

Voicing Voicelessness:
Theopoetics as Community Expression

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Speak out for those who cannot speak,
 for the rights of all the destitute.
 Speak out, judge righteously,
 defend the rights of the poor and needy.
 — Proverbs 31:8–9 NRSV

Speak not for those who cannot speak,
 Do not assume you know their desires.
 Speak to guard, speak not for,
 Protect the right of poor speech.

From cardboard beds, to basement suits; from haunting silence, to busy streets; from the depths of being, to a frenetic face; sometimes we are prone to wonder . . . if God . . .? The question then plagues us, haunts us, calls us, disturbs and entices us. If God, then what; then how; then when; and then where? If God speaks, then where and how might we hear? And if speech; can it move us, shake and rattle us, from a silent slumber? How might one hear a physical voice of God? If God speaks, then is there a speech that shakes eardrums, collides bones, and fires nerves so as to orchestrate meaning within being itself? What might such a voice sound like and where might one hear it? Might a faith community practicing a communal poetics be a space in which to hear theo-poetics? Could a hint for hearing such a voice be listening not for a word *ex nihilo*, but for words uttered from the tongues of silence: “Before all things existed there was a great pregnant silence.”¹ — Rubem

If Spirit . . .? Then might we be seeking the uncontained, and the uncontrolled? For if the spirit of God is other or otherwise, subject not object, alive not dead, moving with the wind not categorically pinned down, then would not the voice of God also be external to oneself? Or might it be a dissenting voice from within the plethora of selves engaged in one’s internal dialogue? Must not spirit be different than mere projection of a

¹ Rubem A. Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet: The Edward Cadbury Lectures, 1990* (London: SCM, 2002), 33.

homogenous and hegemonic voice? Might the sounds be more like a call with potential for unfathomable soundings of its depths, rather than a predetermined speech; or echoes of a living voice, not the returning record of death? Would spirit not altogether be uncontainable like the wind itself? For if God has not offered a final mimesis of an unquestioned voice, might our hint be to listen for whispers in quiet places with enough space for their tones to be heard?² If yes, then the demanding question remains: where can one find a voice that challenges, resonates, breaks open expectations, and moves those who have ears to hear? And how might doing so lead toward deeper love, compassion, and an expanded understanding of our human condition?

If Christ . . .? Then liars, thieves, and lepers. For if Christian scripture leads its readers toward a conclusion that God aligns with, cares for, and is with the marginalized and the oppressed, then would not an active voice of God, if such a voice utters words, perhaps be found in their midst? Deceit will be on our tongues, greed within our hearts, and yet the mentally unwell leper (if Michel offers us a clue) may utter the speech of Christ.³ “For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”⁴ — Paul

Such questions beleaguered me, and hints directed me, until I found myself working with those on the margins of society and the fringes of the church. Doubters,

² Catherine Keller, *Cloud of The Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 30.

³ “At the end of the Middle Ages, leprosy disappeared from the Western world. In the margins of the community, at the gates of the cities, there stretched wastelands which sickness had ceased to haunt but had left sterile and long uninhabitable. For centuries, these reaches would belong to the non-human. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, they would wait, soliciting with strange incantations a new incarnation of disease, another grimace of terror, renewed rights of purification and exclusion.” Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard, Vintage Books (New York: Random House, 1988), 1.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:25 NRSV

addicts, and homeless people—people whom society categorizes and defines by their traits first rather than their humanity. And it was in that peripheral place that I began to hear unanticipated tones that were other than my own speech, words that challenged me and were spoken by those who have no voice—a voiceless speech.

*Not from pews, but tables.
Not from a pulpit, but a seat.
Not from a script, but a question.*

What follows is an attempt to record faithfully our community's practice, which has made possible moments in which a voiceless voice(s) ~~is~~(are) heard. As I orient you, the reader, to our specific context, I will be depicting how our communal expression is our theopoetic insofar as we attempt to remain open to the future, prioritize our embodied existence, and communicate in a non-propositional ways. I will also be highlighting some of the challenges we have encountered in speaking, hearing, and recording voiceless speech: a voiceless speech and communal expression, which, perhaps, *becomes* the voice of God. Such a voice, in my experience, is rarely heard in the wider church and the academy directly, occasionally it filters in through a study, a story, or an outburst that is quickly hushed. In a direct divergence from the prevailing norm our faith community began by asking what it would look like to listen to those voices, to give them room to speak, and to actually tune into the harmonics that result? We have continued to practice open speech from voiceless people by nurturing a space where voices collide, interject, and strike odd chords. This peculiar symphony is what I suggest draws near to the voice

of an embodying God, a carnal God, and a God interested in interplay and interarnation.⁵

Low hanging grey clouds, a misty drizzle, a neighbourhood built around a mill long ago closed. Old buildings, repurposed, and occasionally repainted. A port side existence maintained—prostitution, open-air drug use, and crime. Cherry blossoms blow across used needles in the spring. Tents populate parks, and the putrid smell of public urination sears nostrils in the summer sun. All of it again washed away by fall rains.

We wander in off the street into a church basement.

*Fluorescents falsify light
A place of anonymity
Alcoholics ~~Anonymous~~
Narcotics ~~Anonymous~~
Here we meet, face to face
A palace — for a human king*

*Sterile, old, human
Crumbling exteriors, collapsing interiors
Reflect our-selves
Caste-aside
Yet space inside
Silence becomes speech*

*Rejected, fostered, adopted,
Gathered — together
Seen
Heard
The dead and the dying
And still ~~new~~ birth*

⁵ Catherine utilizes the word *interarnation* to highlight the continual entanglement of God and the world: “The incarnation, in other words, becomes interarnation. The becoming of any creature reverberates in a universe readable as God’s body.” Keller, *Cloud of The Impossible*, 308.

Just as Judith argues that the “*framework for hearing*” the voice and arguments of the other was compromised, limited, and lost in the United States after the events of 9/11 by silencing, polarizing, and nationalistically centering the public discourse such that dissenting views were unable to be heard, so too the church has set up such a framework of structures and practices that inhibit voiceless speech.⁶ From directional pew seating, to scripted orders of service; from a mono-voiced interpretation that prevents word from becoming words, to silence in the sanctuary; from one who stands on stage while many are seated below, to pedagogy as dissemination not collaboration; the majority of Christian churches have participated in reaffirming structures of hierarchical power, singularity of voice, and an impartation of a previously known truth to those not yet initiated. Such a framework, in so far as it is unquestioned, prioritizes repetition without novelty, and inhibits alternative voices from being heard. Counter to this majority, our community has joined those in various branches of the church—Waldensians, Moravians, Reformers, Anabaptists, Quakers, Pentecostals, African Independent/Indigenous Churches—that have seen it necessary to dissent from dominant, systematic structures that silence.

Doors open and we begin in the kitchen.
Coffee, chat, eat,
Hear, peanut butter, and jam,
“How was your week?” tables and chairs set out,
Faces seen, “Fine” — _____, listen,
Needs once met, relax us, include us, unite us,
“My week was bad.” — _____
A tongue is loosened by food.
“What happened?”
“I was in the psych ward for three days.” — _____

⁶ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London ; New York: Verso, 2006), 13.

Peanut butter has unstuck a voice.
“How are you doing now?”
“I ’m OK .” — _____
Coffee, strums a vocal cord.
Vulnerability has been offered. A voice has been heard.
We walk many miles with small steps.

Prolegomena is a necessity.

Giving voice to the weeks that have been has become essential before discussions of life, faith, and doubt. For people speak once they have been heard. Words need space and voices room. Birds fly out of cages for food.

“In our church the time before and after are really more important than the sermon.” — Bradley

Central to our faith community has been placing the voices of persons experiencing marginalization at the core of our identity. In order to retain this focus we actively attend to it, so as to persistently resist a glossing cultural narrative that trains us to construct façades that normalize, flatten, and placate our existential tenuousness via busyness and consumer identities. This *attending to* comes in the form of weekly stripping away constructed veneers by acknowledging our brokenness together, an acknowledgment spoken voluntarily by one on behalf of the whole. Practicing this liturgy of planned but unprepared speech validates the participation and voice of all who are present within our context of socio-economic and racial marginalization.

“Welcome here, we will get going. Would anyone be willing to share why we call ourselves Mosaic?” — Silas

“Sure I’ll do it. We call ourselves Mosaic because we are all broken, broken pieces, broken by the world, by institutions, by the church, and we come

together so that we can be put back together into a beautiful piece of art. We're like the broken pieces that all need to be put together. And that's why we call ourselves Mosaic." — Matt

No matter what is said we try not to correct.

For those who have ears to hear, let voiceless voices speak to the community.

Perhaps God will speak as well.

“This Word cannot be produced. It is neither a child of our hands or of our thoughts.

We have to wait in silence, it makes itself heard: Advent . . .

Grace.

When this Word is heard the whole body reverberates and we know that the mystery of our Being has spoken to us, out of its forgetfulness . . .”⁷ — Rubem

And if there is speech, which should I prioritize: to listen or to record? To write down free speech immediately, record the conversation, or upon reflection write down from memory? I have not concluded, instead I practice all three: occasionally recording, sporadically jotting down statements, and often committing pieces of conversation to my memory. I try not to impartially remove myself from our conversations; I'm invested, I'm moved, and I'm not neutral. Amen.

As we gather in the poorest off-reserve neighbourhood in Canada, some of us present have significantly greater social challenges to overcome that are compounded by layers of discrimination connected to race, ability, addiction, gender, socio-economic

⁷ Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*, 4.

status, and mental illness. We accept that our experience of brokenness is not equal, nor equivalent. For some, brokenness is clearly etched on our bodies.⁸ While for others, the marks of brokenness on our being are less visible, gnawing and hacking away at us from the inside out, as we hurt interpersonally, relationally, or existentially—wounds that may take longer to appear on our bodies. Therefore, our weekly reminder does not bind us through our similarity in brokenness, but through the difference and uniqueness of our brokenness. Our façades fail us and we all wear masks.

Broken bodies, broken souls, and broken interpretations bring us together; we claim no high ground, no perfection, or perspective exterior to our own situation and embodied position. These commitments sink in slowly. We have a lot more unlearning to do.

“One must forget in order to remember,
one must unlearn in order to learn anew . . .”⁹ — Rubem

We have desires, many of power; we want to understand, to comprehend, to know and control; learning to forget these takes a lot of practice. But as we sit in our state, bodies hurting, smelling, and decomposing, we work on coming to terms with our

⁸ Andrew compassionately explores the physicality of trauma being etched on physical bodies, recalling Rubem’s use of the image of palimpsest and the engraving of stories onto flesh. He then turns to consider not only the physical engraving, but also the silencing of stories told by marginalized voices. This leads him not toward fixing, but to creating space for listening. He asserts that “communities of hospitality are communities that cultivate listening and seeing others, specifically the others whose voices are silenced and whose bodies are rendered invisible by society.” Andrew Tripp, “Pastoral Theopoetic Care in the Presence of Incribed Bodies,” *Theopoetics* 2, no. 1 (October 1, 2016): 32–33, 39. I consider what I am putting forward in this paper to align well with the direction Andrew has begun pursuing by depicting how our current communal practice attempts to create space for such voices.

⁹ Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*, 18.

inability to hear and our ineptitude in interpretation, as we raise questions without answer.

Is an answer coming, a response to our call? And if someone answers, what will it sound like? Of the many unique voices we hear, some exterior, some interior, it is hard to know which, if any, are the voice of God.

“Newborns are already sensitive to the rhythms of language . . . Newborn infants can distinguish the timbre and intonation of their mother’s voice, and prefer it to any other; and can distinguish the intonation of their ‘mother’ tongue, which again they prefer to others.”¹⁰ — Iain

“It is difficult and painful for the ear to listen to anything new; we hear strange music badly.”¹¹ — Friedrich

“Individuals are, after all, *Gestalt* wholes: That face, that voice, that gait, that sheer ‘quiddity’ of the person or thing, defying analysis into parts.”¹² — Iain

“I would like to become unfamiliar with everything
in order to see again
to hear again
to feel again.”¹³ — Rubem

If I am not God, and God is other than me, different than my projections or my community’s projections, wholly other, subject, mysterious, or even otherwise than

¹⁰ Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and The Making of The Western World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 103.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Helen Zimmern (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997), 61.

¹² McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 51.

¹³ Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*, 18.

being, then I should not be surprised if the voice of God speaks not in English, following the rules of grammar, like a white, middle class, heterosexual, male voice.¹⁴ If I expect the voice of Esau, but hear the voice of Jacob will I listen, will I know? Will I confirm my bias by touching hands hidden by skins? Or will I listen to a timbre and intonations that are unfamiliar?

There is no guarantee that the strange voice is anymore the voice of God than the familiar, such is the gamble. For we all learn to speak somewhere, from someone, and we all may just be parroting an equally stilted voice that we previously have heard. In our community I know not if the voice I hear speaks a truth or a lie. But at least the voice speaks, words are said, beings heard, and opinions are not assumed.

We taste what we do not know, what is different, what is other. For the voiceless the taste is sometimes words. Strange, awkward things that tumble, or become verbal vomit, but often they stick on the tongue, tongue-tie, catch in the throat and cause us to choke. They are dangerous things that flash out, spark ideas, burn in the conscience, or sear the one who hears.

“Bannocks here!” — Marvin.

About three or four people stand up to get bannock and pass pieces around.

¹⁴ Here I follow John’s lead and his distinction between projection and projectile: “the name of God arises not from a projection but from a projectile coming right at us, a *problema* in the original Greek sense, which literally means thrown up in our way, a hurdle to be scaled, a barrier to cross, a rock aimed right at our heads.” John D. Caputo, *The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 27–28. In the context within which we practice our communal theopoetic it is with a readiness to confront the unexpected, to expect the unknown *problema*, to wait without waiting for the projectile of speech to come at us.

After a fire burns the smoldering remains may bake beautiful bannock that satiates and feeds. Such embers are a gift—Fire: a gift to those who are cold and warmth to those who have little.

But “how great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell.”¹⁵ — James

Voiceless speech is a risk. Strange fires burn where tinder is plentiful, where a fire has not raged for many years. In such places a spark can be unpredictable, a fire incomprehensible, and an ash eerily silent. Nevertheless, perhaps blackbirds will fly from the pies baked in the ashes—perhaps even a raven or a crow.

Tongues are warmed, loosened, and limbered by the time scripture is read by a volunteer. We continue to listen, to speak, to hear, and to question. As we attempt to entangle relationships that validate difference, incorporate edification, infuse teaching, spur activism, and cherish unique expression, we perform faith expression as dialogue rather than monologue. Instead of solely practicing a paternalistic discourse that imparts educated information to the uninitiated, laden with teleological hopes, authority, privilege, and power, we try to listen to the dissonant. Each week we continue our conversation, following it where it leads. We utilize the lectionary to keep our community moving, but such movement means many things are left unresolved.

When confronted with a difference of opinion we are once again met with a number of options available: align, object, fight, tolerate, compromise, or collaborate. Many of these options require some degree of unlearning (alongside Rubem) much of

¹⁵ James 3:5b–6 NRSV

what we previously learned if we do not wish to silence all but one type of speech. This approach of unlearning and listening to diversity guides our ritual, assisting us in the bearing of outcomes that are not pre-determined and allowing for physical voices to resound. For as we listen to the plethora of external voices we have the opportunity to become more aware of the numerous voices within ourselves: an anarchic choir of utterances.

“All the good stuff is unplanned.” — Steve

This polyphony of physical voices opens spaces for an uncontained conversational theo-poetics that has challenged me to pay close attention to difference; and hopefully such a communal theo-poetics will critique the church and the academy whenever they prioritize, necessitate, or limit acceptable speaking or writing to that which acquiesces to the hegemony of a harmonized mono-voice. Through multiple unstructured voices our practiced difference opens interpretation and opens our mouths for the meal at the end. We thereby resist metaphysical closures to life and interpretation that assume an arrival at the end point of each gathering; we do so in order to make space for life. It is in this making space for voices—voices that remain voiceless to the majority culture—that we sometimes hear what might be a voice of God.

Therefore, we, Mosaic, want to challenge mono-writing, mono-utterance, and the goal of sole authorship, in order to hear a different chord. For unlike those who desire a sole voice speaking a singular truth, we have instead sought to validate and dignify each unique person and their speech.¹⁶ This means that we often opt for polyphony, rather than

¹⁶ A spectacularly clear example in popular culture of a defence of mono-writing is by Jared Diamond at the beginning of *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Society* where he legitimates his

seeking singular speech because we have found that such approaches, even at their best, tend to speak for those who have no voice rather than letting people speak for themselves. And it is not only defenses of sole authorship that are suspect, for while we, in the academy, may give verbal platitudes towards difference or acknowledge that an arena of knowing far exceeds one's own horizons, we tend to unify in the mono-voice of academic writing—which for the most part is singular in its style and draws upon, and appropriates, other voices for its use—and it is this uniformity that writing a communal theopoetic can work against. (I willingly critique this very paper on this point, in that I as the sole-author selected, determined, and patched together the moments of speech I included.) Furthermore, even in multi-authored books difference and disagreement are rarely acknowledged and instead authors commonly write under the unifying “we.” *We speak with one voice on this matter.* Instead I suggest we, those involved in theopoetic writing and practice, encourage the voices to play, express, and breathe without forcing them to align. For, as Judith argues, “*we do not need to ground ourselves in a single model of communication, a single model of reason, a single notion of the subject before we are able to act.*”¹⁷

Play, beyond quoting, sanitizing, and utilizing. Play for the sake of hearing. Play for the sake of play. Play because life, a *joie de vivre*. Unknown, unpolished, rough—like

use of singular authorship and voice to reach the goal, somewhat ironically, of a harmonized account. “These requirements seem at first to demand a multi-author work. Yet that approach is doomed from the outset, because the essence of the problem is to develop a synthesis. That consideration dictates single authorship, despite all the difficulties that it poses.” Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: Norton, 1999), 26.

¹⁷ Butler, *Prekarious Life*, 48.

life itself. A strange harmonics—unexpected, interrupted, life in the dub-step, the break down, the chord from the periphery.

Such play avails itself to opening up speech so as to be heard a second and a third time. Such openness can verse, reverse, and inverse a term. For us, it can change, stretch, and multiply a metaphor in new and ever flexible ways. For in our context of rapid gentrification, development, and forced—sometimes violent—evictions the theopoetic moment is the turn—the re – re – turn that confuses the pervading paradigm, undercuts its power, and opens new possibilities previously unforeseen.

“I’m here to evict loneliness today” — Val

Even eviction can be creatively turned; it depends on what it is directed towards.

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood . . .”¹⁸ — Paul

For while some may speak of casting out demons or wax eloquently about principalities and powers, which is all well and good, in our specific context evicting loneliness resounds with good news. A bird flies from its cage and wreaks havoc, startling and disrupting the other birds still silently sleeping; and suddenly the whole coop is a flutter.

Conversation does not move like a train down straight tracks. Instead it feels the pulse, hears the rhythm, leaps over abysses, and dances through life.

“This way of thinking had visible effects in their way of walking. Just by watching how a person walked it was possible to identify the group to which it belonged . . . Poetry is dancing; prose is marching. It is obvious that the

¹⁸ Ephesians 6:12 NIV

members of the order were very much afraid of the embarrassment of stumbling, a risk which one has to run if one wants to dance.”¹⁹ — Rubem

How do we speak?

“I like that the term “the uncertainty of riches” you can work your entire life to try be rich and miss out on so much, and yet people can be rich in friends and family.” — Sue

“And ‘setting their hopes’ is an interesting way of phrasing it on the ‘uncertainty of riches.’ Setting their hopes, right, so. Hope is very theological idea, like: where do you hope in, what is calling you into the future? What do you want? What do you long for? And then it’s not ‘sets their hopes on riches,’ but on the ‘uncertainty of riches.’ Paul like traps you in the phrase. Um, sets their hopes on riches would make sense, but he is like: but riches are never certain. So, catches you before you can even enjoy it. Very well written.” — Silas

“Sort of like the humongous sale of scratch lottery tickets the day after welfare.” — Sue

“There are a lot of rich people that donate to different institutions, art galleries and so on, can’t all be bad.” — Patrick

“Ya, can’t all be bad! Good, I like that Patrick’s defending the rich. Someone had to do it!” — Silas

“Well if they’re giving to art galleries!” — Steve

“Ya, if they’re giving to us, and if they’re giving to . . .ya . . .” — Silas

¹⁹ Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*, 67.

“Riches are used to feed the poor.” — Matt

“That’s true.” — Sue

“Ya, Ya, Cuz I walk around, and I’ve been to these churches, and you should see the food that they serve you. It needs a lot to be desired, if someone had riches they could very well, you know, maybe put out better food. Like I live in a secular building, a totally ungodly building, and we eat every day, and we eat better than most, than than most churches feed people. And they’re secular, most of these people don’t believe in God and have nothing to do with God.” —

Matt

“Interesting, very interesting word Matt . . .” — Silas

“Ya the world seems to do a better job than what we do.” — Matt

Theopoetics can be a way for honest expressions of individuals, whose voices are not often heard, to find their way into the academy through everyday poetic expressions and conversation, by recording the moments of voiceless speech and transferring them into the ongoing discussions regarding God, culture, policy, and what it means to be human. The author/recorder of such a theopoetics acts as the conduit through which dialogue can flow. An immediate challenge is the quantity of voiceless speech that is available once one is willing to listen. Thus the conduit also acts by necessity of their finitude as filter or a curator; we cannot relay every message, every moment of speech, every moment of being, a choice must be made as to what we retell. The task of recording voiceless voices is immediately challenging as dangers loom on every side:

appropriation, misrepresenting, biased selection, or selfish utilization. The metaphor one utilizes to understand this task proves itself to be challenging: painter, weaver, conduit, filter, artist, or curator. Curator, for example, may be too paternalistic a metaphor, since for some it is laden with connotations that align it too closely with a singular concern for high culture at the expense of art fashioned on the periphery. It is these types of paternalistic traps one ought to be wary of when dealing with populations who experience voicelessness:

“They always invite us to protests, but nothing ever happens, they just want our voice, but nothing ever changes. So we’re not only going to work with them any longer, we’re going to organize.” — Lance

Words captured, art collected, may once again lead to constructing hierarchies.

“We were ‘lecturers’. Because this is the meaning of ‘lecturing’: to read words which were captured on paper, by the power of ink: the words come as birds in cages . . .”²⁰ — Rubem

Am I doing harm to the free birds that fly from communal expression? Can they be shared? Can I share them without violating their freedom? Can the bird be caught softly in ink so as to fly again? Or will the ink clip its wings; will the bird be tarred by an inky black exterior, caging it, never to fly free until it disappears on the wings of the wind?

²⁰ Ibid., 5.

“Poets act shamelessly towards their experiences: they exploit them.”²¹ —

Friedrich

How much more delicate are the voiceless birds whose eerie song haunts my dreams? Whose songs are not oft repeated or sung as though well practiced?

Are my good intentions to share these bird songs pure enough? Or do I mire them?

Moreover, is it not only the selection of content that becomes a challenge, but the presentation of such content. For it is common practice to participate in data cleaning whereby interviews are polished, edited, formalized, adjusted, and end up becoming an ideal form of what was said, rather than the words that were actually spoken.

In contrast to polishing, let me propose that a theopoetics of voiceless speech ought not to be polished. Instead, I feel compelled to defend the importance of the second *um*. For if it is embodied being, which we wish to explore—the divine intersection with carnal existence—then the second, third, and forth *um* are spaces in which to breath, live, interject, and think afresh. Let them retell to us a story of the impossibility of clear, unbroken, linear sequential logic that functions as though gears in a machine. And let the second *um* remind us that speedy data transmission is not our aim—we are not computers, the world is not this metaphor even if it is the dominant view of reality simply because it is the current height of humanity’s technological progress. We are no more software than we were gears of the machine in the enlightenment and modern era.

So let us . . . *um* . . . speak. And let this speech be anti-metaphysical in so far as it refuses to prioritize an abstract meaning over the physical resonances. Retain the life

²¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 53.

within the voice, and kill not the speech by categorization or confining the voice to a predetermined or posterior meaning. Let the meaning arise within being, let the awkwardness of existence resound, so that meaning may come to be out of actual speech.

Perhaps conversational, voiceless, and communal speech *becomes* a theo-poetic. It is toward such an aim that this paper has explored an alternative mode of theopoetic writing wherein various fonts are used to communicate the distinct voices of the polophony that is our community's faith expression—so as to enable a hearing with the eye. This Mosaic approach of open speech, arose within a context where we actively discard previous approaches and understandings, both in terms of what it means to organize a faith community as well as what it means to speak of God, speak to God, or speak God.

“It’s like riding a tricycle but you’ve got to give it up in order to get to the two wheeler. Yeah and everyone wanted a two-wheeler, like a real nice one . . .” —
Matt.

For when we opened the space, and voices began to speak more freely, we began to hear a voiceless voice(s) anew. Therefore, rather than producing edited, determined language that attempts to close off possibilities of interpretative openness— such as, creating and performing set sermons, songs, and rhythms—we have nurtured a space that encouraged exploratory modes of speaking, and now writing. These developments have continued to move our faith community toward a mode of reconciliation with difference and without forced resolution. As we continually speak and write against homogeneity, we actively engage in a more open, more playful, more poly-bodied, and embodied voicing of our community to our community. This practice has become our weekly

theopoetic in which the voiceless voices play at center field. And therefore, I have kept their names central to this bodied paper.

Speak out for those who cannot speak,
for the rights of all the destitute.
Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.

— Proverbs 31:8–9 NRSV

Speak not for those who cannot speak,
Do not assume you know their desires.
Speak to guard, speak not for,
Protect the right of poor speech.

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