

Editorial

2020 – this year will surely be remembered as the year of the Covid19-pandemic. Writing these lines in August 2020, there are around 20 million people infected (numbers increasing continuously) – and the whole population of the world affected by the virus. 750.000 people died in the first months of the pandemic. And all over the world poverty increases, and the most vulnerable are most affected by the crisis.

Are there any ‘answers’ sermons can give? Or is this a time for silently listening with the congregations to the word of God? What is the role of preaching in the pandemic – knowing that we will never simply return to the situation ‘before’ the pandemic, but that our way of living, and also our way of preaching and celebrating worship will change.

The fourth volume of the *International Journal of Homiletics* opens with an article from South Africa presenting first results of an empirical research on preaching in times of the pandemic. Marileen Steyn, Cas Wepener and Hennie Pieterse, all three from Stellenbosch University, conducted a grounded theory exploration on *Preaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa* analyzing 24 sermons preached on March 22 and March 29 2020- during the time of the South African lockdown. They convincingly show that in an experience of ‘distance’ (to God and the others) sermons primarily try to present a God who is ‘near.’ The authors explore the ‘hinges’ preachers use to help people on the threshold between near and far. They also point to the role liturgy plays together with the words of the sermon and suggest Holy Saturday/Silent Saturday as a metaphor for the homiletical endeavor of preaching in times of crisis. The article is presented in our volume in an English and an Afrikaans version.

We are glad to present four more articles in this volume of our journal:

Ellen T. Charry, Professor of Theology Emerita at Princeton Theological Seminary, deals with one of the fundamental problems of Christian preaching from the very beginning: its open or latent Anti-Judaism. By rereading Biblical texts, texts of sacred music, and sermons Charry shows, how Anti-Judaism ‘works’ hermeneutically and homiletically underlying the role of supersessionism for hermeneutics and preaching. Her article is a passionate plea for a new Christian preaching avoiding supersessionism.

It is sad to say that also this article is absolutely up-to-date – at least in many European contexts, where Anti-Semitism is on the rise again. And also on a worldwide level we see that the times of the Covid-19 pandemic are also great times for conspiracy theories – and again and again they go hand in hand with classical Anti-Semitic stereotypes.

David M. Csinos, Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Atlantic School of Theology, examines quite a new and booming phenomenon of art: sound-and-light shows. Observations and interpretations of shows in Orléans, in Jerusalem and on Mont-Saint-Michel verify the thesis that these shows can be seen as a form of preaching in the public square – maybe giving some inspiration for ‘regular’ preaching in a visual age as well.

HyeRan Kim-Cragg, Associate Professor of Preaching at Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto, Canada, deals with the challenges for preaching in a “post-truth era”. The word “post-truth” was chosen as the Oxford Dictionaries’ Word of the Year in 2016 – and since then we have experienced many aspects of what it means to live in these times. Kim-Cragg deals with Biblical hermeneutics, the visual society and the role of media, and with aspects of violence thus providing a panorama for future research – and also paving the floor for Societas Homiletica’s next ‘physical’ meeting in Budapest dealing with Preaching Truth and convening (hopefully) in August 2022.

The final article of this volume comes from Brazil and is presented in English and Brazilian. Klaus A. Stange, who teaches Theology at the Lutheran Faculty of Theology, shows, how Neuroscience and Homiletics can be brought in dialogue – thus introducing readers into a very recent field of research with huge potential for further studies and for the ‘making’ of sermons.

We are grateful to the contributors to this volume, to our peer-reviewers, to David Stark for editing the English texts, and to Ferenc Herzig for doing all the other editing work (which is a lot). And we thank all our readers who form an international community of people who are interested in preaching and are longing to connect our stories with God’s story – also in this year of crisis.

The next issue of the *International Journal of Homiletics* will be a special issue on “Preaching in times of crisis,” publishing some of the papers presented at Societas Homiletica’s Online Conference (August 10–12, 2020). We hope to be able to publish it towards the end of the year.

Best wishes and greetings to all of you all over the world!

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