

# The Future of Homiletics in the Nordic Countries

## Wie von Gericht und Hölle (nicht) predigen

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### Abstract

Against the backdrop of *Marlene R. Lorensen's* call for a turn to theology in Nordic Homiletics, in this article I try to give a positive outlook on the future for Nordic Homiletics. I argue that we should move into the future by four moves: (1) challenging the dichotomy between the empirical and the theological, (2) asking foundational homiletical questions from new angles, (3) continuing to work to reveal normativities and making the implicit explicit, and (4) conducting homiletical research outside the worship service and the Nordic State/Folk-Churches. I conclude that the future of Nordic Homiletics lies in a continuous conversation between empirical and theological perspectives.

### Zusammenfassung

*Vor dem Hintergrund der Forderung von Marlene R. Lorensen nach einer Wende zur Theologie in der nordeuropäischen Homiletik versuche ich in diesem Artikel, einen positiven Ausblick auf die Zukunft dieser Homiletik zu geben. Ich argumentiere mit vier Schritten in Richtung Zukunft. Wir sollten: (1) die Dichotomie zwischen empirischem und theologischem in Frage stellen, (2) grundlegende homiletische Fragen aus neuen Blickwinkeln stellen, (3) weiter daran arbeiten, Normativitäten aufzudecken und das Implizite explizit zu machen, und (4) homiletische Forschungen außerhalb des Gottesdienstes und der nordischen Staats-/Volkskirchen durchführen. Ich schliesse mit dem Gedanken, dass die Zukunft nordeuropäischer Homiletik in einem kontinuierlichen Austausch zwischen empirischen und theologischen Perspektiven liegt.*

### Introduction

In a recent overview article on Homiletics in the Nordic countries, Danish Homiletician Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen asks whether it is time, bearing all the new knowledge created by the empirical studies in mind, for a new turn towards more attention to traditional homiletical questions, including the theology of preaching.<sup>1</sup>

Although Lorensen does not advocate leaving empirical studies behind, in this attempt at looking into the future, I highlight even more strongly that the turn towards a more theological focus in Nordic Homiletics springs out of the empirical studies and cannot be seen as separate from these. Thus, the future of Homiletics might lie precisely in the continuous negotiation between empirical and theological perspectives in Homiletics.

1 *Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen*, Nyere nordisk homiletikk: Empirisk vending, fremmedhed og resonans, in: *Tidsskrift for praktisk teologi* 31, no. 37 (2020), 51.

## A Brief Introduction to Nordic Homiletics

This article follows in the wake of two other articles by *Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen* and *Kirstine Helboe Johansen* detailing the recent developments in Nordic Homiletical Research. The article written by Lorensen and Johansen is an overview article where they refer to what kind of research Nordic homileticians are conducting at the moment. As this article aims to point forward, I will refer you to that article and not summarise it here.<sup>2</sup>

I will, however, briefly summarise Lorensen's article, "Nyere nordisk homiletik: empirisk vending, fremmedhed og resonans". In the article, Lorensen claims that two main characteristics describe Nordic Homiletics from 2000 to 2020: an empirical turn and a focus on the interaction between the sermon and the world around the church.<sup>3</sup> She asks whether these two focuses have become so strong that they provide blindfolds for other essential aspects of Homiletics or if they, on the contrary, provide opportunities to study classical Homiletical elements anew?<sup>4</sup> This critical question underlines Lorensen's article, as she, while appreciating the contributions of the empirical turn in Nordic Homiletics, continuously reflects on not only what is gained but also what is lost in the last 20 years' clear focus on what is happening in the world in front of the text.

### Into the Future By ...

After this brief sketch of the current status of Nordic Homiletics, it is time to try to see into the future. I will do this by providing four ways by which I believe Nordic Homiletics can move positively into the future. We can go into the future by (1) challenging the dichotomy between the empirical and the theological, (2) asking foundational homiletical questions from new angles, (3) continue to develop ways of making the implicit in homiletical research explicit, and (4) conducting homiletical research outside the worship service and the Nordic Folk-Churches.

*... challenging the dichotomy between the empirical and the theological.*

After reading Lorensen, it seems like the future of Nordic Homiletics lies in a turn towards the theological aspects of preaching.<sup>5</sup> While I do not necessarily disagree,

2 *Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen/Kirstine Helboe Johansen*, Homiletics in the Nordic Countries, in: *PrTh* 55/2 (2020), 88–93; <https://doi.org/10.14315/prth-2020-550207> [accessed 4.6.2021].

3 *Lorensen* (note 1), 43.

4 *Ebd.*

5 This has also been a topic of discussion at different recent Nordic practical theological zoom-meetings that I have attended and the perceived lack of theology in empirical research is also a topic in practical theology more generally. See for instance: *Auli Vähäkangas*, Searching for the Missing Theology in the Nordic Discussion of Practice, in: *Studia Theologica* 75 (2021), 52–66. Moreover, *Frida Mannerfelt's* survey and analysis of literature employed at Swedish seminaries the last 100 years points shows a similar development. *Frida Mannerfelt*, *Kontrast*

I do have some critical questions to this seemingly unified agreement that Nordic Homiletics has focused too much on the empirical, or the world in front of the text, as Lorensen labels it.<sup>6</sup> My main critical question is: is it possible to turn towards the theological without creating a dichotomy between the empirical and theological?

The primary contribution of the many empirical studies in recent years is the knowledge it has provided of preaching reception and notions of preaching among congregants.<sup>7</sup> Empirical studies have contributed with “thick descriptions” of selected parts of the world and the church. Firstly, the studies provided knowledge on “normal” churchgoers, then on more specific sub-groups like refugees, children and worship services for Young and Old.<sup>8</sup> Another contribution is more knowledge of how preachers reflect on preaching in different contexts.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the studies have introduced new and previously unfamiliar voices into Homiletics. Or, instead, empirical studies have elevated the espoused, operant, formal and normative voices of theology among congregants as voices worth listening to and engaging with.<sup>10</sup> It, therefore, seems like the call for a theological turn is a call for a turn towards normative and formal theology. However, adopting a practice theoretical view, as I did in my PhD thesis, practices are not just full of espoused and operant theology; they are also filled with normative and formal theology. Normative and formal theology is not just produced at Theological Faculty’s or Church Synods.<sup>11</sup>

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och Kontinuitet. Predikoideal i Svenska kyrkans prästutbildning 1903–2017, in: Stephan Borgehammar (ed.), *Predikan – i tid och otid* (Svenskt gudstjänstliv 93), Skellefteå 2018.

6 Lorensen (note 1), 43.

7 See for instance: *Marianne Gaarden/Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen*, Listeners as Authors in Preaching. Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives, in: *Homiletic* 38 (2013), 28–45; *Hans Austnaberg*, Improving Preaching by Listening to Listeners: Sunday Service Preaching in the Malagasy Lutheran Church, *Bible and Theology in Africa*, New York 2012; *Sivert Angel*, Talerens troverdighet i prekener for konfirmanter, in: Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen (ed.), *Gudstjenester med konfirmanter*, Oslo 2017; *Linn Sæbø Rystad*, I Wish We Could Fast Forward It. Negotiating the Practice of Preaching, in: *Homiletic* 44 (2019), 18–42.

8 This is overlapping with the studies above but, in addition, see for instance: *Sivert Angell/Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen*, Preaching and political debate on refugees. A “tyranny of goodness”?, in: *Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 73, no. 1 (2019), 60–88; *Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen/Tone Stangeland Kaufmann/Carina Sundberg*, Preaching in Times of the European ‘Refugee Crisis’ – Scandinavian perspectives, in: *International Journal of Homiletics* 2, (2017), 74–100.

9 See for instance: *Hallvard Olavson Mosdøl*, Fra tekst til preken. En beskrivelse og drøfting av norske presters prekenforberedende praksis, in: *Tidsskrift for Praktisk Teologi* 2 (2013), 21–31.

10 The terms espoused, operant, formal and normative theology is from the ARCS project and their conceptualisation of the four voices of theology. Espoused theology is the theology embedded within a group’s articulation of its beliefs, operant theology is the theology embedded within the actual practice of the group, formal theology is the theology of theologians, dialogue with other disciplines, and normative theology is scriptures, the creeds, liturgies, official church teaching. *Helen Cameron*, *Talking about God in practice. Theological action research and practical theology*, London 2010.

11 *Davide Nicolini*, *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization. An Introduction*, Oxford 2012. This notion is also purported by Ordinary Theology and Lived Religion, cf. *Jeff Astley*, Or-

1 The discussion of how the theological and the empirical relate to each other is  
 2 extensive in the field of Practical Theology; however, at least in Nordic Homilet-  
 3 ics, the empirical homiletical studies conducted have generally shied away from  
 5 attempting to make theological-normative claims. This might be due to what  
*Kaufman* and *Danbolt* label as the empirical hermeneutical approach to practical  
 theology generally found in the Nordic countries.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Homiletics is a  
 discipline that, to a large degree, needs to grapple with these questions as preach-  
 ing is this in-between practice, where one always uses more than “just” the Bible,  
 10 theology or experiences. In preaching, we weave together several components,  
 and we create theology; thus, discussing what we mean when we say “theology”  
 is vital.

Therefore, the metaphor of the turn of the pendulum that Lorensen employs  
 does not accurately describe what I see as the future of Homiletics. The concept of  
 a pendulum is that it swings from one side to the other, leaving the last side it was  
 15 on behind. Hence, the pendulum metaphor contributes to creating a dichotomy  
 between empirical and theological where it is possible to swing from one side to the  
 other, leaving one of the two components behind. Turning from the world in front  
 of the text to, for instance, the world in the text does not mean that we should forget  
 the world in front of the text.

20 Two new ways of looking at the relationship between the empirical and the theo-  
 logical can be found in *Jonas Ideström’s* call for understanding practical theology  
 as “faithful participation” and *Geir Afdal’s* notion of normativity as distributed  
 across all social practices. Ideström challenges how the practice of research and the  
 practices in the fieldwork often remain separate. He suggests that viewing practical  
 25 theological research as participatory, relational and something the researcher en-  
 gages in is a fruitful way forward.<sup>13</sup>

Geir Afdal argues that what separates local theological practices, what we often  
 label the empirical, and academic theological practices, what we often label theo-  
 30 logy, is not theory and practice, not normative and descriptive. He claims that it is  
 instead that theological practice and theological academics are two separate activi-  
 ty systems with its own set of normativities, theories and practices. The knowledge  
 in each system needs to be translated; therefore, academic theology cannot make  
 prescriptive claims on behalf of theological practice. However, it can contribute to  
 35 critical reflection, seeing new possibilities, and understanding the practices in new

dinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology (Explorations in Practical,  
 Pastoral and Empirical Theology, Aldershot 2002; *Nancy Tatom Ammerman*, *Everyday Reli-  
 gion. Observing Modern Religious Lives*, Oxford 2007.

40 12 *Tone Stangeland Kaufman/Lars Johan Danbolt*, Hva er praktisk teologi?, in: *Tidsskrift for  
 praktisk teologi* 1, no. 37 (2020), 4–18.

41 13 *Jonas Ideström*, Faithful Participation. Engagement and Transformation in Ethnographic  
 42 Ecclesiology, in: *Ders./Tone Stangeland Kaufman/Christian Scharen* (eds.), *What Really  
 43 Matters. Scandinavian Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Church of Sweden  
 research series), Eugene, OR 2018, 59.

ways. This also goes for what theological practice can teach theological academic practice. Learning happens in both systems, not just in the local practices.<sup>14</sup>

In these new, non-dichotomous ways of seeing the relationship between the empirical and the theological, there is potential for Nordic Homiletics. It is a positive challenge to have researchers grapple with the theological implications of their studies and with the ontological, epistemological and methodological challenges that might pose for empirical homiletical studies in particular and homiletics in general. Therefore, Nordic Homiletics has a future in turning towards theology; however, I argue that this turn needs to be made while keeping theology and the empirical together.

*... asking foundational homiletical questions from new angles*

Yet, the primary reason why I argue for keeping the empirical turn is the foundational homiletical questions the empirical studies contribute to asking anew. Knowledge of how listeners react to preaching and how preachers reflect on preaching can prompt and reframe fundamental homiletical questions. In the following, I use *Marianne Gaarden's* article “How Do We Break Out of ‘the Old Paradigmatic Box?’” as a showcase for how empirical studies can lead to research on foundational homiletical questions.<sup>15</sup>

In her PhD thesis, Gaarden aimed initially at describing how listeners experienced the preaching event. However, she found a discrepancy between the formal and normative theological account of what happens in preaching and how the listeners experienced the preaching event. She also discovered that preachers operated with an ideal theology of preaching and a “real” theology of preaching informed by their experiences. Gaarden argues that she could have concluded that the listeners were wrong and needed to follow formal and normative theology more faithfully when they listen. She chose instead to let the listeners experience challenge the formal and normative theology of preaching.<sup>16</sup>

For Gaarden, and for the preachers in her empirical material, the formal and normative theology expressed in the Pauline saying “faith comes from hearing” implied that God was the only actor in preaching. In other words, the empirical findings challenged the understanding of divine agency in preaching, and the problem then became how to articulate a communication theology of preaching where both the divine and the human agency remained intact.<sup>17</sup> Gaarden describes

14 *Afdal Geir*, Teologi som teoretisk og praktisk aktivitet, in: *Tidsskrift for teologi og kirke* 82, no. 2 (2011), 87–109.

15 *Marianne Gaarden*, How Do We Break Out of “the Old Paradigmatic Box?”, in: *Ideström/Kaufman/Scharen* (eds.) [note 13], 124–137.

16 AaO., 136.

17 AaO., 127. Interestingly, Finish homiletician, *Berncie Sundkvist* in tackling much of the same formal and normative theology in her study “En Predikan – Nio Berättelser” [One Sermon – Nine Stories], argues that viewing communication as dialogical is consistent with this theology. This might point to how similar formal and normative theology on preaching, namely

1 that, to overcome this discrepancy, her project changed from being empirical and  
 2 descriptive to taking on a normative approach to theology, a normativity she labels  
 3 a rescriptive and hermeneutical normativity. Thus, her contribution is both a thick  
 4 description of espoused, operant and normative theology in homiletical practices  
 5 and a contribution to formal and normative theology in Homiletics.

Although I use Gaarden as an example, I am not arguing that we should all  
 copy her. I am, however, drawing attention to how the empirical findings contrib-  
 uted to an attempt at reformulating and re-phrasing normative and formal theol-  
 10 ogy. Moving into the future, there lies a possibility in more thorough attention to  
 how these entities are connected and mutually challenge each other.

... revealing normativities and making the implicit explicit

15 On to the third movement. As shown, empirical studies bring forth questions concern-  
 ing the foundational issues in Homiletics, like What is preaching? How do  
 people listen to preaching? Why are some sermons effective? What is the relation-  
 ship between what is said and heard in preaching? Hence, in describing espoused,  
 operant, formal and normative theologies in practices, these studies contribute  
 empirically by providing thick descriptions of practice and theologically by stimu-  
 20 lating formal and normative reflections on the role of theology in Homiletics.

In my research, I was surprised to learn how much I took for granted. When in-  
 25 terviewing children about their responses to preaching, I took for granted that they  
 had a response, that this response was cognitive and that they knew what preaching  
 was. During the interviews and the analysis, I quickly realised that I could not take  
 any of these things for granted.<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, this then led to a need to examine  
 what preaching really was, both in my material and as a general concept, and why  
 these children I had interviewed struggled so much to make sense of what I was  
 asking them about, as well as the different devotions and preaching events they  
 30 had attended. This move is similar to Gaarden's revelation, yet somewhat different.  
 While she found a discrepancy between the formal and normative theology of the  
 church and the understanding of the listeners and the experiences of the preachers,  
 I found a discrepancy between my own understanding of preaching and a *lack* of  
 understanding, thus making explicit the implicit understanding of preaching that  
 I operated with and my naïve assumption that this understanding was universal.  
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that "faith comes from hearing", has been interpreted differently in Finland and Denmark.  
 Where *Gaarden* sees a discrepancy challenging formal and normative theology of preaching,  
*Sundkvist* sees the same discrepancy as unthreatening to formal and normative theology  
 40 of preaching. It could also be that *Gaarden* and *Sundkvist* just experience this differently.  
 However, that *Gaarden* finds the discrepancy not only between her material and the formal  
 and normative theology but within the preachers, is an argument for seeing the same for-  
 mal and normative theology being interpreted differently in two Scandinavian countries.  
 41 *Bernice Sundkvist*, *En Predikan – Nio Berättelser: En Studie i Predikoreception*, Åbo 2003.  
 42

18 *Rystad* (note 7), 22.  
 43

The above is similar to how *Lorensen, Gitte Buch-Hansen* and *Kirsten Donskov Felter* argue for a larger degree of reflection on scholarly situatedness when doing fieldwork. Their research on refugees in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark shows how the interviewees in the study theologised and how this theologising both confirmed and challenged formal theology. They contend that the researcher's situatedness affects the production of theological knowledge and that fieldwork helps describe and promote Otherness that can challenge the researcher and how theological knowledge is produced.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, I suggest that Homiletics, to a certain extent, always has started in practices and in the espoused, operant, formal and normative theologies of those writing Homiletics. The introduction of qualitative research methods and other critical theories has facilitated transparency and new reflection on representativity and whose voices are presented as normative and formal theology. Too long, this has been a place where the experiences of white, well-educated men have existed without a breaking in of other voices.

However, a pitfall when discussing the inclusion of "other voices" is to idealise these voices as more "pure" and "true" than formal or normative theologies or traditional dominant voices, which might be what *Lorensen* argues against in her call for a turn back towards "classical Homiletical elements".<sup>20</sup> It is essential to not throw the baby out with the bath-water and not exoticise the espoused, operant, normative and formal theologies in practices. As Canadian theologian *Natalie Wigg-Stevenson* argues: the alternative to allowing doctrine to trump practice, which has been done for several years, is not to allow practice to trump doctrine.<sup>21</sup>

However, empirical studies emphasising reflexivity and examination of normativity "forces" homileticians to listen to other voices, voices who often do not speak in tandem with established theory and theology. Going forward, a heightened awareness of implicit normativities, what we take for granted and whose perspectives we view as neutral or normative can contribute constructively to both homiletical research and preacher's preaching practices.<sup>22</sup>

19 *Gitte Buch-Hansen/Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen/Kirsten Donskov Felter*, *Ethnographic Ecclesiology and the Challenges of Scholarly Situatedness*, in: *De Gruyter Open Theology* 1 (2015), 220–244.

20 *Lorensen* (note 1), 43.

21 *Natalie Wigg-Stevenson*, *From proclamation to conversation: ethnographic disruptions to theological normativity*, in: *Palgrave Communications* 1 am 13.10.2015, online unter: <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2015.24> [accessed 4.6.2021].

22 It is also noticeable that references to female scholars are in a majority in this article. While Nordic Homiletics long remained an area of male dominance, women now have a strong voice in the field. Within the last 10 years, at least four women have submitted PhD-theses in Homiletics and there are at least three female PhD-students working on within Homiletics at the moment. This representation alone bodes well for the future in terms of whose voices are seen as authoritative when it comes to preaching. Cf. *Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen*, *Dialogical preaching: Bakhtin, Otherness and Homiletics*, Göttingen 2014; *Carina Sundberg*, *Här är rymlig plats. Predikoteologier i en komplex verklighet/Here is a Lot of Space. Theologies of Preaching in a Complex Reality*, Göttingen

1 ... studying preaching outside the worship service and the Folk-Churches

2 Finally, I will move from the overarching and foundational perspective to some concrete  
3 areas of study emerging in the Nordic countries. The first is studies of digital worship.

5 With the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for and potential for research on digital  
worship and preaching has only increased. Moreover, it has “forced” the majority  
churches in the Nordic countries onto a platform where previously free churches and  
Pentecostal churches dominated the field.<sup>23</sup> A recent Swedish study found that 12 % of  
congregations in the Church of Sweden had an online presence before the pandemic,  
10 which increased to 84 % during the pandemic.<sup>24</sup>

Regarding preaching in particular, *Frida Mannerfelt* is the leading scholar of  
digital preaching in Nordic Homiletics. Much of her research is in print, but she  
convincingly argues for seeing digital preaching as closer to an oral than a literary  
tradition (second orality) in a published chapter. Moreover, she states that sharing  
15 sermons on social media, primarily when the person who shares provide additional  
comments and evaluations of the sermons, can be considered co-preaching.<sup>25</sup>

In my research and in the research group “Forkynnelse for små og store” [Preach-  
ing for Young and Old], we paid attention to mediation and how artefacts, the church  
building etc., influenced preaching. Materiality and mediation is also an area where I  
20 see the potential for the future. One aspect that I could not analyse further in my PhD  
was how none of the preachers used the pulpit when preaching for children. It would  
be exciting to research what this does to preaching, to the authority of preachers and  
if it reflects a change in how we perceive and create authority in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Moreover, the large-looming Christian Education Reform in the Church of Nor-  
25 way<sup>26</sup> has contributed to new versions of worship services, often aimed at the par-  
ticular age-group of children who are invited to attend the specific Christian educa-  
tion event and the following worship service.<sup>27</sup> Hence, preacher’s preaching practices

30 2008; *Marianne Gaarden*, *Den Emergente Prædiken*, Aarhus 2014; *Linn Sæbø Rystad*, *Overestimated and Underestimated. A Case Study of the Practice of Preaching for Children with an Emphasis on Children’s Role as Listeners*, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society 2021. There are at least three female PhD-students working on within Homiletics at the moment. Two in Sweden: *Frida Mannerfelt* and *Clara Nystrand* and one in Denmark: *Anne Agersnap*. She was defending her thesis, “Collective Testimonies to Christianity and Time – A collection and large-scale text study of 11,955 Danish sermons from 2011–2016” at Århus University in the beginning of June.

35 23 Private communication with *Mannerfelt*.

24 *Sara Fransson/Stefan Gelfgren/Pernilla Jonsson*, *Svenska kyrkan online: Att ställa om, ställa in eller fortsätta som vanligt under coronapandemin*, Uppsala 2021, 34. See also the forthcoming book “Corona och Kyrkan” by *Sune Fahlgren*, *Elin Lockneus* and *Daniel Strömner*.

25 *Frida Mannerfelt*, *Back to the Roots or Growing New Branches: Preaching, Orality and Mission in a Digital Age*, in: *Jonas Kurlberg/Peter M. Phillips* (eds.), *Missio Dei in a Digital Age*, London 2020, 209.

40 26 See *Rystad* (note 22), 13–15 for a short introduction to the reform in English.

41 27 *Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen*, *Gudstjenester med konfirmanter. En praktisk-teologisk dybdestudie med teoretisk bredde* Oslo 2017; *Rystad* (note 22); *Tone Stangeland Kaufman* (ed.), *Mer enn ord* (forthcoming 2021).

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43



might also change. As I have argued in my PhD thesis, the preachers tend to separate form and content, making the form “child-friendly” while the content often remains quite theologically sophisticated. Which again shows that researching preaching in new areas contribute to reframing and actualising old debates, like this one on form and content. Furthermore, these studies also highlight a need for Homiletics to re-engage academically with preaching for children, as this area of preaching has mainly been left to the discipline of religious pedagogics.

Lastly, a significantly complicating factor in the Nordic countries is how the Folk-Churches are clear majority churches and need to be cognizant of how their majority status affects preaching.<sup>28</sup> In the future, studies on preaching outside the majority churches provide ample possibilities for research.<sup>29</sup>

### **Conclusion – The future lies in a continuous negotiation between “the empirical” and “the theological”**

As I have shown, there is a call for a theological turn in Nordic Homiletics. However, through this article, I have argued that this turn should not leave empirical studies behind. Rather, Nordic Homiletics should move into the future by challenging the dichotomy between the empirical and the theological, asking foundational homiletical questions from new angles, continuing to revealing normativities and making the implicit explicit, and studying preaching outside the Sunday worship service and the Folk-Churches. Thus, I claim that the future of Homiletics does not lie in swinging the pendulum back to theology but in the continuous negotiation and fruitful conversation between empirical and theological perspectives.

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<sup>28</sup> In Sweden and Norway, the majority churches are no longer State Churches, while the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark is still a State Church. The landscape in Finland is somewhat more nuances, yet the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the majority Church, 68,8 % of the population are members. Cf. “Who are our members”, <https://evl.fi/the-church/membership/the-church-in-numbers>.

In Island, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Island labels itself a national church but stresses that it is a “free and independent religious community”. About 70 % of the population are members of the Church. “English Homepage The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland”; cf. <https://kirkjan.is/english/>. For clarity’s sake, I will refer to the churches as Folk Churches, which is an established term for the Scandinavian majority churches. For an introduction to the ecclesiological landscape in Scandinavia see *Kirsten Donskov Felter/Ninna Edgardh/Tron Fagermoen*, *The Scandinavian ecclesial context*, in: *Ideström/Kaufman/Scharen* (eds.) [note 13].

<sup>29</sup> At MF Norwegian School of Religion, Theology and Society, PhD-student is *Rasmus Lund Jonstrup* and the preliminary title of his project is “Fra vugge til grav. En homiletisk undersøkelse af meningen med livet ifølge pentakostale forkyndelse i Mosaik og ateistiske talere i Humanistisk Samfund”; MF, “Ongoing Doctoral Projects”, <https://www.mf.no/researchandphd/phd-programme/ongoing-doctoral-projects>, [accessed 04.06.21].