; 1 Peter 1:8). There is a contemplation for which no words can give an accurate description of the phenomena perceived by one's conscious experience. The one who intuitively or perceptively experiences such encounters commonly does not understand them (2 Kings 6:17–20; Ps. 119:18, 27, 82, 125; Acts 8:31, 10:17; Rev.

[48] Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine*, 200.

[49] Cf. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation. The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1998 revised edition), 118,119; Alan F. Johnson, *Revelation. The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 66; J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation. The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1995), 100,101; Jürgen Roloff, *Revelation of John. A Continental Commentary*, John E. Alsup (trans.) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 68, 69.

7:14, 17:7). One is drawn into a love and peace that surpasses all understanding (John 14:27; Eph. 3:19; Phil. 4:7). Here union and communion are experienced through a beholding of fellowship (κοινωνία, 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:3, 6)—communion with the divine, a *Brautmystik* (Song 1:4; 2:16; 1 John1:2,3). The horizon of the experience is compressed, like an eternity into a momentary "now"—a *unio mystica cum Christo* of rest,[50] containing both a sabbatical and eschatological dimension. St. John expresses this way: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that if He becomes manifest (φανερόω), we will be like Him, because (τι) we will see Him *just as* (καθὼς) He is (1 John 3:2). In summary, the vast range of descriptions of contemplative experiences as found in Scripture offers an extended horizon of the reading, meditation, and prayer of Scripture. The divine presence turns one into a participating witness and enables one to testify to what is "seen." The structure of this wide range of experiences converges and is captured by the words of those on the road to Emmaus: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

Presence and Participation

The description of this structure of consciousness in a participatory experience or experiential knowledge reveals the interrelation of two aspects: presence and participation. There is an experience of the presence of the Other, and there is participation in that presence.

For the homiletician wrestling with Scripture, this presence can be experienced in a threefold way: invoked or promised, incarnated (Christ), and imparted (Spirit and Sacrament). God-with-us (Immanuel) is the One, the "high and lofty One," who dwells in "the high and

[50] Cf. Delitzsch, *System der biblischen Psychologie* (Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1855), 357, "[W]as erlebt wird, sich ewigkeitsatig in ein Nu zusammendr ngt."

holy place," and yet is present with one "of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15); He is near (Ps. 34:18, 138:6); He is *with* one (Isa. 41:10; Matt. 28:20; John 14:20). The objectivation of the Word is bridged and annulled by the experience of union and communion which is experientially invoked from the outside. This divine presence comprises human affectivity, such as joy (Ps. 16:11, "In Your presence [is] fulness of joy"; cf. Ps. 21:6) and satisfaction (Ps. 17:15). This human affectivity is attested in both the Hebrew and Christian traditions and the ancient philosophical tradition.[51] The variety of experiences is on full display in the Book of Psalms ranging from delight (Ps. 1:2, 9:2, 13:5–6, 16:8–9) to despair (Ps. 6:6–7, 13:1–3, 17:5), from joy to misery (Ps. 5:11, 28:7, 30:5, 94:19; 42–43, 130, 142–143). Such experiences may be translated into the philosophical language of modalization, such as alienation (*Entfremdung*, *Seinsvergessenheit*), doubt, angst, but also a deep self-awareness (*Existentiell*). Phenomenologically, the "I" of the psalmist is appropriated by the contemplative one—an appropriation (*toeëigening*) of the experience of the psalmist. The sighing and singing of the psalmist are the experiences of the homiletician. It is a transformative experience directing one to the Other by the One in the psalm. In other words, the divine presence transforms one into a participant. There is a surrender, a relinquishing of the self to the Other (Song 2:16, "My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his"). The transformative character is experienced when the exteriority and interiority fold and meet, worked from the outside into one's experience. The transformation of a caterpillar in the cocoon is but a

[51] *The Golden Verses Of Pythagoras And Other Pythagorean Fragments*, Florence M. Firth (ed.) (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1904), 25, "If you are always careful to remember that in whatever place either your soul or body accomplishes any deed, Divinity is present as an inspector of your conduct; in all your words and actions you will venerate the presence of an inspector from whom nothing can be concealed, and will, at the same time, possess Divinity as an intimate associate" (Demophilus); 45, "He who believes that Divinity beholds all things, will not sin either secretly or openly" (Democrates); Ibid., 48, "In all your actions place God [*the Universal Law*] before your eyes. Invoke God [*the Law*] as a witness to whatever you do" (Sextus, the Pythagorean). See for commentary Johan C. Thom, *The Pythagorean Golden Verses: With Introduction and Commentary* (Leiden, Boston: E.J. Brill, 1994).

metaphor of spiritual metamorphosis. The relinquishing of the self, even the dying of the self through a divine revelation and activity, is a fundamental renewing (μεταμορφόω, Rom. 12:2), a re-creation or regeneration—a new birth into the image (εἰκ ν, icon) and likeness or resemblance of Another (Rom. 8:20; Gal. 4:19; Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18). In sum, the experience is of surrendering to a mystery made known (Eph. 3:3), a fundamental, renewed perspective of lived experience, a conscious and deeper level of grasping participatory comprehension (Isa. 64:4, 1 Cor. 2:9, 13, Heb. 11:1—making visible the invisible). Spiritual transformation is an actualization of the possible. The modalities of seeing turn towards a seeing of reality as a paradoxical knowing beyond knowledge. The experience of love and peace, "to know the love of Christ, which *passes (*ὑπερβάλλω, to throw over or beyond) *knowledge*" (Eph. 3:19), *and a "*peace of God, which *passes* all *understanding*, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). This experience is a participation with a divinely initiated presence. Although this is not the place to discuss the revival and revisiting of participation in theology, the ancient philosophical roots of the concept of participation cannot be dismissed. [52]

Participation was understood as an ancient Greek form of theater in which the audience participated, and in ancient Greek philosophical terms it conveyed the relation between a

[52] Willem van Vlastuin, "Een theologie van tevredenheid: De potentie van het participatiebegrip bij de puritein Jeremiah Burroughs (1599–1646)" [A Theology of Contentment. The promise of the meaning of participation by the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs (1599–1646)] (Amsterdam: Inaugural address, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2015); Maarten Wisse, *Trinitarian Theology beyond Participation: Augustine's De Trinitate and Contemporary Theology* (London, New York: T & T Clark, 2011); J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*. *Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); James K. A. Smith, James H. Olthuis, *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). See also Hans Boersma, *Seeing God. The Beatific Vision in the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2018); Ibid., *Scripture as Real Presence. Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017); Ibid., *Eucharistic Participation. The Configuration of Time and Space* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2013).

particular and a Platonic form. Concerning Greek theater, the audience and spectators became participants in a communal, united effort of actors and participants in the play. Plato's use of μέθεξις has been defined as "participation" in the sense of the "'name' of the relation which accounts for the togetherness of elements of diverse ontological types in the essential unity of a single instance. In this sense, it is a real relation, one constitutive of the *nexus qua nexus* which arises from it."[53] Participation, then, occurs when an entity is defined in relation to something else. A holy person, for example, is distinct from holiness, but is defined as holy because one shares or participates in holiness, which, accordingly, conveys a relationship.[54]

The New Testament deploys a range of words for "participation," as also found in ancient Greek philosophy, which concur with μέθεξις, such as μετοχή, or sharing in something (2 Cor. 6:14), μεταλαμβάνω, or receiving a share (Acts 2:46, 2 Tim. 2:6, Heb. 12:10), κοινωνία, or inward fellowship or communion (1 Cor. 1:9, 2 Cor. 13:14, Phil. 2:1, 1 John 1:3, 6–7), and μένω, or indwelling, abiding (Luke 24:29, John 1:32, 6:56).[55] Dominiak points out the relational nuance of "participation," that of union and communion in particular, where κοινωνία "expresses the unitive and constitutive relationship of the believer to Christ," as well as in the Eucharist, along with "μένω," which "alludes to Eucharistic participation and union

[53] Charles P. Bigger, *Participation: A Platonic Inquiry* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 7.

[54] Cf. Norman Russell, *The doctrine of deification in the Greek patristic tradition* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

[55] See also *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, 1297 (μέθεξις); Ibid., 1336 (μετοχή); Ibid., 1326 (μεταλαμβάνω); Ibid., 1151 (κοινωνία).

with Christ."[56] The invisible presence of the divine becomes visible and is experienced through the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. This experience of union and communion is physical and spiritual as the bread and wine symbolize sacramentally the blood and body of Christ, but the elements are also disseminated in the body and blood of the partaker, accentuating "Christ in me" (John 14:23, 15:1–17, 17:23, Rom. 8:10, Gal. 2:20, Col. 1:27, 2 Cor. 13:5). Hooker, for example, asserts that "participation is that mutual inward hold which Christ hath of us and we of him, in such sort that each possesseth the other by way of special interest, property, and inherent copulation."[57] This mutual inward hold is grounded in the Trinity, and the reality of the hypostatic union of Christ, for Hooker.

Contemplative phenomenology, then, is participatory. Through the reading, meditation, and prayer of Scripture, the reader becomes a contemplative participant—and this is where the sermon is formed. One is not interpreting a dead text but is in living communion with the w/Word (Henry). Such participation is a gift (Marion) and based on a gracious invitation. This participation expresses itself in various, interrelated ways: personal, Christological, and sacramental. One is drawn through the word to the Word (Song 1:4, 2:4; Jer. 31:3; Hos. 11:4; John 6:44). This participation, then, is not caused by a human initiative but a sharing or partaking in of what is (divinely) given. More is seen contemplatively of what is given "on Jacob's ladder, between heaven and earth" which allows one to "weave continually new

[56] Paul Anthony Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2020), 4. See also, Y. Ge, "The One and the Many: A Revisiting of an Old Philosophical Question in the Light of Theologies of Creation and Participation," *The Hey Journal* (2016) 57: 109–121; David. C. Schindler, "What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context," *The Saint Anselm Journal* (2005) 3.1:1–27; Sister M Annice, *"*Historical Sketch of the Theory of Participation*," American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (1952) 26: 49–79.

[57] Richard Hooker*, Of the lawes of ecclesiastical politie: eight books* (London: William Stansbye, 1622), 304. Hooker moreover writes, "[T]he first degree of communion with Christ must needs consist in the participation of his Spirit (307) ...Thus we participate Christ partly by imputation…partly by habitual and real infusion… (309)."

connections between them."[58] This gift is bestowed and received in fellowship and communion in Christ (John 17:23; Col. 1:27; 1 Cor. 1:9). This gift is only received in dying to oneself and living in and through Christ (Gal. 2:20; 2 Tim. 2:11). This invisible (spiritual) reality becomes visible through the sacrament where the sign (*signum*) and reality (*res*) co-inhere. Here the participant partakes in the sacramental elements of bread and wine, which point to the real presence of the body and blood of Christ spiritually (1 Cor. 10:16, ὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλο ίας ὃ εὐλο οῦμεν, οὐχὶ *κοινωνία* ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ; τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν, οὐχὶ *κοινωνία* τοῦ σ ματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστιν; emphasis mine). This participation is with the physical elements which realize a spiritual reality—the indwelling of Christ in the partaker (Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27), a union and communion. The true meaning of the visible sacrament, then, is given through the invisible reality—a sacramental ontology (Boersma).[59] The presence of Christ is not merely symbolic, distinct from that which appears, but rather sacramental so that the appearance participates in the reality itself. "The fruit of the Eucharist," Hooker notes, "is the participation of the body and blood of Christ."[60] This participatory character of the experience is a conceptual framework that bridges the subject-object distinction. According to Jorge Ferrer, "the kernel of this

[58] Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology (Oxford*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3. The reference to Jacob's ladder is already used by Richard Hooker (1554–1600). See Paul Anthony Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2020).

[59] Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation. The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2011), 20–22; Ibid., *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009);* Ibid., "Sacramental Ontology: Nature and the Supernatural in the Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac," *New Blackfriars* (2007) 88: 242–73; Ibid., "Néoplatisme belgo-français." *Nouvelle théologie* and the Search for a Sacramental Ontology," *Louvain Studies* 32 (2007) 333–360. Boersma proposal of sacramental ontology offers promise but is an appropriation of the *Nouvelle théologie,* especially Henri de Lubac. For example, For De Lubac Boermsa notes in *Heavenly Participation,* "the only way to make sense of the world was by a sacramental ontology" (22) …God graciously provides a sacramental link between his own divine life and the time-bound order of creation. It [is] this sacramental participation that [gives] the temporal order eternal significance" (36). As such the orientation of Boersma proposal is more towards Roman Catholic theology with the centrality of the Eucharist, than a Protestant position centered on the Word.

[60] Hooker, *Of the lawes of ecclesiastical politie: eight books*, 359.

participatory vision" is "a turn from intra-subjective experiences to participatory events in our understanding of transpersonal and spiritual phenomena."[61] In biblical terms, this participation is communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit (1 John 2:24, 2 Cor. 13:14) and fellow believers (1 John 1:3). Contemplative phenomenology is, therefore, participatory in character—realized "sine nobis, in nobis" (*Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ* 3/4:12) and experienced.

Witness and Testimony

If sign and reality co-inhere in the sacrament and the invisible reality is made visible through the elements, i.e., a real presence is experienced, so also witness and testimony co-inhere in the one preparing a sermon or homily for which the w/Word becomes a spiritual reality. The character of contemplative phenomenology is participatory, which expresses itself twofold: in witness and testimony. The language of Scripture, and in particular Johannine language, articulates this through the word μαρτυρία (John 1:7, 1:19, 3:32–33, 5:32–36, 19:35; 1 John 5:9–10).[62] There is a double sense of eyewitness and bearing witness to what can or cannot be seen. There is even an inherent tension between what is seen—eyewitness testimony (subject)—and what cannot be seen—bearing witness or phenomenological truth (subjectivity). Kelly Oliver suggests that "whereas testimony is usually a spoken or written account of something seen or experienced…witnessing refers to the structure of subjectivity

[61] Jorge N. Ferrer, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*: *A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 2. Italics in original.

[62] The New Testament Greek use does not differ with μαρτυρέω in ancient Greek philosophy, which can be rendered as "to testify, give testimony, act as witness, attest, declare, affirm, give evidence." Cf. *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, 1285. Other New Testament words include, μαρτυροῦμεν (John 3:11, 1 John 1:2, 1 John 4:14), μαρτυροῦσαι (John 5:39), μαρτυρήσῃ (Joh.1:7). See also the attention is given of "Seeing God in Christ: Contemplation in the Gospel of John," Hans Boersma, "the Beatific Vision. Contemplating Christ as the Future Present," Coe, Strobel (eds.), *Embracing Contemplation*, 203–223.

itself, the very structure that makes testimony possible."[63] In the context of Scripture, then, μαρτυρία brings together the subject and subjectivity, or in Johannine language, "we have seen and do testify" (John 3:11, 1 John 1:2, 1 John 4:14).[64]

The homiletician, therefore, is a witness (John 1:17, 19; 3:33; 19:35; 21:24) of what is experienced in "sacramental" participation with the w/Word.[65] As sign and reality co-inhere in the sacrament, so witness (the object of contemplation) and witness' testimony (the subject who contemplates) co-inhere—there is a singularity of the witness and the testimony.

Testimony has a dual relation: the one who testifies and the one who hears the testimony. The witness has seen, but the one who received the testimony has not seen but hears. It is only by hearing the testimony that one believes or not.[66] God sends the witness, who attests or testifies "about the radical, global meaning of human experience." Furthermore, the testimony is oriented toward proclamation, and thus the witness "implies a total engagement not only of words but of acts and, in the extreme, in the sacrifice of a life."[67] The testimony, for Ricoeur, has its origin in the Other, "an absolute initiative," and does not belong to the witness, and as such Ricoeur "lays the foundation for the hermeneutical process. In the first naiveté, the preacher encounters the testimony of the witness in a pericope. In the critical inquiry, the

[63] Kelly Oliver, Witness and Testimony," *Parallax* (2004) 10.1:81. See for a fuller treatment, Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing beyond recognition* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 85–106.

[64] Thomas W. Simpson, "Testimony in John's Gospel. The Puzzle of 5:31 and 8:14," *Tyndale Bulletin* (2014) 65.1:101–118. Simpson points out the centrality of the theme of witness/testimony (μαρτυρία) in the Gospel of John based on word frequency, pivotal position in narratives, and persuasiveness of the theme attested primarily by Jesus and John.

[65] See for example, Richard Bauckham, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017, 2nd edition), 290–411, 472–549; Richard Bauckham, Carl Mosser (eds.) The Gospel of John and Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 120–142, 295–310.

[66] Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), "The Hermeneutics of Testimony," 445.

[67] Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 445.

preacher expands an understanding of the pericope. In the second naiveté or appropriation, the preacher testifies to the witness of the Gospel."[68]

A witness is the author of the testimony relating what one has seen or heard.[69] A testimony is a report, not the perception itself of what is seen or heard. Thus, there is a transfer of what is seen (witnessing) to what is said (testimony), and *vice versa*. The testimony itself is in an intermediary position and has a dual relation: the one who testifies of what is seen and experienced, and the one hearing the testimony of what is not seen and experienced. The implication for homiletics, then, involves a difference between the phenomenological consideration given to sermon preparation, and the actual oral delivery of the sermon. A difference of meaning might arise between what is experienced in seeing and the experience of understanding what is conveyed in the testimony. Furthermore, according to Ricœur, the testimony is at the "service of judgment" or "trial" as "the eyewitness character of testimony…never suffices to constitute its meaning as testimony."[70] In a contemporary homiletical context, this may function apologetically, but in light of Scripture the truthfulness of the testimony does not rest in the witness but in the origin of the testimony. The testimony given by the witness is an existential engagement of what is seen. Testimony, in this sense, relates the exteriority of what is seen and the interiority of the witness who has seen.[71] For

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[68] Mary Margaret Pazdan, "The 'New Hermeneutics'," Edwards Foley (ed.), *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 227.

[69] Cf. Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, "II Semantics of Testimony" https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-3–the-hermeneutics-of-testimony/ (accessed Nov. 25, 2020).

[70] Here Ricœur frames the discussion on testimony in judicial and court terms, which, according to Lythgoe, has changed over time in Ricœur's writings from a legal concept (1972) to a promise as found in *Parcours de la reconnaissance. Trois études* (2000). Cf. Esteban Lythgoe, "Ricœur's Concept of Testimony," *Analecta Hermeneutica* (2011) 3:1–16 (also published as "Paul Ricœur: Thinker of historical testimony," *Revista de Filosofia* (2012): np.).

[71] Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 131, "Testimony is the action itself as it attests outside of himself, to the interior man, to his conviction, to his faith."

this, Ricœur turns to biblical texts that offer a new dimension of testimony. Based on Isaiah 43:8–13 and 44:8, he asserts that a witness is one who is sent in order to testify; i.e., the Lord himself is witness to the testimony, which in turn is oriented towards proclamation and aims for total engagement in word and deed. In sum, the witness testimony "proceeds from an absolute initiative as to its origin and its content."[72] Ricœur notes that the witness testifies about something or someone which goes beyond oneself. Although the testimony originates from the Other, the witness testifies about something or someone which goes beyond oneself, and yet the testimony, that which is manifested to the witness, "belongs" to the witness giving the testimony.

Witness and Testimony: Practicing Phenomenology in Reading Isaiah 6:1–8

The phenomenological reading of Scripture attempts "to bring to light; it should only bring a light to bear on a text in order to show what is given there," according to Horner.[73] The text chosen for this practice of phenomenology is Isaiah 6:1–8, and what follows is a description of the experience of reading this text with meditative intentionality—a listening to its words. This is far from simple, particularly for one who is trained as a theologian, prepares sermons, or is acquainted with biblical commentary. The suspension or bracketing of theology, exegesis, and commentary may trouble the reader, initially, while seeking "to arrive at the essence of what is given."[74]

The text:

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the

[72] Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 131.

[73] Horner, "Phenomenology as Lectio Divina. Jesus and the Woman Caught in Adultery," Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture*, 115.

[74] Horner, "Phenomenology as Lectio Divina. Jesus and the Woman Caught in Adultery," 114.

> train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me.

What is seen, heard, and spoken is overwhelming. In a time of death—this death of Uzziah, the other, confronts me with facing finitude and the anxiety of finitude. One remembers Heidegger saying "the dying of Others is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just 'there alongside.'"[75] Death entered in the world because of sin (Rom. 5:12) and sin and death is now encountered: "All I know is that I must soon die but what I know least about is this very death which I cannot avoid" (Pascal); in fact, the reality of *sum moribundus* (I am in dying, Heidegger) prevails against *sum, existo* (I am, I exist, Descartes).[76] Sin, which ends in death, is a suffering of death (Gen. 2:17, *tu mourras de mort*); it is an anxiety and burden over transgression and not knowing how to live with finitude.[77] This facing of death (*Sein-zum-Tode*), which discloses my sin, suffering, and finitude, appears even more urgently when "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple." This manifestation of an overwhelming and dazzling appearance is more intense than looking into the sun at midday. Confronted with

[75] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 239 §47.

[76] Pascal, Pensées, 427 L427, B195. See also Heidegger, Being and Time, § 53.

[77] Cf. Emmanuel Falque, *Le passeur de Gethsémani, Angoisse, souffrance et mort, Lecture existentielle et phénoménologique* (Paris: Cerf, 1999); Ibid., *The Guide to Getsemane. Anxiety, Suffering, Death*, George Hughes (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 23.

downcast death, one is drawn on high and is lifted up to see the Lord, the One whose seeing of preceded my seeing of him—I am exposed and disclosed by this irresistible, penetrating manifestation. The givenness of this manifestation (Marion) is devasting, and yet one is drawn to it, which is the great paradox, the "paradox of subjectivity."[78] The scene is beyond sungazing; there is a blurred and distorted vision, a difficulty discerning shapes, solar retinopathy, and even blindness. Moreover, death is facing me even more intensely, as "there shall no man see me, and live," says God to Moses (Ex. 33:20). Contrary to this expectation, "I saw," discerned more than shapes—clearly seeing a throne and angels. Did I know how angels look? Wings covering and hovering? Reverence and readiness, sacredness and serving? Does this reveal how it is to be a messenger (α έλου) and minister (Heb. 1:14)? Are they the seraphim, caretakers of the divine throne, the "burning ones"? Is the supernatural visible? Questions abound, but an ever-increasing adoration and worship is observed: an echo chamber of liturgy, the ever-present voices heard proclaiming triple holiness here (Isa. 6:3) as well as on the island of Patmos (Rev. 4:8) centuries later. They "contemplate the universal diffusion" of divine "glory" (*sub specie aeternitatis*) as a present event.[79] The given manifestation, which is seen and heard, is a display of sacredness and consecration, which fundamentally and existentially shakes my being-in-this-world. Being captured by this overwhelming gazing and gazed-upon appearance, which is audibly enforced, is an encounter in which I am silenced ("For I am lost") and exposed as a sinner ("For I am a man of unclean lips"), and even as a participant ("I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips"). This

[78] Husserl 1934–7a: 179/1934–7b: 183, "The subject is both disclosive of the world and in the world it discloses."

[79] Cf. John Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah Chapters I-XXXIX* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 47.

encounter with this divine and angelic presence is appropriated in me through a confession: a reduction takes place—the unholy "I" stands over against the holy One. Job's experience is experienced: "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5–6; a similar experience is described in Luke 5:8 and Rev. 1:17). Now I see the true self when I see God who is seeing me: consuming holiness versus existential and personal uncleanness. This "I" is *contra* the Cartesian "I" deduced from "I think therefore I am" but shows "who I really am" in the face of divine appearance while facing a deserving death. This is vividly experienced as "one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar." The coming of this burning, glowing hot coal from the altar that points to sacrifice and offering comes as judgement, which is experienced by a speechless, silenced sinner: the mouth, with the parts of its anatomy—lips, vestibule, mouth cavity, gums, teeth, hard and soft palate, tongue and salivary glands—this speechless, oval-shaped cavity inside the skull for eating and speaking, is slightly pressured, is sensed, is touched. This consuming coal is cleansing, and the touching is transformative. Words are heard while the ever-present choir of holiness continues: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." A substitutional sacrificial exchange and metamorphosis takes place (Falque)—guilt is purged, and sin is pardoned. Thus, the touching, purging, and pardoning comes from the outside. It breaks into my world, undeserved but graciously gifted—a divine, not angelic, givenness. In fact, I am reminded that the focal point of the narrative is the divine presence ("for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts"), which is a seeing of Christ, as St. John reminds me (John 12:38–41). If so, does this burning coal point to Christ's substitutionary sacrifice through which sin and guilt is purged and pardoned? I hear now a third voice, not

that of angels this time. It is "the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'" Not only is it, "I saw the Lord," but now I hear "the voice of the Lord." Seeing and hearing combines sights and sounds, creating a conscious and intentional experience, a divine gift and voice that transforms me in reverence and readiness, sacredness and serving, as a messenger and minister: "Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.' Heidegger noted that "running the course of one's life before God (*Wandeln vor Gott*) and waiting upon him in service (*Erharren*)" is the result "of a living, effective connection with God."[80] This transformative experience is an experience of encounter, both humbling and beyond expectation: I saw, I am lost, I am a man of unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and *yet*, I said, "Here I am." The "and *yet*" is because I have been transformatively touched, sacrificially sanctified, and called by Christ—should this not be experienced by preachers?

Witness and Testimony: Practicing Phenomenology in Praying Isaiah 6:1–8

The practice of a phenomenology of prayer, here, concerns the reading of Scripture in the preparation of a sermon on Isaiah 6:1–8 (December 7, 2020).

Lord, as I raise my mind and heart to You in light of this Your Word, let me speak not from the height of pride and will, but out of the depths of a humble and contrite heart. Because what is seen, heard, and spoken here is an overwhelming experience, deeply humbling and beyond expectation. In the midst of a depressing, downcast time, amid deaths from COVID-19, I encounter You high and lifted up ("In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord…"). The experience of this throne scene, the flashing glory, the echo chamber of

[80] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion* (Frankfurt am Mein: Verlag Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 60:95.

angelic voices, and holiness breaking into my world affects me deeply, shakenly. I am in awe, covered, overcome, and overthrown by it—the more I prayerfully read, reread, and reflect this passage, the more intense it becomes—who You are and who I am. Your majestic, glorious, splendorous holiness and my unclean lips amidst an unclean people. Lord, "Woe is me!"—not in the contemporary sense used in a humorous way to express grief, regret, misfortune, or grievous distress—but in realization that I am judged, facing impending doom and Your condemnation. "I am undone," silenced and ruined before You, encountering You through Your word. Why is it not that every time I read Your word I have this deep, experiential realization of the reality of You and of myself? Here I am lost and losing myself *coram Deo*. I have seen You as never before ("for my eyes have seen…")—with my eyes of this visible manifestation, a gazing with comprehension of mind and intellect, seeing a reality beyond the perceptible appearance; what I see and what I know is different. Here I "ascend above every end, every limit, and every finite thing"—my intellectual ignorance and obscurity to know the unknowable, and see the invisible, reaching the inaccessible.[81] With Jacob I now see: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." But this is also a confrontation with myself, my priorities in life, my reading of Your word, my preaching of Your word—I am a man of unclean, defiled, polluted lips—the *labium superius oris* and *labium inferius oris*, these tactile sensory, soft, movable, visible body parts at the mouth serving as an opening for food intake (Ps. 119:103; Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1–5; John 6:35) and for the articulation of sound and speech. How can I preach? Do my lips not need to be clean? Do these lips not need to be touched by You? I do not know how to speak (Ex. 4:10,

[81] Cf. Hans Boersma, *Seeing God. The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 208–216; Nicolas of Cusa, *De visione Dei*, Jasper Hopkins (trans., ed.) (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985); Ibid., *Selected Spiritual Writings*, Lawrence Bond (trans., ed.) (Mahwah, NK: Paulist Press, 1997).

6:30; Jer. 1:6). Do my sin and guilt not need to be taken away? This is my experience of surrender, humility, inadequacy, incompetence, and guilt— "behold, this [burning and purifying coal] has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." Beyond expectation, still before Your majestic glory, still in the midst of an unclean people, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered" (Gen. 32:30). Lord, I am reminded of another glory, shaking temple, and sacrifice (Matt. 27:50–53)—the glory of the cross, the opening of the veil, and Christ's sacrificial death: iniquity purged away, sins atoned for, guilt taken away. With the apostle I confess, "*what no eye has seen,* nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared" (1 Cor. 2:9). This is nothing less than an atoning metamorphosis, a touching transformation of the self—a transformation of the mind (Rom. 12:2); nothing less than a resurrection. How? I don't know, but know it is *there*, having taken place, *a fait accompli*. It is an act from the outside, apart from my own doing—perhaps a glimpse of the action of the Holy Spirit?[82] I listen, as I now am enabled to listen to You: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Is it the transformative experience? Is it the divine voice—a divine sound expressed in divine words, which I, as human, hear as I listen? Is it the question of being sent? Is it the plurality of divine and/ or angelic majesty ("who will go *for us*")? But "Here I am! Send me"—willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven obeying Your voice.[83]

Ich will dich kennen, Unbekannter,
du tief in meine Seele Greifender,
mein Leben wie ein Sturm Durchschweifender,

[82] Cf. Emmanuel Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude. An Essay on Birth and Resurrection*, George Hughes (trans.) (New York" Fordham University Press, 2012), 77–78.

[83] Cf. *Heidelberg Catechism*, QA 124; Ps. 103:20, 21.

du Unfassbarer, mir Verwandter!
Ich will dich kennen, selbst dir dienen.[84]

Amen

Confession

If a participatory, contemplative phenomenology is possible, which expresses itself in witness and testimony, the preacher who practices such a phenomenology is not only a witness and testifier but also one who confesses what is seen and heard. A confession or making a confession is knowingly and voluntarily done in order to be admissible as in an official setting. The confessor provides and communicates information previously unavailable. In court, for example, a confession can be admitted, supporting the testimony, and as such is considered evidence. The confessor has an inner reconciliation of truth stated verbally, declaring publicly with one's mouth what one has resolved in one's heart—it exteriorizes an interiorized truth, and takes the form of oral communication to others. For example, a confession of love is a communicative event, which is considered positive for both the confessor and the recipient of the confession.[85] The confessor thereby is understood, and one is acting in a twofold manner: it is a confession to a priest, and in the context of the encountered Christ in Scripture, the High Priest, an encounter which structures the confession as a dialogue; and as such, it is also a confession to the audience. Phenomenologically, then,

[84] "I want to know you, unknown one, / You who have reached deep within my soul, / Wandering through my life like a storm, / You incomprehensible one, akin to me! / I want to know you, even serve you." Friedrich Nietzsche, "Noch einmal, eh ich weiterziehe ..." Undated manuscript. Published in: *Pan*. Jhrg. 3 (1897) Heft 2, S. 102a. trans. *The Nietzsche Channel*. http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/poetry/poetry-dual.htm (accessed December 1, 2020).

[85] See for Ricœur's philosophical consideration and confession, for example, Anna Jani, "Guilt, Confession, and Forgiveness: From Methodology to Religious Experiencing in Paul Ricœur's Phenomenology," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (2019) 33.1: 8–21; Paul Ricœur, "Le philosophe en face de la confession des péchés," *La Confiancen* (1957)1.2: 25

the confessor existentially agrees with what has been seen as true and speaks the same as true. As such, the confession is proclaimed as admissible and valid for all to hear.

Scripture is a rich source of this aspect of contemplative phenomenology as found in the word ὁμολο έω (Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; John 1:20; Rom. 10:9–10; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 John 4:2, 15).[86] The confessor, here, declares or proclaims Christ—the center of the confession. What the confessor has seen and heard is Christ, ultimately and essentially. This confession is moreover a communicative event for both the one who confesses and the recipients—there is fellowship through the confession. Contemplative phenomenology, then, is a spiritual exercise of seeing Christ in the Scriptures beyond the personal witness and testimony, which is now shared in public, in community and communion: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

In the context of the preparation of a sermon or homily, the preacher, then, metamorphosed from an observer to a participant to a proclaimer—from a seeing witness and testifier to a confessor. The preacher goes through various modalities of seeing, which becomes a public confession. As such, the dichotomy of the *explicatio-applicatio* model is canceled and nullified. The words of Scripture have been "put in one's mouth" (Ex. 4:15; Deut. 18:18; Isa. 51:16; Jer. 1:9), eaten (Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 2:8; Rev. 10:9–10), were tasted (Ps. 19:10; 119:103), and "confessed" and preached by the ancient prophets. The range of experiences is profound as being in the palm of the divine hand, feeling protected in a place of

[86] This word is also found in ancient philosophy by Plato, Aristotle, Herodotus, and others, and is rendered as, to agree, concur, to reach agreement, correspond to, to consent, acknowledge, confess, have come to an uncontested and indisputable understanding. Cf. *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, 1458; Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clareton Press, 1990; 1843 1st edition), 1226.

refuge and safety in which the Word is received, and being touched in order to speak—touching, which includes resistance but also leaves an imprint. The Word is bitter, sweet, a delight and joy, more precious than gold, sweeter than honey—only comparative language suffices. The travelers to Emmaus attest to this experience of confession as well: "they *told* what things were done in the way, and how he [Christ] was *known of them* in the breaking of bread" (Luke 24:35; emphasis mine).

Confession. Practicing Phenomenology in Reading Acts 8:30

Returning to the question in Act 8:30 by Philip (believer) to the Ethiopian (non-believer), a Jew to a non-Jew, a confessional one (Deut. 6:4, Matt. 16:16) to a non-confessional one, is more than contemporarily relevant in its presentation of the communication the Christian gospel, illustrating some phenomenological considerations in reading of Scripture. The text:

> So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:
>
> Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
> and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
> so he opens not his mouth.
> In his humiliation justice was denied him.
> Who can describe his generation?
> For his life is taken away from the earth.
>
> And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

"Do you understand" (ιν σκειν, to know, especially through personal experience) "what you are reading" (ἀνα ιν σκειν, i.e., Greek word play on "understand" and "read")? The

court official of Candace (Acts. 8:30–38) replied, "How can I, unless someone guides (ὁδη ήσει, to lead, explain, instruct. Cf. John 16:13, Rev. 7:17) me?" Philip opened (ἀνοίξας) his mouth, as agent of text meaning-making, and "having begun from this very Scripture, he preached Jesus" (ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῆς ραφῆς ταύτης εὐη ελίσατο αὐτῷ τὸν Ἰησοῦν). The reading of Scripture, here, is a knowing of the text of Scripture through experience and is guided by leading "back to the things themselves"—Scripture itself—through which the possibility opened up of announcing the good news, Christ. Here, a type of phenomenological reduction takes place—questions of the necessity, sufficiency, clarity, veracity, and authority of Scripture (*attributa Scriptura*) are bracketed, and anything else that could have prevented the text from speaking for itself, from presenting itself. Moreover, inquiries of the historical authorship of the book of Isaiah are suspended, as are prior theological, metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical considerations. The Ethiopian, this non-Jewish person worshipped in Jerusalem—the summit of Jewish religion with its traditions, ceremonies, and sacrifices pointing to the Messiah. But his *reading* of Isaiah 53 left him with the burning question, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" This question—a disposition of expectation, is "a token of his elevated mind (φιλοσοφίας)," Chrysostom remarks. As such, all expectations of what will be obtained in reading the biblical text should be bracketed or suspended. Robyn Horner suggests, "a phenomenological reading is an attempt to bring to light; it should only bring a light to bear on a text in order to show what is given there."[87] In sum, a phenomenological reading reveals and offers Christ (Marion, Falque, Henry) to a pilgrim in this passage. This pilgrim, furthermore, is revived to newness of life in the desert. As Chrysostom asserted, "First he

[87] Wells, *Phenomenologies of Scripture*, 115.

reads and does not understand; then he reads the very text in which was the Passion and the Resurrection and the Gift."[88] Reading Scripture on phenomenological grounds is in essence to read more attentively, bracketing or suspending actual meaning, but open to the possibility of the biblical text. The question raised in the text in Acts 8, read phenomenologically, confronts the reader *now*: "Do you understand what you are reading?" The *then* and *now* of the biblical text is phenomenologically erased (Falque), and the Living One speaks to a human, living being (Henry). The immediacy cannot be escaped (Henry); the phenomenon of the biblical text is revealed to one, and it reveals and discloses one (Marion). The question "How can I, unless someone guides me?" leads back and guides (ὁδηγήσει) to the text itself (Husserl): "beginning with *this Scripture*," the Isaiah text, "he preached [εὐηγγελίσατο] to him Jesus." This "saturated phenomenon" (Marion) overwhelms and transforms him: "What prevents me from being baptized?" Word and sacrament (here, baptism) are unforeseen revelatory events (givenness, Marion) that becomes a radical, transformative, participatory experience. This way of sharing Christ is transformative now as then.

Confession. Practicing Phenomenology in Praying Acts 8:30–35

The practice of a phenomenology of prayer, here, concerns the reading of Scripture in the preparation of a sermon on Acts 8:30–35 (July 6, 2020).

Du hast gerufen: Herr: ich eile und weile an deines Thrones Stufen…. Herr ich komme,[89] seeing your word, which manifests itself before my eyes. You called me, Lord, and I have come—in the hurry of life, as I linger at the steps of Your throne. I linger because of You and

[88] *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff (ed.). (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889), vol. 11.

[89] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Historisch-Kritische Gesamtsausgabe*, Hans Joachim Mette, Karl Schlechta (eds.) (Munich: C.H. Becksche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934–40), II, 80. Cf. Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Call and Response*.

Your throne—so dazzling and overwhelming in holy splendor that I have to confess with one of Your preachers, "I am unclean, a silenced sinner" (Isa. 6:5, paraphrased). I linger, reluctant to leave, dawdling and dragging on because Your word encounters me and breaks into my life—my being-in-the-world. I linger because Your word confronts my limitations. I ask myself, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The words are read: "Like a sheep he…is taken away from the earth." What could this mean? Is it the prophet himself or someone else? One like a sheep and a lamb? Led to the slaughter, silent, humiliated by injustice—with no place on earth. Is there still no room in the inn (Luke 2:7)? The question lingers because Your word irresistibly draws me in. I linger at Your throne, which kenotically dethrones me of what I know and do not know. The more I linger the more the hurry subsides, the dawdling dwindles, and the reading reduces to listening. This word about the Other (the "he" in the Isaiah text, or in it the Acts text, or the divine w/Word?) is manifested to me, begs with the African, "How can I [understand], unless someone guides me (ὁδηγέω, to [be a] guide, lead on one's way)?" I linger, I am a traveller, and am in need of being led on the w/Way. *Herr, ich komme*…. but while reading, a reversed experience comes over me: *komme Du, Herr—Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, o come, o come, Emmanuel. A kenotic experience of being emptied of the self is invitingly receptive ("and he invited Philip to come up and sit with him"). It is in the kenotic experience that one opens to the Other—to You. I linger more, and now I listen, "beginning with this Scripture…the good news about Jesus"—an encounter with Yourself: God with us; Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Silenced, slaughtered, humiliated with injustice, "beginning from this Scripture":

> Like a sheep Jesus was led to the slaughter
> and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
> so Jesus opens not his mouth.
> In Jesus' humiliation justice was denied Jesus.

Who can describe Jesus' generation?
For Jesus' life is taken away from the earth.

Is that good news (εὐα έλιον)? I linger at the steps of Your throne and listen as the good news is proclaimed; I read it before, but now it is new as I listen to You speaking to me ("εὐη ελίσατο, he proclaimed the good news"): "stricken for the transgression," "his soul makes an offering for guilt," and "he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." *Du hast gerufen: Herr*…. it was You for my transgression, my guilt, my sin—You are the sacrifice, bearing my sin—I am one of many, and you interceded for me—I am one of the transgressors. *Du hast gerufen: Herr*…. You draw me to Yourself in this encounter of You with me and for me. This is good news. *Herr ich komme*…. and confess You, having this transformative new orientation in life, going on the Way rejoicing (v. 36ff, "See here is water"). Truly, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Contemplative Phenomenology: Implications for Sermon Preparation

Contemplative phenomenology, then, is described in terms of three related aspects: presence and participation, witness and testimony, and confession. The encounter of the word and Word of Scripture, an encounter that really counts, is experienced as divine presence—an unexpected and overwhelming being taken hold of by the w/Word. By the reading, meditation, and praying of Scripture, one's being-in-the-world alters into a transcendent moment of being overtaken (Jer. 20:7, SVV), a moment of experiential realization that "this is true," as it is true according to Scripture. The French philosopher Simone Weil (1909–1943) recalled,

> in 1938 I spent ten days at Solesmes, from Palm Sunday to Easter Tuesday, following all the liturgical services. I was suffering from splitting headaches; each sound hurt me like a blow; by an extreme effort of concentration, I was able to rise above this wretched flesh, to leave it to suffer by itself, heaped up in a corner, and to find a pure and perfect joy in the unimaginable beauty of the chanting and the words. This experience enabled me by analogy to get [a] better understanding of the possibility of loving divine love in the midst of affliction. It goes without saying that in the course of these services the thought of the Passion of Christ entered into my being once and for all…. Often, at the culminating point of a violent headache, I make myself say it over [a poem entitled "Love" by George Herbert], concentrating all my attention upon it…. I used to think I was merely reciting it as a beautiful poem, but without my knowing it the recitation had the virtue of a prayer. It was during one of these recitations that…Christ himself came down and took possession of me…. I had never foreseen the possibility of that, of a real contact, person to person, here below, between a human being and God.[90]

With intentionality in reciting and concentration, having "the virtue of a prayer," Weil was lifted or raised above the suffering Self, and was reoriented through the song and speech (Chrétien) or words (Henry) to experience being taken over by the Word, Christ (saturated phenomenon, Marion). Such a realization, not only for Weil, is not merely an intellectual assent but a transformative trust—a believing rationality (Marion). As a light hovering over the words, the encountered words of Scripture come into a moment of an unescapable (spiritual) seen and new, revealed reality. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) captures this as, "*Denn sie sind die Augenblicke, da etwas Neues in uns eingetreten ist, etwas Unbekanntes; unsere Gefühle verstummen in scheuer Befangenheit, alles in uns tritt zurück, es entsteht eine Stille, und das Neue, das niemand kennt, steht mitten darin und schweigt*."[91] For Rilke, the work of the eyes is done, and continues in the heart-work, and "*So fasst uns*

[90] Simone Weil, Letter IV. Spiritual Autobiography," *Waiting for God*, Emma Craufurd (trans.) (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1951), 68–69.

[91] Rainer Maria Rilke, "An Franz Xaver Kappus" (1904). Translated from this letter, known as *Letters to a Young Poet*, "Then there are the moments when something new has entered us, something unknown; our feelings fall silent in shy embarrassment, everything in us recedes, a silence arises, and the new, which nobody knows, stands in the middle and is silent."

das, was wir nicht fassen konnten, voller Erscheinung, aus der Ferne an."[92] As such, language may fail to describe the structure of experience, as also the biblical writers wrestle with this new, seen reality. The apostle Peter writes, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).[93] In other words, if the limits of language are to be recognized, it may point to the limits of phenomenology as proposed by Husserl and other early twentieth century phenomenologists, but may also suggest a recasting of phenomenology through the inclusion of Scripture as a source of experiential language. As such, contemplative phenomenology, suggested here, may contribute to a new way of practicing of phenomenology and opening the possibility for the description of the structure of spiritual experiences rooted and shaped by the words of Scripture. The one preparing a sermon or homily, therefore, should wait while working till this "experiential" encounter with the Word is witnessed in oneself. One only can participate when (divine) presence is experienced. Without the divine presence—the existential realization—of a living, speaking word of God, no participation or union with that word can take place. One moves from *memoria* (memorization as re-reading for meaning) to *præsentia* (participatory presence). In fact, this realization is a dialectic of union and communion of the Word, whereby the Self is reoriented and reprioritized to the Other. In this way the homiletician becomes a witness of the Word, who can testify (*testimonium*, "in witness thereof") to the experience of the encounter with the Word—though the possibility of the threshold of language should not be forgotten. The

[92] Rainer Maria Rilke, "Spaziergang" (1924). Trans. "This is how we grasp what we couldn't grasp, full of appearance, from afar."

[93] For Jonathan Edwards this biblical text is foundation to describe the religious experience or affections. Cf. Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1746), 4, "The [religious or holy] affections are no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."

apostolic reminder is that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Thus the witness receives the spiritual experience, a gift (Marion), which can only be spiritually discerned, and as such can only be a spiritual testimony. Here, the borders of phenomenology may be reached—one cannot describe what is experienced; as a witness account, the testimony is always rendered as tentative and approximate and yet is experienced as true, as "*the Spirit* itself bears witness with *our spirit*" (Rom. 8:16). The one preparing a sermon must be aware of the proximity of experiential language and that any doctrinal, propositional, ecclesiastical, or confessional statement will fail. It is precisely in the proximity of the testimony of what has been encountered and witnessed that the horizon remains wide open for a sacred expectancy and longing in the preacher and the audience. In this way dependence on and ample room for the work of the Spirit is given. The preacher, as such, transitions to no more and no less than a confessor in sermon preparation. Here, sermon preparation becomes a manifestation of a liturgical moment of the Word-experience that is ready to be proclaimed within the liturgical worship service. These three aspects of contemplative phenomenology—witness, testimony, and confession, phenomenologically considered—may offer new ways to approach preaching to a skeptical world.[94] These aspects are a result of a divine presence and experientially seen and heard encounter in which the preacher participates. As such, contemplative phenomenology goes beyond the limitations of

[94] Other proposals have been made, and include, Lance B. Pape, *The Scandal of Having Something to Say. Ricoeur and the Possibility of Postliberal Preaching* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013); Geoffrey D. Lentz, "Generative Preaching: The Role of Preaching in Communal Identity Formation in an Emerging Church Context," (DMin. Diss, Drew University, 2012); Phil Snider, *Preaching After God: Derrida, Caputo, and the Language of Postmodern Homiletics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012); Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching and the other: studies of postmodern insights* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, c2009); Zach Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008); David J. Lose, *Confessing Jesus Christ. Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).

the human endeavor to practice phenomenology. Rooted in Scripture, one is divinely drawn into the words and Word and is transformed by it—the divine presence invokes proclamation within the limits of no more and no less than what is seen and heard. Such is confessed experientially, declaring a range of experiences as encountered by the words and met in Christ. The Christ-centeredness of the confession reorients the decentered self and becomes the center of the sermon. The practice of contemplative phenomenology, then, may offer an experiential language that resonates with believers and non-believers alike.

A contemplative phenomenology, then, is indispensable for preaching in unexplored, biblical-experiential ways, but also resonates in the lived experience of both the preacher and the public, hearing the Word and seeing Christ. In this way "the fruits of contemplation" are handed over to others: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you" (1 John 1:3).

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECT

This chapter is the provisional end of the journey of this study, which was born out of concern for the contemporary relevance of biblical, Reformed, and experiential preaching—a relevance for the churched and unchurched meeting at the intersection of "experience." The attention to experience is profoundly present in recent French philosophy and its practice of phenomenology. Although the phenomenologists such as Chrétien, Falque, Henry, Lacoste, and Marion are first and foremost philosophers within the French academic context with a growing interest in North American academia, they are also Catholics with a deep concern for the intelligent and credible articulation of Christian faith. This concern should be shared by those of the Reformed tradition, though this tradition is currently for the most part deficient of any thoughtful philosophical reflection. This is underscored, for example, by the absence of courses on philosophy or philosophical-theology from most Reformed theological curricula in institutions of higher education. This lacuna is an ill-fated result of the Enlightenment, while historically, the engagement with the then contemporary philosophy was on the forefront of theological reflection; the early modern Reformed response to Descartes and Cartesianism is a case in point. This is not to say that popular Christian apologetical works written from a Reformed perspective are missing. Such work is exemplarily attested in the works of preachers, such as Timothy Keller (New York) and John Piper (Minneapolis), for example. However, a reciprocal interaction between philosophy and homiletics should not be rejected by the Christian preacher *a priori.* The aforementioned French philosophers have considered many aspects of humanity or the general human experience, such as speech (Chrétien);

anxiety, body, death, eros, finitude and suffering (Falque); word, life and truth (Henry), humanity and experience (Lacoste); and believing, gift, and revelation (Marion)—topics not unfamiliar to preachers, it is hoped. Furthermore, these twentieth-century French philosophers have considered the theological dimensions and implications of their phenomenological approach, though the crossing of the Rubicon dividing the banks and boundaries of philosophy and theology has not gone without objections. In short, phenomenology and preaching may have more in common than has thus far been considered.

In particular, phenomenology and the preparation of the sermon or homily, the focus of this study, should be reflected upon. The description of the structure of experience (phenomenology) is particularly noted in the preparation phase of the sermon. The reading and wrestling with the text of Scripture is ultimately a spiritual exercise, which resonates with the *Lectio Divina*—the *lectio, meditatio, oroatio*, and *contemplatio* of Scripture. Phenomenology, with its promise and precinct, lends itself exceptionally, as is suggested in this study, to describe this experience or experiential character of sermon preparation. Therefore, this concluding chapter revisits, evaluates, and appraises the principal research question as to whether phenomenology in twentieth-century French philosophy has implications relevant for and applicable to contemporary preaching, and Reformed experiential preaching in particular. This question was addressed in light of the research of sources from French philosophical phenomenology and in dialogue with the secondary (or interpretative) literature. In this appraisal, general concluding observations will first be offered and will be followed by an in-depth evaluation of the research in an attempt to formulate an answer to the central research question. The chapter ends by offering prospects for further study.

General Concluding Observations

One of the first general observations in light of this study that can be made concerning phenomenology in French philosophy is on the issue of the status of phenomenology: is it a new apologetic, a new or postmodern hermeneutic, and a new form of doing theology? The commentary on the work of Chrétien, Falque, Henry, Lacoste, and in particular Marion, i.e., through the scholarship of Gschwandtner, Horner, and others, seems to diverge on these issues. Most of the commentary, however, is united around the issue of transgressing the boundaries of philosophy and theology. This view is primarily based on interpretations of the writings of Henry and Marion, though. But, as this study has shown, the recent work of Falque, suggesting the annulment of these boundaries on historical grounds, is mostly excluded in this interpretation. And although philosophers such as Henry and Marion have defended their strictly philosophical approach to the issues they have considered, like Lévinas who strictly demarcates philosophy from his rabbinical work, the following question presses itself to the foreground: if these philosophers argue positively for the use of phenomenology, overcoming or going beyond metaphysics and obliterating the object-subject distinction, among other issues, why should this dichotomy between philosopher and religious person, be it Jewish or Catholic, be allowed to stand? If these philosophers propose the possibility of a phenomenology of life, words, and revelation—why should that be restricted to the philosophical realm? Did not Marion very recently (November 2020) cross the set boundaries, proposing in *D'Ailleurs, La Révélation* the privileged place of the Revelation that is found in what the Jewish and Christian tradition have received and meditated on from the two Testaments? Here Marion asserts that despite the technicality and the limits of any science concerning the phenomena of revelation, one must first deconstruct revelation, because no

biblical term corresponds exactly to the modern concept of revelation, but then one must reconstruct Revelation as a gift from elsewhere and understand this as a new definition of knowledge.[1] As such, this recent work of Marion and the work of Falque, in particular, concerning the relationship of philosophy and theology, cannot be ignored, as their proposals resonate more with the catholicity of the intellectual thought of the pre-enlightenment era, which includes the early modern Reformed tradition, than they do with contemporary views on the demarcation of both disciplines. In particular, their Patristic orientation, to which also the Protestant Reformed tradition owes much, cannot be discounted here, as the *Patres* understood themselves as philosophers seeking true wisdom. In other words, Marion, Falque, and others have history on their side when they consider topics of human experience from a phenomenological point of view, bridging the divide between philosophy and theology. Although the critique of Janicaud must be taken seriously (*contra* "the theological turn of phenomenology"), it seems to be losing traction in French philosophy, though one should not be too hasty to blur philosophical and theological concepts. In fact, a thorough (re)consideration of philosophy, and phenomenology in particular, in relation to theology should be of eminent importance. This would include the study of Husserl and Heidegger on phenomenology. Their "atheistic" practice of phenomenology is considered in this study as an opportunity and not immediately as a threat. The methodological bracketing, *epoché*, and reduction in phenomenology, in fact, may offer a preacher a rational approach in the preparation of a sermon that sets aside creed, confession, and theological convictions. As such, is it as such a new hermeneutic? Is it as such a new form of doing theology? This

[1] Jean-Luc Marion de l'Académie française, *D'Ailleurs, La Révélation. Contribution à une histoire critique et à un concept phénoménal de révélation* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2020).

remains to be seen. The phenomenological approach to Scripture—in reading, meditation, and prayer—may be most challenging for those preachers standing firmly in a confessional and theological tradition. However, as this study has shown, the phenomenological approach to Scripture—challenging as it may be, may offer a fresh encounter and reading of the words of the text of Scripture. To open up an experience of these words as words of the living God is indispensable in the preparation of a sermon. Important to note here is that such a preacher is not an "atheist" in deploying the phenomenological approach in reading Scripture; one does not become a non-Christian by applying phenomenology to homiletics. Furthermore, one of the possible advantages for the inclusion of phenomenology in the preparation of a sermon is the intended neutrality of the approach—both for Christians and non-Christians, the churched and unchurched. This may assist in describing the structure of experiences in contemporary terms and today's language—something that may overcome the limits often imposed by archaic, outdated, creedal, and confessional terminology that is only understood by "insiders"; i.e., those who have heard the preaching of the Word within their confessional boundaries, and who know and expect what to hear.

Therefore, is phenomenology a postmodern apologetic, a new hermeneutic, and a new form of doing theology? Ansering in the negative, this study has suggested that phenomenology should be considered as a practice of philosophy—*contra* Gschwandtner, who strongly leans towards phenomenology as a kind of postmodern apologetics, concluding that "postmodern apologetics, if there is such as thing…is a defense of experiences of radical excess as originating in some fashion in or at least as closely associated with the divine, a

defense of passion at the very limit of human experience as a *religious* phenomenon";[2] *contra* Ricœur, who is "hermeneutically sensitive" to the "use of Scripture in philosophy";[3] and *contra* Falque's proposed "Catholic hermeneutic, or the Text of the Body."[4] Ruud Welten's point of a "phenomenological attitude"—an attitude of amazement (*verwondering*), beginning with the phenomenon itself and not with existing knowledge about the phenomenon—comes to fruition in the context of homiletics in this study by emphasizing the *practice* of it, which is more than an attitude: it is a living, participatory practice in the service of a spiritual exercise the preparation of a sermon.[5] The possibility of a lifelong practice of phenomenology in reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating Scripture to inform and form the sermon may offer more benefits than is suggested by the New Homiletics, narrative preaching, and Buttrick's approach of sermon delivery in moves and structures. As such, the practice of phenomenology in the service of the sermon preparation is a preliminary affirmative reply to the central research question. An in-depth evaluation, however, is required as to whether this initial response to the central inquiry of this study is sustainable. To this we turn our attention.

[2] Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 293. Emphasis in original.

[3] Christina Gschwandtner, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Scripture: Marion, Henry, and Falque on the Person of Christ," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* (2018), 17.2:292–294. This "hermeneutically sensitive use of Scripture in philosophy" is also shared, for example, by Aaron Pidel, S.J., "Ricœur and Ratizinger on Biblical History and Hermeneutics," Journal of Theologica Interpretation (2014) 8.1:193–212; Mark I. Wallace, "From Phenomenology to Scripture? Paul Ricœur's Hermeneutical Philosophy of Religion," Modern Theology (July 2000) 16.3:301–313; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[4] Emmanuel Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon. The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, Reuben Shank (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 43–50.

[5] For Welten, see Introduction chapter of this study.

In-Depth Evaluation

This evaluation concerns the research question in light of each chapter of this study. Arising from the *Introduction* (chapter 1), the first preliminary conclusion that can be drawn is that philosophical reflection is relevant and applicable to preaching. Philosophy and preaching are not contradictions *per se*, as attested by various approaches to philosophy in relation to homiletics, such as analytical philosophy (Plantinga, Wolterstorff) and Radical orthodoxy (Milbank, Pickstock, Ward). As such, contemporary French phenomenology in philosophy may be included as well, which is further underscored by the various themes and topics explored by the reviewed French phenomenologists which relate to preaching or should have a place in preaching.

This leads to the second preliminary conclusion on phenomenology and homiletics (chapter 1): both the scholarship of phenomenology and homiletics have not yet given sufficient attention to a possible research exploration of sermon preparation. The field of homiletics is primarily concerned with the delivery side or the audience receptivity of the sermon, and less attention is given to sermon preparation. The focus of this study to the preparation of a sermon or homily, then, has more in common with the catholicity of approaches such as the *De optima methodo concionadi* ("Concerning the best method of preaching") or the *De sacra et unica ratione concionandi* ("Concerning the sacred and only true manner and method of preaching"), which reach back to the *Patres* (Augustine), and parts of the twentieth century Reformed handbooks on preaching of T. Hoekstra (1926), K. Dijk (1955), and most recently, the work of Joel R. Beeke (2018), than it has with the current status and direction of homiletics scholarship. Furthermore, the proposed phenomenological consideration of the meditative reading, prayer, and contemplation of Scripture resonates

more with the tradition of the *Lectio Divina* than with hermeneutical, exegetical commentary and communication concerns in relation to preaching that is often illuminated in scholarship. This study, then, offers a modest attempt to fill the lacuna of scholarship on philosophy and preaching, giving attention to the issue of the preparation of the sermon that is so lacking in recent homiletical reflections. Moreover, this study offers attention to the intersection of and homiletics and "experience," which is a topic recognized having relevance both in preaching and French philosophy.

The consideration given in this study of phenomenology and homiletics was presented in two parts: a *conceptual foundation* (part 1) and a *constructive proposal* (part 2). In regard to the *conceptual foundation*, a phenomenological reading of Scripture as a result of a survey of the works of Chrétien, Henry (w/Word), Falque, and Marion (r/Revelation), in dialogue with commentary or secondary literature (Gschwandtner, Horner), was proposed (chapter 2). The French phenomenologists reviewed deliberately deployed the reading of Scripture philosophically—offering sometimes surprising readings (Falque on the Mary and Martha narrative in Luke 10). On this, three comments are in order: first, the phenomenological reading of Scripture takes as points of departure medieval (Meister Eckhart) and Patristic sources (Augustine). Although in itself this is not problematic (at least there is a historical exegetical sensitivity, which is missed in many contemporary commentaries), this study identified potential limitations of this approach. In other words, it raised the question as to whether the phenomenological approach of the reading of Scripture was not overly shaped interpretatively by these sources of the Christian tradition, or whether does this pointed to a possible limitation of phenomenology itself in the reading of Scripture? On the other hand, secondly, the benefit of the phenomenological approach offers a meditative reading of

Scripture that is often missing from homiletic handbooks. The method or approach of phenomenology lends itself to such a reading in new or renewed ways, so needed in our time, which is characterized by "instant" results and "skim and scan" reading. In fact, this study suggests that phenomenology slows down the reading process, opening up an intentionality and appropriation that often is lacking when preparing a sermon. Furthermore, the description of the structure of the experience of reading Scripture results in a reflection on the (divine) encounter as living w/Word. As such, the work of Henry is magisterial, and Marion's thought on revelation is rich. The critique offered in scholarship (Gschwandtner, Horner), thereby, is challenging on the one hand; the distinction between philosophy and theology is possibly upheld (Gschwandtner) in a way that creates an unnecessary tension with the sources (Henry and Falque in particular) and raises more questions than answers (Horner on Marion). On the other hand, this study shows that Horner seems more sympathetic than Gschwandtner when it comes to the theological conviction of these French phenomenologists. Gschwandtner's concern might be right from a philosophical point of view, but it is more dismissive about the possible theological implications than Horner, who is more appreciative of the work of Marion and others.

Finally, and third, the phenomenological reading of Scripture may have its limitations, as the reader is confronted with one's own inadequacy in grasping the words of Scripture—and so the need for prayer arises, which is also discussed in the conceptual part of the study on phenomenology and prayer (chapter 3). As such, the chapter specifically suggests as a reply to scholarship the question (particularly expressed in the work of Aspray) as to whether phenomenology is fitting for defining the nature of prayer. The work of Chrétien and Lacoste answers in the affirmative. If prayer is considered as a means to come into the presence of

God, an experiential understanding that one's life is before God (*coram Deo*), whereby the being-in-this-world and life-world (the Self) succumb and crumble and is bracketed and suspended under the gaze of God, such a modality resonates with the psalmist in the divine Word: "For God alone my soul waits in silence, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him" (Ps. 62:1,5). One's word is the response of the divine call: *Du hast gerufen: Herr… Herr ich komme* (Nietzsche). Through prayer the words of Scripture are received and appropriated in an act of speech (Chrétien), which enables one to speak the Word.

These conceptual aspects of phenomenology in relation to the preparation of preaching, concerning the reading of Scripture and prayer, leans affirmatively on the question as to whether phenomenology is relevant and applicable to the preparation of a sermon. That is not to say that possible limitations have not been noted, which is explored in the *constructive proposal* of the study on phenomenology and contemplation (chapter 4). One of the underlying questions about the work of the French phenomenologists concerns the extent or threshold of phenomenology, ranging from the experience of seeing the visible and revealed (Marion) to seeing the invisible (Chrétien, Henry, Falque, Lacoste, but also in the recent work of Sherman). The constructive proposal of the study points to two major issues: first, the seeing of the invisible, and by extension the spiritual, is not excluded by these phenomenologists and Sherman, thereby supporting its inclusion in philosophy. In this regard their work is a possible, valuable contributor to the articulation of Christianity in a credible and intelligent way. However, this study identifies a major limitation in their approach: the supporting reasons for this inclusion is found primarily in the consideration of medieval and Patristic sources that offer ways of seeing beyond knowing and point to a spiritual or experiential knowledge. This study suggests, however, that if a phenomenological practice

can be used in the preparation of a sermon, why should Scripture not be included and function as the primary source for such experiential knowledge? This proposal is motivated by two reasons: first, ancient philosophy deployed a range of senses for the term "to see," indicating a range that includes seeing as a spectator (θεωρία) and seeing as a participant (ὁράω)—terms and senses occurring in Greek philosophy as well as in Scripture (demonstrating their common linguistic currency). By including Scriptural words, even limited to those words used in ancient philosophy, then, one may extend the horizon of a phenomenological project. Second, it is argued that Scripture itself offers a range of words describing experiences. In fact, one should be open to the fact that phenomenological language is limited in other sources in comparison with the language of Scripture. This possibility seems to be justifiable, considering Marion's most recent work on Revelation. More important, however, is the view of this study that Scripture, the words and text of Scripture, and the Word (Henry) is foundational for the sermon and ought to be inclusively considered for the preparation of the sermon. In other words, the inclusion of Scripture, and the language of describing experiences as found in Scripture, may advance the phenomenological work of the reviewed French philosophers, though limited here to the preparation of a sermon or homily.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the inclusion of Scripture as a source for phenomenology opens new venues to be considered in homiletics: presence and participation, witness and testimony, and confession. Collectively, this has been understood as working towards a "contemplative phenomenology." One the one hand, this term underscores the need for a contemplative approach during sermon preparation, and on the other hand it respects both the philosophical and theological tradition—as contemplation is not only found in ancient philosophy regarding the "observer" or in Scripture as "participant" (when one broadens the

meaning), but also contemplation may be rendered as the "handing over of the fruits" of reading, mediation, and prayer. As such, the preparation of a sermon, it is suggested, is an encounter with the divine Word, and ultimately Christ, whose presence, as it is experienced, transforms one into a *witness* of an experience that can be *testified* and *confessed* in the sermon. Contemplative phenomenology, then, may offer a new way of approaching Scripture for the preacher preparing a sermon, and as such becomes a spiritual exercise.

Concluding Consideration

A final, concluding consideration is given to the principal inquiry of this study as to whether phenomenology in twentieth-century French philosophy is relevant and has applicable implications for contemporary preaching, and Reformed experiential preaching in particular. The provisional response is affirmative but reserved and deserves the following qualifications: this study affirms the concern of the French philosophers who practice phenomenology to communicate and articulate Christianity in a credible and intelligent way. Moreover, their commitment to read Scripture as Word or as divine word, in itself, is refreshing against the background of historical criticism, exegetical-grammatical, and historical considerations of the text of Scripture. The question of the evangelist is still relevant today: "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30). The answer is also still relevant: "beginning with this Scripture he [Philip the evangelist] told him [the Ethiopian] the good news about Jesus." Both the question and answer are central to phenomenology as practiced and proposed in this study. The preparation of sermons phenomenologically, beginning "from this Scripture," and therefore what is seen and heard shared in fellowship, proclaiming "the good news about Jesus"—is the ultimate center of preaching, witnessed, testified, and confessed. As such, phenomenology, or more preferably, contemplative

phenomenology, is but a practice—a philosophical practice in preparing sermons with possible profound spiritual implications. On the other hand, the affirmative answered is tempered and more reserved for two reasons: first, the phenomenological approach is a first-person practice, which may lead to the reading of Scripture only individually and not in community, or at least in a community that gives reason for a surprising reading, exemplified in Falque's reading of Luke 10 in light of the reading of the mystic Meister Eckhart's sermonic reflection on the passage. This reservation may be compensated by a communal reading lead by the Spirit, being it with the commentaries of the past or the people of the present. As such, the practice of reading as a *compagnie des pasteurs,* or with congregants, may be beneficial as part of sermon preparation. It also may offer opportunities to read in the community of the unchurched, whereby it is understood that the method of phenomenology, as proposed by Husserl and Heidegger but also the French phenomenologists, levels the churched and unchurched in their reading of Scripture. Husserl's aim was to reach those who had strayed away—an aim too often forgotten in philosophical and homiletical studies. The second reason for a reserved affirmative response to the research question is that the practice of contemplative phenomenology should be considered as *complementary* to Reformed hermeneutics, exegesis, and biblical commentary, not *supplemental* to it. In fact, an extensive training in these fields, together with philosophy, is of foremost importance to practice contemplative phenomenology fruitfully in sermon preparation. The proposed contemplative phenomenology together with the phenomenological reading, meditation, and praying of Scripture in this study may point to a fundamental reorientation of theological education and training of pastors.[6]

[6] See Appendix A of this study for a provisional suggestion.

Despite these reservations, phenomenology may contribute the insight that each sermon should be the result of "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Phenomenology, as discussed in this study, then, offers much promise for the churched and the unchurched, the Christian believer and non-believer.

Prospect

This study is but an initial attempt but is still limited in its consideration of phenomenology for the field if homiletics. Therefore, the following prospect is offered for further study. *First*, if the practice of phenomenology in philosophy is considered as a form of natural theology, such requires a new thinking-through of the Reformed view of natural theology. *Second*, if phenomenology is instrumental for crossing the Rubicon or "borderlands" between philosophy and theology, then analytical philosophy, Radical Orthodoxy, and *ressourcement* projects should be reassessed together with their possible implications for homiletics. *Third*, the catholicity of the Christian thought of the French philosophers, such as Chrétien, Falque, Henry, Lacoste, and Marion, requires more serious consideration in the Reformed tradition. For example, Lacoste's work on liturgy may be examined in relation to the phenomenology of preaching, and related to it, a theology of place.[7] There will be doctrinal differences (for example, on the Eucharist), but to what extent? Is there not more which binds together than which separates the postmodern culture in which the preacher of today prepares and proclaims the Word? Last but not least, and *fourth*, one

[7] I acknowledge Dr. Maarten Kater for the suggestion of "phenomenology of preaching and liturgy," and "theology of place." On the latter see my own suggestion concerning facilities in the Appendix "The Practice of Phenomenology and Theological Education." The following study points to a similar direction, Johan Cilliers, *A Space for Grace: Towards an Aesthetics of Preaching* (Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA, 2016).

area of prospective study—notably absent in this study—is a phenomenology of voice.[8] This topic deserves attention, as voice is given to the sermon phenomenologically. The relief of the voice, between sound and silence, speech and song, and the expression of words is rich—and is richly present in Scripture (sigh, cry, utterance, sweet), as well as the relationship of the divine and human voice in Scripture. This relief offers a possible contribution and continuation of this study, when the delivery of sermon is considered—finding one's voice in preaching.

[8] See for example, Teresa L. Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon. Voice, Body, and Animation in Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Stephen H. Webb, *The Divine Voice. Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004); Johan Cilliers, *The living voice of the gospel. Revisiting the basic principle of preaching* (Stellenbosch: SUN PRESS, 2004). I acknowledge Dr. Victor Emma-Adamah for suggesting this topic for phenomenological research.

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APPENDIX

The Practice of Phenomenology and Theological Education

If phenomenology, as practiced in recent French philosophy, is useful for homiletics, and for the preparation of a sermon or homily in particular, then cognitively oriented, credit, and course-based theological education requires a fundamental change. The change suggested here aims for a re-envisioning of academic and spiritual formation of students training for the pastoral and preaching ministry. The proposed change is on two levels: the practice of theology and the curriculum of theological education.

The Current Situation

The current situation of Reformed theological education involves a three- or four-year model of course- and credit-based education, which is assessed through measures of academic progress and spiritual formation. The former takes place commonly through testing, quizzes, research, and the writing of papers, and grading follows an established grading scale. The latter, spiritual formation, may take place through regular interviews, self-reporting of spiritual practices, such as bible reading, prayer, devotional time, and growth in sanctification. These measures are reported together as a grade point average (GPA) or a “gemiddelde”

(average). [1] The student is required to take a set number of courses with a number of credit hours to graduate with an accredited degree.[2] These courses may be complemented by a pastoral internship—providing a hands-on sense of the "how" and "what" of congregational life, visitation, pastoral counseling, and preaching. In sum, the preparation for pastoral and preaching ministry consists primarily in cognitively oriented and credit-based course work, complemented by spiritual formation and a pastoral internship. This, then, comprises the basic tenets of Reformed theological education around the world, as a result of classic theological education models in place since the early modern or Reformation era.[3] What is lacking, however, is the integration of the meditative and contemplative aspects of the practice of the *Lectio Divina* into ministry formation. A phenomenological approach may contribute to such an integration toward a more holistic program of ministry formation in which academic and spiritual formation are not two (different) aspects of theological study but—and in a phenomenological sense—an amalgamated or lived-experience of ministry education.

[1] This assessment is based on Reformed and evangelical theological education as offered, for example, in Belgium (Evangelical Theological Faculty, Faculty of Protestant Theology) Brazil (Martin Bucer Seminary, Andrew Jumper Graduate School of Theology at McKenzie Presbyterian University), Egypt (Alexandria School of Theology, Evangelical Theological Seminary), The Netherlands (Theological University Apeldoorn, Hersteld Hervormd Seminarium, Protestant Theological University, Theological University Kampen), South Korea (Hapdong Theological Seminary, Kosin Theological Seminary), Taiwan (China Reformed Theological Seminary), United Kingdom (London Seminary, Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Union School of Theology, Highland Theological College), and the United States (Midamerica Reformed Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Westminster Seminary California, Westminster Theological Seminary), all of whom work with grading scale 0–4.0 or F–A in the US-educational system, or 0–10 in Dutch educational system, see also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grading_systems_by_country (accessed December 2, 2020). A Grade Point Average (GPA) is used in American based educational systems and a "gemiddelde" in Dutch educational system.

[2] See for example, Studiegids Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn https://www.tua.nl/media_files/Studiegids_2020–2021_Complete_Studiegids.pdf (accessed December 2, 2020); Graduate Programs at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary https://prts.edu/academics-aid/graduate-programs/?parent_menu=2 (accessed December 2, 2020).

[3] Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560–1620*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, England: Brookfield, Vt., USA: Scolar Press; Ashgate Pub., 1995).

Proposed Model

The proposed change in theological education should take place on two levels: *the practice of theology* (education), and the *curriculum of ministry education*. Concerning the former, *the practice of theology* relates to "doing theology" in the service of ministry formation. This practice is formative and directive for the individual student, which requires one or more intake session(s) of assessments, including psychological, social, and behavioral testing, and theological and ministry knowledge and experience. In other words, the result of the intake assessment offers an initial and basic competency map. Based on the competency map, an individual learning plan is developed, which is assessed and improved throughout the course of study.[4] Furthermore, the practice of theology and theological education would include the practice of the *Lectio Divina* as a fundamental practice for studying for the ministry. Learning of the art of reading Scripture, mediation, contemplation, as well as the art

[4] For example, the Aurora Institute lists four aspects of competency-based learning. Cf. https://aurora-institute.org/ (accessed December 2, 2020).

1. Students advance upon demonstrated mastery. Moving towards mastery allows students to potentially spend more time working in those areas that are more difficult for them. They may even advance beyond grade level in some domains, while taking more time in those that are more challenging. Mastery also allows the teacher to focus assistance on where students need the most help while also ensuring they learn what is needed to advance to the next level of learning.

2. Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students. With greater transparency in learning objectives, students have greater ownership over their education and increased opportunity for choice in how they learn and how they demonstrate their learning. In this process, teachers also collaborate more with students as they increase their intentionality on what they want students to know and be able to do.

3. Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students. Formative assessments are emphasized so teachers better understand where students have misconceptions, and students receive the feedback they need to improve.

4. Students receive timely and differentiated support based on their individual learning needs. Flex time during the day is provided for students to receive additional instructional support and ensure misconceptions are addressed quickly. For example, when students don't complete a course, they focus on the specific skills they need to develop rather than retake the entire course.

5. Students develop and apply a broad set of skills and dispositions. Students actively learn and apply critical-thinking and problem-solving skills along with the "critical skills of communication, collaboration and cultural responsiveness to help them work in ever-changing, diverse workplaces."

of prayer involve the four foundational areas that undergird the study of any theological or ministry topic. For example, instead of studying the definition and distinction of the divine attributes in a course of theology proper or of the doctrine of God, students would be meditatively reading texts of Scripture on a divine attribute, followed by prayer and contemplation—communal and individual. This would be a reflective, spiritual-learning approach and experience, i.e., what is experienced while reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating a divine attribute; what is the transformative experience; how the before-and-after of considering the divine attribute is described, etc. These reflections would be recorded by the student in a journal, as a spiritual learning practice. The instructor of knowledge-transfer becomes a coach and spiritual mentor, giving attention first and foremost to Scripture, the relation of various texts of Scripture in the topic; secondly, attending to how the *Lectio Divina* functions in the consideration of a theological topic; thirdly, offering insight from scholarship on the topic; and fourthly, providing opportunities to practice the theological topic through student participation in relief and care ministries (for example, assistance to homeless people or senior home facilities), sermon preparation, pastoral counseling, or youth ministry. In other words, the student begins to "live" the theology as a practiced, lived experience.

As concerning the latter, the *curriculum of ministry education,* the implementation of a phenomenological approach to ministry formation should take into account the following aspects: the *facility*, *faculty,* and *formation* of ministry—together marked as the curriculum of ministry education. The *facilities* of the place of study must accommodate rooms for quiet reading, meditation, and prayer—small, for individual use, and larger rooms, for communal use. The traditional classroom should be converted into a place of meeting with an ample number of chairs, a minimal number of tables, and a total absence of Wi-Fi and Zoom

technology (mobile or cell phones are blocked upon entry into the room by jammers or signal blockers). If required, the room should contain sound reduction or soundproofing material to enhance the "stillness" of the space. Furthermore, a space for communal meals strengthens the life of the community, as students are required to be on campus on a modular basis (one or two consecutive weeks). Each day commences with a time of devotion, individually and communally, followed by a meeting time, lunchtime, another meeting time, preaching, and ending the day with a meal and devotions (Scripture, singing, prayer). In summary, a "retreat" format of learning. The *faculty* would primarily be spiritual mentors—academically informed spiritual practitioners who offer guidance to the learning experience. Retraining the faculty to participate in the proposed model and approach of ministry formation would be advisable to transmit the new vision and for maximum effectiveness. Due to the individual competency learning plans for each student, the ratio of faculty and students should be appropriate—the mentor having a deep acquaintance with the student's learning plan. In effect, each member of the faculty is a mentor with several assigned students,[5] operating as a group—an apprenticeship model that is extended beyond the seminary, participating in churches, chaplaincies, senior living communities, and for-profit, and non-profit entities. In other words, the community, and especially the Christian community, is engaged in the (w)holistic ministry formation of the student. The *formation of ministry*, then, includes an on and off-campus presence in which the learning takes place at the seminary and other institutions, such as churches, hospitals, jails, and other areas of ministry opportunity. Pastors of churches will participate in the ministry formation of the student as participants in the "curriculum."

[5] A group of students is formed each academic year and remains the same throughout that year, but the faculty appointment per group will change each semester.

External, participating facilitators will be trained by the faculty on the phenomenological approach to ministry training, including the shaping of a pastor's life by the *Lectio Divina* of Scripture. In this way, the connection between the seminary and church or other entities of ministry is strengthened and intended to be mutually beneficial. Furthermore, the student, situated between seminary and a ministry entity, is a "boundary spanner," shaped by a holistic learning experience as a spiritual exercise, thereby erasing the borders of "student" and "ministry." The ministry formation, then, resonates more with the "apprenticeship" learning model than with in-class courses and an internship model education. The proposed model of ministry formation can be represented as follows:

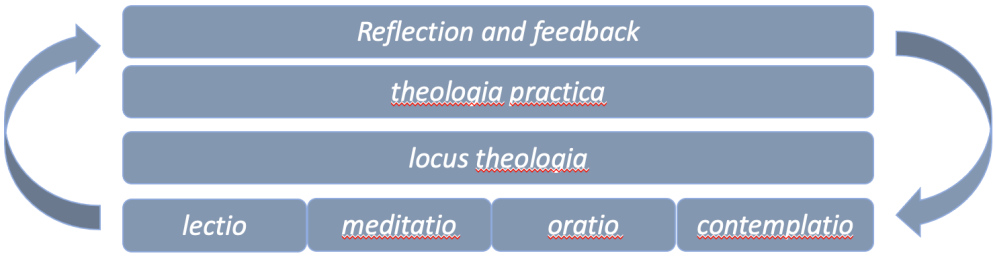


fig. 1

Fig. 1: *Lectio Divina* = the individual reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation of Scripture on a topic. This is followed by instruction on hermeneutics and exegesis, as well as communal *Lectio Divina*, offering more insight but also more internalization and appropriation of the theological locus under consideration. The considered *locus* of study will be practiced in a ministry setting (*theologica practica*) through counseling, sermon preparation, assisting in homeless shelters, criminal justice, churches, and participation in other ministry opportunities. Reflection and feedback will be offered by the student, the external mentor, and faculty. The assessment will take place through competency mapping,

comparing the learning experience with the desired or aimed competency. It should be noted that competencies such as counseling, preaching, church polity, etc., will follow the same approach of learning.

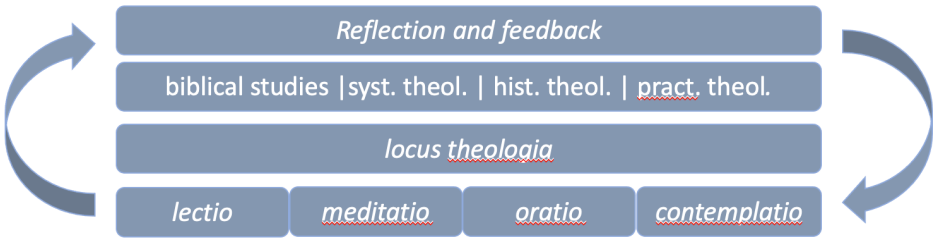
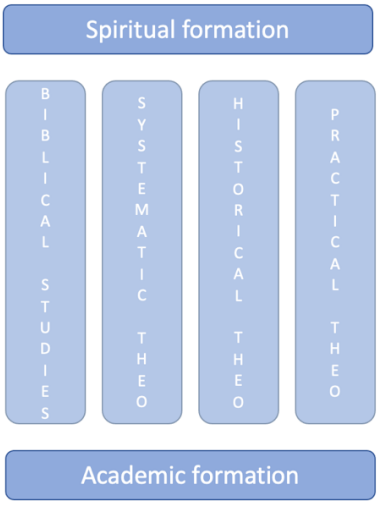


fig. 2

Fig. 2: Although the *Lectio Divina* remains foundational for ministry formation, the theological loci will be considered from various perspectives, offering a more holistic approach to the topic. For example, a competency concerning divine immutability will be reflected upon from the discipline of biblical studies (hermeneutics, linguistics, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, exegesis, commentaries, as well as the secondary literature in biblical studies on the topic); systematic theology offers a systematic theological definition, structure or essence and relation to theology, as well as scholarly literature on the topic; historical theology offers a historical perspective on the loci, as defined in sixteenth and seventeenth Reformed systematic theology, for example, as well as early modern biblical interpretation; practical theology covers aspects of counseling, missions, preaching, and teaching (catechism) on the topic. In this way the curriculum and faculty's disciplines (biblical studies, i.e., OT and NT studies; systematic theology; historical theology, and practical theology) fundamentally changes from compartments to competencies (fig. 3):



vs.

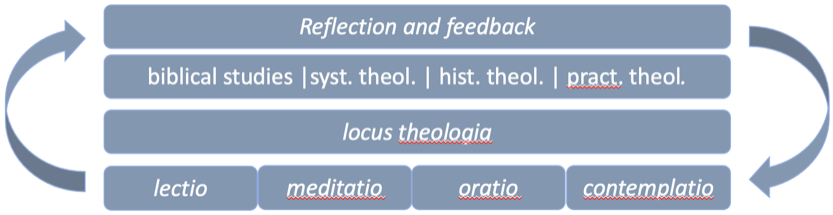


fig. 3

Last but not least, the proposed model of ministry formation, as a result of phenomenology as practiced in French philosophy in relation to homiletics and theological education, is the implementation of, or a working towards, a competency-based learning experience.

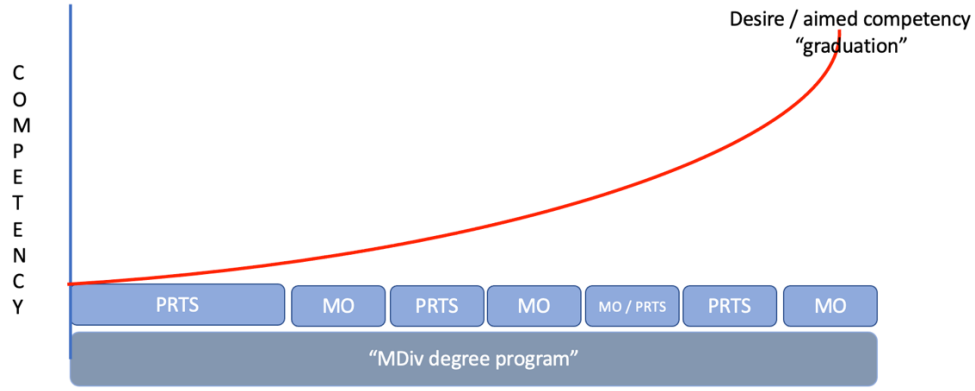


fig. 4

Fig. 4: The MDiv degree program, then, is a cooperative learning process and interaction between the student, seminary (PRTS), and ministry opportunity (MO). This interaction takes place on and off-campus/ministry entity but is also integrated while at the ministry entity, participating in PRTS live-streamed learning events. The proposed model offers, furthermore, continued education for the student as well as the participating ministry partner. In other words, upon completion of the degree program, students can continue to participate in the life of the seminary community through live streamed access or on-campus participation to advance their competencies or a single competency. This advancement can be translated into single "certificates" of completion or collectively with several certificates into an advanced degree (ThM or MA in Counseling). Finally, the competency-based model of education may offer a learning experience not only for those who seek or are called to ordained ministry, which remains for men only, but also for other forms of ministry such as chaplaincy, diaconal work, missionary work, counseling, and primary or secondary education. In this way, the seminary community can welcome and accommodate more women as well as men seeking ministry training beyond pastoral and ordained ministry.

In sum, a phenomenological approach to Scripture is a learning experience involving

spiritual disciplines and practices as well as logical and critical reflective thinking, which shapes a person into the ministry, as opposed to the current and primarily cognitively oriented, course and credit-based model of theological education.

SUMMARY

Despite the rise of homiletics scholarship since the 1960s, churches in the West deal with a culture that contests its preaching. The Catholic Church encounters issues of credibility, mainline Protestant churches are numerically in decline, and Reformed confessional churches face increasing challenges in communicating the gospel. Protestant and Catholic preachers encounter a culture of skepticism, complacency, and contentment. The latter is observed by those attending confessional churches, be it Reformed or Roman Catholic. The former, skepticism, is the primary mode of life for many people in the megalopolises around the world—not always an immediate rejection of Christianity, but an uninformed doubt, a questioning attitude, or unbelief concerning religion. This culture, collectively, is a challenge for the preacher and the hearer—the churched and the unchurched. Philosophical endeavors, such as *Nouvelle théologie*, Radical orthodoxy, and (American) analytical philosophy, which have been appropriated in limited ways for homiletics, have made considerable efforts to present Christianity intelligibly and credibly.

Phenomenology, one the other hand, as practiced in recent French philosophy by Jean-Louis Chrétien, Michel Henry, Emmanuel Falque, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and Jean-Luc Marion considers various themes and topics related to preaching, such as revelation, word, prayer, and Scripture. The field of homiletics has not made use of this approach of philosophy, even as the field of phenomenology has not considered preaching to be an area of consideration. Therefore, those with an interest in Reformed experiential preaching, in particular, could fruitfully apply

implications of phenomenology—a philosophy that attempts to describe the structure of experiences.

As such, this study considers the central research question as to whether phenomenology, as in the French philosophy of the later part of the twentieth century, can be applied fruitfully to the preparation of the sermon or homily. This study, then, is structed in two parts: a conceptual foundation that is descriptive and exploratory in nature—assessing and appraising the works of twentieth-century French philosophers of phenomenology, particularly on the reading of Scripture and prayer; and a constructive proposal that identifies the possible limitations of phenomenology in French philosophy and suggests ways in which a contemplative phenomenology may be practiced while preparing a sermon or homily, manifesting itself as witness, testimony, and confession.

A tentative conclusion is reached in the final chapter suggesting the use of phenomenology, with reservations, for the practice of sermon preparation.

SAMENVATTING

Ondanks de opkomst van homiletiek studies sinds de jaren zestig, hebben kerken in het Westen te maken met bestreden prediking. De Katholieke kerk stuit op geloofwaardigheidskwesties, de belangrijkste Protestantse kerken lopen in aantal achteruit en de Gereformeerde confessionele kerken staan voor steeds grotere uitdagingen bij het overbrengen van het evangelie. Protestantse en katholieke predikers ontmoeten een cultuur van scepsis, zelfgenoegzaamheid en tevredenheid. Dit laatste wordt waargenomen door degenen die de confessionele kerken bezoeken, hetzij gereformeerd of rooms-katholiek. Het eerste, scepsis, is de primaire levenswijze van veel mensen in de megalopolissen over de hele wereld - niet een onmiddellijke verwerping van het christendom, maar een ongeïnformeerde twijfel, een vragende houding of ongeloof met betrekking tot religie. Deze cultuur is gezamenlijk een uitdaging voor de predikant en de toehoorder - de kerkelijken en de onkerkelijken. Filosofische inspanningen, zoals *Nouvelle théologie*, Radicale orthodoxie en (Amerikaanse) analytische filosofie, hebben gepoogd om het christendom begrijpelijk en geloofwaardig te maken, en zijn in beperkte mate overwogen voor homiletiek.

Fenomenologie, aan de andere kant, zoals beoefend in de recente Franse filosofie door Jean-Louis Chrétien, Michel Henry, Emmanuel Falque, Jean-Yves Lacoste en Jean-Luc Marion beschouwen verschillende thema's en onderwerpen die verband houden met prediking, zoals openbaring, woord, gebed en de Schrift. Het vak homiletiek heeft deze benadering van de filosofie nog niet overwogen, zoals het vak van de fenomenologie prediking niet als een onderwerp van overweging heeft beschouwd. Daarom zouden vooral degenen die

geïnteresseerd zijn in gereformeerde bevindelijke prediking fenomenologie kunnen overwegen - een filosofie die probeert de structuur van ervaringen te beschrijven.

Als zodanig beschouwt deze studie de centrale onderzoeksvraag of fenomenologie, zoals in de Franse filosofie van het laatste deel van de twintigste eeuw, kan worden meegenomen bij de voorbereiding van de preek of homilie. De studie is dus opgebouwd uit twee delen: een conceptueel deel en een constructief deel. De eerste is beschrijvend en verkennend van aard en beoordeelt en beoordeelt de werken van deze Franse filosofen, met name wat betreft het lezen van de Schrift en het gebed. Het laatste, het constructieve deel, identificeert mogelijke beperkingen van de fenomenologie in de Franse filosofie, en stelt een contemplatieve fenomenologie voor die zich manifesteert als getuigenis, getuigenis en bekentenis die in praktijk moet worden gebracht tijdens het voorbereiden van een preek of preek.

In het laatste hoofdstuk wordt een voorlopige conclusie getrokken die het gebruik van fenomenologie bij de voorbereiding van de preek als praktijk suggereert, maar niet zonder voorbehoud van de filosofie zelf.

BIOGRAPHY

Adriaan Cornelis Neele was born October 14, 1960, in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and studied biochemistry, initially working internationally in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries as a researcher and manager. In 1989 he joined the information-technology industry in an executive management function and worked in North and South America, founding an international investment and management consulting firm (1996). After having completed a Master of Theological Studies (2001) and Theological Master (Historical Theology, 2002, *cum laude*) at Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, USA), he obtained a Doctorate at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands (2005). Currently, he is Director of the Doctoral Program and Professor of Historical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids). Before arriving at PRTS in 2016, he lectured in Post-Reformation studies at Farel Reformed Theological Seminary (Montréal), the University of Pretoria, and the African Institute for Missiology. He was Senior Research Professor and Director at the Jonathan Edwards Centre at the University of the Free State, South Africa. Since 2007 he has served as Research Scholar and Digital Editor at the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, and as a member of various business and academic boards (Bavinck Institute, Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, Reformation Heritage Books). In addition, he is co-editor of the *Yale Jonathan Edwards Studies* journal, *Studies in Puritanism and Piety*, *New Directions in Jonathan Edwards Studies* (Vandenhoeck Ruprecht), advisory board member of *Theologia Reformata*, and chairman of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society. His research interests concern seventeenth-century Europe as well as early American (eighteenth-century New England) theology, philosophy, and homiletics. As co-founder of a foundation for

internet-based and global theological education, he has a continuing interest in the intersection of primary sources, digitization, and web-based education. He is an ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament at the L'Église réformée du Québec and has accepted a call as Professor of Theology of the Heritage Reformed Congregation. Adriaan is married to Kornelia Klop, MA; they have six children, Ruth, Matthew, Hadassah, Deborah, Jo l, and Salóme.