

The Impotent Leader and The Legacy of the Church

The Farewell Sermon as a Bishop's Last(ing) Act of Leadership

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Abstract

When a leader leaves office, the leader becomes impotent, divested of power. This makes the actual moment of farewell a particularly interesting case study in leadership, as the farewell moment marks the transition of power from one leader to another. Many leaders use the point of departure as an opportunity to articulate the legacy of the institution they leave behind. This article offers a rhetorical and theological analysis of the farewell sermon delivered by former presiding bishop of the Church of Norway, Helga Haugland Byfuglien in January 2020, and a shorter, comparative analysis of the equivalent farewell sermon of the former Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Anders Wejryd (2014). The article analyses how Byfuglien and Wejryd conceptualize the legacy of the church with the use of epideictic and deliberative rhetoric (rhetorical analysis) and discuss what kind of legacy (theological analysis and discussion) they promote. The article argues that both Byfuglien and Wejryd use the farewell sermon as a rhetorical opportunity to articulate the church's legacy for the future, although their own formal power to execute that legacy is coming to an end. Byfuglien appeals to a diaconal vision of the church's legacy, with a tendency to emphasize the church's welcoming and inclusive character. Wejryd addresses the current ecclesiological situation in more detail. By assessing the church's numerical decline and changed societal status as a crisis, he mainly appeals to the church's missional legacy. The article concludes that the farewell sermons of both Byfuglien and Wejryd may be interpreted as a sort of inheritance dispute, or better heritage dispute: In their farewell sermons, the departing bishops present their last(ing) act of leadership, appealing to the audience to commit to a particular vision of the church's legacy.

Keywords Farewell Speech – Farewell Sermon – Presiding Bishop Church of Norway – Archbishop Church of Sweden – Legacy of the Church – Rhetoric

Introduction

When a leader leaves office, she becomes impotent – or divested of power: She loses her power to execute decisions based on her office. The change in formal power is particularly acute for an American president, but even for a bishop in a Nordic Evangelical Lutheran church, there is a marked change of status as the bishop is dislocated from the formal power of overseeing the preaching of the gospel on behalf of the church. Faced with her departure, the leader is expected to give a farewell speech. This article analyses the farewell sermon delivered by Helga Haugland Byfuglien, former presiding bishop of the Church of Norway, in January 2020, and also offers a shorter, comparative analysis of the farewell sermon given by the former Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Anders Wejryd, in 2014.

When the leader gives her farewell speech, the audience expects the leader to appear both magnanimous and humble. Celebratory gratitude is the preferred virtue of the farewell speech, and the speaker is supposed to express thanks both to colleagues as well as family and friends. However, she may also point to the particular stories, virtues and ideals, which have become visible at the time of her departure. According to classical rhetorical theory, the farewell speech is traditionally understood as an *epideictic* speech, a speech of praise speech, as when one praises the beauty of the bride or the hospitality of the host. The farewell speech is therefore a eulogy by genre, and it is mainly directed to the present. The aim of the farewell speech is to point out to the audience *why* something is either praiseworthy (beautiful) or shameful (ugly) (Ueding, Band 1 2015: 11, Pernot 2015:4, Lausberg 2002, Kennedy 1999, Vestrheim 2018).

Upon closer observance, however, it turns out that many contemporary farewell speeches are not merely epideictic speeches directed to the present. In farewell addresses offered by leaders of state and leaders of business and organizations, there is often a strong forward-leaning momentum. One recent example is former US president Barack Obama's farewell speeches of December 2016 and January 2017. In these speeches, Obama sticks to the formal, rhetorical expectations of a farewell speech by celebrating the moment and expressing gratitude. Simultaneously, however he – both explicitly and implicitly – appeals to the legacy of his presidency, and of the American nation. This is accomplished by means of *deliberative* rhetoric, which appeals to future choices and actions. Similar traces may be found in farewell speeches by many other leaders. We here define legacy in broad terms, encompassing an organization's past key narratives, core values, core practices, its meaning and purpose, if you like (Norheim and Haga 2020:11-12).

Epideictic rhetoric places the audience in the role of the spectator, who at the end of the speech is invited to join in either praise or blame. Deliberative rhetoric, however, shifts the role of the audience: As with *forensic* rhetoric, the audience becomes a judge. But where forensic rhetoric invites the audience to offer a court room verdict (guilty/not guilty) based on the evaluation of past facts, the context of *deliberative* rhetoric is the future: Now the

audience is called to offer judgement as to whether the proposed vision of the future is something useful or something harmful. Many farewell speeches therefore appear to present a hybrid of epideictic and deliberative rhetorical elements. By utilizing both past stories to portray the praiseworthy at the moment of farewell (*epideictic* rhetoric) and simultaneously draw on a past *legacy* to articulate a future vision (*deliberative* rhetoric) that the audience is invited to dedicate themselves to (Norheim and Haga 2020:93-109).

On the 26th of January 2020, former presiding bishop of the Church of Norway (CoN), Helga Haugland Byfuglien, gave her farewell sermon on Luke 18: 35-43, which was the designated gospel reading for the 4th Sunday of Epiphany. The gospel story tells about the blind beggar outside Jericho (named "Bartimaeus" in Mark 10:46-52), who is healed by Jesus and is made to see again.¹ Former archbishop of Sweden, Anders Wejryd, delivered his farewell address in Uppsala Cathedral on June 14, 2014, on the eve before the Sunday of Trinity (Mission Sunday), where the designated gospel reading was Matthew 28:16-20.

The rhetorical context of these two farewell sermons is highly interesting both from a rhetorical and theological perspective, as the legacy of the two former hegemonic state churches is contested and in flux. Both the Church of Norway and the Church of Sweden have experienced significant changes over the last couple of decades. First of all, the relationship between state and church has been fundamentally re-organized in both Sweden (2000) and in Norway (2017). Secondly, both churches have experienced significant numerical decline in since the turn of the Millennium, with the situation being a bit more acute in Sweden than in Norway.² Obviously, these changes also challenge the role of the former state churches in contemporary society.

The shifting political terrain for these two churches makes it particularly interesting to investigate how the top leaders of the two institutions use their farewell sermons as an opportunity to address the crisis of this situation while articulating the legacy of the two churches in a new era. After all, the farewell speech or farewell sermon represents a potential crisis in an institution's life where the legacy of an organization is negotiated, by means of the transition of power. How do they appeal to the past legacy (rhetoric), and what sort of ecclesial legacy for the future (dogmatic content) do they envision in this critical moment of transition? The research question of this article is therefore: How do former presiding bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien (CoN) and former archbishop Anders Wejryd (CoS) use their farewell sermons to articulate the legacy of the church and its relevance for the future (rhetorical analysis), and what sort of legacy do they promote (dogmatic analysis)?

¹ There is no archbishop in the Church of Norway (CofN), as in the Church of Sweden, only a "preses", a presiding bishop. Byfuglien was the first elected and appointed presiding bishop in the history of CofN.

² Church of Norway members comprised 71% of the population in 2019. However, only 49% of children between 0-4 years are baptised, but the Parliament has decided to count an additional 17% as associated members. Cf. <https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/bakgrunn/om-kirkestatistikk/> The Church of Sweden had 90,2% members of the population in 1988, whereas CoS had 56,4% of the population in 2019. Cf. <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/filer/1374643/Medlemmar%20i%20Svenska%20kyrkan%201972-2019.pdf?id=2068054>. (both visited February 26, 2021)

Theory

The act of leadership is by its very essence, directed towards the future. It may be understood as a process of influencing others to commit and dedicate themselves to future visions and goals (Yukl 2010:26, Kotter 1996:9). Charting a course, however, into the emerging future envisioned by the leader (Scharmer and Kaufer 2013), implies building on an assessment of an organization's or company's past, both of its legacy and the heritage of its tradition (Heifetz et al 2009:15). In other words, the moment of farewell marks a particularly interesting case study for leadership at the nexus of past and future, and where the leader is called to offer one last(ing) bid on the legacy of the company or organization she has been leading.

Rhetoric deals with the art of persuasion, influence, if you like, and persuading an audience is a question of how to appeal to and use authority and power. The distinction between *potestas*-power and *auctoritas*-power shows that the question of leader's authority is particularly acute in the moment of transitioning power, as epitomized by the farewell speech. Rhetorical theory also makes a helpful distinction between *potestas*, which is the formal power a leader has to execute decisions, and *auctoritas*, which refers to the authority a leader might be given by exercising his or her persuasive power. When a leader leaves office and delivers a farewell speech, the leader loses the *potestas*, or formal authority invested in that particular office. However, a leader may still draw on and use his or her *auctoritas* – the ability to persuade the audience by appealing to the leader's own reputation, image and aura, often with personal anecdote and story – in order to convince the listeners to commit to a future cause (Norheim and Haga 2020:24).

The farewell speech is a performative speech act, as the speech presents the intensified moment of transitioning power and authority. By *performative* we here refer to the idea first promoted by British language theorist John L. Austin, that there are utterances which not only describe a given reality, but in some sense even change the social reality they are making account of (Austin 1962). Well-known examples of such sentences are a couple making promises, a priest performing a wedding ceremony, or a judge pronouncing a verdict.

Therefore, a farewell speech is a speaking occasion that marks an interesting case to analyse both from a rhetorical perspective and from a more content-oriented perspective, as it allows the opportunity to decipher the cause or vision that the soon impotent leader may appeal to at the moment of transition. If the farewell speech functions as a sort of hybrid speech, combining deliberative and epideictic rhetorical elements, it is interesting to see how different leaders use this rhetorical opportunity to articulate and negotiate the legacy of the organization to which they are now saying adieu. The farewell speech thus also serves as a motif to analyse farewell sermons theologically, trying to decipher the ecclesial legacy with the help of dogmatic theory.

Method and Material

The primary material of this research article is the farewell sermons by Byfuglien and Wejryd.³ The material for the rhetorical analysis consists of the sermon manuscripts, which means that the focus is on a textual, rhetorical analysis, not on the audio- or video recordings of the sermons. It should also be noted that a sermon, as an exposition of a Bible text, forms another genre than the traditional farewell speech, which is usually expected to be a more personal address, even if it is a farewell speech given by a political leader. This notwithstanding, whether with a farewell speech or a farewell sermon, one final opportunity is marked for the departing leader to promote a particular articulation of the institution or company`s legacy, one last time.

The point of a rhetorical analysis is to identify both what the speaker or preacher showcases or portrays as well as what the preacher leaves out, in attempting to persuade the audience of a certain argument or meaning. It comes down to how the speaker or preacher uses the three means of persuasion *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*, to try to address the situation and audience at hand. As already pointed out, this article takes particular interest in the mix of deliberative and epideictic rhetoric in the crucial moment of the farewell speech. The article draws on the tradition of rhetorical sermon analysis (see for instance Asmussen 2010 or Jacobsen and Øierud 2009:49ff) but conducts a more focused rhetorical analysis on a particular topic, namely how the leader uses the farewell sermon to articulate the church`s legacy with the mixed use of epideictic and deliberative rhetoric.

Simply put, the method of this article is to combine a focused rhetorical analysis of the two sermons with a systematic-theological analysis and investigation (dogmatics) of the (ecclesiological) legacy that the bishops promote. The dogmatic account focuses on uncovering the inherent normative dogmatics of the two sermons, expressed through a few key, dogmatic loci such as creation theology, soteriology and anthropology (Austad 2008: 42-59). The approach is inductive, in the sense that we focus on key dogmatic themes that appear in the sermons as opposed to framing the dogmatic analysis with a full set of predefined themes. The aim is to use the dogmatic analysis to offer an overall assessment of the ecclesial legacy that the bishops promote.

³ The sermon on Luke 18:35-43, offered by former presiding bishop of Church of Norway, Helga Haugland Byfuglien, on January 26, 2020 in Nidarosdomen Cathedral can be found here:

<https://kirken.no/globalassets/bispedommer/nidaros/bildemappe/nyheter/avskjed%20preses%20helga/preken%20hhb%20avskjedsgudstjeneste%2026.01.20.pdf> (visited February 26, 2021). The farewell sermon delivered by former Church of Sweden archbishop, Anders Wejryd, on June 14, 2014 (Matt 28:16-20 and Matt 19:4-6) in Uppsala Cathedral, can be found here:

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKE-wiVwcS10NTtAhX5CRAIHctxAjUQFjAAegQIDhAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mynewsdesk.com%2Fmaterial%2Fdocument%2F36701%2Fdownload%3Fresource_type%3Dresource_document&usg=AOvVaw25-m5CLlMd8qT_vbXaZRJy

(visited February 26, 2021)

Based on this analysis, we discuss the implications of the different accentuations the two bishops make in their sermons. The main purpose is to identify how the two leaders interpret the church's legacy in their farewell sermons and what sort of legacy they promote as they are about to become divested of power. The structure of the article therefore is as follows: The first part of the article analyses the mixed use of epideictic and deliberative rhetoric in the two sermons and employs this analysis to identify what sort of ecclesial (dogmatic) legacy each of the two bishops advocates. Based on this analysis, the second part of the article discusses the implications of this analysis, comparing the legacies Byfuglien and Wejryd promote, and how they use their farewell sermons to conceptualize a particular ecclesial heritage that is worth passing on in their respective situations.

Analysis

Helga Haugland Byfuglien's Farewell Sermon

In her farewell sermon in Nidarosdomen Cathedral in Trondheim, presiding bishop Byfuglien preached about the blind beggar at the gates of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43), with the Mark-version of the story (Mark 10:46-52) being used to supply his name, Bartimaeus. Quite early in the sermon, she points out that Jesus asks the beggar "What do you want me to do for you?" (NIV) even when the need seems obvious. Byfuglien uses this quote to claim that "Jesus is not invasive nor insisting but inviting and including."⁴ The adjectives used by the bishop portray Jesus as the epitome of non-intrusion. Notably, such portrayal corresponds with the manner which the Church of Norway has mainly sought to recruit its members – via the attraction of tradition and belonging, rather than aggressive marketing and evangelism. Byfuglien taps into this legacy and portrays an image of Christ as a gentleman who embodies these desired manners, namely, to hold back and let people themselves choose whether they will except the non-invasive invitation.

In the following sentence Byfuglien uses another laden word, underlining that Jesus, by this way of framing the question, offers Bartimaeus *dignity* (NOR: "verdighet"). She then goes on to underline that this is the way Jesus meets us, even today. In acting this way, Jesus represents an "example" (NOR: "forbilde") in how to confirm the value of human beings, Byfuglien finds:

In meeting the church, human beings shall be met as equals, never to be made inferior. We, who want to follow Jesus and belong to the church, may openly acknowledge our longings and needs. We do not lose ourselves. We are not made into objects, but we are challenged to be subjects in our own lives – like Bartimaeus.

⁴ All the English quotations are our translation of the Norwegian original (Byfuglien's sermon), and later the Swedish original (Wejryd's sermon). The Norwegian original here reads: "Jesus er ikke inviterende og insistende, men inviterende og inkluderende."

What are the implications of the bishop`s use of words like inclusive, invitational, dignity and equality? How may portraying Jesus as an example of seeing the individual, not the disabled person, Bartimaeus, but the individual (thereby possibly escaping the object-subject-dichotomy) be viewed as an example of deliberative rhetoric? The Bishop`s emphasis here may be interpreted as an attempt to rephrase the future legacy of the church as a diaconal legacy. By diaconal we here are simply referring to a theology which emphasizes that the church must be active in the world by offering healing, supporting those who struggle for justice and working towards inclusion (Dietrich et al 2019). In her sermon, Byfuglien portrays Jesus as the ultimate example of human inclusion. By appealing to such a diaconal legacy, she focuses less on Jesus as the Son of God, who comes down to save humanity from sin, but more on Jesus as the ultimate expression and restoration of true humanity. The sort of “diaconal humanity” that the church should seek to commit itself to has to do with lifting up those who have been oppressed and including those who have been excluded.

In the next section of the sermon, Byfuglien discusses the meaning of healing in our contemporary context. She starts with an interesting re-articulation of Bartimaeus` response to Jesus` question “What do you want me to do for you?” In the Norwegian translation, Bartimaeus responds by saying “Herre, la meg få synet igjen!” (NIV: “Lord, I want to see!”) Byfuglien adds a comma to the Norwegian translation, which now reads: “Herre, la meg få synet, igjen.” (“Lord, I want to see, again!”) By adding this comma, she slightly alters the meaning of the response, indicating that the petition is a request to restore creation. This emphasis, or re-interpretation, resonates with much of Scandinavian creation theology,⁵ which underlines creation`s goodness, not its inherent brutality or injustice. Byfuglien then interprets miracles or healings as phenomena which are “more than what is already among us – more than we can explain,” but at the same time it cannot be ordered or promised to those who are sick. All in all, the story of Bartimaeus is a story of someone who reclaimed what was once lost. He is able to see everything anew – human beings, flowers, the landscape, and the town of Jericho. Interestingly, Byfuglien`s rhetorical framing of a theology of healing here finds little room for the role of faith. Rather, she portrays healing as something that may take place when the church acts as a diaconal community, taking its cue from the example of Jesus`s own restoration of creation to its true meaning.

In the following section, the sermon moves its focus towards the city of Jericho and explores the different Jericho-narratives in the New Testament – the parable of the good Samaritan, the story about Zacchaeus and the story about Bartimaeus. The focus has shifted from blind Bartimaeus to the healing gaze of Jesus, now an example for the church to follow.

⁵ The rather diffuse term ‘Scandinavian Creation Theology’ refers to a reaction particularly by theologians such as K. E. Løgstrup (Aarhus, Denmark) and Gustaf Wingren (Lund, Sweden) to the radical theology of revelation as it was formulated by Karl Barth. These theologians saw themselves as promoting insights from Martin Luther, where God is – to a certain extent – recognizable without the preaching of the Gospel. For a recent account, cf. Gregersen, Uggla, Wyller (eds.): *Reformation Theology for a Post-Secular Age*, 2017, particularly the preface by the authors.

With the story of the Good Samaritan, this gaze, Byfuglien finds, also expands the meaning of one's neighbour to something extending beyond spatial presence, even including the stranger: "Jesus challenged people to see that my neighbour is not just the person I know and care about, but even the stranger in need of my help and care."⁶ In conclusion, the bishop suggests that all three narratives are about seeing who my neighbour is and about "how Jesus invites those who exploit others to reconciliation and community."⁷

In the next section of the sermon, Byfuglien explores the meaning of faith and her vision of the church, based on how Bartimaeus showed faith in Jesus. First, she suggests that Bartimaeus might have heard "rumours of him who saw the outsider, those filled with shame, and who lifted up the one who was down-trodden."⁸ The idea of the outsider as the focal point of attention, creates a metaphorical *suspensio* in the sermon. The image begs the listener to ask with expectancy: Who is the outsider today, who is the intended audience of the sermon, who are the people of God – the church? Is the church first and foremost a community of forgiven sinners, or rather a community of (more or less) oppressed outsiders drawn to fellowship by the loving gaze of Jesus, which restores true humanity (see above)? The tension – or *suspensio* – is evident even in the way the bishop presents the faith and healing of Bartimaeus (the oppressed outsider) alongside with Zacchaeus (the abusing outsider): Who is really the outsider, and what is the *legacy* of the church today? The audience is faced with a dilemma: Should I ask forgiveness (like Zacchaeus) or should I see myself as the oppressed outsider in need of inclusion (like Bartimaeus)? Who should the listener identify herself or himself with? What is the most acute problem facing the intended audience in the cathedral (Nidarosdomen), and further in (the Church of) Norway – being blind and being poor, misusing money and in need of forgiveness, or something else?

Possibly, her following reflections on the "optics of faith" offer a response to the dilemma. Byfuglien finds that "the gift of faith even includes *what* we believe in: faith lets us see the world and ourselves as God's creation (...) despite the fact that we have not been able to take care of the earth as we should and have not done what we should have to relieve pain."⁹ In the next sentence, the bishop proceeds by claiming that we believe in a God "who sees and forgives." Although God is here presented as the forgiver, the focus of the passage is not on the penitent sinner, but on how faith, invoked by the loving gaze of Jesus, reveals the true nature of the world. The potential implications here are that the gift of faith may point to a way to *actively* address both the climate crisis and the fight against poverty. The metaphor of the outsider, along with the manner the sermon frames the optics of faith, indirectly

⁶ NOR: "Jesus utfordret mennesker til å se at min neste ikke bare er de jeg kjenner og er glad i, men er også den fremmede som trenger min hjelp og omsorg."

⁷ NOR: "hvordan Jesus inviterte den som utnytter andre, til oppgjør og fellesskap."

⁸ NOR: "ryktene om han som så den som var utenfor, og den som var fylt av skam og reiste opp den som lå nede."

⁹ NOR: "Troens gave er også **hva** vi tror på: Troen lar oss se verden og oss selv som Guds skaperverk (...) til tross for at vi ikke har maktet å ta vare på jorden og ikke har gjort alt det vi kan for å lindre nød."

presents the legacy of the church, but this use of deliberative rhetoric, this future-oriented line of argumentation, is nevertheless hinted at in a rather subtle manner.

The next part of the sermon marks an important turn. This is where the bishop weaves together her own personal narratives and the legacy of the church, using her own *ethos* and story as a means of persuasion to articulate the legacy of the church. This part of the sermon is perhaps the part that most resembles a typical farewell speech, where the leader bidding farewell draws on her personal experience to highlight the cardinal virtues of the organization she has been leading. The bishop even explicitly states that she “begs to see, again, both backwards and forwards.” The reference to Bartimaeus – who got to see, again (as Byfuglien earlier framed it) – is evident.

The bishop draws on memories from her own youth, how she became proud of belonging to a church, which challenged her and others to fight against injustice and stand up for solidarity. She recollects memories of a great youth ministry with leaders who trained her and others, who gave her responsibility and preached the gospel in a credible way. As a result of this, the church became the place for “deep joy and an energetic way of life and much optimism.”¹⁰ These sentences in the speech signal that the farewell sermon is not merely directed to a mere recollection of the past so as to celebrate it in the present moment, as typifies general usage of the epideictic in a typical farewell speech, but Byfuglien uses the recollection of her past experiences as a youngster to reframe the future legacy of the church as a place of joy, which here draws on more deliberative rhetoric and serves to highlight both useful and harmful options and choices for the future (of the church and humanity). Her remark about the flourishing, energetic life is important in this aspect, because it may be taken as a signal of establishing a certain distance to the Church of Norway's Pietist past. Instead of religious gravity and seriousness, she promotes an institution that celebrates the more optimistic aspects of life. The church is a worldwide community of joy, as it always offers forgiveness and a fresh start, yet it holds an even broader, civic mission, focusing on human dignity. “We stand together with human beings of good will (fighting for) values like human dignity, freedom and peace.”¹¹

The more personal part of the sermon is followed by a critical evaluation of the history of the church, including the things that the bishop is not proud of – the church's defence of slavery, the ecclesial alliance with power and with the rich, the church's hesitance to support equal rights for women and men, as well as more recent examples of injustices done to indigenous people, Gips/Travellers and homosexuals. There is, however, an important change in the use of pronouns as she elaborates on the aspects of the history that she finds problematic: In the previous statements, where she salutes the church as a joyful community, standing on what Byfuglien probably finds to be the right side of moral history, “we” is the preferred

¹⁰ NOR: “dyp glede og frodig livsutfoldelse og mye optimisme.”

¹¹ NOR: “Vi står sammen med mennesker av god vilje om verdier som kjemper for menneskeverd, frihet og fred.”

pronoun in use. In the latter statements, mourning the misdeeds of the church, she uses “the church” as subject pronoun.

The bishop underlines that the future lesson to learn is for “the church to look at her own role and be alert whenever human dignity is violated and fundamental values are set aside.”¹² She closes the section by making an indirect reference to the cry of Bartimaeus – *kyrie eleison* – which is the “deeply meaningful” cry for mercy uttered by the church every Sunday. Looking at the whole of this section, it is not entirely clear, however, how the bishop positions the *ethos* of the church and herself (“we”), in her critical evaluation: Does she see herself as the leader of a penitent church, where she, along with the church, asks for mercy, or is she penitent on behalf of someone else? It is also unclear how she reflects on the politically, and economically privileged position of the Church of Norway, as a former a state church, and her own leadership as part of that power structure.

The concluding section of the sermon is directed to the future, focusing on “a better future for our world,” which is a typical example of the use of deliberative rhetoric in a farewell sermon. The bishop ushers the audience to see anew (implicitly, like Bartimaeus), “not just with the eyes, but with the mind, with the help of new knowledge, and last, but not least with the heart.”¹³ Byfuglien invites the audience to participate in a progressive ecclesial legacy, where “the church must dare to take one step forward, where we used to stand still.”¹⁴ In this future-oriented legacy the cardinal virtue is humility as “we” seek do discern “what is right and true, and what is at the centre, and what is the unchangeable as we try to be church in our time.”¹⁵ In the final exhortation of the sermon, Byfuglien invites the audience to approach the future together with Jesus, following Bartimaeus and all the others.

Anders Wejryd's Farewell Sermon

Former Church of Sweden Archbishop Anders Wejryd delivered his farewell sermon in Uppsala Cathedral on June 14, 2014. The sermon is markedly shorter than that of Byfuglien, and the following analysis is therefore also shorter. At a Vespers celebration on the evening before the Sunday of Trinity, Wejryd preached on Matthew 28:16-20, where Jesus offers his short and poignant farewell address to the disciples, commissioning them to go and make disciples of all nations, to baptize them *in* the name of the Triune God, and to teach them to obey everything Jesus have commanded them. The passage ends with Jesus promising his presence, even to the end of age.

¹² NOR: “kirken må seg på egen rolle og være årvåken når menneskeverd krenkes og grunnleggende verdier settes til side.”

¹³ NOR: “Se på nytt, ikke bare med øynene, men med tanke, ny kunnskap og ikke minst med hjerte.”

¹⁴ NOR: “Kirken må våge å ta steg videre der vi stod stille.”

¹⁵ NOR: “hva som er rett og sant, og besinne oss på hva som står i sentrum og er uforanderlig når vi skal være kirke i vår tid.”

Anders Wejryd takes Matthew 19:4-6 as his point of departure and begins by claiming that in today's society one is no longer obliged to marry.¹⁶ Previously, Wejryd emphasizes, getting married was a more or less compulsory duty for anyone who wanted to participate in civic society. Marriage was an obligation – not a choice – for anyone who wanted to live a political life. In Jesus' treatment of marriage in Matthew 19, Wejryd finds seeds of a more individualistic approach to marriage and civic life, highlighting personal choice, which has now sprung forth, in later generations, Wejryd claims.¹⁷

Moving from this introduction, Wejryd, like Byfuglien, uses a display of personal experiences, and indirectly character (*ethos*), to articulate the church's legacy (*logos*) in today's world. The former archbishop tells the story of a bishop from Zimbabwe who came to visit him in Sweden. After visiting a number of worship services in the Church of Sweden, Wejryd apologized to the bishop for the lack of attendance – that the churches were not as packed as back in his diocese in Zimbabwe. Whereupon the bishop from Zimbabwe responded: "If people had as many choices and resources back home in Zimbabwe as you have here in Sweden, our churches would be equally empty!"¹⁸

The archbishop uses this story, and the following Sunday's missional legacy, The Sunday of the Trinity or Mission Sunday, to address the numerical decline in the Church of Sweden and to envision the church's missional legacy in a shifting context. As a parallel to his opening remark on marriage, he claims that one is no longer obliged to go to church. Previously in Sweden one had to be active in church to be active in civic society.¹⁹ With the emergence of a liberal individualism, along with its valuation of personal choice as the defining factor for authentic human living, a new political terrain emerges – one which impacts the church: The church is no longer a given, the bishop points out. On the contrary, the church and the Christian faith must be chosen voluntarily and consciously, an assertion which implies that the church has to rediscover her missional legacy. Wejryd describes the current situation for the church in Sweden as a "crisis": If the stories of Jesus are not shared, a well-established (former) state- and folk church may survive a few generations, but it won't last any longer than that, he fears. In other words, the *legacy* – the very future – of the Church of Sweden is threatened.²⁰

In articulating the missional legacy of the Church, Wejryd does not go into any theological depth to investigate the meaning of the church's missionary identity. He neither resorts

¹⁶ SWE: "Man måste inte gifta sig längre."

¹⁷ SWE: "Jesus verkar inte dela idén, uttryckt i den hebreiska bibeln att alla behöver gifta sig och skaffa så många barn som möjligt. Det finns en individualism redan hos profeterna och Jesus. Först i senare generationer har den kunnat ta sig allmännare uttryck vad gäller boende och försörjning."

¹⁸ SWE: "Om folk skulle ha lika stora valmöjligheter och resurser hemma i Zimbabwe som de har här, så skulle det vara lika tomt där!"

¹⁹ SWE: «Man måste inte gå till kyrkan längre. Förr i Sverige behövdes det intyg om att man åtminstone någon gång under senare år gått till nattvarden, för att man skulle kunna ha uppdrag i det allmänna.»

²⁰ SWE: «Gud sänder oss att berätta berättelserna om Jesus. När sådant inte fungerar kan en väletablerad stats- och folkkyrka överleva några generationer, men längre håller det inte. Det är kritiskt nu.»

to application of *Missio Dei*-theology, nor reflection on God as triune and missional, either of which would have been possible, given the designated Gospel reading. Wejryd simply describes the church as missionary and still non-exclusive, observations which may be interpreted as an attempt to also highlight the *diaconal* side of the church. Further, he finds that the change ahead is much harder than imagined. More boldness and willingness to share life and faith is needed if there is to be a future for the Church of Sweden.²¹

In the closing paragraphs of his farewell sermon, the archbishop sets out his vision for the church's legacy by drawing on the narrative of Jesus's life and a few other biblical passages (Luke 4 and John 20). Wejryd describes how Jesus in communicating the gospel, dared to cross borders and saw those who were having a hard time and who were on the margins ("broke the pattern", SWE: "bröt mönstret."). Based on this understanding of the gospel, Wejryd expresses his concern about the role of human rights in a shifting society: If an individual cost-use thinking or paradigm prevails among those in power, (civil) human rights will lose their rationale, Wejryd fears. However, there is a rationale for these rights, Wejryd claims, and that rationale is to be found with the Triune God.²²

In the very short, final paragraph of the sermon, Wejryd strikes a more poetic chord hinting at Hebrews 13:8, and urging the Church of Sweden to rise to the occasion and to re-discover its core legacy: "The Church of Sweden has responded to changes and challenge before. There will be more of that, much more – humanly speaking – because nothing is like before. At the same time, everything, the most profound and most important, is just like before. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, and forever will be."²³

Discussion

Before we look more closely at how Byfuglien and Wejryd use their farewell sermons to conceptualize the legacy of the church and their mixed use of deliberative and epideictic rhetoric, it is worth pointing out the obvious: Although the sermons are both farewell sermons given by

²¹ SWE: «Och förändringen som vi börjat mot att bli en missionerande men icke- utestängande kyrka är svårare och mycket mera omfattande än vi nog vill tänka. De första åren efter statskyrkans tid har omorienteringen börjat bli synlig. Men ska det bli något med Svenska kyrkans framtid så behövs mycket mer av frimodighet och lust att dela liv och att dela tro.»

²² SWE: «Jag är oroad för grundvalarna för hela det enastående bygge som vi kallar den allmänmänskliga människorätten, eller vanligare, de mänskliga rättigheterna. Om individuellt nyttotänkande tar över bland dem som har makt, så blir de mänskliga rättigheterna utan grund. Grund för dem, däremot, finns hos den treenige Guden.»

²³ SWE: «Svenska kyrkan har svarat emot förändringar och utmaningar förr. Det kommer att bli mera sådant, mycket mera, mänskligt att döma, för ingenting är längre som förut. Samtidigt är allt, allt det djupaste och viktigaste, precis som förut: Ära vare Fadern och Sonen och den heliga Anden, nu och alltid och i evigheters evighet.»

leading Evangelical Lutheran bishops in similar churches, in similar contexts, and at approximately the same time in history, they are working from different sermon texts, Luke 18 and Matt 28, respectively. Clearly, the varying Bible texts may account for some of the difference in emphasis experienced in the two sermons. However, the aim of the following comparative discussion is exemplary, rather than extensive: We want to discuss how each of the two bishops use the particular rhetorical situation, involving a particular Bible text in a particular context, as an opportunity to perform a last(ing) act of leadership by articulating the church's legacy and its relevance for the future.

Diaconal vs missional legacy

In her sermon, Byfuglien pictures Jesus as the ultimate example of human inclusion. In Byfuglien's description of Bartimaeus, it is not his blindness which is in focus, but how he serves as a representative of someone who was met by Jesus and was restored to true humanity. The legacy of the church is therefore to reach out to those on the margins, like Bartimaeus, in order to restore true humanity. In re-articulating the legacy of the church, Byfuglien appeals to a diaconal legacy, emphasizing words like "invitational," "inclusive," "dignity," and "equality." In all of this, the marginalized or oppressed outsider becomes the focal point of attention. Right after the farewell sermon, in one of her farewell interviews, the presiding bishop even salutes the Norwegian prime minister Erna Solberg for "using her moral compass" when taking initiative to bring home a sick child refugee from Syria.²⁴ Similar to Byfuglien, Wejryd also describes the church's legacy in the world as a diaconal legacy, where seeing and meeting those in need is a key characteristic of the church. He further highlights that Jesus brought the gospel to those on the margins. This is a point which Wejryd also underscores in his portrayal of the missional legacy of the church, that the church in its essence is sent (for the meaning of missional, see for instance Guder 1998 or Boren and Roxburgh 2009).

Byfuglien portrays the church not so much as a community of forgiven sinners, but as a fellowship of formerly marginalized or oppressed outsiders drawn to a new direction in life by the loving gaze of Jesus. Like Byfuglien, Wejryd also describes a gospel which starts by being seen as a condition for establishing a new direction in life.²⁵ The key virtue for the fellowship Byfuglien promotes is humility. Her sermon tends to focus more on the role of the community, than the role of faith. If faith is focused, the focus is on the use of faith: Faith may be used to take political action against oppression and injustice and for human dignity. Faith may also reveal the true nature of the world, the meaning of creation. Based on this

²⁴ <https://www.nrk.no/trondelag/roste-statsminister-for-a-ha-brukt-sitt-moralske-kompass-for-a-hente-hjem-barn-1.14876920>

Cited February 26, 2021.

²⁵ SWE: "...För det är först när man blir sedd och uppmuntrad som det kan bli någon bättring och omorientering av.."

representation of the legacy of the church, Byfuglien also offers a critical evaluation of the history of the church and its wrongdoings, championing a (more) progressive ecclesiology compared to past malpractice. It is, nevertheless, not entirely clear how she positions her own *ethos* and that of the current Church of Norway in relationship to what she identifies as the misconduct of the past. The audience is therefore faced with dilemma: Should they simply applaud the recent changes, or should they appear penitent on behalf of the alleged wrongdoings of the past?

Crisis as ecclesial context

The key point for Wejryd in his sermon, one which is absent in Byfuglien's sermon, is the *crisis* the church is facing. Wejryd is worried: If the Church of Sweden does not address the challenge that the numerical decline represents by rediscovering its missional legacy, it may vanish. The church has to change in order to survive, according to Wejryd. Comparing the shifting societal role of the church to the shifting role of marriage, Wejryd points out that the church is no longer a compulsory component of society's everyday life. The church, even a former state church is no longer a given, and now must appear attractive and relevant in order for people to actively and voluntarily join its ranks. In an era of authenticity, the church cannot escape an emerging culture of self-choice.²⁶

Fundamentally, the persuasive power of a farewell speech or farewell sermon lies in its ability to name and re-articulate the legacy of the past in order to assess what is at stake – for the future – at the moment of transition. This challenge – and opportunity – is what opens up for the use of deliberative rhetoric in a farewell speech. If the leader is able to activate pertinent stories, metaphors and symbols of the past in connection with future choices, the leader may revive the power of the legacy for the future. The moment of farewell is a sort of *kairos* as it marks the transition of power, even as it marks an exemplary and crucial opportunity to name the current reality while pointing out what is useful and harmful in the future.²⁷ The short farewell sermon of Moses, given before entering the Promised Land, is a typical example of how a farewell sermon represents such an intensified moment, which seeks to identify the legacy of a group or an organization and articulate how the legacy should be used in the face of the potential threats and choices that the future holds:

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your

²⁶ Wejryd's portrayal of the dynamics of authenticity and self-choice resembles the work of Charles Taylor, see Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, and Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 473-504.

²⁷ For an excellent account on the importance of *kairos* in rhetoric, see Vestrheim 2018:52-54. For more on the importance of «naming reality» in a convincing manner with the use of deliberative rhetoric, see Norheim and Haga 2020:29-35.

life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

The use of character to promote legacy

The farewell sermons given by Byfuglien and Wejryd are also such intensified, performative moments, in which the future of the legacy is being negotiated in the moment of transition. Therefore, for the departing, soon to be impotent, leader, finding the *apt* rhetorical garments – the right metaphors, stories and symbols – is particularly acute when delivering a farewell speech or farewell sermon. After all, the farewell speech displays the character of the leader, and implicitly or explicitly uses the *ethos* of the leader to argue for a certain vision of the organization`s legacy. In giving the farewell speech the leader has to appear true to her or his legacy as a leader, thus becoming worthy of the audience`s devoted attention. How does this rhetorical element play out in Byfuglien and Wejryd`s farewell sermons? One effective means of re-articulating the meaning of a particular legacy for the future is to use personal narratives (*ethos*) as part of a deliberative rhetoric. Such an approach serves as an appeal to the audience`s trust and dedication (*pathos*) and thus aids in articulating a credible and convincing legacy (*logos*). Both Byfuglien and Wejryd use personal narratives as part of their sermon to display character and preferred virtues.

Byfuglien, by drawing on memories from her youth, does something similar to what former US president Obama did in his farewell speech in Chicago on January 10, 2017. The former US president started the speech by revisiting the heritage of his own vocation. He tells the story of how his path of leadership had begun in a neighbourhood in Chicago, situated in “the shadows of closed steel mills.” Like Byfuglien, who emphasized that some of her most important church lessons were acquired in youth ministry, Obama highlights how in his youth he became acquainted with the “the beating heart of our American idea” (the *legacy*) and that “change only happens when ordinary people get involved.” Both Obama and Byfuglien use their *ethos*, their personal experiences and narratives, in order to re-articulate the legacy that they seek to promote for the future. Even Wejryd does this, but more indirectly, by telling the story of the bishop from Zimbabwe. In some sense, for Obama and Byfuglien, the recollection of the dedication of their earlier years serves as a character witness for their particular vision of the future legacy for America (Obama) or the Church of Norway (Byfuglien). Another element in this use of *ethos* is the introduction of journey metaphors, which may be helpful in promoting a progressive, political vision. This resembles what former US president Ronald Reagan did in his farewell address or what Martin Luther King jr. did so prominently in many of his speeches. The way Byfuglien draws on her personal narratives implicitly introduces the journey metaphor and serves to strengthen her appeal to a progressive ecclesiology.²⁸

²⁸ Norheim and Haga, *The Four Speeches*, 93-109. For more on the importance of journey metaphors in political rhetoric, see Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 88-96.

The farewell sermon as an inheritance dispute?

Fundamentally, the more personal part of the Byfuglien's sermon, taken in concert with the subsequent critical evaluation of the church's tradition, frames her farewell speech as a sort of inheritance dispute: What is to be handed over in this particular farewell sermon as the presiding bishop leaves office and becomes "impotent," losing her *potestas*, as a leader of the Church of Norway? What is the church's true legacy, the tradition worth handing over in process of transitioning/transmitting power? In this section of the speech, the bishop uses her *auctoritas*, her own personal story, her experiences and reputation, to revise the legacy of the church and offer pointers for evaluating what is helpful and what is harmful in the church's tradition for the future.

What does it imply, then, to say that the farewell speech may function as a sort of inheritance dispute? Unless the farewell speech is given by the departing leader of a dynasty, where the will of the founder dictates who in the next generation should actually receive the inheritance of the company, the "dispute" is not so much an actual inheritance dispute, but more of a heritage (legacy) dispute. In such a situation, the departing leader has no real power to proclaim how the legacy or heritage should be spent, such as to dictate how the Church of Sweden should use its earnings and funds. The power of the departing leader rather lies in his ability to appeal to his followers to take on a certain vision or interpretation of the legacy. How, then, should the departing leader try to persuade the audience to dedicate themselves to his interpretation of the heritage? By re-naming the legacy in a way that appears persuasive and credible in the given situation.

In his farewell address Obama does just this when he relativizes the power of the presidential office and argues that it is the Constitution that really represents the epitome of a shared American legacy. Obama here applies what is really a Protestant hermeneutic principle. The "problem" in the Protestant tradition, is that there is no formal office that holds the authoritative power to interpret Scripture – the heritage. Although, Wejryd served as archbishop and Byfuglien as presiding bishop, they are faced with a similar problem: For a Protestant institution like the Church of Norway or the Church of Sweden, the power to interpret the legacy is really up for grabs. It is a continuous power struggle. In the farewell sermon, understood thus as inheritance dispute where the future inevitably lies open, the audience is left with a dilemma: Who are we? Who is the church? What is really the true legacy of the church for the future? (Norheim and Haga 2020:97)

Naming reality to promote the legacy

The ability to name reality in a persuasive way is a key element in every speech. If the speaker or preacher succeeds in naming the current reality in a convincing way, this may pave the way for acceptance of the leader's vision of what the future should look like – what is

useful or what is harmful. In the farewell speech or farewell sermon, the leader names reality by pointing to the present moment as a decisive moment, where choices have to be made: *I* may be leaving my office, but given how *I* have named reality to *you* (the listeners), will you then commit yourself to the legacy *I* have now envisioned for you? If we look at Wejryd and Byfuglien's sermons, Wejryd is much more explicit in naming the current reality for the church, by describing the contemporary situation as a crisis that requires action, missionary action. Byfuglien's appeal to future action is more implicit, but nonetheless linked to her naming of human reality on a more individual level. The main difference between the Byfuglien and Wejryd farewell sermons is found in how Wejryd describes the current situation as a crisis for the future, a crisis which calls for missional action and renewal. Byfuglien, on the other hand, does not address the numerical decline of the church, at all. Surprisingly enough, Byfuglien does not even mention how the relationship between the state and the Church of Norway changed in 2017. It is also worth noticing that neither Byfuglien nor Wejryd appeal to the common Evangelical Lutheran heritage of the two churches in any depth. As the analysis showed, the appeal to traditional features of a Lutheran anthropology, soteriology or ecclesiology in the two farewell sermons is rather limited.

Finally, another way to apply deliberative rhetoric in a farewell speech is to describe what may threaten the legacy of the institution. This implies using what may be labelled as constructive fear. Former US President Barack Obama used this strategy abundantly in his farewell address in 2017. Faced with the emergence of the Trump era, he issued warnings and named what he found to be four threats to the heritage or legacy of the American Institution: the loss of economic solidarity, the failure to combat discrimination, the negligence of a common baseline of facts, and the temptation to take democracy for granted. By doing this, he called his audience to fear the impact of these threats for the future. Byfuglien and Wejryd both do something similar in their farewell sermons. Byfuglien names stories and how the church has failed to include the marginalized in its past. By criticizing this part of the church's past legacy, she implicitly points out a potential threat for the future. Wejryd more explicitly uses constructive fear in his deliberative rhetoric, claiming that the church is in a crisis and unless it rediscovers its commitment to mission, it might vanish.

Conclusion

The farewell speech, or in this case the farewell sermon, represents an intensified, performative moment of leadership where the future legacy of an organization is being negotiated as the departing leader is about to become powerless – impotent – through the transition of power. In their farewell sermons both former presiding bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien (CoN) and former archbishop Anders Wejryd (CoS) use a mixture of traditional epideictic rhetoric and more future-oriented deliberative rhetoric to advocate a particular legacy for the future. Byfuglien mainly appeals to what may be labelled a diaconal legacy, emphasising that the church must work for inclusion and fight injustice. Wejryd mainly promotes a missional

legacy, highlighting the church as being sent to preach the Good News. However, even Wejryd`s missional vision for the church is that of an inclusive – or rather “non-exclusive church.”

Byfuglien and Wejryd both use their farewell sermons to name and re-articulate the legacy of the church for future action and implicitly and explicitly call their listeners to commit themselves to their particular vision of the church`s legacy. They do this by reiterating stories of the past and reinvigorating the feelings of the audience in the present moment. At the same time, they reignite the relevance that the preferred ecclesial legacy holds for the future. This is particularly evident in Wejryd`s sermon as seen in his appeal to action in the light of a crisis. Ultimately, the farewell sermons of the two bishops present the audience with a moral choice, typical of an inheritance or heritage dispute: How will you honour the legacy of the church we have presented to you in our sermons? What sort of church will you work to promote (when we leave the scene)? What do you find useful? What do you find harmful? Such an appeal is typical of deliberative rhetoric.

While a consolation speech addresses the transition-element in human experience, the farewell speech addresses the tradition-element. By passing on the institution`s legacy in a farewell speech or farewell sermon, the leader weaves the audience into a larger narrative, a story that moves toward the limits of human existence. Traditionally a farewell greeting marks the boundary of a conversation. The leader is leaving the scene. Where the main focus of an opening speech is usually on the cause (*logos*), the farewell speech primarily focuses on the leader`s virtues and character, the *ethos*. Ethos-based-arguments are therefore key, even in articulating the more deliberative rhetorical elements of a farewell sermon or speech, as observed in both Byfuglien and Wejryd`s sermons. Drawing on *ethos*-based arguments in a farewell speech or farewell sermon, the leader tries to give the audience an answer to the most pressing question at the moment of transitioning power: where are we going now? What is the cause, the legacy (*logos*) for the future, which now demands your dedication (*pathos*)?

As an audience, we often tend to remember the end of a speech. Even more, we are prone to interpret what precedes the end in the light of that particular ending. The closing words of a speech or a sermon are therefore important. A major difference between Wejryd and Byfuglien is expressed even in their closing words. Both point to the future as they activate a particular ecclesial legacy. But whereas Byfuglien suggests a continuation of the road already travelled, Wejryd invites a much more radical approach to the future, even as he taps once again into his crisis-description from earlier in the sermon. Such differences notwithstanding, it is possible to interpret the farewell sermons of both Byfuglien and Wejryd as a sort of inheritance dispute, or better heritage dispute: In their farewell sermons, the soon impotent leaders, the departing bishops, aim to offer a last(ing) and final impact on the future legacy of the churches they have been leading.

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Haga, Joar and Norheim, Bård Eirik Hallesby. "The Four Speeches Every Youth Leader Has to Know: The Preaching of Jesus as Model for a Public Rhetoric for Youth Ministry." in *Journal of Youth and Theology*, Vol 18:2, 2019:2, 164-184.

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