



CHRISTIANITY &  
COMMUNICATION  
STUDIES NETWORK

connecting sharing learning

1. Type questions into the chat box; they will be addressed during the Q&A after the presentation.
2. CCSN Members and non-members may receive free updates of new content added to the network: <http://theccsn.com/receive-updates/>
3. Consider joining the CCSN. Learn about member benefits: <http://theccsn.com/membership-benefits/>
4. Contact the Network Administrator, Robert Woods, with additional questions: [administrator@theccsn.com](mailto:administrator@theccsn.com)
5. Learn about book publishing opportunities with Integratio Press: <https://www.theccsn.com/ccsn-books-integratio-press/>

# Holy Ghost in the Catholic Machine

*Spirit–Structure Tensions  
in Parish Preaching Work*

J. E. Sigler  
CCSN Webinar  
2024 January 17



# About Me

- ✦ 2017 PhD Org Comm, Purdue
  - ✦ AOS: Work + careers
  - ✦ Advisor: Patrice Buzzanell
- ✦ Post-academia
  - ✦ 1 yr Head of L&D, Nairobi consulting firm
  - ✦ 3 yrs Org Design/Culture/Talent Analyst, Gartner
  - ✦ ~2 yrs Head of Research, EX tech start-up



# **Overview**

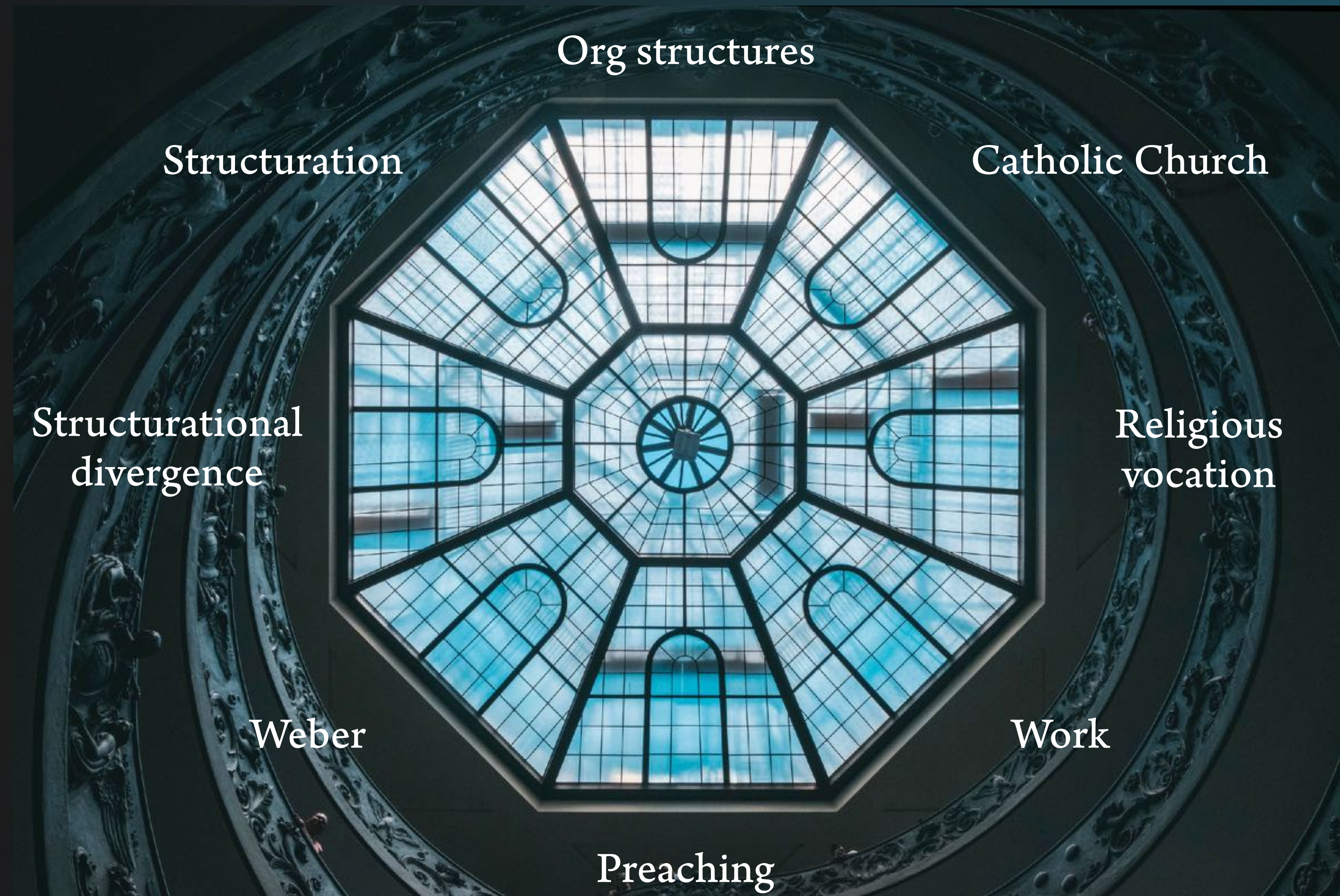
- ✦ **The problem + one solution**
- ✦ **Quick thematic/theoretic detail**

# The Problem + One Solution

- ✦ The problem: Catholic preaching is bad.
  - ✦ The typical explanation: “Priests are overwhelmed because of the priest shortage.”
  - ✦ The reality: Priest shortage since ~1970. Bad preaching since... centuries ago.
- ✦ The study: Interviews with 39 parish priests.
- ✦ The solution: Nurture integrative orientations in priests.
- ✦ The contributions: First study...
  - ✦ Of preaching *as work*
  - ✦ To find an interpretive (individual-level) solution to SD



# “What Can I Learn/Publish/Teach from It?”






- \* Identity
- \* Agency
- \* Ethos
- \* Rationalism
- \* Interdenominational relations
- \* Holy Spirit's role in preaching
- \* Practical application of theology to preaching work
- \* Over 50 pages of advice for how to fix the problem
  - \* Seminaries
  - \* Bishops
  - \* Preachers
  - \* Listeners
  - \* Content creators

# **Framework & Findings**

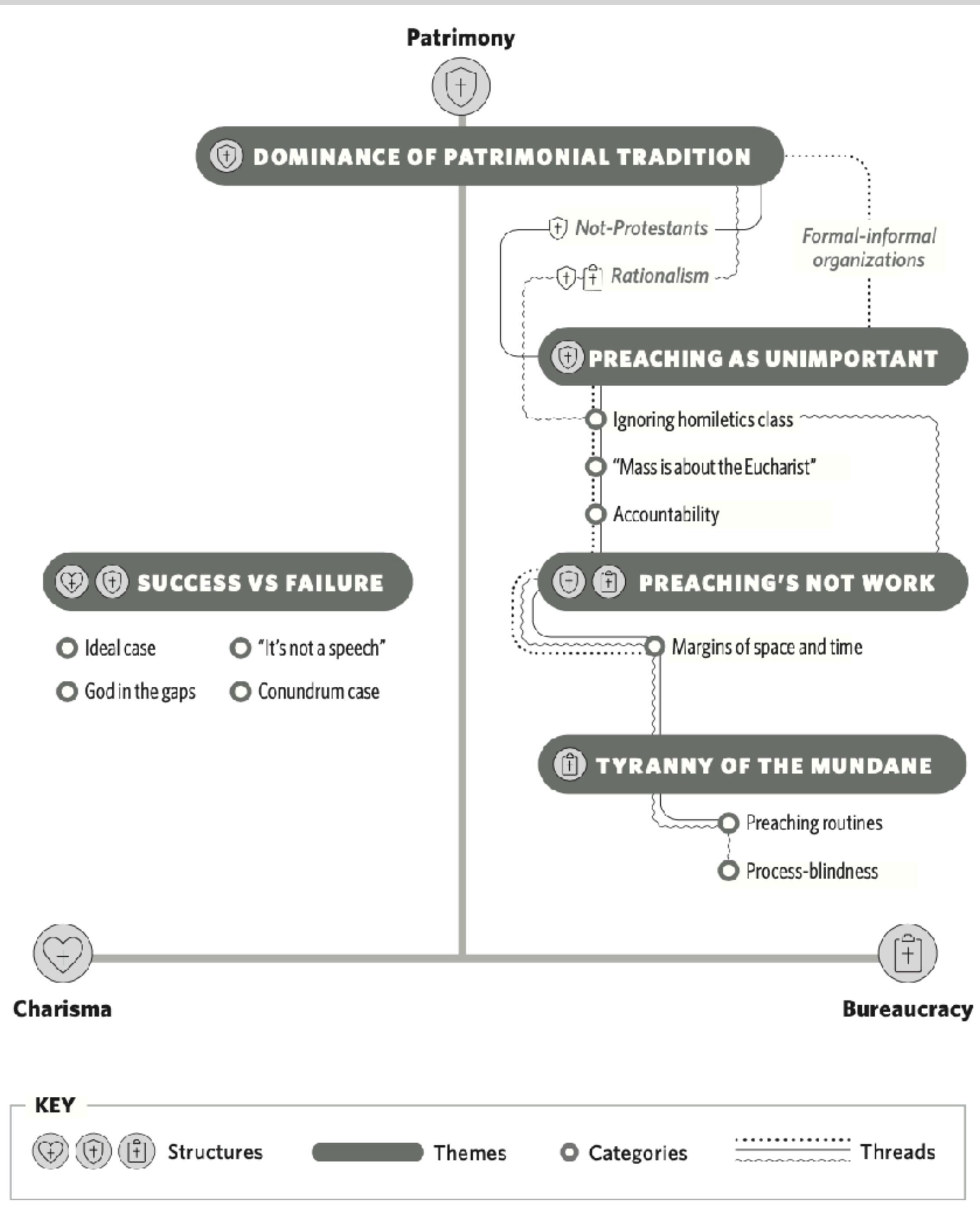
- ◆ **Weberian structures**
- ◆ **Themes, categories, and “threads”**
- ◆ **Deep dives:**
  - ◆ **The success vs failure theme**
  - ◆ **The not-Protestants thread**
  - ◆ **The magic box question**

# Weberian Structures

## A super basic intro

	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Ground of Validity</b>	<b>Typical Rationality</b>	
<b>1</b>	 charismatic	personal charisma/heroic deeds	affectual	Jesus, Ghandi, Maharishi, cult leaders...
<b>2</b>	 patrimonial	community tradition	traditional	Medieval feudalism, divine right of kings...
<b>3</b>	 bureaucratic	rational rules	instrumental	Well known to us :-)





# High-Level Findings

9 themes, 22 categories, 4 “threads”

- ✦ What’s a “thread”?
- ✦ 5 themes, 10 categories, 3 threads at left (brief overview of each)
- ✦ Remaining 4, 12, & 1 in the continua

# The Continua

Don't try to read!

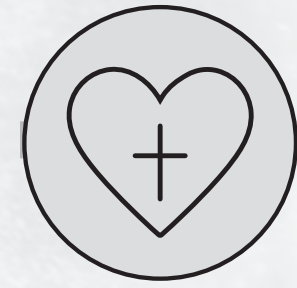


**KEY**

- ⊕
⊕
⊕
⊕
Structures
- Themes
- Categories
- Threads

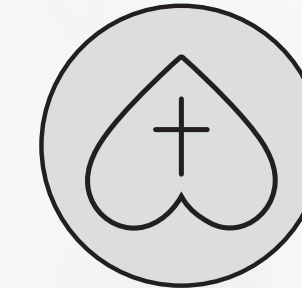
# One More Weberian Structure...

## Pure vs office charisma



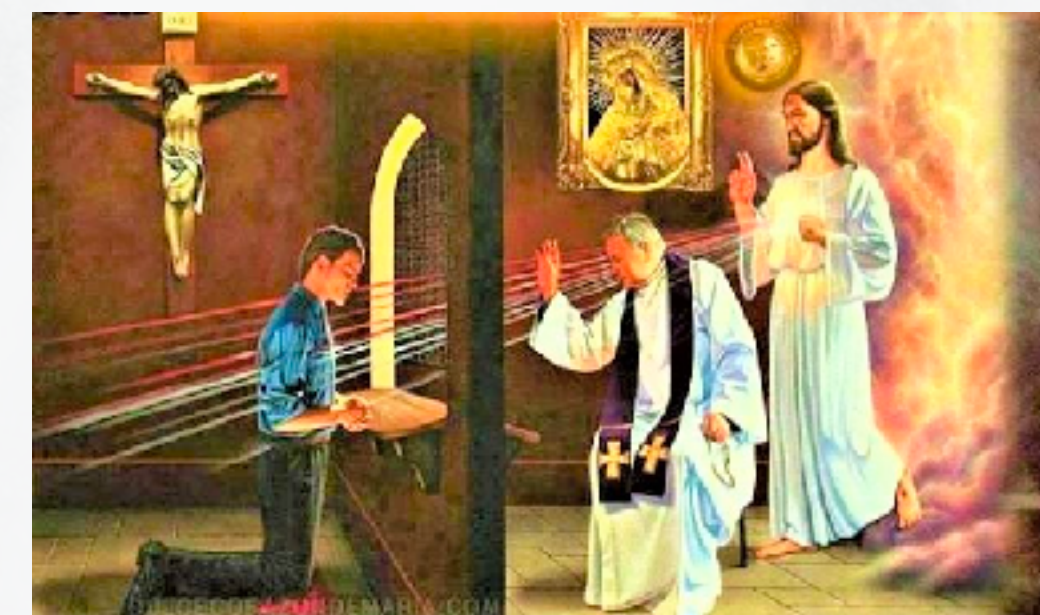
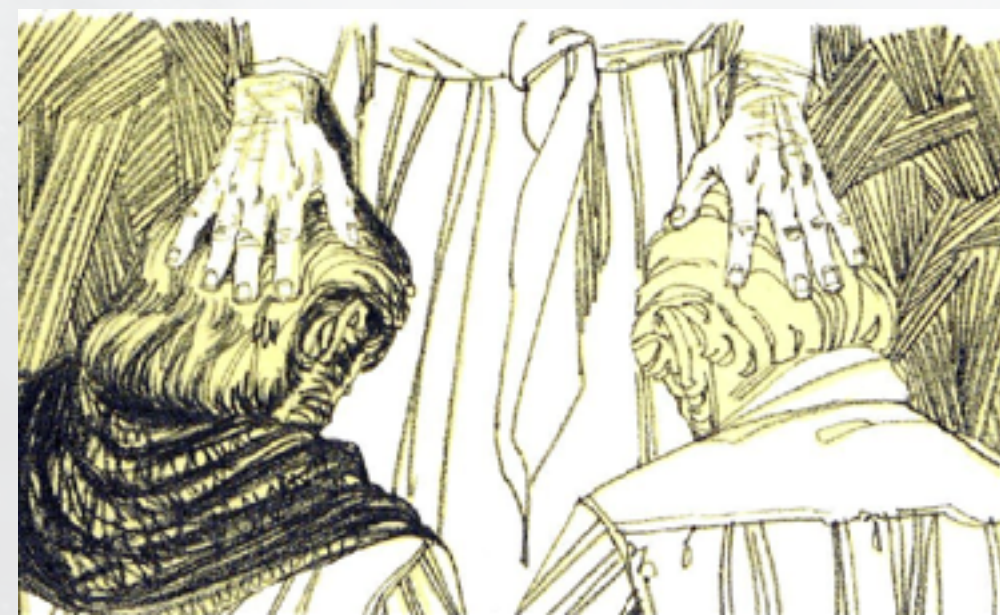
**Pure  
Charisma**

- ✦ Personal
- ✦ Earned by extraordinary deeds
- ✦ Unstable—is lost with the man
- ✦ Unpredictable



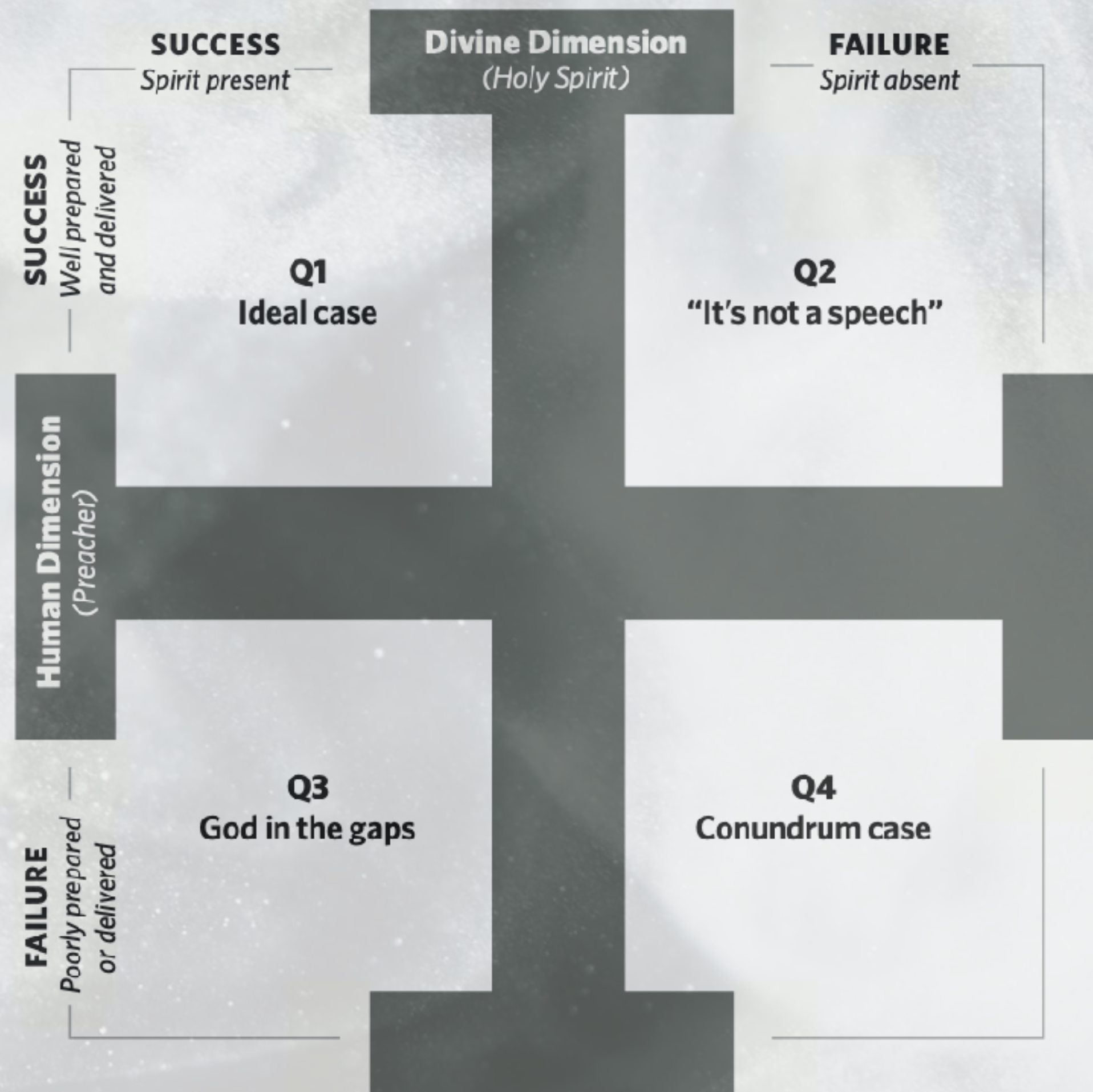
**Office  
Charisma**

- ✦ Institutional
- ✦ Earned through credentialing
- ✦ Stable—is transferable
- ✦ Controllable



# The Success vs Failure Theme

Four scenarios of homiletic success/failure



Priests consistently:

- ✦ Deny the possibility of Q2 + Q4
  - ✦ Believe all homilies fall into Q1 or Q3
  - ✦ Assert that only divine success matters
  - ✦ Logically imply that what they do homiletically doesn't matter
- ∴ Why seize agency in preaching?

# The Not-Protestants Thread

“They’re better than us, but they’re heretics”

Priests acknowledge that Protestants are better at preaching in general—both laity + clergy.

**But:**

- 1** Their Catholic identity is built partly on disassociation from Protestants
- 2** They conflate (heretical) content with (good) style

So they *refuse* to learn from them.

This yields the poster child of a structurational cycle:

*500 years ago...*



22 s

*Today...*



2 m 19 s

*Hope for the future...*



1 m 57 s

# The Magic Box Question

Agency, ethos, and... probably some bad (application of) theology

Interviewer: . . . .Would you use the box?

*Box-Embracers*



*Box-Qualifiers*

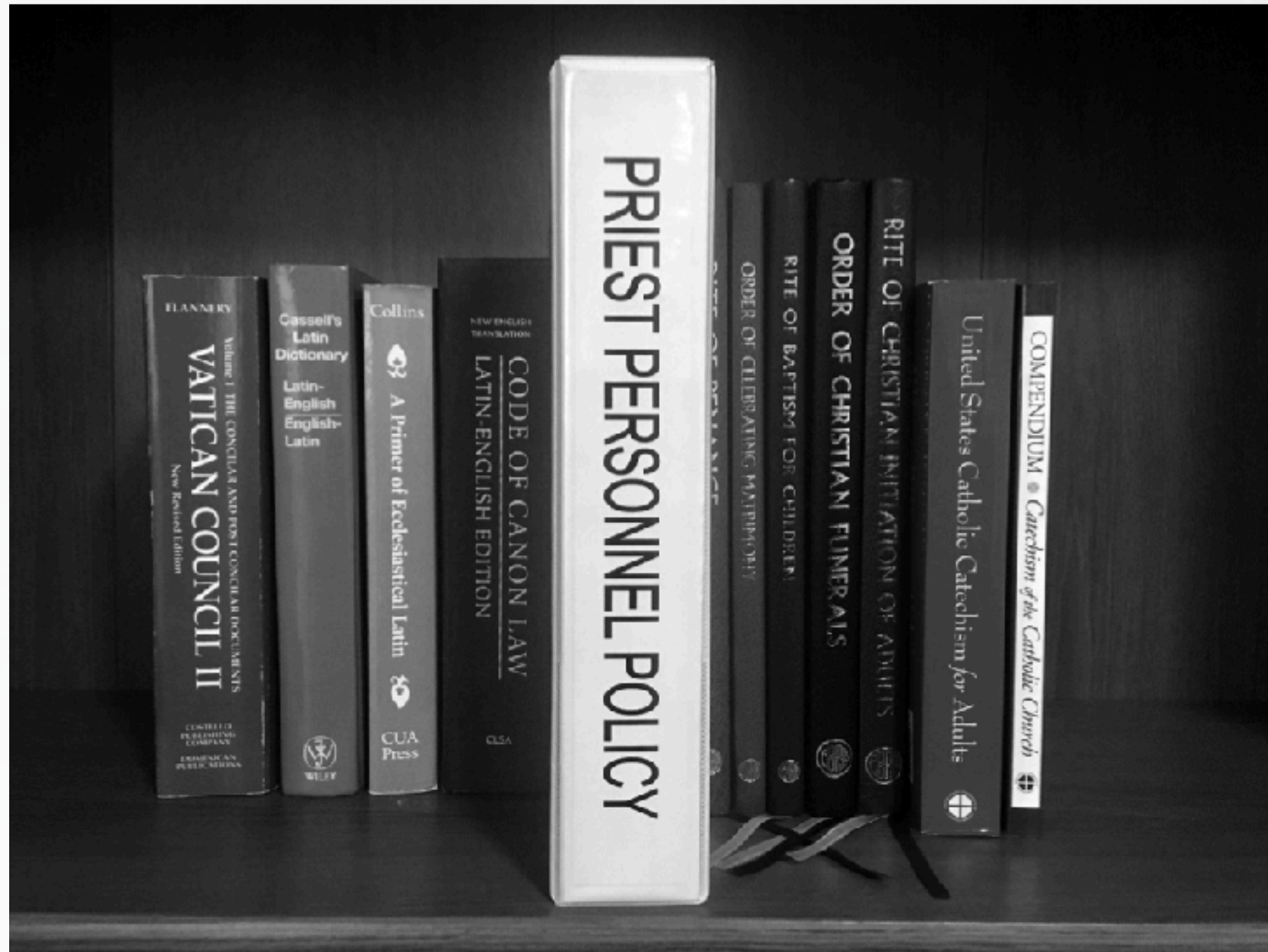


*Box-Haters*



# Q&A

And below, the only two photos in the book, which are kind of opposites...



Fr. Nathaniel's priest personnel policy binder, issued by the diocese to all new priests.

*Fr. Nathaniel:* This is the big personnel binder of all the personnel policies that we have, and this is one binder but—

*Interviewer:* How many are there?

*Fr. Nathaniel:* I don't even know. I don't think I've been exposed to the horror of that yet.

A strong holist's office knick knack ("ASAP: Always Stop and Pray"), reinterpreting the bureaucratic as charismatic.

# Links & Contact

## Get a(n):

- ✦ [Exam copy](#)
- ✦ [Review copy](#)

## Buy from:

- ✦ [Wipf & Stock](#)
- ✦ [Bookshop.org](#)
- ✦ [Amazon.com](#)

## Connect with me:

- ✦ At [jenniofthewoods@icloud.com](mailto:jenniofthewoods@icloud.com)
- ✦ On [LinkedIn](#) (mention this webinar)

