

The Journal of Religion and Theatre

<http://www.rtjournal.org>

**Published by the Religion and Theatre Focus Group of the
Association for Theatre in Higher Education**

The Journal of Religion and Theatre is a peer-reviewed online journal. The journal aims to provide descriptive and analytical articles examining the spirituality of world cultures in all disciplines of the theatre, performance studies in sacred rituals of all cultures, themes of transcendence in text, on stage, in theatre history, the analysis of dramatic literature, and other topics relating to the relationship between religion and theatre. The journal also aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge throughout the theatrical community concerning the relationship between theatre and religion and as an academic research resource for the benefit of all interested scholars and artists.

All rights reserved. Each author retains the copyright of his or her article. Acquiring an article in this pdf format may be used for research or teaching purposes only. No other type of reproduction by any process or technique may be made without the formal, written consent of the author.

Submission Guidelines

- Submit your article in Microsoft Word 1998 format via the internet
- Include a separate title page with the title of the article, your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number, with a 70 to 100 word abstract and a 25 to 50 word biography
- Do not type your name on any page of the article
- MLA style endnotes -- Appendix A.1. (Do not use parenthetical references in the body of the paper/ list of works cited.)
- E-Mail the article and title page via an attachment in Microsoft Word 1998 to Debra Bruch: dlbruch -at- mtu.edu. (Please replace the -at- with @.)
- Or send by regular post with the article on a zip disk, Mac format, in Microsoft Word to:

Debra Bruch, Ph.D.
General Editor, *The Journal of Religion and Theatre*
Department of Fine Arts
Michigan Technological University
1400 Townsend Drive
Houghton, MI 49931

- DEADLINE: May 1st of each year

The Performance of God – Religious Discourse in the Aftermath of 11 September

Written by
Peter Civetta

"God is being sought out with a fervor I have never seen in my lifetime."¹ These words, spoken by Episcopal priest Terry White in his sermon on September 16th, 2001, echo sentiments expressed across faith traditions in the aftermath of the events of 11 September. In the following days and weeks, people clamored for answers, and many turned or re-turned to their local religious institutions. Although politicians made speeches and television provided endless coverage and analysis, much of the task of trying to deal with these events fell squarely on the shoulders of the world's clerics. Therefore, Christian and Jewish sermons as well as Islamic khutbahs played an important role as people processed, responded, or, in many cases, processed how they might respond.²

This paper examines four such addresses delivered in the immediate aftermath of September 11th. Certain methodological issues require clarification before commencing. First, these sermons appear as discrete examples of preaching/khatabah and not necessarily as representative of some greater tradition that may or may not have existed. The four sermons

¹ Reverend Terry White, Sermon Delivered 16 September 2001. Given to author.

² I have found it challenging to discuss this topic across faith traditions that have disparate terminology for what they do. "Sermon" is a term found within Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions, although the formal Muslim term is "khutbah." When speaking strictly about Islam, I shall use their term. I shall use "sermon" when referring to Jewish and Christian addresses as well as when speaking universally. However, this ease of lexicon ends there. "Preacher" appears in Jewish circles, though not as readily as within Christian ones. In Islam, the term is "khateeb." To remain fair, when not speaking specifically about one tradition or another, I will use the amalgam "preacher/khateeb." The same pattern will be utilized a second time: "preaching" refers to Jewish and Christian addresses, "khatabah" refers to the same action for Muslims, and "preaching/khatabah" will stand in for universal instances. I apologize for the awkwardness of these constructions, but I prefer them to the choosing of one term over another.

are exactly that, four sermons. Second, while this study will explore all of the material, the sermons do not appear as equivalents or even parallels. Unique circumstances, only partially knowable now, conceived and created each of the sermons. The preachers/khateeb's personalities and congregations further individuate them from each other. However, each example remains related, a unique performance event dealing with a single experience affecting, in varying degrees, people around the world.

Using performance paradigms to examine phenomenon such as sermons marks the ever-expanding curiosity of theatre and performance studies. No longer tied to the disciplinary focus on traditional theatre and drama, the study of preaching/khatabah represents just such a new area for exploration. I believe much may be gleaned about sermons through performance exemplars. I also believe religious addresses, in their creation, delivery and reception, have much to offer our field. To that effect, this paper uses a dramaturgical model, exploring the context and history surrounding the presentation of a performed text.

As with any complex event, the historical and theoretical foundations for religious addresses frame each event before it takes place. An examination of the oratory traditions of each faith, their homiletics, remains in order to fully contextualize the four addresses I have chosen. The discipline of homiletics serves as the dramaturgical foundation for this study. Whether a sermon gets received as radical or conventional lies only in marking it against the established homiletical norm. Homiletics offers a macro-model from which to view each individual event.

Khutbahs, religious talks given by an Imam, occur during a communal performance of Jummah (Friday prayers). Jummah, as part of Salat (prayer), remains one of the five pillars of the Islam; therefore khutbahs retain major significance within the practice of the faith.

However, the performance of Salat need not be corporate, for as long as a person completes their prayers, even alone, they fulfill their commitment. Therefore although strongly encouraged to attend, listening to khutbahs is not a required element of the faith.

Structurally, a khutbah consists of two consecutive speeches with a short break taken in between for prayer. A khutbah generally begins with praise of Allah, the declaration of faith, peace and blessings for the Prophet, and a quote from the Qur'an. They usually cover only one main topic, supported by quotes from the Qur'an or Haddith, the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed. The khutbah's goal lies in instruction and/or reminding the assembled congregation about their religion, serving, according to the European Council for Fatwa and Research, as "a call, a guidance, and a means of education" for a particular community.³ Khutbahs, in this sense, not only espouse the tenets of the faith, but also assist in the binding of the people together. Khutbahs serve as unity mechanisms for the community, connecting them as they confront any religious or secular challenges.

While enjoined to make their khutbahs inspirational, khateeb must also steer away from controversy. In a fatwa (religious legal opinion) offering guidelines for the performance of khutbahs, Saudi Mufti (religious leader and scholar) Sheikh Muhammad Al-Gazali states:

The Khutbah should never discuss controversial issues... The mosque should unify and not divide people. The Ummah (people) should be gathered around the fundamentals of Iman (faith) that every person agrees upon versus matters that are subject to personal opinion. There are numerous principles that can make good topics. Muslims have suffered enough from divisions among themselves, and it is time that the mosques provide unity and harmony.⁴

³ European Council for Fatwa and Research, "Fatwa on Role of Friday Sermon (Khutbah)," 30 August 2001
<<<http://www.islam-online.net/completesearch/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=48111>>>

⁴ Sheikh Muhammed Al-Gazali, "Fatwa on Guidelines for Delivering Friday Sermon (Khutbah)" 13 March 2002.
<<<http://www.islam-online.net/completesearch/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=66059>>>.

The key factor in understanding the importance of khutbahs lies in their connection to the specific community hearing them. Khutbahs strive to raise God consciousness, to borrow a phrase from New York Imam Kasim Kopus. They may speak to theological or historical issues, but must remain relevant to the gathered community's present and daily life. The intent of a khutbah lies in bringing the beliefs of Islam into direct connection with the praxis of its individual adherents.

Jewish homiletics reflects a similar focus on the community addressed. However, Jewish sermons often embrace controversial issues, seeking to challenge the congregation. Rabbi Abraham Cohen delivered one of the only explicit discourses on Jewish homiletics in his 1936 lecture series at Jew's College in London. He highlights the importance of sermons as cooperative, both with the congregation and the synagogue itself. He states, "Only by holding a clear conception of the scope and purpose of the synagogue and its services can one secure a true understanding of the nature and aim of Jewish preaching".⁵ Later he adds that the aim of a sermon is "to influence the thought and action of [its] listeners. In Judaism 'knowledge' is not just something connected with the mind, an abstraction. It alone has value when translated into action, particularly ethical conduct".⁶ A sermon, in his conception, emerges as a performative, collaborative event. Never truly passive to begin with, the congregation gets recognized as active participants. This active collaboration reflects Cohen's purpose for Jewish sermons, to instruct the people on issues they need to hear and in ways they can readily understand. He

⁵ Rabbi Abraham Cohen, *Jewish Homiletics: Shiff Lectures on Preaching, 1936* (London: M. L. Cailinggold, 1937) 2.

⁶ Cohen 26.

states, "The instruction is a means to an end, that end being the hallowing of life by the ideals and precepts of Judaism. 'To learn in order to do' is the true Jewish principle".⁷

Christian homiletics contains similar echoes. Episcopal priest and homiletician Reverend Barbara Brown Taylor offers a three-part model similar to Cohen's. Brown Taylor likens the preaching dynamic to a three-legged stool, asserting sermons as the mutual creation of God, the preacher, and the congregation. She writes, "All three participate in the making of it, with the preacher as the designated voice. It is a delicate job for the one in the pulpit, a balancing act between the text, the congregation, and the self".⁸ The three-legged stool image works so well because of its emphasis on balance as well as authority. While the Bible may seem to dominate Christian preaching, her model reminds that too much emphasis on one leg of the stool will cause it to topple.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, one of the 20th century's most celebrated American preachers who for decades he had a weekly radio show with over three million listeners, described the overall purpose of sermons in the following way: "every sermon was to start with the real problems of the people and was to meet their difficulties, answer their questions, confirm their noblest faiths and interpret their experiences in sympathetic, wise, and understanding co-operation".⁹ While current homiliticians may dispute the need to provide complete answers in their sermons, Fosdick highlights the necessity of connecting with the congregation and remaining relevant to their lives. Both of these attributes appear repeatedly within Christian homiletics.

⁷ Cohen 33.

⁸ Reverend Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Preaching Life* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1993) 78.

⁹ Paul Scott Wilson, *A Concise History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992) 156.

Sermons, in all three traditions, focus on the relationship to a specific group of people at a particular time. Each of their homiletics expresses the need to connect the religious talk with the congregation addressed, offering this insight as the heart of understanding the nature of the sermonic moment. Sermons are therefore not interchangeable, but inextricably linked to the communities that created them. A study of the performance of sermons should not, then, focus on abstract theological discourse, but rather should offer opportunity to learn about and explicate the community from which the sermon came. In other words, to learn about a community, look at the sermons they hear, and vice versa, to learn about sermons, look to the communities that created them. The delivery and reception of sermons functions as a construct. Sermons assist in the constitution of the identity of the community. Sermons both show and tell a community about itself. Sermons may respond to a crisis, such as 9/11, but they do so for and to specific communities in a precise context.

The four sermons I have chosen each reflect the different communities that heard and also helped to create them. The Reverend Billy Graham addressed a televised audience from the National Cathedral.¹⁰ Rabbi Scott Glass delivered a Rosh Hashanah sermon to his congregation in Ithaca, New York.¹¹ Imam Arshad Gamiet spoke in a London mosque,¹² and Reverend Peggy Bosmyer preached at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Little Rock, Arkansas.¹³ These four, culled from over one hundred and fifty surveyed, communicate a wide spectrum of responses, providing fertile ground for exploration. Outside of Graham, the

¹⁰ Reverend Billy Graham, Sermon Delivered on 14 September 2001, Washington, D.C.
<<<http://www.billygraham.org/newsevents/ndprbgmessage.asp>>>

¹¹ Rabbi Scott Glass, Sermon Delivered on 18 September 2001, Ithaca, New York. Given to author.

¹² Iman Arshad Gamiet, Khutbah Delivered on 28 September 2001, London. Forwarded to author.

¹³ Reverend Peggy Bosmyer, Sermon Delivered on 16 September 2001, Little Rock, AR. Given to author.

preachers/khateeb remain relatively unknown outside of their communities. This obscurity represents the work of so many clerics forced to deal with the extraordinary pressure to create meaningful sermons after 11 September. Rabbi Glass expressed sentiments echoed by numerous others, "Never before have I felt more ill-prepared to stand before the congregation." However their sermons showcase the astonishing responses created and delivered within the first few weeks after 11 September.

As with all choices, my selections were subjective. I focused on two elements in my search: a diversity of people and locations, and for a sermon that seemed, at least to me, to encapsulate a type of response. With regard to diversity, I have chosen across gender and geographical lines as well as showcasing a response from outside the United States. Diversity also played a part in my decision to include Graham. Many famous orators and speakers weighed in after 11 September, and so I wanted to include a response given from a position of power, in addition to those voices projected from smaller communities. With regards to encapsulation, I feel each of these sermons characterize certain types of responses. However, I do not view these sermons as representative, a reductionary move. Each sermon stands as a testament of each community, but taken within the context of a larger faith tradition. Copies of all four are available upon request.

Evangelist Billy Graham, according to his web site, "has preached the Gospel to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history -- over 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories -- through various meetings, including Mission World and Global Mission".¹⁴ He has counseled many U.S. presidents and spoke during the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance at the request of President Bush. Bush and many other political

¹⁴ Reverend Billy Graham, "Billy Graham Bio," 19 August 2002
<<<http://www.billygraham.org/newsevents/ndprbgmessage.asp>>>

leaders attended, and the content of the sermon reflected this powerful and influential community. In many ways this sermon appears as much a political address as a religious one. References to the President, Congress, and the nation almost outstrip direct references to God. Graham states early on "some day those responsible will be brought to justice, as President Bush and our congress have so forcibly stated." It appears that justice, then, gets decided and dictated by Bush, not by God as one might expect in a religious address.

The sermon contains many violent images (backlashed, disintegrate, implode, backfired) and none of these referred to the events of 11 September. Graham's martial tone reflects a sermon constructed and delivered for political purposes. For example, given all the powerful experiences around that time, Graham singles out when Congress "stood shoulder to shoulder the other day and sang, 'God Bless America.'" Graham's sermon directly supports its governmental audience, while constructing a nationally televised audience dependent upon that government. Near the end Graham says, "We also know that God is going to give wisdom and courage and strength to the President and those around him. And this is going to be a day that we will all remember as a day of victory." The question remains: is that victory God's or the military victory of the U.S. government led by President George W. Bush, the sponsor of the sermon itself?

Rabbi Scott Glass brings the Jewish tradition's distinct perspective to the events of 11 September. As a supporter of the state of Israel, Glass and his community remain only too familiar with violent acts committed against civilians. As he said, "now people will understand, they will know the rage that fills one's soul when innocent people, in their offices, traveling to work, walking the street, stopping in a restaurant, disappear in a flash." However, Glass brings far more than cynicism to this sermon. In fact, he reflects on the lessons learned by those who

have suffered in this way previously. He quotes Rabbi Harold Kushner on the hollowness of revenge, saying "The proposal of getting even is seldom worth what it does to us as people." Glass instead offers forgiveness, referencing Hebrew scripture, not because the perpetrators deserve it but because his congregants deserve better "than to be permanently mired in bitterness of the past." Glass calls for healing, not rage, and presents God and their synagogue as a place for them to draw strength, solace, and comfort. His sermon focuses on reconfiguring the expected response, presenting a way through their faith of moving forward in a positive manner. Glass acknowledges the trauma and pain all feel embroiled in, but offers a way to regain control. As he closes his sermon, Glass reiterates the core of their faith and how it can help them at this time. "Our tradition, in its wisdom, is forward-looking. Even at our moments of deepest despair, we are encouraged to look, with hope, to the future, to life."

Imam Arshad Gamiet begins his khutbah with the precarious situation facing many Muslims, the violence and blame inappropriately assigned to their entire faith tradition. He states, "The logic seems to be, if you're a practicing Muslim, you are a Fundamentalist. And if you are a Fundamentalist, then you must also be a terrorist... as if the terms Islam, Muslim, Fundamentalist and Terrorist are interconnected and inseparable." The focus, in both parts of his khutbah, lies in the community's response as Muslims, saying they must "rise to the challenge" presented by the mistreatment and misinformation. He offers three specific modes of action. First and foremost, the community needs to renew their commitment to Allah, to act in every way to please Allah. Second, Gamiet reminds his congregation of their responsibility to give alms to the most needy, to those "who are desperately short of food, clothing, medicines and basic healthcare." He offers several organizations that he believes deserve greater support, including Human Relief International and Muslim Aid. Gamiet's final objective pleads that "we must do everything in our power to counter the negative propaganda about Islam and

Muslims... we must be models of dignity and excellence of character, that will inspire others and win over their hearts and minds." Gamiet's three-tiered approach seeks to counteract the damaging and destructive representations of Muslims. By emphasizing the positive face of Islam and making that face more visible in the greater society, he hopes to dispel the stereotypes fostering such a negative view of their faith.

The khutbah offers condolences over the events in America, but also stresses the danger his community now faces because of it. However, Gamiet's response-oriented khutbah does leave one obvious issue untouched. Since enjoined not to deal with controversial, divisive subjects, Gamiet never discusses what it might mean to his community if Islamic groups carried out the attacks. At the time of delivery, little concrete information had surfaced as to the perpetrators, yet Gamiet's response assumes they will eventually prove non-Muslim. Through this approach, he leaves his community without guidance regarding their response as Muslims to these attacks being carried out by persons claiming to believe as they do. Instead, Gamiet focuses on their present and future conduct, with little regard to the past. "Our job is simply to persevere in patience and constancy, in speaking the truth and living the excellent example, which is our duty and destiny."

Reverend Peggy Bosmyer handled the 11 September events very differently than the previous three gentlemen. Unlike most of the 9/11 sermons I have heard or read, Bosmyer didn't deviate from the lectionary, the pre-selected Biblical texts assigned by some denominations for each Sunday. While most liturgies still contained those scriptural readings, few made more than a cursory mention of them. However, Bosmyer's choice affirms a sense of comfort through stability that so many preachers/khateeb emphasize in their sermons. This choice imparts more than mere talk. Instead, Bosmyer enacts comfort and stability through remaining connected to a form and process familiar to her congregation.

More surprisingly, Bosmyer never directly refers to 9/11 until over half way through her sermon. Instead, she focuses on the question "What is God like?" In formulating an answer, Bosmyer also doesn't get stuck in what Kenneth Burke calls "negative theology," the tendency of people to describe God in only negative terms – what God is not: God is immortal. God is infinite. God is unknowable. Bosmyer instead focuses on positive, engaged images of God. First, she highlights God's love for us all, a fact hard to accept during this time of crisis "because it involves realizing that this means everybody – even the people we don't want to love, can't love." Second, she emphasizes that God constantly seeks us out. Bosmyer doesn't fixate on what happened or what will happen, but rather on what is happen-*ing* right then in the lives of her congregation. Whereas all of the other sermons focus on the future response to the events that had previously transpired, Bosmyer strictly deals with the present state of her congregation.

To the end, Bosmyer forgoes concern about some outside threat or how we as a nation or a faith should respond. She focuses on the individual and, due to the crisis each one now faces, her or his possible separation from God because of it. Bosmyer's engaged God won't allow for such a separation. By offering God living with us in our present state, a God loving and seeking us out, Bosmyer undermines the power of the events of 9/11 to seize control of our lives. "There is nothing- not life- nor death- nor principalities- nor powers- nor terrorists- nor anything else in all creation- not even our own wretchedness- which can separate us from the love of God." Bosmyer's sermon reminds her congregation of God's constant and unwavering connection to each of them at every moment. By *presenting* God, Bosmyer alleviates the despair and loneliness felt by her community, replacing it with God's comfort, stability, and presence.

While their homiletics, such as Brown Taylor's three-legged stool, point to the community's role in constructing each address, these four sermons equally demonstrate the

identities of the congregations. They are, in fact, performances of those communities.

Construction flows reciprocally. Communities do not only assist in the creation of a sermon; that same sermon serves as a presentation of their identity. In other words, sermons appear as performative expressions of a congregation, preacher/khateeb, and faith tradition. Each of these sermons illustrates what each of these communities deems important. They construct them accordingly then perform that identity back to themselves. This reciprocal connection to the people not only implicates the creation of a sermon, but its delivery and reception as well. In each case the relationship between sermon, preacher/khateeb, and congregation consists of a continuously shifting, yet linked chain of causality. It remains impossible to study one aspect without taking into account the perspective of the other two. The identity of the sermon becomes the identity of the congregation, which remains implicit in its own construction.

In these terms, the construction of congregational identity appears no different than the construction of identity in race, gender, etc. As Judith Butler writes, identity gets "tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts".¹⁵ Preaching represents just such a repetition of acts, and herein lies a major distinction between religious and theatrical performance events. Unlike in theatre, religious congregations predominantly consist of the same group on a regular basis. This group forms and re-forms again and again, and this homiletical repetition helps to create the identity of those who hear. They build, develop, and modify this identity over time and through repetition, a decidedly distinct environment from traditional theatrical audiences. To truly understand these repetition-based,

¹⁵ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 270.

reciprocal constructions, sermons must no longer be viewed as universal to all situations and all people, but as an act, an event tied to space and time.

In addition, phenomenologist Edmund Husserl talks about noesis and noema: the two concatenous yet unified facets of perception. Meaning, for Husserl, appears through the noetic action of perceiving and the noematic act perceived. In other words, noesis represents the –ing, perceiving, while noema represents the –ed, the perceived or perception itself. Husserl relates them accordingly: "The noematic is the field of unities, the noetic is the field of 'constituting' multiplicities".¹⁶ The noematic represents the completed act of perception; the noetic refers to the constantly shifting action of perception. Too often when preaching gets examined, if it gets examined at all, it is as noematic, a completed act. I feel a far more interesting approach lies in its noetic aspects, the way a sermon is not completed once written, nor even once delivered. The notion of performed congregational identity speaks directly to this noetic aspect of preaching. Never fixed or even fixable, congregational identity always remains fluid and developing. For example, a common Christian saying asserts that a good sermon the congregation must finish for themselves, that the preacher should not seek to answer all questions, but to point the congregation to a place where they can continue the journey individually. The end point of a sermon remains elusive and illusive. A common rabbinic teaching concurs stating, "The homily is not the essence but the deed." To examine a sermon in this context approaches its noetic aspects.

The events of 11 September provide an opportunity for just such a performative, noetic examination of sermons because each preacher/khateeb dealt with the same crisis, but did so in decidedly different communities. The distinctions between these sermons not only reflect the

¹⁶ Edmund Husserl, *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) 99.

differences in faith traditions and the differences in individual preachers/khateeb, but also reflect the noetic differences in listening audiences. Therefore, September 11th sermons do not constitute monolithic, theological treatises on the nature of good and evil. They do not collectively discern God's possible role, or lack thereof, in preventing or condoning these attacks. In fact universalist notions of preaching must be refuted and set aside. Each of these four sermons reflect a specific group of people in a particular place and time as well as their relationship with the Holy and one another.

Billy Graham fixates on the power of nation and the abilities of our leaders to solve and correct injustice. Graham portrays an audience constructed to believe that God works on the side of America, directly through the person of George W. Bush. He goes so far at one point as to speak for God, stating: "I want to assure you that God understands these feelings that you may have." Graham's performative act equates the justice of God with the justice of the government of this country. The noetic action of this sermon merges the religious and the political, supports their interdependence, and allows for their future involvement together. In this way, the sermon did not end when Graham sat down that day, but rather its repercussions had only begun.

Gamiet presents an audience of unknown victim, the congregation as a site of ongoing and future tragedy. By constituting his congregation in this manner he then becomes able to performatively stress the acts required by their faith in response to the expected treatment. His local knowledge of the violence and persecution faced by Muslims both constructed his sermon and helped to communicate the audience to itself. It shows the community they can no longer remain passive. The khutbah's noesis extols an activist response. If they want to counteract the stereotypes around them, they must assert positive notions of their identity into the greater

society. "We must not behave in any way that compromises the good name and dignity of our faith." Gamiel uses his khutbah to create a turning point for his congregation, reflecting a community ready to change and move forward.

Bosmyer expresses an audience found solely in the present. By relegating the 9/11 events outside the dominant aspects of her sermon, she performatively constitutes an audience focused on where they are as opposed to where they've been or where they are going. Bosmyer does not offer explanations or guides for conduct. Instead she says, "we stand together to affirm what we cannot always understand." Her impetus restores focus on her positive, engaged image of God. What is God like? God loves us, seeks us out, and remains with us always, even grieving with us at the pain of our lives, of our world. Reconnecting that notion of God to her congregation constitutes the true noetic movement of her sermon, and it offers a sense of how it might continue after the service ended.

Glass communicates an insider audience, an audience with previous intimate knowledge of events such as those of 9/11. He uses this type of knowledge to performatively persuade his congregation to move beyond the expected revenge born of the shock and anger of the moment. His construction of the audience seeks to performatively move them "to embrace life with fervor, to find greater meaning in all that we do, to appreciate what we have all the more, to love with greater passion." Glass offers the perfect example of a sermon not intended as a noematic, completed act. The true work of the sermon only begins after the service has ended. As a community construction and performance, the sermon performatively stresses the noetic. Glass' sermon offers a call-to-action, whose effects ripple back through the community that created it.

I titled this article "The Performance of God," but, in the end, I do not believe that represents an accurate description of what I have found. These sermons instead reflect the

presentation of how a particular community understands and desires God – the performance of God as I want or know God to be. God becomes a communal experience, even a construct, expressing the ways in which each community engages in an ever-developing relationship with the Holy. God remains with you always for Bosmyer and her community. God also scrutinizes the actions of Gamiet and his community. God can align with political leaders or focus on the future. We cannot understand the total mystery of God, as Bosmyer states, yet each community can latch onto to what they need. Reciprocal, evolving constructions highlight the role of sermons in constituting and performing the identity of religious communities and their notion of God as well.

The events of 11 September affected an increased attendance and interest in religion. Many people in crisis turn to religion for comfort and for answers. Preachers/khateeb across faith traditions dealt first hand, often on a daily basis, with people's responses to the tragedy. Their sermons illustrate the enormous power and influence of the pulpit. Preaching/khatabah, long overlooked within cultural studies as revealing only religious doctrine, I believe reflects entire communities – sermons as facets of local knowledge. I feel preaching/khatabah deserves more thorough study, and although this present project deals solely with sermonic texts, a fuller study should include actual performance analysis of the moment of delivery and reception. Performance paradigms and methodologies such as dramaturgy offer valuable tools for an examination of religious addresses, presenting a fresh approach to this overlooked form of cultural discourse. Preaching/khatabah shows how communities constitute themselves and perform themselves to themselves, a valuable site for further exploration.