

Chapter Four

Preaching as an Art of Shared Leadership

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A COUPLE YEARS AGO, I had an interesting conversation with a friend of mine who is a lay leader of her church. She expressed her disappointment with her new pastor's preaching. Her major complaint was that in his preaching, he treated his listeners like little children inferior to him in knowledge and experience and considered them the object rather than the subject of his ministry. However, she comforted herself by telling me that her church would be fine with that pastor as long as he could perform other leadership roles effectively, for preaching might be just one of the components of pastoral leadership. Recently, I met her again and learned that her church was in crisis because of the pastor's lack of leadership. That time, she firmly declared that "Preaching is not merely *a* component of pastoral leadership but is itself leadership!"

"Preaching is itself pastoral leadership!" This statement may sound exaggerated since the pastoral role is multifaceted. It makes sense, however, when we realize that preaching represents the particular style of a pastor's leadership and that preaching is the most important medium of communication between the pastor and the congregation. Through

preaching, pastors regularly communicate spiritual and pastoral concerns in public and provide theological and practical directions for the journey of the community of faith on personal and communal levels. Upon realizing the inseparable relationship between preaching and church leadership, the preacher needs to ask such crucial questions as these: What does leadership mean for the church in our changing context for the ministry? What kind of paradigm shift is necessary for the ministry of preaching in order to participate in the renewed leadership of the church? How can the church practice theologically relevant and practically appropriate preaching?

This essay seeks to answer these questions by proposing a new paradigm of preaching based on a new leadership model. Concerning the search for a new leadership model, historian Jean Miller Schmidt reminds us of a lesson from church history, that the ministry of female preachers in early American Methodism thrived because of “the vital partnership in ministry between laity and clergy—lay preachers and class leaders providing pastoral leadership at the local level.”¹ Further, she tells us that partnership between clergy and laity grounded in the “ultimate trust in the sufficiency of grace” of God was the foundation of church leadership in early American Methodism.²

These historical remarks of Schmidt’s will be the starting point for developing a new paradigm of preaching in the following five sections of the essay. The first section will focus on understanding the context for preaching by analyzing internal and external conditions of the contemporary church. The second section will be a brief historical review of leadership in the church, paying special attention to the practice of the shared ministry. The third section will explore the theological meaning of leadership in light of shared ministry and will propose shared leadership as a new leadership model for the renewal of preaching. The fourth section will concentrate on the understanding of preaching as a practice of the shared ministry. The last section will focus on developing the practice of preaching as an art of shared leadership by suggesting a practical theological methodology.

1. Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient*, 151.

2. *Ibid.*, 21.

Preaching in Transition

The development of a new paradigm of preaching should begin with “exegeting” the congregation. As Leonora T. Tisdale urges in her book *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, preaching requires the preacher to exegete both the biblical text and the congregational culture.³ However, the congregational culture is not merely formed by internal cultural components but is also exposed to the larger world to which the congregation belongs. Obviously, contemporary churches are facing complex internal and external conditions in many unpredicted ways. Just as our society is going through phenomenal spiritual, political, and sociocultural shifts, so are Christian churches. Such shifts can be explained in at least three ways.

First of all, one of the most challenging internal conditions of the church is the enhancement of egalitarianism in the leadership roles of the church. Since the middle of the twentieth century, mainstream churches in the United States have gradually begun to ordain women to the role of Minister of the Word and Sacrament and have allowed them to serve the church as lay leaders. Currently, about fifteen Protestant denominations allow women to be ordained pastors, and a growing number of female clergy serve local churches as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. For example, 23 percent of United Methodist Church clergy are now female.⁴ In the 2006 statistics of the Presbyterian Church (USA), women comprise approximately 30 percent of active (nonretired) clergy.⁵ The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reports that the percentage of its ordained clergywomen doubled from 1991 to 2003, to 16 percent.⁶

Many clergy in mainstream churches—both female and male—experience traditional patriarchal leadership as no longer effective in the contemporary context of the ministry. This kind of experience challenges church leaders to reconsider the concept of leadership and seek a more egalitarian and collaborative leadership model. If the leadership model

3. Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*.

4. *General Commission on the Status and Role of Women*. Online: <http://www.gcsrw.org/>.

5. Presbyterian Church (USA), “News and Announcements” (2006). Online: <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2006/06538.htm/>.

6. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “Welcome to the ELCA.” Online: <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Welcome-to-the-ELCA.aspx/>.

changes in this way, the ministry of preaching also needs to change, since it is closely related to the practice of leadership in the church.

Another shift in the mainstream church that challenges the traditional model of church leadership is its membership decline.⁷ The heyday of large memberships in mainstream churches has passed. Half a century ago, mainline denominations were bursting at the seams. They were so thriving that their church buildings were on every corner of the streets, and many of their churches were so affluent that they could offer a luxurious salary and benefit package to pastors. Nowadays, however, many churches struggle to pay ordained pastors even their minimum compensations required by their denominations. As a result, they cannot help but replace paid staff positions with lay volunteers and encourage lay people to participate in leadership roles which were once played by professionally trained pastoral leaders. The increasing demand on lay leadership challenges both clergy and laity to reconsider the identity and mission of the church and to ponder how to develop shared leadership between clergy and laity, not merely for their churches to survive but to thrive in the changing situation.

Shared leadership is also more demanding when we realize the shift of our world into an age of globalization. In our globalized world, human beings and other creatures are interconnected beyond geographical boundaries, more closely than ever before in human history. The global economy and the advancement of communication technology and transportation systems have contributed to changing our society into multicultural and multiracial environments. Moreover, the local is no longer isolated from the global. On a daily basis, people are experiencing social and ethical issues in their local contexts that emerge from the larger context of the globe.

In our increasingly multicultural society in North America, many churches realize that they can no longer remain homogenous in regards to race, ethnicity, language, and culture and therefore face practical issues such as whether they give up on their racial and cultural homogeneity

7. See Hout et al., "Demographics of Mainline Decline"; The Presbyterian Church (USA) lost 46,544 members (2 percent) in 2006 and 57,572 members (2.5 percent) in 2007 (blog.gajunkie.com/.../pcusa-membership-statistics-for-2007.aspx/, viewed on 08/12/2010); the United Methodist Church lost 1.01 percent of professing membership in 2008 (www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c...b=2789393/; viewed on 08/12/2010); the Episcopal Church membership has declined 7 percent and Sunday attendance by 11 percent over the past five years (geoconger.wordpress.com/.../more-pressure-to-postpone-lambeth-conference-on-110907-p-6/; viewed on 08/12/2010).

and open to become an inclusive community or move to a less multiracial location to keep their traditionally homogeneous identity. It is unrealistic, however, to try to escape the changing reality entirely. The more we are aware of the web of interconnectedness we share with others, the more we understand that diversity is one of the crucial issues for the church to deal with. The issue of diversity challenges the leaders of the church to reconsider its identity and how to share leadership with others who are racially and culturally different from them.

In the changing context for preaching caused by such internal and external conditions as egalitarianism, membership change, and globalization, pastors are challenged to reconsider the concept of leadership and to reevaluate their ministry of preaching as a practice of their leadership. Leadership in the Christian community is inherently a matter of communication.⁸ Through many different forms of communication, the vision and mission of the church are renewed, and the attitude and behavior of the members are transformed to live out the shared vision of their church. Therefore, the leadership of the church is broader than the official leaders of the church. It is a shared exercise of influence between the pastor and the congregation.

Keeping in mind this understanding of leadership, following is a brief review of the exercise of leadership in the church. Critical reflection on the history of church leadership will provide us with insights into developing a new leadership model which can bring a paradigm shift in preaching for our contemporary church.

A Historical Review of Church Leadership⁹

The history of the primitive and early churches reminds us that the Christian church was first formed by means of the shared ministry. The Acts of the Apostles, Pauline letters, and Pastoral Epistles in the New Testament are evidence that the original model of the Christian ministry was a shared ministry between traveling apostles and local church leaders. In addition to the historical records, biblical references of such metaphors as the body whose parts have different functions for its organism

8. Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 26.

9. Some portion of this section is included in my essay, "Asian American Women and Renewal of Preaching," in which the initial idea of the paradigm of preaching as a shared ministry was explored.

(Rom 12:4ff; 1 Cor 12:12ff) and house utensils that are made for different purposes (2 Tim 2:20–22) show that primitive churches were encouraged to share ministry based on the gifts that members were granted by God. Early church history also reveals dynamic interaction among members of the church in a wide variety of leadership roles such as preachers, apostles, deacons, teachers, prophets, and priests, regardless of gender, race, and social status.¹⁰

Since the church was institutionalized under the Roman Empire, however, church leadership has belonged solely to clergy. Through the process of institutionalization, the church created hierarchical leadership positions and limited them to educated male clergy. The shift of church leadership from shared to clergy-centered ministry has changed the concept of the ministry in terms of clericalism and degraded the role of the laity into passive recipients of the ministry. Yet, the clergy-centered patriarchal orders of church ministry were protested by numerous ecclesial movements during the medieval era. Many female leaders and laymen resisted the hierarchical system of the church and struggled against it to regain equal opportunities to participate in church leadership beyond the boundaries of gender, race, education, and class. For example, from the end of the twelfth century to the early thirteenth century, the Carthars and Waldensians in the south of France, in Italy, in Flanders, and in certain areas of the Rhine Valley revolted against the established orders of the church and claimed that church leadership, especially the right to preach, should be open to the laity.¹¹

Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other sixteenth-century reformers also denied the ecclesial orders and reclaimed the authority and right of the laity to participate in church leadership. They proposed the shared leadership of the primitive church in the New Testament as the ideal for the Reformed church. It is noteworthy that among the reformers, Calvin was not an ordained minister but still played a dominant role in the leadership of the Reformed church. He served the church by preaching, teaching, and administering sacraments, never wanting to be an ordained pastor, for he firmly believed that ordination “was not an indispensable requirement for serving God’s Word and leading the community” and that the pastoral office should be functional “under the working of God’s

Spirit.”¹² Yet, Calvin and other reformers restricted their understanding and practice of the shared ministry to men. A number of Pietist groups, however, such as Mennonites, Quakers, and Baptists, emerging later outside the mainstream of the Reformed Church, extended the reformers’ doctrines of Christian freedom and the priesthood of all believers to women and included them in their shared leadership.¹³

Shared ministry was also revived in the early Methodist movement in the eighteenth century. Wesleyan theology emphasizing the freedom of the Holy Spirit and its personal experience as the source of individual and communal transformation became the theological foundation for the movement to view the church as functional and charismatic rather than institutional and authoritarian. Such theological understandings of the church diluted the boundary line between women and men as well as that between clergy and laity in leadership roles. Most of all, due to the undersupply of ordained clergy to the expansion of the movement, the leaders of the movement could not help but share their leadership roles with the laity and even with women. During Wesley’s late days, women were granted the right to preach and, as a result, many Methodist women participated in preaching as well as leading class meetings and love feasts. The vital partnership in ministry between clergy and laity made it possible for the Methodist movement to grow to become an independent denomination of the Christian church.¹⁴

In nineteenth-century America, however, the Methodist church was institutionalized by male leaders and failed to embrace women and racially marginalized people in the leadership of the church. More precisely, just twelve years after Wesley’s death in 1791, the majority of conservative male leaders resolved to rule women’s preaching unnecessary and, consequently, few Methodist women could share the pulpit with male preachers from that point in time until the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Furthermore, African American converts who were former slaves were excluded from the leadership roles of the church and eventually separated

10. Kim, *Women Preaching*, 34–35.

11. *Ibid.*, 53.

12. McKim, *Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, 10.

13. Kim, *Women Preaching*, 80, 84–85.

14. Kim, *Women Preaching*, 151.

15. *Ibid.*, 88.

themselves to establish an independent Christian church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1815.¹⁶

Shared ministry is biblical and powerful. But most churches have ignored its theological and practical significance, keeping the status quo of the traditional model of clergy-centered patriarchal leadership as the standard of church leadership. Against this situation, the movement of feminist theology since the middle of the twentieth century has raised a prophetic voice. In her book *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*, Letty Russell regrets clerical privilege in the leadership of the church¹⁷ and urges leaders of the church to revive the “partnership paradigm” of church leadership. As a way to share ministry with the laity, Russell proposes “round table leadership.”¹⁸ According to Russell, round table leadership is centered in “Spirit-filled communities” rather than privileged individuals and shares “the gifts of the Spirit among all those who share new life in Christ.”¹⁹ In round table leadership, power and authority are “something to be multiplied and shared rather than accumulated at the top.”²⁰ Therefore, “there are never too many leaders, for power is not understood as a zero sum game that requires competition and hoarding in order to ‘win.’ Rather, power and leadership gifts multiply as they are shared and more and more persons become partners in communities of faith and struggle.”²¹

Today, this feminist understanding of church leadership cannot be taken as a marginalized voice in theological education. Rather, it is essential to revitalize contemporary churches. Many theologians and church leaders who take seriously the changing context for the ministry agree that traditional clergy-centered patriarchal leadership is no longer a relevant leadership model for the church and that the partnership model, which has already been proposed by feminist theologians and church leaders, should be the paradigm of a new leadership model of the church.

For example, in his book *As One with Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry*, Jackson W. Carroll proposes “reflective leadership” as a new

leadership model. In reflective leadership, explains Carroll, leaders function not in “a top-down, asymmetrical fashion”²² but invite their congregants to be their ministry partners in the process of “reflection-in-action.”²³ As another example, Norma Cook Everist and Craig L. Nesson propose the “relational leadership” model. In their book *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for a Church in Mission*, they emphasize the significance of a “genuine partnership between the called leader and all of the people” and suggest that church leadership should be relational between pastoral leaders and their congregants in order to bring forth a mutual transformation between them, thus participating in God’s mission of justice and peace.²⁴

In addition, Richard L. Hamm develops the concept of shared leadership into the practice of team ministry. In his book *Recreating the Church: Leadership for the Postmodern Age*, Hamm analyzes complex problems associated with leadership in the contemporary church and proposes that team ministry based on relationship and trust between the clergy and laity should be a way to recreate the church. For Hamm, ministry with a team of people who have complementary leadership styles makes it possible to bring changes into the church, since the team can explore what changes are necessary and how it can seek these changes in an approach relevant to the internal and external situation of their church.²⁵

Preaching and the Theology of Shared Leadership

The phenomenological analysis of our context for preaching and the critical review of church leadership throughout its history convince us that the leadership model for our contemporary church should be shifted from the traditional patriarchal leadership model to the shared leadership model. However, shared leadership seems unrealistic when it relates to the ministry of preaching. On the one hand, most mainstream Christian churches firmly believe that only professionally educated clergy can preach. On the other hand, preaching has been understood as one of the most power-related ministries. Many pastors who were raised in the environment of clerical elitism tend to regard preaching as their distinctive privilege and right that they should not give up. In addition, they are

16. African Methodist Episcopal Church, “About Us.” Online: <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php/>.

17. Russell, *Church in the Round*, 54.

18. Ibid., 63.

19. Ibid., 64.

20. Ibid., 57.

21. Ibid., 56.

22. Carroll, *One with Authority*, first ed., 123.

23. Ibid., 177.

24. Everist and Nesson, *Transforming Leadership*, viii–ix.

25. Hamm, *Recreating the Church*, 91–94.

afraid that their congregations may judge them impotent if they share their preaching ministry with others. Consequently, the pulpit has been the most exclusive place, in which serious leadership issues are tangled. In an actual ministerial context, for example, how the pulpit can be shared between the senior pastor, who is usually male, and the associate pastor, who is usually female, is one of the tricky issues, let alone how to share the pulpit with the laity.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to reconsider the practice of preaching in relation to shared leadership, for it is theological rather than simply pragmatic. The concept of shared leadership is grounded in “the intercommunion of our Triune God,” who is “by nature relational.”²⁶ The relational life of God revealed in the Trinity should be the source and the goal of church leadership. The relationality of God in the Trinitarian structure means that the nature of God is not a single being manifesting oneself in various forms but that which pervades and reaches beyond a single entity to include others in its oneness, which is “the communal principle.”²⁷ In the Divine communality, the three Persons are ontologically equal, and there are no hierarchical degrees among them. Each Person of the Trinity is seen as God who shares in the fullness of the substance and has difference in its function. But different functions of the three Persons do not make them superior or inferior to others but make God’s nature interdependent among the three Persons. Thus, the unity of the Trinity is defined in terms of the community which the members of the Trinity share. That is, the fundamental unity of God is “a unity-in-difference.”²⁸

In the divine community, power is the one thing shared among the members, for it is not the possession of a singular Person but belongs to the essential nature or substance of what it means to be Divine. In other words, God shares power with the three Persons on the ontological level and makes it a force for the Divine, who is in essence a fundamentally active principle in or a force to the universe.²⁹ God’s nature endlessly shares God’s providential power among the three Persons through the way that is faithful to God’s essence, love, and character, the *kenosis*, revealed in Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:11). Since God is love, God restricts God’s own

power and presence to allow creation to exist and shares power among creatures to whom God relates through the *kenosis*, self-emptying. God, who interacts with God’s creation not by subordination and servitude but by mutuality and love, necessarily requires the freedom of human beings to respond to this love.³⁰

If God’s nature is understood as relational and communal, the relationship between God and God’s creatures is to be reciprocal and mutual. Moreover, relationships among God’s creatures should be based on reciprocity and mutuality. Just as the nature and power of God is correlative with the three Persons in the Trinity, so we humans are created to live out the image of the relational God through sharing our gifts and power granted by God. When those gifts and power are shared among the members of the church in trust of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church flourishes best toward mutual transformation among its members.

The theological ground of shared leadership in the Trinitarian structure of God challenges us to rethink the nature and practice of preaching. Throughout church history, the pulpit has been the place of demonstrating God’s power, and many Christians have imagined who God is based on the preacher’s exercise of power behind the pulpit. If God’s nature is relational by sharing the divine power among the three Persons and among the creatures, our preaching should also be relational in order to appropriately represent the nature and power of God. That is, the pulpit should no longer be the place of a monopoly on power, but must be a place representing God’s relational nature and shared power to the world.

The exercise of power behind the pulpit can be transformed into this Trinitarian way when the traditional patriarchal paradigm of preaching is shifted to the paradigm of preaching as a shared ministry beyond clericalism. Preaching as a shared ministry is a practice of shared leadership based on open, inclusive, and communal relationships with others. Such preaching shares the authority and power with others, not only collegial people but also traditionally underrepresented groups in the church based on gender, sexuality, social and economic status, race and ethnicity. The new paradigm of preaching as a shared ministry will freely invite those who are willing to witness to God’s redemptive power in their lives and creatively work in collaboration to transform the church and the larger world into a place where people can foretaste God’s reign.

26. Everist and Nesson, *Transforming Leadership*, 4.

27. Ogonnaya, *Communitarian Divinity*, 77.

28. Jansen, *Relationality*, 110.

29. *Ibid.*, 82.

30. *Ibid.*, 127.

Preaching as a Shared Ministry

Preaching as a practice of shared leadership is a communal effort between the pastor and the congregation to discern God's grace in their lives together and bring it into a shared experience. As Schmidt reminds us, "there is grace sufficient even for our day,"³¹ and the more the pulpit is open, inclusive, and communal, the more can God's grace be discerned and shared with others.

In order to practice preaching as a shared ministry, at least four prerequisites are necessary. The first is that the pastor and the congregation should reconstruct their understanding of authority. Traditionally, authority has been perceived as the power of control possessed by the person who stands on top of a hierarchical system. Such an understanding, however, is not the authentic meaning of authority, because authority is in essence relational, rather than hierarchical, rooted in God, who is its ultimate source. More precisely, God has granted authority to people in manifold ways "as abundant commodity"³² or gifts to share with others. Authority in the church, therefore, is not a possession that the leader should make every effort not to lose in competition with others but God's gift that is supposed to be shared with others as a means of building up the community of faith (cf. Eph 4:7-12).

In her book *Growing in Authority: Relinquishing Control*, Celia Allison Hahn explores the multiplicity of exercising authority and categorizes it into four different modes: received authority (shaped in roles they receive), autonomous authority (shaped by professional knowledge and experience), assertive authority (shaped by relationship with other), and integrated authority (shaped by using the above three modes of authority contextually and eclectically). Among Hahn's description of the four modes of authority, integrated authority provides insight into understanding authority in relation to the practice of preaching as a shared ministry. According to Hahn, integrated authority emerges in paradox between the authority coming from within the self of the leader and the willingness to share her authority with others and arrives at "a paradoxical and gratifying resolution of the self-other contradictions"³³ by setting aside for a time her received authority and giving up some of her autonomy and assertiveness

for the sake of the people she is called to serve.³⁴ If pastors understand their authority as integrated authority, they will not consider their preaching as a win-lose game, competing with others, but a shared ministry with others for mutual growth. By sharing preaching, pastors can provide hospitable space in which others can participate in discerning the grace of God and empower one another to blossom God's abundant authority among them.

The second prerequisite for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is that both the pastor and lay leaders should have a humble mind or humility. N. Graham Standish may be right when he regrets that "too many churches have pastoral and lay leaders who are somewhat arrogant, assuming they always know what is best and that the members are spiritual infants who are ignorant of God's desires."³⁵ How, then, can such church leaders open themselves to God and others and submit themselves to their wisdom? Only genuine humility makes it possible. Genuine humility means neither condescendence nor impotence but honest openness to God and others with respect to diversity. Respect is a "willingness to show consideration or appreciation for someone"³⁶ who has a different value-orientation and life-experience. By respecting difference, pastors and lay leaders can place their egos at the service of others.

Genuine humility leads pastors to realize that preaching is a communal calling, a calling to an interdependent and collaborative partnership with others. By humbly praying and studying together with others—especially the marginalized, oppressed, and exploited—to discern God's mysterious presence and power in our mundane lives and by sharing them with others through preaching, the pastor can help the congregation freely witness to God's grace to the world. Consequently, preaching as a collaborative ministry contributes to transforming the church, whose "product" is transformed people.³⁷

The third prerequisite for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is that the pastor should have a teachable spirit and pedagogical skills to train and work with her preaching partners. Some may think that shared preaching will result in a negligence of the pastor's responsibility as a preacher and an exploitation of the labor of lay people or other staff

31. Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient*, 295.

32. Hahn, *Growing in Authority*, 27.

33. Ibid., 90.

34. Ibid., 24.

35. Standish, *Humble Leadership*, 17.

36. Everist and Nesson, *Transforming Leadership*, 123.

37. Hahn, *Growing in Authority*, 116.

members to lighten the burden of the pastor's duty of preaching. Or, the practice of preaching as a shared ministry may lead to a misconception that it does not take seriously preachers' education or training because shared preaching invites every believer to participate in preaching regardless of one's qualifications.

However, these are not true. Shared preaching demands of the pastor not only her sufficient knowledge and experience of preaching but also her passion and diligent efforts to sustain the pulpit to be the place where God's truthful message is communicated in quality. This is not possible without the pastor's willingness and ability to educate her preaching partners to be faithful witnesses to the Word. From the selection of a preaching partner(s) through the process of sermon preparation and to the performance of preaching, the pastor should be the leader of the shared ministry of preaching by teaching, facilitating, directing, and encouraging her preaching partners. Thus, the image of the pastor for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is multiple, including the images of a teacher, a facilitator, a colleague, a coach, a project coordinator, and, most of all, the leader of the congregation. Through these leadership roles, the pastor is called for "the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12). The pastor serves those whom she is called to lead by helping them participate in witnessing to the grace of God to and beyond the church.

The last prerequisite for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is that the pastor should have skills for building up relationships with others. The church is a covenantal community, formed based on relationships with God and with people and continuously renews its identity, vision, and mission through preaching and other ministries. While contractual relationships are concerned with job descriptions, compensation, working conditions, and such like, covenantal relationships are concerned with the right of the members to be involved in both the ownership of problems and responsibility for the community, i.e., the right to make a commitment to the community. In order for people to feel a sense of belonging in the covenantal community, a great deal of trust among the members of the community and a clear sense of interdependence between the leader and the members are eminently necessary.³⁸

The church, like other covenantal communities, is based on the commitment of the members, and they assume a genuine opening of the community to their influence by letting them use their gifts in decision making, implementation, and evaluation of community events. Thus, leadership for the church does not depend on the pastor's tactics or strategies but artful skills of relationships, including creativity in attentiveness to the divine action already present in individual and communal lives and pastoral skills in listening to people and polishing, liberating, and enabling the gifts that they bring to the church. Preaching can be practiced as a shared ministry when the pastor has an ability to perform this kind of art; the pastor who is willing to practice preaching as a shared ministry is called to be an artist who builds relationships with God and the people.

Preaching and Practical Theology

Shared ministry is a comprehensive term that means a collaborative ministry between leaders of the church and its members. If we consider preaching a shared ministry, how can preaching be practiced in an actual ministerial setting? While a wide range of practices can be experimented with in creative ways, it is important to remember that the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is a practical theological discipline. Just as preaching is a subdiscipline of practical theology, so is preaching as a shared ministry.

In the contemporary theological education system designed on the basis of the clear-cut dichotomy between theory and practice, the term practical theology tends to be regarded as an "applied theology," whose aim is to teach students techniques and skills of application of the substance that were gained in other fields such as biblical, historical, and systematic theologies. Practical theology, however, is more than "a handmaid of other theologies," for it means a dynamic theological reflection that guides the church to the life of faith. It includes all doctrinal and biblical teachings and metaphysical reflections about God related directly to the life of faith and offers pastoral and soteriological implications for the daily lives of believers. In fact, Christian theology is, in its origin, not abstract or speculative but a "practical discipline" that concerns a vital relationship between theological reflection and the practice of a Christian life in the world. In other words, all Christian theology is, in essence, practical

38. De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art*, 36–43.

theology, for, as H. Richard Niebuhr insists, all theological reflection is inherently practical and, in this sense, all theology is practical.³⁹

The subject of practical theology is not restricted to ordained ministers but includes all believers—both clergy and laity. As a community, the entire congregation is responsible for theological reflection on their practice. Here, the term practice does not mean a simple application of theory but “practical wisdom” or “*phronesis*” in Aristotle’s term. Its definition is a “prudent understanding of variable situations with a view as to what is to be done.”⁴⁰ Moreover, practice is not an activity of a single person, but a communal activity which creates a new way of life in the context of a community.

The holistic and communal aspect of practical theology can be described no better than in the way Friedrich Schleiermacher does. Although Schleiermacher divides areas of studying Christian theology into three—philosophical, historical, and practical—he stresses practical theology as “the crown of theological study.” For him, “leadership in the church is the final purpose of theology,” and the area of practical theology is “the final part of the study because it prepares for direct action.”⁴¹ Therefore, all theological knowledge taught in the areas of philosophical, biblical, and historical theologies must be reflected in relation to our personal and communal lives to give meaning and direction to the present and future lives of humanity.

Schleiermacher further suggests that the method of practical theology should be a “probing, rigorous, critical, and constructive” theological reflection, stepping back to think about the meaning of faith, church, and life, with some critical distance before again jumping into action.⁴² This reflective method has been advanced by contemporary practical theologians such as Richard R. Osmer. In his book *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Osmer develops the method of practical theological reflection into four interpretive tasks, based on the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice: 1) the descriptive-empirical task, 2) the interpretive task, 3) the normative task, and 4) the pragmatic task. In the stage of the descriptive-empirical task, the pastor gathers information

about the context for the ministry “through informal information gathering, careful listening and looking more closely at patterns and relationships that are taken for granted,” by asking, “What is going on?” In the stage of the interpretive task, the pastor goes deeper to better understand patterns and dynamics occurring in the particular situation by analyzing them through theories of the arts and sciences, by asking, “Why is this going on?” In the stage of the normative task, the pastor uses theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses and learning from “good practice,” by asking, “What ought to be going on?” In the last stage of the pragmatic task, the pastor determines strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and enter into a reflective conversation with the “talk back” emerging when they are enacted, by asking, “How might we respond?”⁴³ For Osmer, this interpretive process is more like a “spiral” than a circle, since it constantly circles back to tasks that have already been explored.⁴⁴

Preaching as a shared ministry should be practiced not as a random or arbitrary case study but as a consistent practical theological act followed by critical reflection. Osmer’s four core tasks of interpretation for practical theological reflection can be used as guidelines for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry. For example, the history and current situation of the preaching ministry in a particular church can be analyzed through the descriptive-empirical and the interpretive tasks. The normative task will help the pastor theologically reflect on the current practice of preaching in her church and provide theological guidance for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry. And the pragmatic task will help the pastor discern her role as the leader of the shared ministry and increase her pastoral sensibility.

Through the process of practical theological reflection, the pastor can practice preaching as a shared ministry in a variety of ways. For some churches that understand preaching as the pastor’s own business, a low-key introduction to shared preaching may be effective. Such churches may begin by inviting some lay leaders or staff members to preach a children’s sermon in Sunday worship. Churches that have a Bible study program may develop it into a lectionary reading group or a theological book club,

39. Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism*, 115–16.

40. Tracy, “Foundations of Practical Theology,” 73.

41. Schleiermacher, *Christian Caring*, 99.

42. *Ibid.*, 17.

43. Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4–10.

44. *Ibid.*, 11.

in which the pastor can study with the members, focusing on some theological theme or preaching texts, and then reflect on the discussion later when she prepares a sermon.

In churches that are open to new things in relation to the ministry of preaching and had talented members in storytelling, music, dance, audiovisual technology, and so forth, the pastor can be creative in preparing preaching by inviting them to participate in the preaching event based on their talents. Preaching a dramatized sermon, a dialogue sermon, a theatrical sermon combined with music and dance, etc., can be rehearsed with a team in a given time and situation. Designing a sermon as a dialogue with preaching partner(s), rather than as a monologue by the pastor, or as an embodied performance including singing, drama, dancing, and other artistic elements by inviting those who have such talents among the congregation will help the congregation understand preaching as a shared ministry. For the effective practice of preaching as a shared ministry, it would be useful to organize a preaching committee, whose role is to participate not only in preparing, performing, and evaluating preaching but also in recruiting participants who are interested in sharing their experiences of God's grace with others through preaching.

The practice of preaching as a shared ministry is not limited to the preparation process and actual performance. It can be extended to post-preaching events such as a sermon feedback time after the service. Or, if a congregation is open and flexible to changes in the order of the worship service and is interested in sharing their reflections on the sermon during the service, the pastor can design the order of the service including a moment of reflection after the sermon as a response to the Word. This practice should be preceded by the pastor's instructions on how to share their responses to the sermon in constructive ways.

The ideas suggested above are just a few. The practice of preaching as a shared ministry requires of the preacher ongoing efforts to innovate and practice new ideas for shared preaching. A variety of creative approaches to preaching as a shared ministry will challenge the church to rethink its identity and mission and contribute to revitalizing the church with fresh insights and passion for communal and collaborative ministry. The practice of preaching as an art of shared leadership will eventually bring forth a new chapter of Christian ministry as an art through which the congregation can appreciate the beauty of leadership.

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Pastoral Response

Holly Heuer

DR. KIM'S VISION of shared preaching as a natural and theologically sound development of shared ministry is both provocative and inspirational. Preaching has, indeed, been the last bastion of clergy preeminence. Church members seem to cherish the hierarchy of the pulpit, even in cases where they practice shared leadership in every other form. Without belaboring the causes or results of an exclusive claim that clergy have held on the pulpit, Dr. Kim invites a reconsideration of that assumption. She begins with the practical necessity for sharing preaching, but ultimately grounds her argument in the doctrine of the Trinity, where shared power clearly originates. Her suggestions for implementation of this vision—while challenging—are consistent with the high calling and art of the preaching enterprise.

We have engaged in some of the practices that Dr. Kim suggests in her section on practical theology. In our context at Calvary Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado, shared preaching has indeed grown out of years of shared ministry. Since Presbyterian polity requires shared leadership at all levels of the church's life, we are shaped by the required parity between elders and ministers. That being said, our *Book of Order* presumes an exclusive claim of clergy on the preaching event itself: "For reasons of order the preaching of the Word shall ordinarily be done by a minister of the Word and Sacrament" (W-2.2008). Presbyterian understanding of shared ministry means that we have separate roles: elders govern the church while pastors teach, administer sacraments, pray for the people, and preach. It has taken years of ministry together at Calvary for mutual

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: THE HOMILETICAL
UPSHOT

Matthew Lamb's liberationist model stops short of this contextually robust presentation of the sagely dynamics of Black religious life and practice, and James Loder's transformational scheme carefully outlines the divine-human relation but seems to overlook the role of how contextually determined people work out their understanding of the incarnational presence of God in their midst. When Lamb, Loder, and Andrews are read and appropriated dialectically for thinking about African American preaching, creative dialogue can be fostered and African American preachers are provided a constructive paradigm to reconceive preaching more holistically. Taken together, they form a useful threefold cord for exploring synchronically the expressed nature and hermeneutical function of trivocal preaching.⁴⁷

A critical appropriation of the rudiments of each—the revised praxis correlational, the transformational, and the Black church praxis-covenant interdisciplinary models—points the preacher as practical theologian toward a more authentic way of preaching and doing theology contextually. These models value the reflexive and introspective character of theory and the concrete realities of praxis in contemporary religious practice.⁴⁸ Hence, an approach to homiletics that emphasizes the prophetic, priestly, and sagely dimensions of Christian preaching is fertile ground for meaningfully addressing the state of health of the church's proclamation in our times, rising to the postmodern global homiletical theology challenge of speaking a message of promise to a pluralistic world, and moving us towards something well beyond the contexts from which it emerges, that is, towards a unified vision of *beloved community* and *koinonia* with our neighbor and our God.

47. Ibid., 75.

48. Ibid.

—3—

The Spirit-Breathed Body

Divine Presence and Eschatological Promise
in Preaching

—Ruthanna B. Hooke

"Who dares, who can, preach, knowing what preaching is?"¹ Karl Barth posed this question, and the question indicates the deep seriousness with which he took preaching, and his understanding of the awesome nature of the preaching task. Barth's sense of the daunting nature of the preaching task, and even (considered from the human standpoint) the impossibility of preaching, is closely linked to his sense of the promise of preaching, which is that preaching is nothing less than the Word of God, spoken through human words. This is truly an astonishing and even unfathomable claim—that God should choose to speak through human beings, that humans in all of their particularity, finitude, and brokenness should be channels for the divine presence and Word. It is amazing to claim that preaching represents an opening, a place for the infinite and the holy to make itself manifest. Of course, many have felt that this claim was far too exalted to make for preaching, and have argued instead that preaching is merely human words about God, not in itself a moment of God's presence and speaking. However, the claim of Barth and others that preaching is something more than this, that it is a privileged event of divine-human encounter, is ultimately a more

1. Barth, "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching," 126.

hopeful position to take about preaching, even if it raises the stakes and makes preaching more daunting than if it is considered simply as human speech. It is a hopeful stance to claim that God really does reveal Godself to us, not only in the sacraments, or in the stuff of our ordinary lives, but in a privileged way in this moment when a human being seeks to speak true words about her interpretation of God's revelation in scripture and in life.

Not only is Barth's position a hopeful one to take, but it corresponds to what many preachers actually feel. Having taught many years' worth of beginning preaching students, I can attest that the fear that they feel about preaching, their sense of the awesomeness of the task, stems not only from its being an event of public speaking on matters of life and death importance to them. Rather, their fear (and also their excitement) comes still more from a sense that in preaching they are engaged not only in a human event of speaking and listening, but that they are presenting themselves and their words to be inhabited, used, opened up by God to becoming God's own presence and Word. It is this sense of preaching as an event in which God is active through a human body and human words—a sense perhaps not fully articulated as such, perhaps only obscurely felt—that is the fundamental theological promise upon which preaching rests.

Homiletical theology seeks to investigate how preaching is an exercise in theological reflection—not merely the application of theology generated elsewhere, but rather itself generative of theological claims. A homiletical theology of promise might explore the ways in which the practices, theories, and contexts of preaching generate theological reflection on God's promise. Such reflections might focus on how God's justice and grace are related, and therefore on the eschatological horizon of preaching and of Christian life. This essay, however, will explore not so much the theologies of promise that preaching generates, as the fundamental theological promise that preaching rests upon, which is the promise of God's presence in preaching. The embodied experience of this fulfilled promise in the event of preaching will be taken as the starting point for generating theological reflection on various aspects of God's promise.

God's fundamental promise, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20), is true in all aspects of human life, but the claim of Barth and others is that this presence is particularly powerful, gracious, and effective in preaching. This claim—that preaching is an event in which God speaks through human bodies and words—immediately raises a whole host of questions, all centering around the basic question: how is this possible? How does it happen that God speaks and is present through the finite, fallible human preacher? To answer this fundamental theological question is to engage

various *loci* in Christian systematic theology, such as doctrines of revelation, theological anthropology, Christology, and ecclesiology. In this paper, the principal *locus* through which I will explore the question of how preaching is possible, how God keeps God's promise to be present through human words and presence, is that of liturgical theology, and sacramental theology as a subset of liturgical theology.

HOMILETICAL THEOLOGY AND LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

It is appropriate for homiletical theology to enter into conversation with liturgical theology because preaching is fundamentally a liturgical act. From the earliest Christian liturgies, the sermon was considered integral to the liturgy, and the two-fold structure of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Table is attested as early as the time of Justin Martyr. Although there is preaching that takes place outside of liturgy, the primary home of preaching is the corporate worship of the Christian assembly. One of the notable features of the liturgical reform movements of the twentieth century has been a renewed recognition of the essential two-fold structure of the liturgy.² While Protestant churches have tended to emphasize the Liturgy of the Word at the expense of the Liturgy of the Table, and Roman Catholics tended toward the reverse emphasis, the twentieth century saw a recognition that from earliest times these two parts of the service were meant to be in balance and serve as a counterpoint to each other. As a result of this recognition, Protestant churches began to reincorporate the Eucharist as central to their worship, while Roman Catholics placed a greater emphasis on the sermon than heretofore. As part of these developments, liturgical theologians began to incorporate theological reflection on the sermon as part of the liturgy, and as having its own distinctive role in the liturgy. Homileticians, however, have tended not to place much emphasis on the relationship of the sermon to the rest of the liturgy, and tend not to theorize the sermon as a liturgical act.³ Homiletical reflection on the sermon as an event tends to view it as standing alone, having its meaning in relationship to Scripture or to the congregation, but not to the event of worship.

There are several benefits to placing homiletics theology in conversation with liturgical theology. First, liturgical theology is fundamentally akin

2. Lathrop emphasizes this two-fold structure. See Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 43–53.

3. Notable exceptions include Rice, *The Embodied Word* and Greenhaw and Allen, *Preaching in the Context of Worship*. See in particular the essay by Wilson in this volume, entitled "Preaching and the Sacrament of Holy Communion."

to homiletical theology because both are reflections on a practice. Liturgical theologians describe this method of theological reflection by making a distinction between "primary" and "secondary" liturgical theology. Primary liturgical theology, as Gordon Lathrop defines it, is "the communal meaning of the liturgy exercised by the gathering itself."⁴ The assembly uses words and signs to speak of God, and thus engages in theology. Secondary liturgical theology is reflection on these words and signs; it is "discourse that attempts to find words for the experience of the liturgy and to illuminate its structures."⁵ Alexander Schmemmann outlines the tasks of secondary liturgical theology as finding the theological concepts that will express the fundamental nature of the liturgical experience, and then connecting those concepts with systematic theology, those ideas by which the Church expresses its doctrine and faith.⁶ Thus liturgical theology stands between worship and dogmatics, and aims to explain the ancient rule of the Church: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Liturgical theology emphasizes the *causal* nature of this relationship, that it is not just that the law of praying and the law of believing are related, but that the law of praying *dictates* the law of believing. Thus, Schmemmann, Lathrop and others insist that "the ongoing tradition and actual performance of the liturgy [is] the primary source for the Church's theology," and see their task as liturgical theologians "to make the liturgical experience of the Church again one of the life-giving sources of the knowledge of God."⁷

Homiletical theology is a natural conversation partner to liturgical theology because it rests on a similar practical-theological method. Homiletical theology takes as its starting point the "primary theology" that emerges from sermon preparation and delivery, from which "secondary theology" is derived. From the primary theology expressed in the practice of preaching itself, homiletical theology develops secondary theology that reflects upon the practice in relationship to the doctrines of the Christian faith.

In addition to this similarity of method, sacramental theology as a subset of liturgical theology engages similar theological questions and *loci* to those raised about preaching as an event of divine self-revelation. Sacramental theology wrestles with the question of how God can be made known to us through material means. Even though the material means are not the same (bread and wine versus the human person and words of the preacher), the

theological claims made and issues raised are similar, and engage the same doctrinal *loci* as homiletical theology engages. Theologies of the sacraments wrestle with questions at the intersection of doctrines of revelation and theological anthropology, since they consider how it is that God is made known to humankind through material means. These questions open onto christology and ecclesiology, since what makes the sacraments a privileged place of divine self-revelation has to do with their grounding in God's primordial self-revelation in Christ, and in the commissioning of the church to be Christ's body in the world, and hence the primary sacrament of God's presence.⁸ Homiletical theology can be in fruitful dialogue with sacramental theology in part because much of the work of wrestling with these questions and synthesizing these doctrines is already being done there, and the conversation in homiletics can build on such a synthesis.

Recent developments in sacramental theology make this conversation yet more fruitful, since there has recently been a shift toward thinking about the sacraments not primarily as objects that dispense grace, but as personal encounters between God and people. Relatedly, there has been a shift toward considering the entire liturgy as sacramental. Russian Orthodox liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemmann maintains that the whole liturgy is a sacrament in that it reveals the essential sacredness of all creation and of human life; it is the fulfillment and manifestation of this world as God's world, of our life as participating in God's life. In this understanding, "a sacrament is primarily a revelation of the *sacramentality* of creation itself, for the world was created and given to man [sic] for the conversion of creaturely life into divine life."⁹ A sacrament is both cosmic, referring to the world as God created it, and eschatological, looking forward to the fulfillment of this world in the kingdom of God.

The upshot of this argument is, first, to move away from ontological or metaphysical arguments about how material objects in the liturgy can become sacred. For Schmemmann, the whole of the liturgy is sacramental not because some change or transubstantiation occurs in the physical elements of the service, but because in the liturgy the Church willingly participates in something that has already been given—namely, God's new life. This argument also emphasizes that the whole of the liturgy is sacramental, and that its sacramentality cannot be reduced to one moment when a material object transforms from being profane to being sacred. Rather, since all of the liturgy participates in the reality of God's kingdom, all of the liturgy is sacramental.

8. See Rahner's description of Jesus Christ as God's primordial sacrament, and the Church as God's basic sacrament, in *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 412.

9. Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 33.

4. Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 5.

5. *Ibid.*, 6.

6. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 17.

7. Morrill, *Bodies of Worship*, 5. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 23. Aidan Kavanagh also argues for the liturgical event as primary theology. See his *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1984), 73–95.

All the rites of the liturgy are a progressive manifestation of the realities of Christ's saving work—not an accomplishment of these realities, since that has already been done. Thus Schemmann, in his volume dedicated to exploring the Eucharist, explicitly labels each section of the liturgy as a sacrament: the first chapter is the “sacrament of the assembly,” followed by the “sacrament of entrance,” and so on through all the sections of the service, including preaching, which he labels “the sacrament of the Word.”¹⁰ He entitles his chapters in this way so that throughout the book he can demonstrate how all parts of the liturgy function sacramentally, in that all parts of the liturgy reveal God's new life which has been given to us.

These shifts in understanding of the sacraments have the effect of including preaching as a sacramental event, inasmuch as it is part of the liturgy as a whole. Furthermore, this redefinition of what sacraments are holds promise for thinking about preaching as an event of divine-self-revelation, since one can theorize this event not according to metaphysical principles for how profane objects are transformed into sacred ones (the old way that sacramental theology operated), but rather in terms of how God enters into personal relationship with us (the new approach of sacramental theology). Since preaching is invariably personal, as God reveals Godself in relationship to the person of the preacher, this new emphasis on sacraments as events of personal encounter provides a helpful framework for analyzing preaching as sacramental.

One aspect of this shifting understanding of sacraments that is particularly helpful for theorizing preaching is the increased emphasis on the human bodies who participate in worship. Considering the liturgy as a whole to be sacramental means that the focus shifts from the mechanics of what is happening to the bread and wine at the altar to what is happening in the bodies of worshippers throughout the liturgy. How are the embodied selves of the gathered community being transformed, made holy, brought into relationship with God? Contemporary liturgical theologians emphasize that sacramental grace always comes to us through our bodies, and that liturgy emphasizes and enacts this truth. The recent volume, *Bodies of Worship*, for instance, focuses explicitly on the body's experience in worship, based on the premise that the body's experience in worship helps us to understand what worship really is and what is happening in it—how it is that worship connects us to God and to each other.¹¹ As Bruce Morrill, the volume's editor, notes, this focus on the bodiliness of liturgy brings liturgical theology into alignment with a growing interest in the body in post-modern scholarship, an interest generated in part because the body's “resistance to abstraction” serves the philosophical

and political interests of this scholarship. Part of this scholarship has involved a critique or even rejection of the ways in which the Christian theological tradition has denigrated or discounted the body. However, liturgical theologians insist that the body is central to the Christian faith, because God in Jesus Christ became flesh and dwelt among us, accomplishing our salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of the very human body of Jesus of Nazareth, and thus that “God saves humanity right in our very material actions and circumstances,” that is, in our very bodies.¹² As Louis-Marie Chauvet expresses it, “Faithful to its biblical roots, ecclesial tradition has attempted to discern what is most ‘spiritual’ in God on the basis of what is most ‘corporeal’ in us. This is especially the case in the liturgy. But it is more widely the case in the whole of *Church life*.”¹³

As Morrill notes, the insistence that liturgy constitutes the Church's primary theology is consistent with a greater focus on embodiment—i.e., it is precisely because liturgy is a set of embodied practices that it is the basis for our theology, because it is above all in our embodied experience that we are brought into relationship to God: “there is no disembodied realm where we are being saved.”¹⁴ Thus, while contemporary liturgical theologies focus less on the mechanics of how material things are transformed to be bearers of grace, these theologies put great emphasis on the material and embodied nature of liturgy, operating from the principle that, “for Christians, the most spiritual of realities can only be experienced or known in and through the materiality of our bodies,” and that this principle is powerfully encountered in sacramental worship.¹⁵ The mystery of the sacraments is that material things, bread and wine, oil, water, can become bearers of God's grace. Sacramental grace always comes to us through our bodies, through eating and drinking, being washed, being anointed. Morrill also makes the crucial point that to focus on the body is inevitably to recognize that the body is never merely a physical body, for that body is embedded in and shaped by the various bodies of which it is a part, such as the Church as the body of Christ; the liturgical body, the community which participates in the worship together; and the cultural body, which is made up of various social relationships that influence the body's experience of itself.

Liturgical theology's methodological commitment to treat embodied practices as a primary wellspring of theological knowledge finds a parallel in much other recent theological scholarship, in which there is evidence of a

10. Schemmann, *The Eucharist*, 65–80.

11. Morrill, *Bodies of Worship*, 1, 3.

12. Ibid., 3.

13. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 111. Emphasis Chauvet's.

14. Morrill, *Bodies of Worship*, 4.

15. Ibid., 3.

"material turn." Formulations of doctrine, or theories of religion, increasingly take as their starting point not texts, but embodied and material existence.¹⁶ This turn to embodied experience forms the basic methodological premise underlying the recent dogmatic scholarship of Sarah Coakley, for example. In her recent work on the doctrine of the Trinity, she argues that prayer, and especially contemplation, is the indispensable "matrix for trinitarian reflection," that "a particular set of bodily and spiritual practices (both individual and liturgical) are the *precondition* for trinitarian thinking of a deep sort." Putting the point negatively, Coakley insists that "if one is resolutely *not* engaged in the practices of prayer, contemplation, and worship, then there are certain sorts of philosophical insight that are unlikely, if not impossible, to become available to one."¹⁷ Coakley points out that this is an "anti-foundationalist" position, in that her claim is that a secular, universalist rationality is not the uncontended basis for making theological claims, but rather theological claims rest on the knowledge gained through embodied spiritual practices. As Coakley puts it, "What distinguishes this position, then, from an array of other 'post-foundationalist' options that currently present themselves in theology, is the commitment to the discipline of *particular* graced bodily practices which, over the long haul, afford certain distinctive ways of knowing."¹⁸ Coakley's methodology is similar to that of Morrill and other liturgical theologians in that she insists that theological knowledge arises from embodied spiritual and liturgical practices, that there are aspects of God's relationship to us, and of God in Godself, that we simply cannot know except through the body's experience.

Adopting this methodological priority given to embodied experience, I argue that the "primary homiletical theology" that takes place in the event of preaching is embodied theology, and that preaching experienced as a bodily action involving voice, breath, self, community, liturgical rite and liturgical space is a fruitful starting point for secondary homiletical-theological reflection on the meaning of preaching. Moreover, it is not only that the body's experience of preaching reveals what preaching is, but also that preaching, as a liturgical and therefore embodied act, is an event of primary theology that can become the basis for secondary theology in which we arrive at doctrinal truth about God, ourselves, and the two of us in relationship to each other. Just as Coakley argues that there are core Christian doctrines such as the doctrine of the Trinity that we only fully grasp through embodied practices and

embodied knowledge, there are essential dimensions of Christian doctrine that we understand most fully when we experience them in the embodied event of preaching. In terms of a theology of promise, we come to understand and believe in God's promise to be present with us through the embodied experience of that fulfilled promise in preaching. This primary theological experience then becomes the basis for a secondary homiletical theology of promise.

Despite the fact that preaching is clearly an embodied activity, in which the preacher communicates her message through the engagement of her body in voice, movement, gesture, and by the body's presence on display before others, it is striking how infrequently the body is included in theorizing about preaching, or even in training for the practice of preaching. If the body is considered at all in most textbooks on preaching, it is in a late chapter of the book on techniques for "delivery" of the sermon. The starting point for theorizing about preaching is never the body; it is usually the biblical text, the tradition of the Church, or the incarnation of Jesus Christ. However, following liturgical theology's method, I argue that it is preaching experienced as a whole, as a bodily action involving voice, breath, self, community, liturgical rite and liturgical space, that ought to be the starting point for secondary theological reflection on the meaning of preaching. Preaching needs to be theorized as embodied and performative knowing of God. Out of that experience of God arises secondary reflection that seeks theological concepts to describe God accurately. Theologies of promise would thus take their starting point from the body's experience of God's fulfilled promise in the preaching event itself.

THE SACRAMENTAL STRUCTURE OF PREACHING

What, then, is the body's experience of God's fulfilled promise of presence in preaching? One way to answer this question is to look at the physical processes of speaking—that is, to explore what is happening in our bodies when we speak, and how in this speaking we may experience God's promised presence. For the outline of the physical steps involved in speaking, I am drawing on a method for training the speaking voice developed by voice teacher Kristin Linklater, which is widely used in the dramatic arts.¹⁹ This method of vocal training takes students through a progression of physical and vocal exercises that are designed to free and strengthen the speaking voice. The fundamental premise of this method is that each person is born with a voice capable of ex-

16. Note, for instance, the "material turn" in studies of theology and religion, as noted in the 2015 AAR Call for Papers.

17. Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 16. Emphasis Coakley's.

18. Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 19. Emphasis Coakley's.

19. Linklater's approach to voice training is outlined in: Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice*, and *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*.

pressing, through a two-to-four-octave pitch range, the fullness of her thought and feeling. The way the voice works is that the speaker feels a need to communicate, the brain signals to the body, the need to communicate stimulates breathing muscles—abdominal muscles, diaphragm, rib muscles—and they expand to let breath in to communicate her thought and feeling; breath comes in, goes out, makes contact with vocal chords, vocal chords vibrate and sound results, amplified by resonators, articulated by lips and tongue. That is how the voice works when the speaker is a baby, where the voice expresses life-and-death need, and where the voice is intrinsically connected to the body. However, as the speaker grows up she learns that it is not always socially acceptable to express herself from the place of life-and-death need, so she learns that when she feels the desire to communicate, instead of letting that impulse travel down into the body, where deep need is felt, to reroute the impulse to a more socially acceptable place, the upper chest and throat. Through social conditioning, trauma, and the tensions of daily life she learns to detach her impulse to communicate from the diaphragm and abdominal muscles, and to express that impulse through the throat and face. The voice becomes disconnected from the body, unsupported by the breath, and is squeezed out by overworking the throat, jaw, and tongue muscles. Such speaking leads to the divorce of words from meaning and emotion, such that words describe rather than reveal their content. The speaker whose voice is thus distorted is no longer fully present in her communication. The range of the voice shrinks from 2–4 octaves to 3–4 notes of speaking range.

The purpose of the Linklater method is to rectify this situation by reconnecting speakers' voices to their bodies and emotions. Linklater's method of voice training takes students through a series of exercises which teach physical alignment, diaphragmatic breathing, relaxation of throat muscles, connecting voice with breath, and the use of the body's natural resonators to amplify the voice. The goal of the method is fully embodied communication, in which the voice and body are free, in which the words spoken exist not only in the head but are connected to and expressed through the whole body. When we speak with this freedom and connection, we are not just speaking words, but the words are living in our bodies; the meaning of the words is communicated in the words we speak. Our whole selves are communicating the words, and we are fully present in this act of communication.

This physical process of speaking, as it takes place in preaching, is not merely physical and technical, but is itself an event of primary theology, which can give rise to secondary theological reflection. One way to enter into secondary theological reflection on this physical process of speaking is to flesh out the implications of the claim that preaching is sacramental by comparing

the liturgical action that takes place in preaching with the liturgical action that takes place in the Eucharist. Gregory Dix famously proposed that the action of the Eucharist was fourfold, corresponding to Jesus Christ's four actions at the institution of the Eucharist. The four actions were: to take the elements, to bless or give thanks to God for them, to break them (or pour them out), and to share them.²⁰ These four actions are embedded in the words of institution in contemporary Eucharistic prayers: "On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take, eat.'" Although the specifics of Dix's construal of the four-action shape of the Eucharist have been critiqued and revised, the essential fourfold shape of the Eucharistic action remains influential in liturgical thinking and practice.²¹ I argue that each of these four Eucharistic actions in turn can be compared to a particular aspect of the physical process of speaking as outlined by Linklater, and that exploring this correlation illuminates how God fulfills God's promise to be present with us in preaching. The fourfold action of the Eucharist is the outline of the steps by which God is present to us in the Eucharistic meal; likewise, four aspects or steps in the process of speaking suggest the steps by which our voices and bodies become vessels of God's presence.

Of these four moments, the second moment is a focal point in the fulfillment of God's promise of presence. This moment, the *epiclesis* or blessing, is the moment when the Holy Spirit comes upon the elements, sanctifying them to be Christ's body and blood. Although, as liturgical theologians argue, the entire liturgy is sacramental, this moment crystallizes or brings into focus something that is happening throughout the liturgy, which is the meeting of the divine with the material, the heavenly and the earthly. It is significant that this meeting is accomplished through the coming of the Holy Spirit in particular. The Holy Spirit, in the Eucharist as elsewhere, is the person of the Trinity that draws us into relationship with God. Sarah Coakley describes the Spirit as breaking down the ontological gap between God and humankind, not by abolishing difference, but by investing it with participative mystery.²² The *epiclesis*, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the elements of bread and wine, is the paradigmatic liturgical event of the bridging of this ontological gap.

If preaching is sacramental, is it possible to locate an *epiclesis* in the preaching event? I suggest that the *epiclesis* in the Eucharist is analogous to

20. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 78.

21. For a critique of Dix's four-action shape of the Eucharistic meal, see Wainwright, "Recent Eucharistic Revision," 332–33.

22. Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 330.

the preacher's moment-by-moment experience of the breath in the body, the breath that supports the voice. According to the Linklater method, the breath is the crucial element that forges the connection between the thoughts, feelings, and impulses we seek to communicate, and the authentic communication of these thoughts and feelings in the voice. It is the breath fueling the voice that brings this communication about, giving our words the ring of truth, making our words flesh.

This experience of breath in connection with the voice is a profound, often unconscious experience of primary theology; it is the lived experience of our relationship with God, of God's fulfillment of God's promise to be present with us, out of which we craft our secondary theologies of promise. It is not a coincidence that the Spirit is consistently described and imagined as the *ruach*, the *pneuma*, the very breath of God that moved over the face of the deep at creation and breathed the breath of life into the first human, the same breath that the risen Christ breathed on his disciples when he said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). Generally speaking, we tend to think of the connection of Spirit with breath as a metaphor, but if we consider the experience of breathing, especially in connection with speaking, as an actual experience of our relationship with God, this becomes a moment of primary theology, giving rise to secondary theological reflection on the nature of our relationship with God and God's promise that is revealed in this embodied experience.

THE EPICLESIS IN PREACHING: THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S DIALECTICAL PRESENCE

Three aspects of the experience of breathing in particular provide grist for secondary theological reflection on the nature of God's promise. First, to breathe is actually a *passive* experience; rather than making ourselves breathe, it is more accurate to say that we *are breathed*. Most of the time, of course, we breathe without consciously focusing on the breath; and even when we bring awareness to the breath, if we simply relax the breathing muscles, the breath comes and goes of itself, in its own natural rhythm. We do not make it happen, but more accurately allow it to happen. Theologically, the passive nature of the human breath reminds us that the fulfillment of God's promise to be with us, to animate us moment by moment, is something we allow more than something we create or make happen. Relationship with God is a gift of grace, God's making good on God's promise to be with us, rather than a human creation.

In addition to being an experience of God's fulfilled promise, the breath in the body is also a primary theological event of connection and communion.

Experientially, the breath connects us to each other; the word "con-spiracy" literally means "breathing-together." Emmanuel Levinas develops the idea that speaking is a signaling of one's ethical responsibility to the other, and argues that in the signaling of this responsibility, God, the transcendent, "passes by." Levinas describes breathing as a crucial moment in the opening of the self to the other: one "frees oneself by breathing from closure in oneself," and "breathing is transcendence in the form of opening up."²³ For Levinas, any attempts to enclose ourselves in our inwardness, separating ourselves from the call of the other, are disrupted by the breath itself, which intrinsically opens us to the hearer, and to the transcendence that is inherently signaled in this relationship. In terms of a theology of promise, the primary theological event of breath-empowered speech leads to secondary theological reflection on the communal nature of God's promise. The eschatological fulfillment of God's promised reign of justice is not a fulfillment promised to individuals, but rather to a whole community, the whole commonwealth of God.

The inherently communal quality of the breath helps to alleviate the risk that sacramental presence in preaching is limited to simply the body of the preacher. If God's presence were realized only in the preacher, the charge of Donatism could readily be made against this argument, for the argument would seem to imply that the preacher, through the indwelling of the Spirit, becomes nothing less than Christ. To claim this would be to posit an idolatrous elision of divine-human difference. One way to counter this risk is to point to the graced nature of the encounter with God that is inherent in the passive nature of the breath. In addition, to claim that preaching is sacramental, without collapsing the person of the preacher into the person of Christ, it is crucial to grasp the radically relational subjectivity that the breath instantiates and even creates. It is this relational subjectivity that Levinas develops, in which the subject is never enclosed in a separate subjectivity, but is radically open to the other; moreover, as Levinas notes, it is the breath itself that signals this openness to the other. When this understanding of the Spirit-breath is applied to preaching, it becomes apparent that the body of the preacher serves as an icon, by means of which God's sacramental presence is realized in the entire assembly, which is the body of Christ in its totality. Indeed, the Spirit-breath, breathing in the preacher and in the listeners, is the agent that unites the assembly into the one body of Christ. It is not the preacher in herself that is the sacrament of God's presence, but rather the preacher in her intrinsic connection to the listeners who witnesses to the sacramentality of the whole congregation.

23. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*, 180, 181.

In addition to being a lived experience of God's gracious presence, which is inherently communal, the breath can provide an embodied experience of the dialectical nature of God's promised presence. When we allow the breath to drop deep into our bodies, and to connect with our words, this experience can lead to a sense of calm, but can also connect us to thoughts and feelings that we tend to leave unexpressed. To breathe is to connect to a fuller sense of self than we might often be aware of; as the Linklater voice method demonstrates, to connect breath deep in the body is to connect to what we need to say from a primal place of life-and-death need. Again, from a theological point of view, this is not surprising. The Holy Spirit has brought disruption, challenge, and a goad toward prophetic utterance as often as She has brought calm and serenity. The disruptive effects of the Holy Spirit in the body of the preacher are analogous to the disruptions the Holy Spirit brings to worship in general, and to the Eucharistic celebration in particular. As Matthew Myer Boulton argues, the work of the Holy Spirit in worship is to intervene into the destitution of human worship, which is of itself unable to fitly glorify God. The Holy Spirit breaks into this human incapacity, functioning as a divine adversary that opposes and transforms the poverty of our worship.²⁴

The disruptive effects of the coming of the Spirit-breath into the body of the preacher highlight the dialectical nature of God's presence in preaching, and point to the dialectic in theologies of promise generally—the ways in which God's promise both has and has not been realized. In one sense the experience of the Spirit-breath in the body is the experience of God's promised presence fulfilled. Yet this same Spirit-breath points us toward an eschatological future that has not yet been fully realized, just as God's presence in the Eucharist is a fulfilled promise that at the same time points us forward toward a fuller eschatological realization of that promise. Bruce Morrill makes this point in maintaining that Schmemmann's strong emphasis on liturgy as sacrament leads to a too "realized" eschatology, in that Schmemmann understands liturgy as the place of pure *parousia*, pure revelation of God.²⁵ Conversely, Schmemmann views the rest of the world as the place where there are no signs of the Kingdom of God, a place seemingly devoid of the sacred. Morrill argues that this position does not adequately take into account that God's presence in liturgy too is dialectical, that God can be hidden in liturgy (or by liturgy) as well as in the rest of the world.²⁶ Conversely, there are signs of the Kingdom of God in history and in human culture outside of the liturgy, signs that might be lacking in the liturgy itself. Chief among these signs are the cries of

24. Boulton, "The Adversary," 76.

25. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 192.

26. *Ibid.*, 135.

the suffering and the oppressed, summoning the Church to do the work of God in the world by acting for justice. Liturgy can hide this aspect of God's reign precisely when it is posited as the place of full revelation, of the fulfilled promise of God's presence. This conviction turns the Church inward in satiation, not outward toward the world in longing for the complete fulfillment of the Kingdom of God in history as well as in liturgy. The collapse of the future into the present in Schmemmann's doctrine of the Eucharist, his too-realized eschatology there, is apolitical in that it fails to take account of the suffering of the oppressed and the need to act for justice in history. It emphasizes God's presence as a promise fulfilled, rather than as pointing us forward to a fuller realization of that promise.

As a corrective to the over-realized eschatology he finds in Schmemmann's theology of liturgy, Morrill connects Johannes Metz's concept of "dangerous memory" to the *anamnesis* that takes place in the Eucharist, arguing that to conceive of liturgy as *anamnesis*, a dangerous memory of Christ, is to maintain liturgy's eschatological thrust more fully than Schmemmann does. *Anamnesis* is eschatological because it looks forward to the fullness of what God will do, based on the memory of what God has already done in Christ. Such memory interrupts the flow of evolutionary time and the hegemony of modernity, bringing to light the suffering of the oppressed through the memory of Christ's passion. In this sense liturgy interrupts the rest of life; but by the same token liturgy itself is interrupted by the memory of Christ, which is God's call to remember those who suffer today. Morrill, himself a Roman Catholic, notes that "the discussion of the Eucharistic celebration in terms of an intervening moment, an interruption in time, might come as a challenge to Roman Catholics, for whom theological and pious reflection on the sacrament has long been dominated by a narrowly focused notion of real presence." Sounding like Barth and the Reformers, Morrill maintains that real presence is not a static thing; rather, "the eucharistic celebration is an encounter with the saving presence of God."²⁷ *Anamnesis* is not mere memory of a past event, but the basis of a genuine encounter with God in the present, since "Jesus' words over the bread and cup, along with his command for his followers to perform this ritual, constitute a promise of presence to them, in the mutual act of divine and human remembrance."²⁸

Morrill insists, moreover, that "Christians' genuine perception (and thus, appropriation) of the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist depends upon their (practical) awareness of the reality of the suffering in their

27. *Ibid.*, 175.

28. *Ibid.*, 178.

historical midst."²⁹ In order for the sacrament to be fully realized, in other words, it needs to be interrupted by the memory of something outside of it, so that, here again, real presence is not something statically given in certain physical elements, but depends on relationship—between God and the worshipper, and between the liturgy and the rest of existence. The presence of Christ in the sacraments is a proleptic presence, which points forward toward a reign of justice that has not yet been fully realized. The dialectic of God's promise, its status as both "already" and "not yet" realized, is instantiated in the Eucharist itself.

Analogously, the coming of the Spirit-breath into the body of the preacher is potentially also a moment of *anamnesis*, a dangerous memory of Christ's passion that also brings to light the suffering of the oppressed today. It is an encounter with God's saving presence, the fulfillment of God's promise of presence; this is never a static presence, but is always pointing us forward to God's promised reign of justice which has not yet been fully realized. In a sense, the sermon is interrupted by the Spirit's coming and by the dangerous memory She provokes of suffering and of redemption. This is one way to describe the disruptive effect of the Spirit breathing in the preacher, summoning her to speak dangerous words that stir up the calm waters of liturgy, preventing the experience of God's presence there from turning to satiety or complacency. In this way, preaching itself is interrupted by the Holy Spirit, and becomes in turn an interruption into liturgy.

The reality and memory of suffering interrupt liturgy, such that liturgy cannot be seen as pure *parousia*. Preaching is a primary place where this interruption takes place; it is a moment when *anamnesis*, dangerous memory can arise. Preaching can be an event in liturgy that breaks liturgy open, raising the cries of the suffering and giving voice to eschatological longing. Morrill argues that preaching is one crucial place in the liturgy where participants come to know and appropriate "the Christian faith in an 'anticipatory memory' of both crisis and consolation."³⁰ Preaching has an "anamnetic character," as it presents the congregation with scriptural "narratives which at times gently invite and at other times strongly demand a decision to enter into God's life, to take up the way of imitation."³¹ The preacher's task is to "throw together the worlds of Scripture and the contemporary community in the unique moment of a particular liturgical celebration." This "throwing together," which is the root meaning of the term "symbol," constitutes the sermon as a liturgical act, symbolic in that it unites two apparently dissimilar realities (Scripture and

contemporary life) to show their essential relatedness.³² As Morrill's argument suggests, liturgy is not always self-interpreting; it needs preaching in order to jolt it out of a too-realized eschatology, a sense that the Kingdom of God has already come in its fullness. In this sense preaching is not only *part* of liturgy but an *interruption* into liturgy, or a *corrective* to liturgy.³³ Preaching thus becomes a signal of the dialectical quality of God's promise in general, how that promise is given and yet hidden, inaugurated and yet not fully realized, in liturgy as in life.

Preachers experience this interruption that preaching is in the interruption that the Spirit-breath makes into preaching itself. Thus, in the very act of speaking we are drawn into an experience of God's promise, experiencing the dialectical nature of this promise. On the one hand, the Spirit-breath breathing within us is the fulfillment of God's promise to be with us, just as the *epiclesis* of the bread and wine is the fulfillment of God's promised presence. At the same time, this same Spirit's coming, both in the body of the preacher and upon the material elements at the table, disrupts any notions of static divine presence, connecting us back to the radical challenge of Jesus' person and work, and also driving us forward toward God's eschatological reign of justice. The presence of God in the preached word is always a proleptic presence that directs us toward a future fulfillment of God's promise. As preachers, we can sense this in the breath itself, perhaps especially in moments of the greatest destitution in our preaching, when the "sufferings of this present time" (Rom 8:18) seem like they occlude God's promise entirely. In those moments, Paul reminds us that in our weakness "the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." (Rom 8:26). These very sighs, even if they be sighs of weakness or despair, are the action of the Spirit in us, opening us to a future promise that we cannot perhaps sense, but toward which the Spirit is leading us. Thus, the Spirit-breath opens our words and our presence beyond our words to the sometimes wordless sighs of prophecy.

CONCLUSION

Homiletical theology begins from the premise that preaching is not merely the application of theological truths generated elsewhere, but rather that

32. Ibid., 211.

33. J. J. Von Allmen makes a similar argument to Morrill's that the importance of the sermon is that it turns the congregation outward, connecting the life of the Church to the life of the world. Thus, the balance of word and table prevents "liturgical escapism and anchorless prophetic activity." Allmen, *Preaching and Congregation*, 32. Quoted in Noren, "The Word of God in Worship," 42.

29. Ibid., 185.

30. Ibid., 201.

31. Ibid., 211.

preaching is itself an exercise in theological method, and is generative of theological reflection. This paper seeks to apply this theological method to the embodied experience of preaching, and to tease out the theological claims related to God's promise that can be derived from this experience. Placing these reflections in dialogue with liturgical theology, I compare the event of preaching with the four-fold action of the Eucharist, and specifically focus on the experience of the breath as analogous to the *epiclesis*. The coming of the Holy Spirit as breath in the body of the preacher is an event of primary theology that gives rise to secondary theological reflection on several aspects of God's promise. First, the Spirit-breath in the preacher's body signals the graced nature of God's promise—that it is something we receive rather than something we create of ourselves. Second, the Spirit-breath in the preacher's body points to the proleptic nature of God's promised presence—that this divine promise is yet to be fully realized, and will be realized only as the sufferings of this present time give way to future glory. Finally, the Spirit-breath in the body of the preacher instantiates the inherently communal nature of God's promise, both as it is realized in the moment of preaching, and as it is yet to be fulfilled in God's in-breaking reign.

What I hope to have suggested in these investigations is the promise of homiletical theology itself. Homiletical theology takes preaching seriously as generative of theological knowledge. To do this is to take seriously knowledge of God that is embodied and performative—to ask what speaking bodies know about God's promise, for instance, and to take this knowledge as foundational to further theological reflection, rather than as tangential to it. Such bodily knowledge has the potential not only to confirm, but also to amplify, challenge, and significantly augment the claims we make about God's promise, as well as numerous other aspects of our knowledge of God.

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A Homiletical Theology of Promise

More Than One Genre?

—Paul Scott Wilson

Homiletical theology, of which this chapter is an example, has a form, content, style, and function—features that commonly mark a genre. The form is an academic essay, the content is theological matters relating to preaching and teaching preaching, the style is defined by *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and the function is to engage informed conversation. Homiletical theology is rooted in the Bible and European academic traditions and makes theological and ethical claims much like other theology and is written for preachers and academic peers. All of this is good and well, but from time to time most homiletics have also encountered another form (or forms) of what could also be called homiletical theology that has a different function/s. As a genre, it lies somewhere between the academic essay and the sermon, it borders the region of popular and devotional literature yet it is sophisticated, specialized, poetical, and theological, and for the most part lacks critical attention. It too relies on Bible and tradition and has some marks of academic writing. What makes it distinctive is that, unlike most of our formal writing, it follows the conversational style, language, and use of imagery and plot that homiletics in recent decades has advocated for the pulpit. Both types exist to serve and strengthen the pulpit, but this second genre pays special attention to clarity and simplicity, creativity and experi-