

PREACHER/ARTIST: INCARNATIONAL AND FULLY EMBODIED PREACHING  
SUPPORTED BY ACTOR TRAINING METHODOLOGY

by

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## Abstract

### PREACHER/ARTIST: FULLY EMBODIED AND INCARNATIONAL PREACHING SUPPORTED BY ACTOR TRAINING METHODOLOGY

Currently, there is a gap in homiletics teaching, training, and practice. This gap is present in the preparation process, as well as in the moment of proclamation. This gap is problematic. The problem is the lack of modality and methodology within homiletics teaching and training that allows preachers to incorporate specific and holistic skills of artistry into their preaching practice process. These skills summon the realities of incarnate word and embodiment as ongoing resources for preachers. The result is a broader definition of the preacher identified as the preacher/artist.

Chapters 1 and 2 address the problem by presenting the parameters of the matter and the current climate of preaching pedagogy in theory and practice. Chapter 3 provides the context of how preaching, and the role of the preacher are defined biblically and theologically, which provides further context that illuminates the problem of how preachers are trained. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the framing for the solution in the form of embodiment, including discussions of the body as resources, and incarnation as preaching modes and formation resources. In chapter 7, specific acting techniques are explained, and their import for preachers is clarified. Chapter 8 brings the previous elements together in a proposed pedagogy model, an experiential and communal learning model, for preacher/artists. Chapter 9 provides the conclusion, summary discussion, and recommendations.

This thesis acknowledges that the preaching process is integrated within the larger scope of God's movement in creation. It is also acknowledged that the preaching person filters the revelation of God through their experience of lived theology, including sensory manifestations of revelation.

## **Dedication**

To the call to preach,

To the call to serve preachers.

To those who have come before and those who are yet to come.

## **Acknowledgments**

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To my family, friends, and supporters of all kinds – I could not have mentally, physically, emotionally, or spiritually done this work without each of you. To Mom, Dad, Julian, Erin, Jerrel, and John – you are my heart.

To the God who inspires and sustains.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	11
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....	16
1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM .....	19
1.4 AIMS, OBJECTIVES, AND QUESTIONS .....	22
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE .....	23
1.6 THESIS TERMINOLOGY .....	24
1.7 SYNOPSIS.....	26
1.8 THE NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK .....	30
<b>SECTION ONE: HISTORICAL IMPORT</b>	
<b>2. THE HOMILETICS LANDSCAPE: ENGAGING AND BUILDING FROM VOICES ON THE THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF PREACHING .....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	31
2.2 A NEW HOMILETIC.....	33
2.3 FEAR OF THE ARTIST .....	37
2.4 A LANDSCAPE VIEW .....	40
2.5 THOMAS LONG – <i>THE WITNESS OF PREACHING</i> .....	44
2.6 TERESA FRY BROWN – <i>DELIVERING THE SERMON: VOICE, BODY AND ANIMATION IN PROCLAMATION</i> .....	47
2.7 JANA CHILDERS – <i>PERFORMING THE WORD: PREACHING AS THEATRE</i> .....	51

2.8 ENGAGING THE GOAL OF EMBODIMENT AS A HOMILETICAL RESOURCE – LONG AND FRY BROWN .....	56
2.9 “TOWARD A LIVELY HOMILETIC” - CHILDERS .....	67
2.10 PERFORMING ARTIST PEDAGOGY AND PREACHING - CHILDERS .....	72
2.11 CONCLUSION .....	77
<b>3. THEOLOGY OF EMBODIED AND EMBEDDED HOMILETICS .....</b>	<b>79</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	79
3.2 PREACHING DEFINED BY THE BIBLE: REVELATION THROUGH HUMANITY .....	82
3.3 HISTORICAL THEOLOGIES AND THEORIES: PROCESSING THE REVELATORY ROLE .....	86
3.3.1 IMAGES OF THE ROLE OF PREACHING: REVELATION MANIFESTATION .....	90
3.3.2 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PREACHING AND ACTING: REVELATION AS PERFORMED PROCLAMATION.....	92
3.4 THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATE, EMBODIED PREACHER AND HOMILETICAL PEDAGOGY .....	94
3.5 REVELATION MADE FLESH: BUILDING BLOCKS OF EMBODIED PREACHING PROCESS.....	97
3.5.1 REVELATION AND INCARNATION .....	97
3.5.2 HOMILETICAL ETHICS .....	97
3.5.3 HOLISTIC EXPERIENCE .....	98
3.5.3.1 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PREACHING MOMENT .....	98
3.5.3.2 RELATIONSHIP WITH LISTENERS .....	99
3.5.4 PRACTICE AS FORMATION .....	100
3.5.5 IMAGINATION .....	101
3.6 CONCLUSION .....	102

## **SECTION TWO: HOLISTIC IMPORT**

### **4. INCARNATE WORD: CHRISTIAN PREACHING AS A CELEBRATION OF EMBODIMENT 104**

4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	104
4.2 INCARNATION: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR PREACHERS .....	111
4.3 MICHEL HENRY’S PHENOMENOLOGY AND EMBODIED PREACHING .....	114
4.4 NIELS HENRICK GREGERSEN’S DEEP INCARNATION AND EMBODIED PREACHING .....	120
4.5 HANS URS VON BALTHASAR’S THEO-DRAMA AND EMBODIED PREACHING .....	123

4.6 INCARNATIONAL PREACHING: CELEBRATING EMBODIMENT .....	126
4.7 CONCLUSION .....	135
<b>5. THE BODY OF THE PREACHER: ENTRY TO INCARNATE, EMBODIED PREACHING ...</b>	<b>137</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	137
5.2 THE BODY AS AN ENTRY TO INCARNATIONAL, EMBODIED PREACHING .....	139
5.3 THE BODY AND THE CHURCH – A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP .....	142
5.4 THE PREACHING BODY AS AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERPRETER OF INCARNATE, EMBODIED PREACHING	146
5.5 THE BODY AS THE PLACE OF LITURGY .....	152
5.6 THE BODY AS THE PLACE OF INCARNATE AND EMBODIED CRAFT FOR THE PREACHER/ARTIST .....	155
5.7 ROLE OF THE PREACHER/ARTIST BODY IN INCARNATE, EMBODIED PREACHING .....	163
5.8 CONCLUSION .....	166
<b>6. ACTING AS AN ENTRY INTO THE HOMILETICAL METHOD OF JESUS .....</b>	<b>171</b>
6.1 INTRODUCTION .....	171
6.2 REDEEMING AND RESOURCING “PERFORMANCE” AS METHODOLOGY .....	174
6.3 TROUBLESOME CONTEXT .....	179
6.4 WHAT ARE ACTORS DOING .....	182
6.4.1 CREATING THE SPACE .....	184
6.4.2 DEFINING THE CHARACTER .....	190
6.5 WAS JESUS OF NAZARETH USING ACTING TECHNIQUES .....	193
6.5.1 JESUS’ ACTING METHOD .....	193
6.5.2 SPECIFIC ACTING TECHNIQUES USED BY JESUS OF NAZARETH .....	197
6.5.2.1 “PLAYING OPPOSITES” .....	197
6.5.2.2 “STAYING ONSTAGE” .....	200
6.5.2.3 “IMAGE” .....	202
6.5.2.4 “IMPULSE” .....	204
6.5.2.5 “EMOTIONS” .....	205
6.5.2.6 “FIGHTING SPIRIT” .....	206

6.6 IS INCARNATION AN ACTING ROLE? .....	208
6.7 BECOMING PREACHER/ARTISTS .....	212
6.8 CONCLUSION .....	213
<b>SECTION THREE: PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF HISTORICAL AND HOLISTIC IMPORT</b>	
<b>7. ACTOR TRAINING METHODS: EMBODIMENT TECHNIQUES FOR PREACHERS .....</b>	<b>216</b>
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	216
7.2 DISCIPLESHIP: INTENTIONAL INCARNATIONAL, EMBODIED PRACTICE.....	219
7.3 VIEWPOINTS ACTOR TRAINING: CREATING SPACE FOR INCARNATION AND EMBODIMENT .....	222
7.4 THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE: CLEARING THE WAY FOR INCARNATION AND EMBODIMENT.....	228
7.5 LINKLATER VOICE: PROCLAIMING WITH AN INCARNATIONAL, FULLY EMBODIED VOICE .....	232
7.6 CONCLUSION .....	235
<b>8. EMBODIED PEDAGOGY FOR EMBODIED PREACHING .....</b>	<b>237</b>
8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	237
8.2 EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND REVELATION IN PEDAGOGY .....	241
8.3 KOLB AS A GUIDE TOWARDS INCARNATION AND EMBODIMENT .....	243
8.4 PREACHER/ARTIST TRAINING: ENHANCED BY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING .....	246
8.5 CONCLUSION .....	254
<b>9. CONCLUSION: PAVING THE WAY FOR INCARNATIONAL, EMBODIED PREACHING..</b>	<b>257</b>
9.1 INTRODUCTION.....	257
9.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	258
9.3 SUMMARY AND REFLECTION .....	261
9.4 CONTRIBUTIONS .....	265
9.5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	269
9.6 POSSIBLE BARRIERS AND CONTROVERSY.....	271
9.8 FINAL WORDS .....	273
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>274</b>

# **Preacher/Artist: Fully Embodied and Incarnational Preaching Supported by Actor Training Methodology**

## **SECTION ONE: HISTORICAL IMPORT**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

#### *1.1 Introduction*

Whether at a Wednesday night revival service, a Saturday contemporary worship service, or an early Sunday morning traditional service, preaching is a vital and expected part of Christian worship. Across the world, thousands of preachers proclaim “thus sayeth the Lord” every week. They preach from their personhood to a people, as they are empowered and inspired by the revelation of the Triune God. For these preachers, the role and act of proclamation have been learned through experience, tradition, and training in one form or another. It is into this last arena — training — to which this thesis speaks. When it comes to the teaching of preaching, the arena of instruction can seem limited. This is not necessarily due to a lack of care, but perhaps it does represent a lack of innovation. If preaching is the incarnational work of revelation, inspiration, and embodiment, why is it not fully taught as such?

Perhaps it is possible, because the act of proclamation is such an assumed act within Christian practice and tradition. Perhaps the Christian church has become complacent in the practice of preaching as a realization of the revelation of the Triune God. Has preaching moved from a manifestation of embodied and realized incarnate word, as demonstrated in the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth, to a movement of rhetorical skill that is disconnected from truly enlivened proclamation? Though not monolithic and exclusively definitive throughout the entirety of the Christian church, this is a question that deserves acute consideration. How preaching is taught indicates how preaching is viewed theologically and practically within the culture of church

practice. In fact, preaching pedagogy is itself a microcosm, reflecting how the role and practitioners are viewed. During times of learning the discipline, preachers are not only exploring how to preach, but also, they are discovering who they are as preachers and how the role of the preacher serves the Christian community as revelation and inspiration.

This thesis will thoughtfully and critically engage with key literature, theologies of incarnation as pertaining to the resource of embodiment for preachers, and acting techniques and methodology. This will culminate in the presentation of a framework for a proposed model of incarnational, embodied preaching practice. The thesis is a response to the need for a fully integrated methodology for incarnational, embodied preaching within homiletics training.

The field of homiletics, as well as homiletical pedagogy, is in many ways a wide-open field. Some of the prominent examples of a theology of proclamation will be discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. These theologies argue for practices that engage and answer the following questions. What is the sermon? Who is the preacher? What happens not only in the pulpit but also during the process of developing the sermon? This thesis engages these questions, as well as doing the work of highlighting further questions about the formation and function of preaching and the preacher considering holistic incarnational and embodied preaching.

A sermon message, although varying in length and centralization within denominational structure and import, is a “must-have” in a Christian worship service. The role of the preacher is one that is inherently included in the overarching role of ordained ministry. The biblical “how” and “whom” can be separated into Old Testament, namely prophets and prophetic messages, and New Testament manifestations, disciples of Christ following the model of Christ and in service

to the Great Commission.<sup>1</sup> Culturally, rhetoric came into play, influencing message formation and delivery, during the first century due to the impact of classic rhetoric on general public speaking.<sup>2</sup> However, eventually, there was a disconnection between classic rhetoric and plain speaking.<sup>3</sup> There seemed to be a desire to not hinder the Gospel by lacing it with cleverness that stemmed from artifice. There also seemed to be a desire for appreciable definitions of preaching as opposed to ethereal definitions. However, at the same time, there was a fear of “performance” watering down the Gospel.

“They [preachers] use their muscles—literal and spiritual—to ensure the message’s delivery, to make sure the message gets across or comes through. It is a clear concept. As a term, delivery may have its downside depending as it does on a mechanical understanding of communication—that is, the transportation of goods through space—yet for many it is vastly to be preferred to the artifice, manipulation, and sham associated with a word like performance. Delivery is, at least, a dignified word... We would rather imply that preaching is like trucking dry goods across Kansas than like the transaction that happens across the footlights.”<sup>4</sup>

This tension with homiletical style-defining also illuminated class and culture distinctions.<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine’s *On Christian Teaching* was pivotal in forming early preaching theory, as it introduced the aims of teaching, pleasing, and persuading in preaching. The

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28: 18 – 20 NASB.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, Vol. 3: The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature*. (Allen: Christian Classics, 1983), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Sears Baldwin, *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic: Interpreted from Representative Works*. (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010), 224. See discussion of the skepticism of the persuasiveness of rhetoric.

<sup>4</sup> Jana Childers, “Preacher. Introduction: The Preacher’s Performance,” in *The New Interpreters Handbook of Preaching*, ed. Paul Scott Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 278. In *The New Interpreter’s Handbook of Preaching*, Jana Childers goes on to provide more guidance on the difference between delivery and performance, in terms of how the terminology is received within the larger church context. “We are more comfortable with comparisons to UPS than to Carnegie Hall. We are happy to let the suggestion hang in the air that the preaching moment is like the moment FTD reaches across the threshold and lays the roses in your arms. It is better than letting people think that preaching has anything to do with pretending... Of course, it is also true that people have a right to be leery of artifice and concerned about sloppiness in the pulpit. The people of God should give schlocky, hammy, or insincere preaching a wide berth. We are right to demand authenticity from our preachers and their sermons. We are right to think that trickery and manipulation have no place in the pulpit. We are right that deception and pretense are preaching’s natural enemies. But we are not right about the word performance.”

<sup>5</sup> Pierre De Labriolle, *The History and Literature of Christianity from Tertullian to Boethius*, trans. Herbert Wilson. (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010), 133. See discussion of this class struggle and the impact of Christian discipleship and preaching as revealed in an exploration of St. Cyprian.

concepts of instructive, affective, and persuasive styles connected these aims in St. Augustine's theory.<sup>6</sup> Throughout decades of development preaching theory and practice have rejected and returned to a version of this theory and, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a definitive move toward developing a systematic theology of preaching.<sup>7</sup> However, this system begs for expansive literal and metaphorical space that allows for the movement of God and the contextualization of preachers. This contextualization is inclusive of the preacher, congregation, and the present proclamation moment in time and space.

Revelation, inspiration, processing, and proclamation converge in one moment called the sermon. However, the process of preaching encompasses many moments, before and after the sermon offering. Preachers are stewards of that moment, and this thesis seeks to infuse that process with a deep sense of incarnational, embodied preaching. This includes an example of how that process becomes a practice.

Crafted through divine inspiration, human engagement, exegesis of text and audience, language, and oratorical structure, the writing of a sermon is an art form.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the

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<sup>6</sup> Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*. trans. by D. W. Robertson. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958), 138. The entire work is a development of the theory and the application of the theory to Christian living. The argument for the integration within instructive, affective, and persuasive preaching is highlighted in the following way. "Eloquence of the temperate style, also, must, in the case of the Christian orator, be neither altogether without ornament, nor unsuitably adorned, nor is it to make the giving of pleasure its sole aim, which is all it professes to accomplish in the hands of others; but in its encomiums and censures it should aim at inducing the hearer to strive after or hold more firmly by what it praises, and to avoid or renounce what it condemns. On the other hand, without perspicuity this style cannot give pleasure. And so the three qualities, perspicuity, beauty, and persuasiveness, are to be sought in this style also; beauty, of course, being its primary object. Again, when it becomes necessary to stir and sway the hearer's mind by the majestic style (and this is always necessary when he admits that what you say is both true and agreeable, and yet is unwilling to act accordingly), you must, of course, speak in the majestic style. But who can be moved if he does not understand what is said? and who will stay to listen if he receives no pleasure? Wherefore, in this style, too, when an obdurate heart is to be persuaded to obedience, you must speak so as to be both intelligible and pleasing, if you would be heard with a submissive mind."

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching as Theology and Art* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 23. See the discussion by Achtemeier on how the art of preaching can be a panacea to rigidity formed within systematic theology.

<sup>8</sup> There are many resources available that speak on the topic of preaching as an oral art form. Some of the most useful for the points of this thesis are Tubbs Tisdale, L. (1997). *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.; Bozarth-Campbell, A. (1979). *The Word's Body: An Incarnational Aesthetic of Interpretation*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.; Tubbs Tisdale, L., and Troeger T. H. (2013). *A Sermon Workbook: Exercises in the Art and Craft of Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.; Lowry, E. L. (2000). *The*

proclamation of a sermon is a sacred performance, enmeshed in a secular/sacred context. The context is secular/sacred because that which is “outside” of the ecclesial reality is engaging that which is “inside” the ecclesial reality, creating a convergence that denies dualistic definition. Thus, a holistic all-inclusive experience is the primary point of reference. God is the original artist and Jesus of Nazareth is the original preacher performer. The point of significance for the incarnational inheritors, preachers, of this work is the practice of embodiment. This practice benefits from theory and application that invites the entirety of sensory human capacity into the process of preaching.

The research done for this thesis aims to identify aspects of a holistic, incarnational, embodied preaching process while recommending a teaching model for the experiential homiletics classroom. Theological import will be explored. Techniques and strategies for engaging a lived theology and practice will also be explored. How aspects of performing artist training can aid in the development of an incarnational, embodied practice of preaching is identified. Additionally, the artistic elements of Jesus of Nazareth’s homiletical style are identified. A useful framing message for this thesis is that the intentionality of craftpersonship is continually transforming the preacher and the message. The remainder of this introductory chapter will provide an overview of the study, including the background, the research problem, aims, objectives, and questions, the importance and significance of this study, and the limitations of this thesis.

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*Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.; and Horace and Dodsley, R. (2011). *The Art of Preaching: In Imitation of Horace’s Art of Poetry*. London: British Library, Historical Print Editions.

## 1.2 Background to the Study

Current literature concerning homiletical study and pedagogy focuses on areas such as defining the call to preach, sermon preparation, hermeneutics, exegesis, and different styles of preaching. Works such as *The Witness of Preaching* by Thomas G. Long lay a foundation for authentic and accountable sermon preparation.<sup>9</sup> *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale* by Frederick Buechner entices the sanctified imagination, enticing preachers to look outside the box to preach from the full spectrum of human experience with the divine.<sup>10</sup> There are texts that speak to preaching as artistic and preachers as the facilitators of this art. In *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, Eugene L. Lowry perhaps states it simply as he names the sermon “a narrative art form, sacred story”.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, preaching being identified as an art is not a new concept. We see this connection being made as far back as John Wilkins’ work *Ecclesiastes*.

Such artificial abilities as are to be acquired by our own industry. And these are either more general, as skill in all those Arts and Languages, which are required as predispositions. Or more particular and immediate, for the act of Preaching, or making Sermons, to which the chief helps are these three; Method. Matter. Expression. Each of these do contribute mutual assistance unto one another. A good method will direct to proper matter, and fitting matter will enable for good expression. By Method I understand an Art of contriving our discourses in such a

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 5. Long expresses the act of preaching and the humble call of preaching succinctly and with humble gravitas. “So when a preacher stands in the pulpit, reads the Scripture, and preaches the sermon, this act of speaking the gospel ripples out into the world as the church continues to speak in a thousand places and ways...People do not stand up to preach because they needed a job and have answered a want ad on a website, but because the church prayerfully set them apart for this ministry. They have been entrusted with a ministry that does not belong to them but that belongs to Christ and is given to the whole church.”

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy and Fairy Tale* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1977), 3. Buechner plainly states that the human experience is a mode and a methodology for crafting sermons. Preachers come from life and preach life amid the gospel. Life, lived experience, seems to be color the shades with which the preacher paints the message. “As surely as each of them brought a toothbrush with him, he also brought with him his loves and hates, his fears of death and his fears of life, his anxieties, his longings, his pride, his dark doubts. Each carried his world on his back the way a snail carries his shell...So one thinks of them, too, the hearers as well as the givers of lectures.”

<sup>11</sup> Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: Westminster, 2001), 4.

regular frame wherein every part may have its due place and dependence: which will be a great advantage both to Ourselves. Our hearers.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, homiletical training has not been fully approached in the way this thesis proposes. The method has not fully matched the meaning. Pockets of classes attempt to introduce the idea, but it has not been utilized as the crux of an overarching pedagogical approach to preacher training and formation. There is a missing step between theoretical proposition and practical implementation.

If preaching is an art form, then it follows that preachers are artists. This is an expansion of the theological and practical definition of “preacher”. Nothing is lost, and much is gained in this expansive process. Those who embrace this expansion can be named preacher/artists. What is meant by preacher/artist is that the proclaimers are receiving a revelatory word and are tasked with the acculturation and crafting of a sermon message from this revelation. This is done with humility, curiosity, creativity, and artistic nuance. Artistry is also found in participation in formational activity that is aimed at engaging the preacher’s artistic self and bringing that sensibility to the preaching process. The message is formed in the preacher - incarnate word - and crafted through a process, resulting in the proclamation.

This is possible and practical because there is a kinship with the performing artist, although the connection is not absolute. Where does this kinship reside? Perhaps in the textual analysis - script and sacred text. Perhaps it lives in character development for the actor and preacher formation for the proclaimer. Perhaps it inhabits the reality of being present in the

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<sup>12</sup> John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes: or, a Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching, as it Falls Under the Rules of Art.* (Farmington Hills: Gale ECCO, 2010), 4-6. Wilkins writes of preaching as an art form that encompasses “spiritual and artificial abilities”. “To our selves, and that both for Invention and Memory A man may more easily finde out things, when instead of seeking for them at randome he can have direct recourse unto all those places and heads from whence they may be most naturally collected. And more easily retain them, when they are linked together and not scattered; Method being as a chain, in which if a man should let slip any one part, he may easily recover it again, by that relation and dependence which it hath with the whole.”

body. This thesis argues for a process and practice of preaching that intentionally engages all points and aspects of revelation, reception, and impartation, within all realms of experiencing and knowing for humans. This focus acknowledges that performing artist training can be an aid in the progression of integration and holistic implementation for preachers who seek to proclaim an incarnational, embodied word for the Lord.

The connections between preacher training and performing artist training can be illuminate when looking at the curriculum of these disciplines. The curriculum of professional actor training programs not only enhances the physical, vocal, and analytical awareness of an actor, but in addition, actors are encouraged to acknowledge and embrace a continuous process of inspiration, creativity, and manifestation. In other words, they are introduced to the tools and hone the skills necessary to harness the tangible and intangible nature of artistic expression within the ongoing communion between artist and art form. Preachers in training, and beyond that point, would benefit from learning to do the same in a way that is applicable and appropriate for the preaching art form.

Exploration of these elements of professional actor training and formation, and the application to the training and formation of preachers, will allow for a more fully realized manifestation of the art of preaching. This will also possibly enhance the overall practice of operating in the call to preach from a biblical and cultural perspective. Although there is certainly the reality of anointing, gifting, and talent in both arenas of preaching and acting, skill and training are not separate from the work of raw ability or the movement of God's Spirit. This research will speak to how the intangible, gifting, and God's movement work with the tangible skill and training.

### *1.3 Research Problem*

The background discussed illustrates that, although there is a plenitude of literature concerning the “what” of preaching, the “how” and “whom” of preaching have been named, but they have not been fully explored in terms of practical application. Where is the literature about a specific methodology for the formation of preachers that allows them to participate in a fully realized and fully engaged practice of incarnational, embodied preaching that represents a lived theology? Then also, where is the literature and practice that places this methodology “on its feet”? There is a vital need for methods, not merely modes, that allow for preachers to critically and holistically engage the process of receiving the message, forming the message, and proclaiming the message within a robust paradigm of incarnation and embodiment. The lack of these methods throughout homiletics instruction and training leaves the teaching and training of preachers operating within an incomplete framework. There is a missing link. Actor training methodology is one connector within the problem of this missing link. The gap in the literature, pedagogy, and intentional practice of preaching is a problem because it leads to a compartmentalized practical theology and methodology. By compartmentalization, it is meant that often, within the homiletics classroom, it is not made clear how the leading of the Holy Spirit and the entire work of exegesis and hermeneutics can be integrated intentionally into an “on its feet” practice of preaching. The hope is that this integration is primed while engaging the fullness of God and the fullness of the human experience. Often, one holds more weight than the other in how they are treated in the formation of homiletical pedagogy and practice. Divinity engages with humanity in the work of preaching. Therefore, preaching theology and practice must do the same.

Suppose there is a belief in holistic theology of incarnate word as modeled by Jesus of Nazareth in preaching. In that case, there must be a holistic pedagogy and methodology of preaching offered to those seeking to embody the incarnate word revelation provided by the Triune God. The integration and application are necessary for the theology to spring forth as lived theology. This integration is enhanced by adding actor training methods into a preaching pedagogy approach.

This is not the realization of more “entertaining” delivery methods. Rather, this is the work of being formed in the process of practicing preaching as a craft, akin to the performing artist who is formed by the process of practicing performance as a craft. Thus, craftsmanship shares a connecting point with discipleship. Actors are vessels serving the script and the story of the dramatic moment. Preachers are vessels serving the scriptures and the story of the Triune God and humanity. The script for the preacher who is an artist, or preacher/artist, is the incarnate word built on the sacred text. Incarnate word is a particular message for a certain people in a certain time, but it also speaks to the overall revelation of God in creation.

The problem that this thesis addresses is how to holistically bridge the gap between theology and thought of preaching as an art form and the intentional pedagogy and practice of incarnational embodied preaching by preacher/artists. The gap in homiletical study and practice must be bridged because each method alone leaves out a vital aspect of the role of the sermon and the preacher. The theology and methodology offered in this thesis do not choose either side, but rather they reach toward integration. The proposed practice does not neglect anointing and consecration by the Holy Spirit, or a method of rigorous study, structure, and exegesis provided in most homiletics pedagogy models. Instead, there is the addition of experiential fully-body

learning techniques and spiritually forming body engagement in connection with the mind and spirit.

Within this thesis, it is readily acknowledged that there is tension in the homiletics field around the issue of entertainment versus edification. The terms artist, art, performance, and performer are abhorrent to some when speaking of preaching. A connection between art and preaching has been rejected due to the flippant use of these terms with negative connotations. This thesis advocates for the redemption and reintroduction of these terms, due to their inherent relevance, within a theological context supported by biblical analysis, cultural significance, and spiritual inspiration.

#### *1.4 Aims, Objectives, Questions*

This thesis aims to provide a strong foundation for bridging the gap named in the previous section. Engagement in this bridge-building process acknowledges hesitation and fear of bringing preaching into the realm of identification as an art form. Additionally, theological consideration of embodiment and incarnate word, and how these aspects manifest in homiletics training spaces are measured for import in addressing the research questions. This dissertation aims to build a robust theological and practical paradigm for teaching preaching as a holistic practice utilizing methodology borrowed from and enhanced by performing artist training. The proposed pedagogy method flows from the theology of homiletics and incarnational embodiment investigated in this thesis. The following objectives and research questions serve this thesis in accomplishing this aim.

##### Research Questions:

- 1). What is a practical and theological articulation of incarnate word and embodiment for preachers?
- 2). What might the formation and training of preachers look like within a framework of performing artist formation and training, as it pertains to incarnational, embodied preaching practice for preacher/artists?

##### Objectives:

Objective: To introduce a fresh articulation of incarnational, embodied preaching based on an embodied theology of incarnate word that is influenced by the homiletical method of Jesus of Nazareth.

Objective: Describe the integration of performing artist training methodology and homiletical methodology.

Objective: Propose a model of pedagogy that follows a particular method while leaving room for flexibility based on the contextualization of the preacher, message, and listening congregation.

### *1.5 Significance*

In this thesis, a path for filling the gap between theory and practice will be paved. This will be accomplished by identifying the breadth of the chasm, naming the markers of incarnational, embodied preaching, and proposing an innovative interdisciplinary approach to homiletic training that is holistically formational. This contributes to the current academy of homiletical study and training as well as to the practice of preaching as it manifests in pulpits. The specific benefits of this research impact the preacher with a regular pulpit assignment who has an established process of preaching and the student of homiletics who seeks to create their own process of preaching. Moreover, there is an enhancement to the view of preaching as an oral art form present within the work of the thesis.

## 1.6 Thesis Terminology

There are specific terms utilized in the scope of this thesis, and it is necessary to articulate how these terms are being utilized within the world of thesis. Although there are general understandings of these terms, this thesis uses these terms in enhanced ways that are pertinent to the outlook of creating a space for preacher/artists and the proposed practice of holistic, incarnational, embodied preaching. This use of terms is stated below.

For this work, “embodiment” refers to the possibility and practical accessibility for the preacher to be “in” their body in a holistic way. This means that the preacher is aware of the body as a resource for sermon delivery clarity, as well as for receiving the inspiration and revelation of the sermon message. A theological understanding of embodiment and a practice enhanced by actor training methods allows for the utilization of all aspects of personhood — sensory, cognitive, and spiritual — to be fully present within a practice of preaching. The preacher’s experience of embodiment with God, with self, and with others informs and translates the sermon’s message.

Furthermore, an intentional “incarnate word” preaching practice builds upon the exploration of “embodiment.” Preachers must trust and value the revelation possibility present in the bodied experience in order to step into the reality of incarnate word manifestation with awareness and humility. This is due to the enormity of the idea that the Triune God continues to self-reveal through the imperfection of humanity. The preacher’s person is the incubator of the message. The preaching process is a birthing process<sup>13</sup>, and the message is knit in the womb of the preacher’s mind, body, and spirit, inspired by the Triune God. The purpose of the revealed

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<sup>13</sup> Jana Childers, *Birthing the Sermon: Women Preachers on the Creative Process* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 9. “Preaching is a mother who conceives and gives birth to faith”.

and birthed message is the edification and encouragement of the contextualized listening audience. For this thesis, the critical import of incarnate word as a modality of preaching is that the sermon is formed in the body of the preacher's person and practice, and it is brought into the world for the continual work of salvific divine revelation.

“Performance” is a word that needs redemption in the world of homiletics. Performing a sermon does not have to be associated with a negative connotation when performance is viewed as the capacity to embrace awareness and acceptance of the nature of the preaching moment. In this thesis, performance is used to speak to the responsiveness to and acknowledgment of a heightened moment, such as a sermon proclamation, and the embodiment of methodology that enhances the holistic communication of said moment. This kind of sensitivity and reception resists artifice while pursuing revelation and surrendering to the preaching moment's larger scope and meaning.

## *1.7 Synopsis*

### Historical Import

#### *1. Introduction*

The first chapter is an outline of the overall discourse presented in the thesis. An overview of how this thesis engages the history and future of preaching pedagogy is given.

This includes an introduction to the study, aims, objectives, and research questions. The significance of the thesis is also addressed. A foundation is laid for a study that fits within the larger scope of homiletical consideration and homiletical training.

#### *2. The Homiletics Landscape: Engaging and Building from Voices on the Theology and Philosophy of Preaching*

Chapter 2 more specifically names the current, including the connection to historical approaches, landscape of homiletical thought, as it pertains to a preacher/artist pedagogy model, by reviewing the works of Thomas Long, Teresa Fry Brown, and Jana Childers. Each of these preaching practitioners was chosen due to their influence in the pulpit and the academy. In addition, each of the authors offers a perspective on preaching that can critically engage with the focus of this thesis. The thesis' articulation of embodiment and a lived theology of preaching is also introduced in this chapter.

#### *3. Theology of Embodied and Embedded Homiletics*

Chapter 3 presents a theological viewpoint of preaching, which outlines and enhances the argument that preaching is a process of embodying – inspiration to the proclamation. This process is identified and explored for tangible and intangible import, which is in and of itself a way of embracing the tangible and intangible process of receiving and imparting the word of God. The viewpoint acknowledges historical import and brings forth new perspectives. The

person of the preacher is also treated to consideration, and this attention helps define the parameters of embodiment within the sermon process and practice. The building blocks for embodiment provide a platform to speak more specifically about incarnation in the next chapter.

## Holistic Import

### *4. Incarnate Word: Christian Preaching as a Celebration of Embodiment*

In Chapter 4, incarnation as a manifestation and celebration of embodiment is surveyed theologically and practically. This exploration is holistically focused. By this, it is meant that focused is paid to how preachers might benefit from a learning environment that offers opportunity to synthesize cognitive, emotional, spiritual processing of the sermon crafting experience intentionally and explicitly. Not only is a theology of incarnation considered, but a practical embodied application for preachers is also proposed. This chapter sets up the need for experiential learning methods to be introduced into homiletics training spaces for the sake of living out the promise of incarnational preaching as it manifests in preacher/artists.

### *5. The Body of the Preacher: Entry to Embodied Preaching*

Before speaking about the connection to incarnation and an experiential homiletics pedagogy in upcoming chapters, the framework of the body as a resource within a preaching practice must be holistically explored. The core of Chapter 5 is the further development of the concept of embodied preaching as it pertains to the practice of preaching. The argument that inspiration, revelation, and sermon preparation can be engaged by the entirety of the preacher's bodied resources is outlined. This chapter also takes note of the complicated history between a theology of the body and the Christian church.

## *6. Acting as Entry into the Homiletical Method of Jesus*

Chapter 6 focuses on the holistic homiletical method of Jesus of Nazareth. This is a continuation of the progression of embodiment within the realm of an enlivened preaching process that leads to an enlivened proclamation. This chapter is also the thesis' introduction to the connection between the Incarnation in the person of Jesus and preaching as incarnational. Aspects of Jesus' preaching are identified. This identification is then classified by how actor training methods may increase preachers' capacity to engage elements of Jesus' homiletical style. Jesus is the original, and the preacher is a type of expression stemming from the original. This expression is explored more specifically in the next chapter.

### Practical Application of Historical and Holistic Import

## *7. Actor Training Methods: Embodiment Techniques for Preachers*

Chapter 7 provides a breakdown of the specific acting training methods presented as valuable, practical resources for preachers. Along with the Suzuki Actor Training Method, the Viewpoints Technique, the Alexander Technique, and Linklater Voice – are also appraised for the gaps present as pedagogical tools for preachers. As an aspect of the proposed preaching practice, the concept and reality of discipleship are also evaluated for their usefulness to the practice methodology of preacher/artists. This is the final building block towards unveiling a pedagogical model for forming and teaching preacher/artists.

## *8. Embodied Pedagogy for Embodied Preaching*

Chapter 8 presents a proposed model of pedagogy that brings the theory of an incarnational embodied preaching practice into the applied realm of the classroom. David Kolb's experiential learning method is recommended as a starting point in the work of integrating actor training methodology into an incarnational, embodied preaching practice. Thus,

all the pieces of the puzzle of articulating and accessing a practice of preaching for preacher/artists are brought together.

### *9. Conclusion*

The concluding chapter provides a synthesizing overview of the study. The overall research is viewed through a reflective lens. The research questions are revisited, within a discussion of how they have been answered. In addition, the contributions of the study are outlined. A critical eye is utilized to evaluate possible barriers to the study's accessibility to a larger audience. A discussion of how the objectives have been explored is also presented.

### *1.8 The Narrative Framework*

The content of this thesis — research, arguments, and conclusions — is meant to enhance the definition and practice of the role of the preacher within the Christian church, especially as it pertains to incarnational, embodied preaching. This enhanced definition is named the preacher/artist, and the practice encompasses the preparation as well as the proclamation. There is a narrative that undergirds the contents. The preacher is a character in the narrative, and the Triune God is the author. A preacher receives an assignment, or call, to preach. This begins a process that impacts and inspires, hopefully, the preacher, and this impact and inspiration will be shared with the hearers of the preached word. This process is spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical. It is a process that is informed by the history of the Church and the history of the preacher. The contents of this thesis are framed by levels of this holistic process and the historical process, just as the moment of proclamation is framed by the same. Throughout this thesis, the holistic and historical framing elements that are marking the narrative will be identified and utilized as support for the preacher/artist process and practice arguments and conclusions. The practical implementation of these framing elements, within a practice of incarnational and embodied preaching, will result in preaching practice that reflects the narrative nature of God's theo-dramatic engagement with creation.

## Chapter 2: The Homiletics Landscape: Engaging and Building from Voices on the Theology and Philosophy of Preaching

### 2.1 Introduction

Also, Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites explained the Law to the people while the people remained in their place. They read from the book, from the Law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.<sup>14</sup>

These verses from Nehemiah share a biblical image of hermeneutics, and therefore also share an insight into the beginnings of the preaching preparation process. Preachers read and translate for the sense and an understanding of what the Triune God is speaking into the life of creation. When speaking about the homiletical landscape, in the scope of this thesis, the term refers to how preaching is viewed and taught within the local church and in classrooms. This landscape is seen as engaging the question, “What is the essence of the role of preacher and preaching and how might those who inhabit that role do so authentically?” The task of defining preaching — theologically, philosophically, and practically — is one that spans hundreds of years of church history.<sup>15</sup> Preaching is both a movement and manifestation of the power of the Triune God, and the preacher engages in the process with his or her whole self. “A preacher’s head, heart, and affections must unite together in the Holy Spirit to produce powerful preaching that informs the mind, inflames the heart, moves the will, and transforms the life. The Word of God is the substance of our message.”<sup>16</sup> Preaching is also an intentional discipline of those who

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<sup>14</sup>Neh. 8:7-8 NASB

<sup>15</sup> See a general survey of the history of preaching in the following texts: Edwards, O.C. (2016). *A History of Preaching, Vol 1 and 2*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.; Wilson, P. S. (1992). *A Concise History of Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.; and Lischer, R. (2002). *The Company of Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

<sup>16</sup> Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), 20. The thought continues and centralizes the multi-layered connection between preacher, Holy Spirit, and Christ. “... when we find ourselves on the solid rails of the Spirit-inspired text, empowered by the Spirit’s illuminating presence, and driven by a passionate Christological motive to glorify Jesus, the train speeds along the tracks of the biblical text to its desired destination of burning hearts and changed lives.”

seek to serve these movements and manifestations. Because the word of God is what a preacher wrestles with and offers in the pulpit, and because it is a living word, every sermon is God's creation. the preacher and the congregation are also creative participants in the proclamation.<sup>17</sup> Both initial participants — Triune God followed by the preacher — contribute to the process, preparation, and proclamation of the sermon.

Moreover, the act of preaching is immersed in the life of religious tradition and ritual in a way that pulls it into focus when one thinks of the purpose of the gathered Church. "Every element in preaching gets its meaning and *raison d'être* from what preaching signifies in the Church and not only from what it achieves. The Church is here given an instrumental character".<sup>18</sup> Preaching informs the Church and is informed by the Church. The integrated life of the Church needs preaching, and preaching is God's word revealed to and shared with the people in the pews. Within the theological, philosophical, and cultural import of the preaching act, there are varied and various voices and influences. It would be impossible to give space within this discourse to all the expressions.<sup>19</sup> However, it is possible to take note of some of the major contributing voices within the culture of preaching as worship and as artful practice.

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<sup>17</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Preaching Life* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1993), 83. "...every sermon begins and ends with God. All three [God, preacher, and hearers of the word] participate in the making of it, with the preacher as their designated voice."

<sup>18</sup> Sune Fahlgren, "Preaching and Preachership as Fundamental Expressions of Being Church," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 6, no. 2 (August 2006): 195. "When the focus on preaching excludes the preacher and preachership, the Church is understood more as instrument than as sign. The Church is given a clear functional character in the new textbooks, except in Johanneryd's book. He examines a tradition in which preaching stands in a balance between instrument and sign. All aspects of preaching – the text, the interpretation, the preacher, the sermon, and the congregation – signify according to Johanneryd a given reality and not only an activity".

<sup>19</sup> See the suggested list for further study of the philosophy and theology of preaching. Barth, Karl. *Homiletics* (Westminster John Knox, 1991); Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Lischer, Richard. *A Theology of Preaching*, Revised ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001); Lischer, Richard. *The End of Words*, Reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Pasquarello, Michael. *Sacred Rhetoric* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012); Litfin, Duane. *Paul's Theology of Preaching*, Expanded and reprinted ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); Lee, Ahmi. *Preaching God's Grand Drama* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

## 2.2 A New Homiletic

An overarching voice that impacts this thesis and, for the most part, contemporary preaching is the New Homiletic approach. This approach emerged in the 1950s and was a shift to a narrative preaching style and structure that re-ignited the tri-focal connection between the preacher, the people and God.

Preaching is the event in which the biblical text is interpreted in order that its meaning will come to expression in the concrete situation of the hearers... The sermon is becoming understood as event, and event means encounter, engagement, and dialogue: the end of "monologue" in the pulpit. Preaching as a one-man affair is a thing of the past, to be replaced by that kind of participatory experience in which those present know themselves involved, even though only one man may be vocalizing at the time. The sermon is being understood as event, and the consequences of this are beginning to be understood in a new way.<sup>20</sup>

The participatory element of this approach is the call to which the argument of this thesis is responding.<sup>21</sup> The theology and practice recommended by this thesis are established in the need for preachers to engage the self, in communion with the Triune God, as a pathway to offering a sermon that is integrated within the life of the local church as well as the life of the Church. The pedagogical model proposed in Chapter 8 facilitates the

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<sup>20</sup> David James Randolph, *The Renewal of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 19. Randolph composed the term "New Homiletic" as he synthesized the thoughts of those, such as Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs, who came before. However, some have credited the phrase to Richard Eslinger and his work *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Pres, 1987)

<sup>21</sup> Several proponents of the New Homiletic are Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 4th rev. ed. (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice, 2001); *Preaching*; Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, expanded ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997); David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SCM, 1987); Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005); *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989); Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Lucy A. Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Mike Graves, *The Sermon as Symphony: Preaching the Literary Forms of the New Testament* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1997); Jana Childers, *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998); James W. Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002); Paul S. Wilson, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice, 2004).

movement from monologue to dialogue as the framework for the sermon process, preparation, and proclamation.

For this discussion, the roots of the New Homiletic are an explicit influence within the arguments. First, the word as an event is central to the goal of transformation in the preacher and the people through the revelation of the Triune God through the sermon. This necessitates contextualization work being included in the entirety of the practice and process of sermon preparation. This is the contextualization of the biblical story and the experience of that story within the human condition.<sup>22</sup> The message and the process are contextualized, and this highlights the reality of a lived and lively theology that is realized and present for the hearers of the word.

Secondly, the organic nature of the preaching process and proclamation cannot be underestimated and should not be stifled. An experiential learning practice, for which this thesis advocates, is built upon the integration of an organic processing practice that co-exists with a constructed process. The New Homiletic advocates for an organic process, as does this thesis. “Organic theories of sermon development assume that each sermon has its own distinctive life and form, more akin to a plant than to something built mechanically by adding parts.”<sup>23</sup> This is a useful image. For an organic preaching practice to develop preachers need something akin to a greenhouse. This preaching greenhouse should be a controlled, yet fluidly accessible

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<sup>22</sup> Randolph, *The Renewal of Preaching*, 22 – 23. Randolph shares that the event of the sermon includes, “that (1) preaching is contextual, not universal, and God encounters listeners in the precise circumstances of their lives, (2) sermons move to confirm experience rather than to assert axiomatic truth, (3) biblical stories make their own points not through abstraction or as history but by coming to life in the situations of the hearers, and (4) the literary form of a biblical text has a bearing on the shape and message of the sermon.”

<sup>23</sup> Paul Scott Wilson, “Word of God,” in *The New Interpreters Handbook of Preaching*, ed. Paul Scott Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 303. In addition, see the works of Horace Bushnell (Conrad Cherry, ed. *Horace Bushnell: Sermons*, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986) and I Henry Grady Davis (*Design for Preaching*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1958) as early advocates for the identification of the sermon as organic. Davis shares that, the sermon is like a tree and “an idea that grows”.

multipurpose environment that creates a space for homiletical exploration in community with other preachers. No matter the metaphorical season, the environment of holistic personhood engagement will allow for healthy and unforced growth for the preacher and the preaching. This will impact the sensibility as well as the content of the sermon. Consequently, the hearers of this organic word will also be invited to flourish organically just as the preacher has been.

The third connection between the work of this thesis and the New Homiletic is found in the previously mentioned narrative drive. “In our context, a narrative sermon is any sermon in which the arrangement of ideas takes the form of a plot involving a strategic delay of the preacher’s meaning. Otherwise put: the narrative sermon moves from ‘itch to scratch’. It is an ordered form of moving time.”<sup>24</sup> The narrative form, in that it resonates instinctually with the hearers as well as intellectually, necessitates a practice of preaching that honors and hones instinctually homiletical revelation reception. An incarnation-minded, embodied preaching practice can aid the preacher/artist in engaging, translating, and imparting the “itch to scratch” trajectory in a way that is authentic. This is due to the practice utilizing authentic and experiential learning methodologies.

The shift towards the New Homiletic was not without its detractors. Some critiques painted the method with a broad stroke that seemed to be hesitant to tip the scales of the preaching process too fully towards the human experience.

The difficulty here for evangelicals is the focus of the sermon becomes human experience rather than the God of the authoritative biblical text and what the text teaches. In addition, there is an overconfidence in homiletical method to bring about transforming experiential events, rather than a confidence in the power of Scriptural truth applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. The new hermeneutic in

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<sup>24</sup> Eugene Lowry, “Narrative Preaching,” in *The New Interpreters Handbook of Preaching*, ed. Paul Scott Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 172.

the New Homiletic has essentially lost biblical meaning because of the overemphasis on the role of the hearer.<sup>25</sup>

The work of this thesis disagrees with this assessment, as it is well-intentioned but reductive.

There is no need to choose between transformational experience and scriptural truth application.

Both are empowered by the Holy Spirit, and both can be integrated into a practice and process of preaching. Moreover, an approach that encompasses both is holistically relevant. Attuning to the human experience, especially the immediate experiences of the humans to whom the sermon is speaking, does not inherently produce a scripturally bankrupt sermon. There seems to be a hint of the fear of the “other” in the essence of this critique.

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<sup>25</sup> Scott M Gibson, “Critique of the New Homiletic,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 482.

### 2.3 *Fear of the Artist*

This fear of the “other” can be named as a fear of the preacher/artist model. A pre-cursor hurdle that must be traversed in this discussion of the homiletical landscape is fear of the preacher as an artist. Perhaps, the fear stems from a belief that if preaching is classified as an art form, then the boundaries of responsible and appropriate authority in preaching are blurred. The fear is that if preaching is an art, anything goes, and anything is accepted. Conversationally there are church-goers, preachers included, that respond viscerally to the idea that preaching is connected to any art form. Is this because there is a fear that the word of God will become a self-centered endeavor engaged by the preacher? This is not a fear that can be wholly dismissed, as there is a dangerous temptation inherent in the public nature of preaching to make it all about the preacher.

We could make a long list of such preachers: The wannabe comedian, the preacher obsessed with cultural awareness, the narrator that strings together poignant but pointless stories, the media maestro who spends hours mastering digital techniques and only minutes on the message, the preacher with an affected pulpit tone, the awkward speaker who has plenty to say but no confidence in delivery, the masterful presenter whose message is a string of banalities, the preacher who becomes convinced that personal experience and "life message" are more interesting than the gospel. The list goes on.<sup>26</sup>

Or is the fear that “art” equates to “outside the box”? If “the box” feels ecclesially and doctrinally safe, then stepping out of it must be dangerous and therefore feared. At least for some, this is the reasoning that leads to a fear of identifying the preacher as artist. This thesis is arguing that the fear is not, in and of itself, heresy. Rather, this thesis is meeting that fear with an expansive and curious response that can bring deeper understanding. Thus, allowing for preaching formation that is not inhibited by fear and is truly imaginative in the way that Walter

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<sup>26</sup> Clayton J. Schmit, “Review: Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre,” *Religion and Politics* 19, no 3 (July 1991):330 - 331.

Brueggemann advocates for imagination. “By ‘imagination’ I mean the capacity to generate and enunciate images of reality that are not rooted in the world in front of us. Thus, imagination moves outside the box of the given and the taken for granted.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, facing the fear of the preacher as artist is taking a leap of imagination, as well as a leap of faith.

As the preaching culture takes on this leap of imagination, there is, perhaps, also a fear that art translates to superficial, trivial, and idle. In other words, once the leap is taken, where does the preacher and the sermon land? There is a history of this kind of skepticism in the arena of defining the role of preaching and the accountability of the preacher. Consider the 15th-century morality play *Mankind* and how it raises the question and perceived danger of idleness within the preaching practice. In the play, the character Mercy is accused of being an ineffective preacher due to the use of idle language. Consequently, the character Mankind is left without sound counsel and succumbs for a time to the pitfalls of New Guise, Nowadays, and Nought.<sup>28</sup> The character of Mischief mocks the idle preaching of Mercy as useless.

I beseech you heartily to leave your flattering, leave your chaff, leave your corn, leave your silliness. Your wit is little but your head is big. You are full of predication. But sir I pray answer this one question. Mish-mash, driff-draff some was corn and some was chaff, some was corn and some was crap. Unshut your lock and take a halfpenny.<sup>29</sup>

Explicitly, the idleness warned against in the play is the idle use of language. But there is also an implicit physical idleness that is warned against. The fear presents as a fear of the sinister apathy, that perhaps seeks personal glory over glorifying God, sneaking into the entirety of the

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<sup>27</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching and Emancipatory Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 30.

<sup>28</sup> Godfrey Allen Lester, *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays: Mankind, Everyman, Mundus et Infans* (London: Methuen Drama, 2008), 1 - 58. Being a morality play, the action of the narrative surrounds the theme of good versus evil. In addition, there is some emphasis placed on the dangers of idle goodness as being just as harmful as the “evil” influences.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 5. The character, Mischief, delivers this mocking rebuke to Mercy for the ineffective preaching that was just provided.

preaching process, and thereby negatively impacting the formation and discipleship of the church. Thus, the fear of the artist, for some, is perhaps based on a seeming opposition – study and humility versus apathetic entertainment and self-centeredness.

Art is experienced and mined for import through the filters of relationship and involvement. The fear is that if preaching is art, then preaching will not be taken seriously or practiced seriously. An assumed conclusion is that art is for entertaining, not edification. How might the academy of homiletics practitioners overcome fear and suspicion when considering preaching as an oral art form and preachers as artists? One answer is to dive fully into interdisciplinary discussion and facilitation within the homiletics classroom. Partnering pillars from performing artist training with preaching pedagogy is one tangible anecdote to the negative manifestations of these fears. In addition, this partnership allows for a productive conversation that does not need to be afraid of the connection between sound preaching and creativity.

## 2.4 Landscape View

The dialogue of this thesis centers around the manifestation of the incarnate, embodied word as it forms in and through the preacher/artist.<sup>30</sup> The discussion necessitates engaging a theologian and pedagogy of preaching that can theorize and facilitate a practice of preaching that is historically and holistically in sync with the current landscape, while also enhancing the current landscape. Charles L. Bartow asks the question, “How do preachers read, receive, and inwardly digest the written word of the Bible as God’s own Word to them and to their congregants?”<sup>31</sup> This question focuses the view of the landscape of homiletical questing in the present moment. It frames the conversation to which many voices of preaching practitioners and professors lend their voices. This conversation is vital for the sake of holistic homiletical engagement.

This thesis willingly engages with the voices of those speaking about aspects of a preacher/artist framework, even if the connection is implied rather than explicit. These are voices that are well-regarded in preaching circles and homiletics classrooms for their innovation within the theology and philosophy of preaching. They are meaningful dialogue partners within this thesis’ argument of preachers as performing artists who seek to engage in a process of incarnational, embodied preaching because within their own work they create space for formation that is holistic. The work of this thesis pursues the enhancement of the conversations engaged by these dialogue partners. This enhancement is proposed in the form of methodology that would allow the preacher/artist to put theology and ideas “on their feet” as a part of a preaching practice. This section of the thesis will allow for clarity to be given to the strengths

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<sup>30</sup> This thesis utilizes “word” when speaking of the proclaimed message from the preacher, and “Word” when speaking of the Incarnation Word presence of Jesus Christ.

<sup>31</sup> Charles L. Bartow, *God’s Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 457. Bartow writes these words as he is addressing the task of interpreting God’s Word.

and limitations within the current homiletical landscape when speaking about incarnational, embodied preaching.

Many viewpoints within the homiletical landscape offer profound guidance for preachers. Coming from his or her particular gifting in and philosophy of preaching, each preacher adds color and texture to homiletics theory and practice. For example, Lenora Tubbs Tisdale facilitates a conversation that enhances the use of an artist framework for preaching and preachers. Her work, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, makes clear connections between exegetical work – of text and congregations – and working within a creative flow as a preacher. This flow focuses on language and forms as the foundations that lead the preacher to “lead the circle dance” as a dancer, model, initiator, and choreographer. “The sermon itself is a participatory act in which the preacher models a way of doing theology that meets people where they are, but that also encourages them to stretch themselves by trying new steps, new moves, new patterns of belief and action.”<sup>32</sup> This is a conversation that places the artistry of preaching not only in the realm of sermon delivery but also in the realm of an artistic theology of preaching.

In, *I Believe I'll Testify: The Art of African American Preaching*, Cleophus LaRue highlights the need for a homiletical viewpoint that does not depend on too narrow a theological or imaginative purview. In the chapter, “Imagination and the Exegetical Exercise”, LaRue presents an argument that American protestant preaching has lost the priority of utilizing imagination as a preaching resource for exegesis and for delivery. “It too often lacks sparkle,

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<sup>32</sup> Lenora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 125. “Contextual congregational proclamation on Sunday mornings is a lot like folk dance. The preacher, functioning both as dancer and as leader in the dance, stays close to the ground of the local community, inviting and encouraging others to join in the circle dance of faith.” This explanation and imagery by Tubbs Tisdale are helpful in detailing how the language and form of the sermon, “the circle dance”, is the arena of the preacher. This arena necessitates a practice that engages the dance and identifies the preacher as artists.

intrigue, provocative thought, and mental images that help us to see and to say the Word in new ways. The preaching that many of us are inclined to do is discursive and rationalistic, given to simple outline form as if that's all our people expect from us."<sup>33</sup> LaRue names, and perhaps mourns, the loss of explicit nurturing of imagination within the preaching, and by extension the imagination of the preacher. Integrated, incarnational, embodied preaching practice can aid this imagination formation and nurturing process.

These are critical and helpful viewpoints and entry points into the “what, why and how” of homiletical training. However, this thesis is going to focus on the work of Thomas Long, Teresa Fry Brown, and Jana Childers due to their focus on elements that implicitly and explicitly lean towards the artistic enhancement of preaching formation in a more immediately accessible applied manner. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the specific contributions from each of these preachers and teachers of preaching to a method of teaching and practicing preaching as an incarnate, embodied art form. A lively homiletic, as named by Childers, and what it has to do with embodiment and incarnational preaching will be explored. An introduction to the connecting points between performing artist training and homiletics training will also be offered. This trajectory will build a solid foundation for the remainder of this dissertation's considerations.

Thomas Long is an advocate for the importance of effectiveness, through the effectiveness of the preacher's witness, within the current preaching culture. Teresa Fry Brown

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<sup>33</sup> Cleophus J. LaRue, *I Believe I'll Testify: The Art of African American Preaching* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2011), 71-80. Expanding on this point, LaRue shares, “Our creative energy goes into saying it quickly and quietly, getting the gospel drudgery out of the way as soon as possible. More often than many of us would like to admit, we are, in a word, boring. We speak only because we have to say something, as opposed to speaking because we have something to say.”

presents preaching as a technical art, due to her background and practice. Jana Childers presents preaching and its processes as a performing theatrical art. These definers are not exclusive, but rather encapsulate the main thrust of the preaching theology and philosopher presented by each of these preaching theologians and practitioners. Their work is presented as inspiration and practical pedagogy. Their shared goal is to connect thoughtfulness about the theology and philosophy of preaching with repeatable and applied practice activities. In terms of the fear of the preacher/artist mentioned previously these voices help illuminate an implicit pathway to artistry within a preaching practice. This dissertation takes this pathway and expands and enhances the implicit, making it explicit. There are safeguards in the proposed interdisciplinary pedagogy model that address the fears and how missteps might be avoided with a disciplined process of artistry and craftspersonship.

## 2.5 Thomas Long – *The Witness of Preaching*

Preaching is a wild river, wide and deep, and one of the goals of this book is to encourage the modesty and caution needed by all who navigate its white-water currents... To discover joy in the work of preaching does not mean whittling down its size, hiding from its demands, minimizing its perils, or even eliminating its anguish. What it does mean is strengthening our grip on the truth that the announcing of the good news of Jesus Christ in human words is an inestimable gift from God.<sup>34</sup>

Seeking to instruct and inspire, these words encapsulate Rev. Dr. Thomas G. Long's philosophy of preaching, in that they speak to the use of humble belief, faithful hermeneutics, sound exegesis and dynamic presentation.<sup>35</sup> Long's influence within the preaching academy, and within the formation of preachers, can be traced to his work equipping preachers.<sup>36</sup> The preacher/artist paradigm is one that embraces the wild river and hopes to guide the process of strengthening our grip on the truth in ways tangible and intangible.

Contextualization of the current homiletical climate, particularly in Western culture, involves a seemingly small circle, and Long is in the elite ring of this circle. He has been named one of the most effective preachers in the English-speaking world<sup>37</sup>, and his seminal work, *The Witness of Preaching*, has been dubbed one of the 25 most influential books on preaching in the last 25 years<sup>38</sup>. Although it is important to note that these lists and classifications are heavily rooted in a specific lens of Christian preaching that represents a mainstream standpoint, that fact

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<sup>34</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 13 – 14.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. See Long's assessment in the first three chapters of *The Witness of Preaching* as he lays out a definition of preaching based on the culture of preaching, biblical witness, and biblical exegesis.

<sup>36</sup> Dave Bland, "Questions Preachers Ask: Essays in Honor of Thomas G. Long," *Homiletic* (Online) 42, no. 2 (2017): 44. Available at: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLAIgFE180213000023&site=ehost-live> viewed 2 July 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Larry Lyon, "Baylor Names the 12 Most Effective Preachers," Baylor University Media and Public Relations, (1996) viewed 25 October 2020, <https://www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=1036>.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Dudit, "The 25 Most Influential Preaching Books of the Past 25 Years," *Preaching*, (2009) viewed 27 October 2020, <https://www.preaching.com/articles/the-25-most-influential-preaching-books-of-the-past-25-years/>.

does not take away from the circumstance that Long is looked to as a pillar and a model in the homiletical classroom and the sanctuary pulpit.<sup>39</sup>

*The Witness of Preaching* is found on many of the required reading lists of homiletics courses across the United States, although there are critiques of Long's subjective approach.<sup>40</sup> The subjective nature of the approach is not a detractor, but rather a strength in that it allows preachers to see themselves as not empty vessels but rather humble witnesses who testify to the work and revelation of the Triune God. Long is clear and concise, while he is comfortable with vision-casting. In this way, he models what he is seeking to guide others in practicing as they proclaim. His approach is grounded and yet open to the mysterious movement of God's hand in the process of preaching. Long is a proponent of the New Homiletic approach and his work connects to the offerings of this discourse by providing a definition of preaching that is widely accessible and accepted by the academy and practitioners.

Accountability to the task and to the tradition of preaching is at the forefront of Long's discourse. This thesis agrees with Long's essential definitions concerning the role of the preacher and the writing of a sermon. "The move from text to sermon is a move from beholding to attesting, from seeing to saying, from listening to telling, from perceiving to testifying, from

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<sup>39</sup> C. J. Childs and Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford, "Book Review: Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.," *Review & Expositor* 115, no. 1 (February 2018): 139. "One can hardly argue with the strength of a preaching text that includes twenty-five years of Long's experience, research, and experimentation in preaching while teaching at the seminary level. It is an experienced text that is written in very practical verbiage, barring none from joining the journey to better preaching."

<sup>40</sup> Helge Stadelmann, "The Role of Exegesis and Biblical Texts in Preaching the New Testament: Engaging with the New Homiletic," in *Preaching the New Testament*, ed. Ian Paul and David Wenham (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 241. Stadelmann critiques Long's approach as being too subjective. He voices hesitation at equating the witness of preaching with the actual import of the sacred text. "Certainly, Long's emphasis on preaching biblically and his claim to prepare for sermons exegetically are to be welcomed. His emphatic consideration of the listeners is indispensable too. But it would be a decisive step forward if the subjective and multifaceted interpretations of preachers and listeners were not too readily called the 'Word of the Lord'. A better alternative is to have the witness of preaching inalienably linked to the faithful testimony of what biblical texts actually intended to say – speaking the message in such a way that its claim can be heard in diverse situations today as the Word from God."

being a witness to bearing witness.”<sup>41</sup> Yet, there is a question left unanswered in his treatise. How do student preachers, as well as experienced preachers, fulfill the responsibility that Long argues for in his work? How might preachers move with these from-to rhythms within a practice of preaching? This thesis’ dialogue with Long, centers on Chapter 10, “From Desk to Pulpit”, as this is the chapter that seeks to take preachers from study with precision to standing in the place of proclamation. This chapter, or rather what is missing from the chapter, is a fit beginning to the conversation on fully embodied preaching.

If Long is one of the formative works framing mainstream homiletics education, then it is only natural that his work helps to frame the world of this thesis. He casts a creative vision for preachers and the preacher’s process from inspiration to proclamation. Long helps preachers embrace the call to be a witness to the story of God and humanity. As this vision takes form, his work lays the groundwork for building an experiential and artistic-leaning learning environment when teaching preaching. For preachers to take this vision to the level of full embodiment, actor training embodiment methods can partner with Long. The preaching pedagogy that follows in chapter 8, would be an integrated preaching practice methodology that marries theory and praxis. Thus, preachers will be empowered to take hold of Long’s vision while summoning an even more holistic embodied revelation process to come to fruition.

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<sup>41</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 114 – 116. “We have been sent to the Scripture on behalf of the people, and having encountered and listened to the text, we have experienced firsthand the claim of the text. Now we turn toward the sermon, toward the pulpit, toward the people to tell the truth about this claim.”

## 2.6 Teresa Fry Brown – *Delivering the Sermon: Voice, Body and Animation in Proclamation*

Rev. Dr. Teresa L. Fry Brown is a professor of preaching and a prolific homiletician who has influenced generations of preachers through her teaching and preaching service.<sup>42</sup> Her preaching practice and theology is influenced by her experience as a speech language pathologist prior to her career in practical ministry.<sup>43</sup> It is this influence that allowed her to connect voice, communication, and speech technique into a methodology of preaching practice that enhances any conversation about embodiment as it pertains to Christian preaching.

Fry Brown lays out the process of serving the word of God through communication, inculturation, vocalization, articulation, embodiment, and animation. Each of these areas is viewed through a lens of being, in part, a technical artist. “Sermons are basically an arrangement of sounds, words, movements, and even silence used to communicate faith claims. The preacher’s ability to transmit these faith claims or beliefs clearly and effectively assists the listener in processing the message.”<sup>44</sup> These elements of delivery are tied to her overall philosophy and theology of preaching.<sup>45</sup> Delivery of the sermon is presented as the culmination of what has already been prepared, rather than the end-all by itself.<sup>46</sup> It follows then that the preparation practice should be viewed as a process in and of itself rather than only thought of as a means to an end. Formation happens in the practice as well as in the moment of proclamation.

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<sup>42</sup> “Teresa Fry Brown – Faculty Profile,” Candler School of Theology, viewed 13 October 2020. <https://candler.emory.edu/faculty/profiles/fry-brown-teresa.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Teresa Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon: Voice, Body, and Animation in Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 2. “My profession as a teacher and practitioner in speech-language pathology has given me expertise in phonation and sound production, human transmission systems, sound perception or hearing, and acoustic, physiological, psychological, and linguistic phenomena of human speech.”

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 2. “The role of the preacher is to assist the listeners in the identification of spiritual, social, cultural, psychological, and economic issues that have an impact on daily life.”

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 2. “Delivering the sermon entails basic knowledge of communication and the preacher’s use of voice and diction to transmit the message. In the midst of singular definitions of “good” preaching, the study of communication is an essential tool for sound delivery of the good news. The content of the sermon may be excellent, the context fully understood, the exegesis may lead biblical scholars to cheer, but a weak delivery can overshadow all the preliminaries.”

Fry Brown's text presents a kind of anatomy lesson that builds into holistic lesson of the preacher as instrument, a study in the living organism of preachers and preaching. This, in and of itself, is a model and a method for embodiment in that it denies a separation between thought and action, vision and vision-casting.

And since men are made for wisdom and justice, and true wisdom is the recognition of God and the contemplation of nature, we should acknowledge that we need to know anatomy in which the causes of many actions and changes can be observed in ourselves.<sup>47</sup>

For Fry Brown, the formation is tied to the function, and both are tied to the larger work of lived theology in community and culture. This formation-function-formation model speaks to a reality of living out the theology of preaching in the practice of preaching. "Lived theology highlights the particularities of experience, narrates 'lived life' with God in its brilliance, depth, detail, and intensity, and affirms the wisdom and detail of these experiences as constitutive aspects of the theological enterprise".<sup>48</sup> The body's anatomy is an experiencer and a narrator of this 'lived life'. The anatomy of communication, the culture of preaching, and the instrument of the voice are the primary themes visited in exploring these connections. The implementation of this anatomy lesson within the person of the preacher is achieved through exercises introduced by Fry Brown.

Much like with Jana Childers' work in *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre*, this is a vital and formational offering in that it spends a good amount of time describing "on its feet"

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<sup>47</sup> Philip Melancthon, *Orations on Philosophy and Education*, ed. Sachiko Kusukawa, trans. Christine F. Salazar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 164 – 165. "Even though the frailty of our bodies can be known also without knowledge, by said examples, nevertheless those who are forewarned by knowledge are less imprudent. The knowledge of anatomy also shows the connections of the parts among themselves. Since therefore the usefulness of knowing the structure of the human body is remarkable, anatomy is by no means to be neglected..."

<sup>48</sup> Charles Marsh et al, *Lived Theology: New Perspectives on Method, Style, and Pedagogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21. Additionally, Marsh shares that, "It would presume, in its method, style, and pedagogy, that the patterns and practices of social existence are an essential part of faithful theology (and indeed, not just practices and patterns as a conceptual category, but individual narrated accounts of lived life)."

practice. The addition for which this thesis argues is the intentional implementation, through pedagogy and habit, of a practice of embodiment as a core, not optional, element of the homiletics training environment. This is the building of a hermeneutic, a process of interpretive engagement, of lived theology through a holistic practice of preaching. To be sure this is, in part, a carnal hermeneutic, that seeks to mine the “surplus of meaning arising from our carnal embodiment, its role in our experience and understanding, and its engagement with the wider world.”<sup>49</sup> This work is the labor of uncovering and recovering amidst contextualization that is sometimes a barrier. “For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible.”<sup>50</sup> Fry Brown helps preachers see a way towards hearing, and a practice of incarnational, embodied preaching is the discipline of regular engagement in the fully bodied process.

A carnal hermeneutic calls for a carnal application in process thought and deed. An initial step in adopting this application to introduce visceral language into how one thinks of preaching. Such visceral language in the description of process of preaching can translate to a visceral proclamation of the sermon message.

My initial preparation stage is a slow burn. It is as if my mind is on simmer. I feel something within, but it is in the nebulous part of me just beyond reach. It is like the early stages of a pregnancy or after seeds have been planted. I know there is a new life, but I cannot locate it in the ultrasound of my mind.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor, *Carnal Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>50</sup> Hwa Yol Jung, *Prolegomena to a Carnal Hermeneutics* (Lanham: Lexington Boosk, 2014), 8. “Carnal hermeneutics means to cure the long tradition of Western disembodied misconception of truth, reality, and the world since the time of Plato’s “idealism” based on (visual) eidos, which was resurrected in Descartes’s epistemocracy as prima philosophia in pursuit of “clear and distinct ideas” in Western modernity.”

<sup>51</sup> Teresa Fry Brown, “A Love Letter Written in Blood,” in *Birthing the Sermon: Women Preachers on the Creative Process*, ed. Jana Childers (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 16.

These words, from Teresa Fry Brown's chapter within the book *Birth of the Sermon: Women Preachers on the Creative Process*, encapsulate the need for a unique learning and processing space that supports the laboring work of preaching craftsmanship and the transformation of the preaching within the process. The "slow burn" and "simmer" spaces are fertile soil for creativity and manifestation in many ways. How much more integrated could these spirit/mind spaces become for the preacher if they are buoyed by not only individual time in spiritual communion with self and God, but also by collective study encounters within a practice community such as a homiletics classroom? The "new life" can be born in an artistically influenced and communal learning environment, thus enhancing the aspect of community during the proclamation by having already been processed in a common and shared atmosphere. The transition from personal inspiration to public inspiration will be more easily, and hopefully more deftly, traversed. Like Long, Teresa Fry Brown offers crucial ground from which to propel this study into its next phase.

There is a direct and implicit connection between Fry Brown's work and this work of this dissertation. Much like the symbiotic relationship between technique and personality influenced artistry, Fry Brown's technically proficient preacher and the preacher who benefits from the holistic practice and pedagogy offered by the work of this study create one preacher who is skillful and artful. This is a thesis that speaks to incarnational preaching and embodiment. Fry Brown helps to communicate the message that skill combined with artistic sensing and sensibility is the complete package that is needed to carry the word of God.

## 2.7. Jana Childers – *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre*

Rev. Dr. Jana Childers has been at the center point of the conversation surrounding preaching as a performing art for over two decades. This is due, in large part, to her contribution to the subject of preaching as a theatrical art in *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre*, which was published in 1998. The foundation-building text has been celebrated and recommended as a sound resource, “For preachers who want to explore ways to bring vitality to their sermon delivery and who are not afraid to consider the possibility that the art of preaching lies among the performing arts.”<sup>52</sup>

This effort joined a chorus of works within the field of homiletics that are concerned with the performance aspect of preaching.<sup>53</sup> Childers goes several steps further than those who had come before, by seeking to help preachers grasp the attributes of actors that may enhance their preaching skills in a formational way as well as in the performance of the sermon. However, her work is not whole-heartedly accepted in all corners of the preaching academy. “Only in passing does she mention exegesis, and fails to make explicit how an exact understanding of a text, the formulation of its message in view of the listeners, and its lively performance could practically culminate in the sermon.”<sup>54</sup> Childers’ work is critiqued by some for not engaging an explicit definition of how exegesis fits into the model of preaching and preaching formation that she presents in her work. Her work seems to assume that hermeneutics and exegesis are going to be a part of the process for the preacher, and this is a valid assumption. She is seeking to enhance

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<sup>52</sup> Schmit, “Review: Performing the Word,” 330.

<sup>53</sup> See the works Ward, R. (2001) *Speaking from the Heart: Preaching with Passion*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishing. Bartow, C. L. (1997). *God’s Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans. Each of these touches upon the idea that preaching is a creative art and preachers are artistic practitioners.

<sup>54</sup> Stadlemann, “The Role of Exegesis and Biblical Texts in Preaching the New Testament,” 237. Stadlemann continues to say, “Unfortunately, Childers does not take the opportunity here to elaborate in any detail on what the contribution of exegesis to the task of the preacher would be at this point...Rather, she recommends experimenting with the text and in this way trying to find a convincing expression of what it might have meant.”

the conversation of preaching as an art form, and her content follows that trajectory. This thesis endeavors to walk that path as well, taking it a step further, and Childers' work is a helpful support.

Her work is a work of practical ministry application as a homiletician. "This book is my attempt to start a conversation about preaching and its closest cousin...The questions raised here come not from the point of view of a cultural anthropologist or a dramaturge; they are not prompted by or pursued under the auspices of the performance studies movement."<sup>55</sup> Childers makes it clear that there is a certain separation that needs to be subverted to participate in her proposed methodology. This thesis would ask, "Does that barrier line truly exist, or is that a byproduct of contextualized tradition and even cultural skepticism?" In many ways once the perception is broadened, one can see that the separation is a matter of perspective. In addition, it is important to ask, "How might a preacher actively invest in this methodology, outside of the realm of individualized or cursory involvement?" Childers' work fits into the New Homiletic's narrative and holistic approach, and thus is a productive dialogue partner for this thesis' focus on preacher training and formation.

Childers' text is laid out in a three-part outline. First comes the theory, followed by the practical import, and concluding with a chapter that draws the pieces together as a kind of exhortation for preachers. There is a call to be present to the word as those who draw the Church "together in our leaning – leaning into the holy, leaning into the mystery"<sup>56</sup> in a way that rises above drawing power or mere participation.<sup>57</sup> The theory is wrapped in Childers purpose and

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<sup>55</sup> Jana Childers, *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 11.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid, 143.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 143. It is interesting here that Childers advocates for a definition of preaching as performance that transcends a "weak" homiletical method that puts incarnate word in a place of impotence when the performance aspect is not fully embraced.

aesthetic of preaching.<sup>58</sup> The practical application is tackled through an introduction to training for performance learning techniques and an explanation of what actors know.<sup>59</sup> This last element, what actors know, will be discussed in more detail in chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis.

Childers' work seeks to bridge the gap between theory and praxis concerning preachers as artists. In support of this goal, much is offered to build a solid foundation for the validation and implementation of actor training techniques as tools for homileticians. She makes leaps towards exploring how preachers can be prepared for fully embodied presence in the moment of preaching.

Collective is touched upon in Childers' theory and theology of preaching. "Behind the mechanics and skills that bring theatre into being, there are norms and values that shape its ethos. The habitus, or habits of the heart and hand, are strategically important in making the collaborative aspect of theatre work and in making it 'art'."<sup>60</sup> For this thesis, the power of the collective learning environment is theological and practical. Collective is tied to experiential learning in community. In community, a fuller story of God's work is revealed, as opposed to the individual experience. Learning from and with others is a pathway to humility and the sharing of grace. These are vital themes and resources within Christian discipleship, and they are vital elements of a practice of preaching. Furthermore, fears – of artistry and being an artist within the world of preaching – acknowledged and explored in a collective and communal environment are less likely to overtake the import of the overall endeavor. The collective, therefore, ushers in an openness that informs and forms the participants.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Jana Childers, *Purposes of Preaching* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 39-47. In this essay, Childers unfolds a definition of the purpose of preaching as the facilitation of seeing Jesus' purpose and personhood.

<sup>59</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 99- 120. In this chapter, Childers outlines the disciplines and values of theatre artists "that preachers may find useful in the practice of their own art."

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Spezio, Gregory Peterson and Robert C. Roberts, "Humility as Openness to Others: Interactive Humility in the Context of L'Arche," *Journal of Moral Education* 48, no.1 (April 2018): 40. This project conducted by this

In Childers' work, there is also the potential for a theology of collective that encompasses a process of discipleship akin to artistic craftsmanship.<sup>62</sup> However, two elements are missing from her argument. A praxis of vocal and body awareness and the formulation of a preaching collective enhance the preacher's ability to embody what Childers is offering. Concerning these elements, Childers does not travel far enough in creating an experiential learning space. She offers suggested exercises, but the power of participating in a practice in community is not prioritized. There may be practical reasons for this omission. The foundational and transformational benefits of these elements, partnered with God's Spirit, are what make incarnation in the preaching moment a reality.

For Jana Childers, the congruence between the art of the preacher and the art of the theatre artist is a worthwhile lens from which preachers can learn and grow as messengers of God's self-revelatory incarnate word. This thesis agrees and stresses the need to add practical application opportunities within homiletics pedagogy. These opportunities would be best traversed in a communal learning environment. Childers is presenting, implicitly, the notion of, not only preaching as a performing art, but also preaching training being done in an organic collective, invested in ongoing communal learning. This will allow for organic, lively, authentic preaching that shapes the preacher and the community to which he or she preaches while

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group of researchers "Develops a theory of interactive humility as openness to others by foregrounding interaction and interpersonal context." This work highlights how the tangible and intangible aspects of communal engagement facilitate humility and openness to the processes that benefit, holistically, the formation of the participants.

<sup>62</sup> Valerie A. Brown and Judith A. Lambert, *Collective Learning for Transformational Change: A Guide to Collaborative Action* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 27 – 29. Brown and Lambert lay out a collective learning model that adheres to the following three rules. 1) In a convivial learning process everyone accepts that the people, time, and place are "right". There is mutual commitment to the learning task and trust of the process; 2) In an open collective learning process everyone agrees to adopt the Rules of Dialogue – Everyone speaks from the heart, Everyone listens without judgement, Everyone learns from each other, The answer is always yes; and 3) A collective learning process seeks to maximize not reduce diversity. This means establishing the following: mutual trust, mutual respect, an inclusive language, use of imagination, and an open mind.

increasing the desire for this kind of sustained and sustaining experience with one another and with God.

Childers' work is closely related to the effort of this thesis to extend and enhance the notion of the art form of preaching and preachers as artists. Her work, in a way, is handing off the baton to the arguments that follow in this thesis. She has set a stage and now the preacher formed in the pedagogy and practice of this study can walk the boards of that stage as a true preacher/artist. This is the work of putting theory "on its feet" in practice. The preacher/artist can engage God, self, and the Body of Christ as they prepare, process, and preach the word of God. As many who have written about the formation of preachers and homiletics pedagogy have stated, preaching is an art form. Childers takes this a step further by adding specificity to her argument. She draws direct parallels between the world and the processes of preachers and actors. However, the power of her proposition can only be fulfilled in practice. Even more, these on-the-feet actions should be done in collective and in community. The conversation begun by Childers is a catalyst that begs for continued study and implementation.

## 2.8 Engaging the Goal of Embodiment as a Homiletical Resource – Long and Fry Brown

Thomas Long and Teresa Fry Brown speak specifically to embodying the sermon as it pertains to an understanding and the performance of preaching. Long identifies the need to “embody the needs and situations of others” and embody the “formative force” of the biblical text.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the sermon becomes a lived, contextualized manifestation of revelation the Triune God. Might not this require a plan of meditation and action that includes a practice of embodiment for the preacher? Fry Brown sets embodiment as one of six foundational elements of delivering the sermon while integrating a full-body approach to proclaiming. The core of her argument identifies honing the skills of presence awareness, imagination utilization, and emotion attentiveness as the pathway towards embodying the word.<sup>64</sup> Exercises for an embodiment practice are offered in her work. Embodiment is a foundational aspect of philosophy and implementation of the proposed pedagogical model in this dissertation. Although the discussion of implementation, individually and collectively, as a practice is absent in terms of building a preaching practice within the classroom, each of the experts provided vital elements to a framework that can bolster a holistic practice process for preachers.

In the reading of the chapter “From Desk to Pulpit”, it may not be immediately obvious that there is a missing link in the connection points that Long is making. But for delivery to become manifest, there must be just as much attention paid to the preacher’s capacity to embody the sermon as there is attention paid to the sermon writing. This is where performing artist training can serve as a bridge between theory and praxis. In essence and ethos Long is engaging with Childers’ connection between preaching and performance here. Childers shares, “Ideally, in

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<sup>63</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 71 and 118.

<sup>64</sup> Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon*, 59-75. Chapter 5 of Fry Brown’s *Delivering the Sermon* names the building blocks of her philosophy and practice of embodiment for preachers.

the case of both theatre and preaching, performance means the use of self as vehicle—the disciplined giving of one’s voice and body to a message, idea, or experience that needs one. Indeed, many artists have found such discipline to be a corrective for an inflated ego.”<sup>65</sup> To fully implement Long’s, and Childers’, philosophy, preachers need pathways that travel from head to heart through the body of the preacher.

This kind of training also meets the need, that Long points out, for preachers to approach preaching as a dialogical encounter between preacher, audience, and God.

A sermon happens only when we open our mouths and the hearers open their ears. People may call it “our sermon,” but it does not belong to us alone. It belongs as well to those who help create it by their listening. To put it theologically, a sermon is a work of the church and not merely a work of the preacher.<sup>66</sup>

It is useful to express these sentiments and to communicate to the collective preaching intellect, and these truths will certainly be agreed upon by homiletical practitioners. However, a practical method of embodying this truth will serve to make the elusive clearer and allow obtained skills to be an entry into unity between preacher and audience.<sup>67</sup>

Long speaks of the pros and cons of using different types of text support, the use of illuminating quotes, whether to rehearse the sermon, and the importance of believing what is preached. The conclusion is that, ultimately, what matters is, “(1) You must be present in the speaking; (2) some significant message must be spoken: and (3) the listeners must be active partners in the event.”<sup>68</sup> This begs the question, “How does a preacher prepare to be present?”, and an answer is a preaching practice that utilizes actor training methodology.

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<sup>65</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 49.

<sup>66</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 263.

<sup>67</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), 74. “When a speaker is addressing an audience, the members of the audience normally become a unity, with themselves and with the speaker... Writing and print isolate. There is no collective noun or concept for readers corresponding to ‘audience.’”

<sup>68</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 264.

Something that such a practice offers is resistance of dangerous compartmentalization that alienates the preacher's practical and practiced process. Without the practice aspect, the "how" is not sufficiently explored or expressed in a way that offers a clear path to execution. There are methods of getting the philosophy and theology into the mind, but what of the body and spirit? What of the heart's connection to the philosophy and theology? The points and routes offered in this study, through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, are a holistic pathway.

For instance, when a preacher is preparing a sermon through a "careful advanced selection of apt words, phrases, and images for sermons in an act of ministry"<sup>69</sup>, the body must be a part of the process. Long agrees with this and offers more cognitive learning resources – books about body and vocal mechanics - in response.<sup>70</sup> Cognitive learning is not exclusively how one absorbs physical and vocal awareness and knowing. The mind and the body are partners in the learning process, and they are partners in a person's capacity to engage what has been learned to produce further knowledge. "Because the somatic self is essentially expressed through this purposive intelligence, while the term "body" is too often identified with mere physicality, I use the term soma to designate the living, sentient, purposive, perceptive body that forms the focus of the interdisciplinary project of somaesthetics."<sup>71</sup> For preachers, this further knowledge can include homiletical revelation. Thus the "body" is a part of a mind-body-spirit learning and receiving process and each element should intentionally be included in the preacher's learning process.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 264.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 269.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Shusterman, *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 92. Shusterman goes on to share that, "In celebrating the body's effectively purposive yet unthinking spontaneous performance in perception, speech, art, and other forms of action, these philosophers recognize that such intelligent spontaneity is not mere uneducated reflex but rather the acquired product of somatically sedimented habit, which often goes by the name of muscle memory."

Exclusively cognitive learning pedagogical models are also not the best way to strengthen oral to aural communication skills. Preachers seeking to hone their skills in this arena need guidance in not only delivery of the sermon, but the role of effective communication as a holistic preaching resource for incarnational and embodied preaching. A communal, experiential learning environment is one that forms the preacher's skill with communication, imaginative use of oral to aural communication, and sense of confident authority while communicating in the role of preacher. This kind of learning includes “enactive mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal”.<sup>72</sup>

Cognitive learning can certainly be a starting place, but without experiential follow-up, reflection, and more follow-up, preachers are left as talking heads, searching for an embodied outcome. The preparation of the person of the preacher – body and personality – to be the vessel is not a matter of merely emptying oneself, as is sometimes suggested in homiletics training. Simultaneous engagement of mind, body, and spirit during the process, from inspiration to proclamation is necessary.

For Long, “witness” is a crucial aspect of defining the role and activity of the Christian preacher.

In one sense, the personal characteristics of the witness do not matter. The court is interested in the truth and in justice, not in the witness per se. In another sense, however, the character of the witness is crucial. If the witness lies — bears false

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas M. Cavanagh, Christopher Leeds, and Janet M. Peters, “Increasing Oral Communication Self-Efficacy Improves Oral Communication and General Academic Performance,” *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (June 2019): 441. “Research has demonstrated that having a skill is necessary but not sufficient for successful performance of that skill; individuals must also have confidence, or self-efficacy, in their ability to employ that skill in a given situation. Self-efficacy is vital for activating a skill set, especially in novel or high-stress situations, situations that students find themselves in when they need to transfer the oral communication skills they learned in an academic setting to a professional setting. Evidence shows that self-efficacy is one of the most important factors for predicting whether people will transfer skills learned in one setting to another, and self-efficacy is one of the key individual traits that predicts whether students will apply skills gained in educational or training settings to actual work performance.

witness — the ability of the people to discover the truth will suffer a grievous blow.<sup>73</sup>

This definition implies a non-dualistic interaction between the self of the preacher and the relationship that the preacher has with the truth. The personalized nature of being a “witness”, in its practical humility, gives way a defining truth and justice that is God’s truth and justice. Therefore, the personal has a communal impact. This truth, for Christian preachers, can be named as God.

Long is drawing upon an image of the witness in a judicial process and the import for this thesis focuses on the intentionality and immersion that comes from this imagery. A witness is summoned into proceedings. A witness is compelled to respond. Witnessing necessitates the reality of an environment that seeks and supports the significance of the testimony. Witnessing is done for the sake of the community. All these aspects of the preacher as a witness can be enhanced in a homiletics classroom that embraces performing artist training as an integral part of the curriculum. Witnessing is not a theoretical pursuit, but rather it is pragmatic and immersive. While participating in an embodied homiletics pedagogy, preaching students can be prepared to embrace the role of witness while modeling the overarching premise and power of witnessing within the narrative of the Church.

Fry Brown has her notions about how to introduce embodiment into the proclamation process, and this also speaks to Long’s definition of the preacher as a witness. She focuses primarily on the moment of sermon delivery as the ultimate point of embodiment. For the sake of this discourse, the focus will be placed on Chapter 5 of the text and the discussion of embodiment. Fry Brown offers this definition. “Embodiment is the act of representing something in a bodily or material form. It occurs when someone speaking uses their physical self

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<sup>73</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 51.

to transform an abstract, mental idea into a concrete form, shape, or representation to assist in establishing its meaning for the audience.”<sup>74</sup> There is no argument with this definition. It resonates well within the world of illuminating the purpose of embodied preaching that this thesis presents. Much like with Thomas Long’s work and Jana Childers’ work, the questions that hang in the ethos are two-fold. First, by what means do preachers represent and re-present a valid manifestation of the aspects argued for as a skill and homiletical method? This is not a switch that can be flipped on when presented with a cognitive definition, even when accepted as a true definition. Secondly, how might this work be done in community with other preachers engaged in the practice for the sake of lived theology learning?

As the text delves into embodiment issues that involve preaching presence, emotion, aspects of speech formation, sermon formation, and worship, exercises are offered to address the active engagement of attending to these areas as a preacher. These exercises call for deep reflective work on the part of the preacher. This is good. This is formational. This is more support for the argument that these exercises might better serve the process when done amid a preaching practice that creates a safe space for this exploration within a community of preaching students. The reasoning for this integrated approach is the presence of a call that begs for a response. The practice is the response, by and for the preacher’s sake and the listeners. The call and response are representative of a certain meta-narrative within the story of God and creation. This approach also benefits a manifestation of communal formation that serves as a model within the larger context of the Church. The local theology presented within the homiletical methodology follows and leads the preacher.

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<sup>74</sup> Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon*, 59.

Fry Brown makes a point that defines the connection between embodiment and passion, which this thesis needs to note.

Regardless of where we begin, that passion steps from the corners of the mind into the midst of the conversation. It may be subtle or pronounced, smoldering or blazing, soft or loud, but the passion should be ever-present in the sermon. It is the lens that overlays each text. It determines how we embody the sermon. As the bard would say, whatever you attempt in relating the word, make sure it is authentically you and not the result of pressure to be like someone else.<sup>75</sup>

This statement teases several key points that will be further investigated later in this dissertation's discussion of embodied preaching practice as a homiletical method. First, preachers need a particular kind of guidance in creating a space to process how passion steps into the midst of the conversation. This is not to say that one cannot do this work in solitude with the guidance of spiritual practices. After all, this dissertation argues against duality as a primary mode of critical engagement. However, there is value in external processing when it comes to development and formation. An experiential pedagogy allows for, and even invites, exploration and nurturing of the full personhood of each student who is journeying to discover and refine their preaching voice.

Secondly, the personal experience and passion of the preacher is a lens for the sermon message. This does not take away from the power and purpose of God's inspiration. It seems to be in line with God's dramatic interaction with humanity. Embodiment is a tradition begun by God and carried out through incarnational preaching. By this, it is meant that embodiment is not merely a method of style enhancement but also a resource of formation that connects to the embodiment found in the incarnation of Christ. This thesis argues that preaching is an incarnational — done in the tone and sense of the Incarnation — act. Embodiment techniques

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 69.

impact message reception and delivery substance. However, ultimately, it is the formational import that is most vital for preachers and the role of preaching.

Lastly, expressing from a place of authenticity is a skill. Enhancing this skill requires awareness and acceptance of each preacher's created uniqueness or "weaving".<sup>76</sup> There are spiritual formation aspects and psychosocial aspects that must be explicitly acknowledged within the preaching classroom. Additionally, a vigorous self-reflective self-concept allows for a greater capacity to make meaning for self and guide others to do the same.<sup>77</sup>

A path to the type of embodiment hinted at by Long and Fry Brown can be found in aspects of actor training. For actors, body preparation is done through conditioning that surrounds physical capacity and awareness. To embody a story, with the intention of delivering it to others, the story must permeate the actor's body. This is so that every part of the person is engaged in the present moment of storytelling. Some may consider this to be a figurative journey. However, any actor going through training in a structured fine arts program knows that there are skills that help this symbolic expression become a literal manifestation. Training is the catalyst and conduit for the embodiment of the character in the story.<sup>78</sup>

There are many types of physical training for actors. These methods can aid Long and Fry Brown's embodiment concepts come to life for the preacher. This thesis will use Tadashi Suzuki's Actor Training Method as an example. Suzuki's method was formed during real-time rehearsal conditions. He asked the question, "How does one open up to the experience of

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<sup>76</sup> This is a reference to the notion that, based on Psalm 139: 13 – 14 (NASB), human beings are "weaved" in their mother's womb by the Triune God. "For You created my innermost parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, because I am awesomely and wonderfully *made*; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well". This points to the inherence value and uniqueness of each individual. This "weaving" is a part of the personhood that authenticity supports, as it is the specificity and particularity that enhances the resource of embodiment. A dampening of this "weaving" is a dampening of the embodiment.

<sup>77</sup> These three points will be further explored and support in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

<sup>78</sup> This point will be further explored in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis.

personifying a character within a story?” He answered this question by focusing on the person of the actor, trusting that the character development would follow.<sup>79</sup> This means not merely saying put your leg here or move your head like this to portray “x” emotion. The goal is to increase an actor’s physical consciousness, which in turn increases his or her ability to respond, in the moment, to what is happening. The extraordinary is found and explored within the ordinary. “It made my hair stand straight up. I didn’t know it was humanly possible for people to do what they were doing. I don’t mean physical tension or anything, but the way they were transformed. They were the whole range of what’s possible for a human being.”<sup>80</sup>

Taking the conversation back to the world of proclamation, there is overlap in the goals of the preaching moment. The artifice of acting on stage does not remove it from the realm of touching the reality of human experience. In fact, that is what draws people into the story being told. A moment of preaching is a moment of story. It is a message within the continuing story of God and humanity. It is a heightened moment, pulled out of the ordinary by its inherent nature. Preachers, as is true of actors, have their selves and their practiced beliefs as resources at this heightened moment. There is stimulation, a text, and proclamation or performance.

The moment is facilitated by the proclaimer/performer, but it is not owned by them. There is a communal purpose. Preachers and actors are not speaking their own stories, but rather are testifying to the heart of the story.

They [the congregation] are present in the moment of speaking, and their presence exerts a shaping force on the communication. Preachers do not “own” their sermons in quite the same way that authors “own” their manuscripts... A sermon

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<sup>79</sup> Paul Allain, *The Art of Stillness: The Theater Practice of Tadashi Suzuki* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 96. “Suzuki’s way of shaping the actor opens up many questions about what performer training is for and how it might be conducted. His process is demanding, precise and extremely technical, but paradoxically this allows the trainee great freedom. The performer is working on himself rather than a character and can create his own fictional context for the movements if desired. The external form is fixed but the imaginative focus is not prescribed other than engagement with a presupposed audience”.

<sup>80</sup> Wendy Mortimer, “Researching the Potential of Merging Suzuki’s Method of Actor Training with Western Vocal Pedagogy: An Interview with Robyn Hunt and Steve Pearson,” *Voice and Speech Review* 4, no. 1 (July 2013): 322.

happens only when we open our mouths and the hearers open their ears. People may call it “our sermon,” but it does not belong to us alone. It belongs as well to those who help create it by their listening. To put it theologically, a sermon is a work of the church and not merely a work of the preacher.<sup>81</sup>

Moreover, there is an inherent “breaking of the fourth wall” during proclamation that is not necessarily inherent within other types of performing. Worship and liturgical studies professor, James F. White, identifies the protestant move towards a less distracting worship environment during the Reformation Period. The goal was to centralize the pulpit and bring the preacher and the people closer together.<sup>82</sup> This is a goal that remains within protestant preaching traditions. In fact, the goal is to offer trustworthy transparency wrapped in the elements of the heightened moment of proclamation. In theatre, the fourth wall is a barrier. It is a wall with a window, but it is there to protect the artifice of the world of the play. “Breaking the fourth wall” in theater is a method of acknowledging the audience and it changes the tone of the moment tremendously.<sup>83</sup> In preaching, there needs to be a breaking down of barriers, for the sake of the message being fully proclaimed and fully received. This breaking of the fourth wall can elevate skepticism and some of the manifestations of fearing the preaching art and preacher/artist in that the humble authority and credibility of the preacher is made evident.

Suzuki training is meant to be experienced and can be difficult to explain outside of the in-the-moment experience. However, Suzuki-trained instructor, Paul Allain, points the uninitiated in a helpful direction.

“There is a core set of walks, marches, and forms focusing on spatial awareness and rhythmic sensitivity, demonstrated by the teacher. These are then repeated by

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<sup>81</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 263.

<sup>82</sup> James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 139.

<sup>83</sup> Nathaniel Davis, “Not a Soul in Sight!: Beckett’s Fourth Wall,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 86. “The theatrical device of ‘breaking the fourth wall,’ wherein on-stage actors acknowledge the presence of the audience, has come to be seen as a characteristic technique of modernist theater. The modern form of this device was developed in the early twentieth century as a rejection of the ‘suspension of disbelief’ demanded by realist and naturalist theater, which Gerhart Hauptmann explained should be written “as though the stage did not have three, but four walls”.

students, with little verbal instruction in-between the exercises. You learn with the body, not through questions...In such silence there can be a progressive heightening of concentration as you move from one exercise to the next, and it is vital to try to sustain and build the focus rather than let it dissipate between sequences.”<sup>84</sup>

What might interdisciplinary training — traditional homiletical training and the Suzuki Actor Training Method — look like? Would the core aspects of Suzuki training translate? For certain curiosity and creativity would be bolstered. Translation would be possible and helpful for preachers, and resilience would be nurtured.

“I think that anything like this that would teach fighting spirit, that would teach not giving up, that would teach perseverance, that would teach going beyond what it is that you think you can do—again without tension, without recruiting [unnecessary tension], without gripping and bearing down—that that would be extremely useful to them. Anything that is teaching people to be where they are in the moment...”<sup>85</sup>

The Suzuki Actor Training Method is not the only performing artist technique that will be referenced in this dissertation. However, the connection and mutual benefit of actor training and embodied preaching, with the connecting thread of discussions from Long and Fry Brown, is crucial for this thesis. More connecting work will be done in the following chapters of the thesis.

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<sup>84</sup> Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 115.

<sup>85</sup> Mortimer, “Researching,” 324.

## 2.9 “*Toward a Lively Homiletic*” – Childers

Childers’ goal is to open the minds of readers as to what preaching can do and how preaching functions in the Christian church. “What makes a sermon work, fly, come to life, have zing, take wing, tear the place up? What gets a sermon up off the stage, across the pews, and down into people’s insides? What gives preaching transconscious appeal – the kind of impact that affects not just cerebrum but cerebellum too?”<sup>86</sup> She is arguing for a movement “towards a lively homiletic”.<sup>87</sup> The next-step question, it can be argued, is “What makes a preacher’s work fly, come to life, have zing, take wing, tear the place up?” Childers’ discourse leads one to want to address, holistically, what might give preachers transconscious capacity, thus enabling them to preach a transconscious word.

It is acknowledged by Childers that the historical trajectory of homiletics training inclines toward being skeptical about categorizing preaching as an art form.<sup>88</sup> She leans into an understanding of preaching as being a peculiar endeavor and thus should be approached with intentionality aimed towards rising above the ordinary as a backdrop to the preaching moment. Embracing the theatrics at the preaching moment allows one to travel the already present connecting pathways between theatre and church. Childers offers this imagery to usher her readers into her argument. “...in art, and in theatre in particular, a young Christian girl didn’t have to choose between head and heart, orthodoxy and ecstasy. You can have them both. Theatre delights in juxtaposition, ambiguity, and tensiveness.”<sup>89</sup> Voicing her approach in this

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<sup>86</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 19.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 15 – 35. In this chapter, Childers argues that “contemporary preaching has suffered from the fact that homileticians have sometimes paid more attention to sermon manuscripts than to sermons...theological language and reflection point us toward a bigger, livelier picture – a model of preaching that is by nature a creative event and whose purpose it is to open us to God’s movement. Such a homiletic will need a method that can help preachers not only with words on a page but with performed words – the enlivened, embodied words that preach.”

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 9. Childers attributes this to fear, misconceptions, and the “burden of a few fat questions.”

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 10.

way defines the character of the text. This assertive slant is necessary to break through the comfortable, sometimes complacent, and dualistic context of homiletics theory and practice.<sup>90</sup>

What has often been seen as black and white, she claims, is meant to be viewed in full of color.

Childers builds a strong foundation. She gets specific, offering exercises, while seeking to redeem and redefine performance for a perhaps doubting audience. Especially useful is her differentiation between art and entertainment.

“Many faithful people for whom the word *art* raises a red flag are not thinking about art at all. They are thinking about experiences they have had with kitsch or propaganda – with the gratuitous, the trivial, the sentimental or the manipulative. Art that deserves to be called art does not teach, it reveals. It is not about lessons, but illumination; not about persuasion, but epiphanies; not about decision, but discovery. Art does not aim at entertainment, but pleasure.”<sup>91</sup>

This redemptive definition of art allows the reader to willingly suspend their distrust of performance in the church. To build upon this groundwork, we must consider the “how” question of her hypothesis. In her endeavor to advocate for a methodology that is robust and relevant for preachers, Childers leaves the reader questioning how these aspects of a lively homiletic can be introduced and nurtured. A way of answering that question is by utilizing performing arts training and building a theology of the preaching collective.

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<sup>90</sup> Williams R Utall, *Dualism: The Original Sin of Cognitivism* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 310. “Dualism, in a nutshell, is the conviction that there are at least two levels of ontological reality. This view of nature has come in many versions over the millennia, Dualisms range from primeval spirit– body dichotomies to sophisticated and arcane mind– brain distinctions made by today’s technical philosophers and cognitive neuroscientists. Whatever the respective form it took at one or another period of human cognitive activity, the strong belief that there may be distinguishable kinds of reality has played a central role in human affairs including, as I argue here, scientific psychology. From its earliest manifestation as a response to the observation of death and bodily decay, through its essential role in religions of increasingly sophisticated kinds, to an arguably nontheological technical philosophy, to modern cognitive neuroscience, dualist ideas have exerted a powerful influence on how humans construct their environments and live their lives. Not only has its influence been strong, but also it is indisputable that if one were to simply count noses, the dualists would vastly outnumber holders of the opposing view— material monism— the belief that only one kind of ontological reality exists. The single form of reality to a monist is the material one; a corollary concept is that all other events and phenomena arise from processes and actions of the material substrate. Included among these “other” events and phenomena are the observable aspects of behavior and, to whatever limited extent it may be possible, the inferred properties of mind.”

<sup>91</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 68.

The aspects that Childers highlights can be found in the curriculum of the training that actors go through to increase their capacity to embody the characters and stories they will carry and announce as artists. This is a holistic practice of performing arts. Fays Simpson shares, “Holistic acting means that the act of acting is a benefit to your system, not a drain. [It] is a holistic training, based on the belief that self-knowledge, having the courage to unpack and look at the contents of that unpacking, will uncover the complexity of the psycho-physical self.”<sup>92</sup> Childers, not in these specific terms but in spirit, she advocates for a mindset that embraces vacillation between self-awareness and community awareness because preaching speaks to the entirety of human experience.<sup>93</sup> Physical training for actors is about enhancing the ability to move through and negotiate the waters of the story.<sup>94</sup> For example, in a Suzuki Method actor training class<sup>95</sup>, the physical exercises are a means to explore how to be intentionally present for the character and an overarching story. The actors may not explicitly focus on a particular

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<sup>92</sup> Fay Simpson, *The Lucid Body: A Guide for the Physical Actor* (New York: Allworth Press, 2020), 20. Fay Simpson speaks to this. “The Lucid Body Basics are the fundamental building blocks of a new language, a new insight into character diagnosis... Using Carl Jung’s theories of persona and shadow, you will start with understanding why we are the way we are. Then we can look a character in the face with honesty. This is me. Who are you? Let’s meet and make magic, get something done...Exploring, uncovering, digging deeper, flying higher, you will move into new places of self, those small voices become large and those undetectable feelings, immense.”

<sup>93</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 16.

<sup>94</sup> Rafael, 25 – 26. “So would the actor who views a play as an opportunity to show off his vocal prowess, his imaginative and complex choice making skills, or his range and virtuosity in developing a character. We would all be better off if he just concentrated on what needs to be done to tell the story to an audience...By embracing the principles of storytelling at the very beginning of the creative process, he avoids many possible pitfalls and much unnecessary work. The goal is efficiency. The framework of the story provides the actor with a context that organizes his or her choices so that all the efforts become cumulative and move towards the purpose of conveying information. For acting is a constant state of telling. Every movement, every look, every breath taken onstage is a process of revelation and communication. Storytelling affords the actor the means to take control of, and the opportunity to take responsibility for that process.”

<sup>95</sup> “Suzuki Method,” Global Shakespeare, viewed 20 October 2020,

<https://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/glossary/suzuki-method/> “The Suzuki method of acting, developed by Tadashi Suzuki is one of the most commonly taught acting methods in the United States. It has been taught at schools such as Julliard and Columbia and has been gaining popularity with the Royal Shakespeare Company. The Suzuki method works to build an actor’s awareness of his body, especially his center. The method uses exercises that are inspired by Greek theater and martial arts and require great amounts of energy and concentration. They result in the actor becoming more aware of his natural expressiveness and allow him to commit more fully to the physical and emotional requirements of acting.”

moment or line of character text. Rather the class content focus on being present as the character in various exercises that challenge artificial spatial and communal awareness. These exercises take the body out of pretense and promote breath to harness intentionality. The exercises help actors “hear the hum” present in every organic moment of life. They learn to dive into the rhythm presented in real-time instead of reproducing an imitation response that feels disingenuous to the human experience. The approach is a method for uncovering the core of the art and the core of the artistry.

For some, it is an answer to the vagaries of psychologically dominated acting and the constraints of realism. For others, it provides a daily routine that hones mental abilities – concentration, rhythmic sensitivity, and spatial awareness – as much as it coaches muscles. Many find it refreshingly challenging regarding the vexed issues of discipline, individualism and creativity in training, and the role of the teacher or trainer.<sup>96</sup>

Vulnerability is an essential aspect of this training. Learning to embrace vulnerability begs for an experiential and ongoing process. “Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity.”<sup>97</sup> Are these not aspects that every preacher might want to be imbued into their entire preaching process, from inspiration to the proclamation? In a communal practice environment, preachers can experiment and discover how an increased capacity for openness to many modes of divine revelation can be a mutually beneficial for preacher and listener. A theology of collective for the preacher includes a plan for this kind of learning to be nurtured as part of homiletics pedagogy.

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<sup>96</sup> Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 2-3.

<sup>97</sup> Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York: Avery, 2015), 33. Brene Brown makes a convincing argument for daring to risk vulnerability to receive the benefits that are found in the intentional process of “daring greatly”. Since preachers are proclaiming a sovereign and vulnerable God, it is important that they explore all the facets of these images for self and others.

Much of what Childers is speaking to is the training of preachers, enabling them to facilitate and be a guide, through the moment of proclamation, to how humanity encounters tangible and intangible movements of the story of Divinity and humanity.<sup>98</sup> There is a need to, if not own, then harness the ongoing dialogue and energy between these characters in the story. This is what the preaching moment is built for, in an individual and communal sense. We speak to “creation, incarnation, transformation, epiphany, illumination, annunciation, inspiration, creative spark, spirit, and communion.”<sup>99</sup> These are more than mere terms for the church and the theatre. These are lived into realities. “Living into” is the daily struggle and joy of both arenas. Learning how to engage this reality in a collaborative environment, such as the homiletics classroom, will prepare preachers to embrace the possibility of transformation. They will, in turn, be able to offer that possibility to their congregations.<sup>100</sup> Performing artist training is meant to allow the tangible to be seen in the intangible and vice versa.

We once asked a group of students where else in life they recognized Viewpoints at work... The ultimate lesson of Viewpoints, after all, might be one of humility. We did not invent a system that the world mirrors. Rather, it is the natural world itself that holds such timeless and consistent patterns of behavior. It is our struggle to name the patterns and then apply them to our art.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 25.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>101</sup> Ann Bogart and Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 209-210. “The answers flew. One young woman talked about her waitressing job and how she suddenly became aware of how she and her co-workers were Viewpointing: Another student talked about his new favorite television station: Animal Planet. Since starting Viewpoints training, he had gone home every night to obsessively watch, in his exact words, ‘Flamingos and rhinoceros and beetles doing the Viewpoints.’ Watch the way animals flock. Watch the way a school of fish shifts direction as if one. Watch people waiting for a bus or train—when one person leans out to check for the oncoming vehicle, others immediately follow. Watch people on the subway or watching a movie—when one person shifts weight or angle, there is a ripple reaction that follows from one to another.”

## 2.10 Performing Artist Pedagogy and Preaching – Childers

Childers suggests that actors can be a kind of mental mentor, helping to shape the process even if direct engagement never happens, to preachers. Throughout her text, she presents very practical cognitive information about aspects of actor training that can enhance a preacher's process. She speaks of vocal training and vocal awareness, physical training, and physical awareness and admits that these are more than tools. They are a way to enter a door to the transformation that preaching opens. These skills are spiritual disciplines that mirror the craftsmanship of actor training. Yet, the image she creates of the preacher attempting to introduce, implement, and hone these skills in solitude is problematic. Much discovery that happens with actor training – the openness gained in mind, body, and spirit, and the ability to embrace the mystical nature of performance – can only be most effective while done in collective and in community.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, a practical approach to communal praxis is vital.

Childers mentions Stanislavsky's Method Acting to illuminate some of the specifics of utilizing actor training to train preachers. It is useful to look at the focus of Method Acting to further this discussion. There is a helpful argument presented by psychologist and researcher Raquel Andres-Hyman for how Method Acting aids in creating and maintaining an environment of truth for the performer and the audience.<sup>103</sup> In the classroom, these elements of Method acting

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<sup>102</sup> Joseph Chaikin, *The Presence of the Actor* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2012), 35. Working in community builds resilience and clarity. "A company of actors—in relation to the work that they are performing—is a community. We started from scratch, from the procession which begins the piece, and then examined and re-examined and re-examined our attitudes to the audience and to the material. Only when we finally began to examine our process of examining were we able to alter our approach to a more creative one, and only at the point where we fully gave up and let the production collapse were we able to begin to build. We slowly did exercises in and around the material and began to reconstruct the work. This time we reconstructed it in a much more formal way because it was much clearer what the intentions were to be".

<sup>103</sup> Raquel C. Andres-Hyman, John S. Strauss, and Larry Davidson, "Beyond Parallel Play: Science Befriending the Art of Method Acting to Advance Healing Relationships," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 44, no. 1(March 2007): 84. "Because method maintains as a central ideology the virtue of truth in acting, this begs the question of how an actor remains truthful while portraying a character unlike him or herself. The truth in method acting draws from several (unofficial) tenets that outline the actor's essential tasks: (a) reproducing a recognizable reality, (b) ensuring that all behavior is psychologically sound (i.e., follows a single overall purpose or "through line")

are practiced through a variety of exercises, which creates an internal vocabulary that enhances the ability to be embodied and impart the character and the story. The internal process aids and guides the external manifestation. This issue of availability to the character and the story is key. Desiring to be available is the beginning of the process. Desire must be met by action. Then, the progression of becoming can engage the full extent of human awareness. This exploration process is not only a way of self-knowing but also communal and Divine knowing. This desired knowing is written in the knitting of humanity and informs thoughts and perceptions. “Explore me, O God, and know the real me. Dig deeply and discover who I am. Put me to the test and watch how I handle the strain. Examine me to see if there is an evil bone in me, and guide me down Your path forever.”<sup>104</sup> Knowing is an exploration, and the self-revelation of the Triune God through the preached word is a part of this probe. Performance training facilitates this exploration. In addition, collective as experiential group learning is akin to collective discipleship practice. In the collective, truths can be named and explored not only for the sake of the individual but for the sake of the community.

It cannot be stressed enough, that the ongoing process of “on your feet” training is what is necessary to develop the resilience that preachers and their communities need. Not only can this model be seen in arts communities, but there is an overarching biblical example as well. Human interaction with Divinity is couched in the context of the larger community. From God’s proclamation that it was not good for Adam to be alone to the declaration of Jesus Christ that He would be with us always, it is evident that community is our context.<sup>105</sup> The transformational

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of the character that can be then subdivided into smaller doable “actions” or “objectives”), (c) expressing genuine emotion, (d) drawing from one’s own personality to bring forth psychological truth, (e) using improvisation and spontaneity to enliven the performance, (f) communicating intimately with other actors in the scene, and (g) using objects for their symbolic and solid, material relevance.”

<sup>104</sup> Ps 139: 23 – 24, NASB.

<sup>105</sup> Matt 28: 20, NASB.

nature of this community is that all individuals within are unique. Therefore, there is an inherent tension about how to function productively amid our diversity. Working in a collective teaches us how to be unified while we are distinct. We have a desire for this level of connection.

Joining with Childers' theory requires acknowledging that homiletics pedagogy needs a realized manifestation of the creative collective.

...creativity may be defined simply as the bringing of something new into the world. 'it is catching and holding fast a fleeting moment of truth...' It is discovering a new interpretation or taking something that already exists and changing it in an unpredictable way... The interpretive process is a generative and incarnational activity. Something new is born out of the coming together a text and interpreter.<sup>106</sup>

It follows that pedagogy for this creative process of interpretation needs a parallel generative and incarnational structure. A way to offer this structure is through the addition of performing artist training that stokes the fires of creativity and engages the entire body while stimulating the mind and the spirit.

The focus on concentration, observation, and imagination by Childers is valuable and she shares some exercises to hone these skills. These exercises open curiosity and present an invitation that can be fully realized in a preacher/artist experiential learning environment. One can imagine the intrigued preacher practicing some of these exercises based on the description on the page. However, has it had the opportunity to travel through the body and become part of the muscle memory, thus becoming a reliable resource? Probably not. This is not how human beings learn.<sup>107</sup> There is much less chance of substantive development of positive emotions and

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<sup>106</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 79.

<sup>107</sup> John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, eds. *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Washington: National Academies Press, 1999), 224. "Knowledge that is taught in a variety of contexts is more likely to support flexible transfer than knowledge that is taught in a single context. Information can become "context-bound" when taught with context-specific examples. When material is taught in multiple contexts, people are more likely to extract the relevant features of the concepts and develop a more flexible representation of knowledge that can be used more generally. Students develop flexible understanding of when, where, why, and how to use their knowledge to solve new problems if they learn how to extract underlying themes and principles from

enhancement of emotional intelligence in a solitary, cognitive experience. Even if one gets up on his or her feet in their sermon preparation time, collective reflection, which leads to action, is missing. The elements of emotional intelligence formed within a communal experience of practice is necessary for embodied learning, embodied processing, and embodied application.<sup>108</sup> A collective interpretive process, including the on-going formational interpretation of the preacher, is indispensable. The collective also offers the opportunity to receive and impart grace. This is something that the preacher can offer outside of the preaching collective.

Childers is implying collective practice when she introduces the idea that there is an ethos created by performing artists from which preachers can learn and should emulate.<sup>109</sup> As identified within the world of the arts, it is evident that a collective learning environment is an optimum context for the habitus to live.

The role of witness, which Long encourages, also requires that preachers have access to a kind of preaching cooperative. Without communal consequence, there is no testimony or witness needed. This collective, of sorts, is created for the purpose of establishing, refining, and cultivating a practice of preaching that includes a lived theology of the preacher as a witness. This collective serves as a laboratory of exploration, and the presence of other preacher witnesses increases the permanence of the learning environment. Each preacher bringing a sense

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their learning exercises. Understanding how and when to put knowledge to use — known as conditions of applicability — is an important characteristic of expertise. Learning in multiple contexts most likely affects this aspect of transfer.”

<sup>108</sup> Jo Ann A. Abe, ““Positive Emotions, Emotional Intelligence, and Successful Experiential Learning”. *Personality and Individual Differences* 51, no. 7 (November 2011):820. “Finally, positive emotions and emotional intelligence may also contribute to successful experiential learning by fostering reflection, which has been identified as ‘one of the core process variables’ involved in successful experiential learning. Given that by definition, emotional intelligence involves information processing with respect to the affective system, it is particularly likely to be strongly associated with deeper processing of experiences and higher levels of integrative thinking.”

<sup>109</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 111. “Behind the mechanics and skills that bring theatre into being, there are norms and values that shape its ethos. The habitus, or habits of the heart and hand, are strategically important in making the collaborative aspect of theatre work and in making it ‘art’. Commitment to Energy, Respect for the Body, and Hospitality are the linchpins of this habitus.”

of humility and vulnerability in an experiential learning environment creates a kind of cooperative that enriches the lived theology that preachers seek to invite others to engage. More depth on this topic will be explored later in this dissertation. For now, the task is to examine how Long's view of an implied preaching collective can benefit from performing artist training.

Homiletics curriculum that seeks to adhere to this aspect of Long's preacher witness model can take from Suzuki's method the reality of the power of collective learning for transformative pedagogy. Yes, preachers for the most part preach as individuals. In the same way, only one actor portrays a role at one time in a play. However, the "one" is not the only participant in the experience in either arena. There is an audience and a congregation. Training as a collective lends itself to spiritual transformation that cannot be done alone. In training, "There's something soothing, something powerful in breathing together, but there's something wonderful about having a simple vocabulary that you then express together in a kind of tribal or collective way. We share that, and in its simplicity, we're trying to find ascendancy."<sup>110</sup> It is possible that the same collective soul can be harnessed for preachers, guiding them even as they stand solo behind the pulpit. Thus, communal formation in the classroom practice begets communal formation in the sanctuary.

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<sup>110</sup> Mortimer, "Researching the Potential," 320.

## *2.11 Conclusion*

The literature review within this chapter provides a helpful overview of the parameters of the current homiletical landscape, especially within the conversation of preaching as an art form. The contributions shared have shown how preaching and preachers are defined by some of the prominent voices within preaching culture and tradition. These perspectives are also useful in the effort to form a definition of the preacher as artist. In addition, these perspectives also speak to how the history of preaching has evolved in terms of being understood as a holistic endeavor for the preacher.

This thesis is unapologetic in highlighting the need for further work in addressing the use of the whole person as a homiletical resource. This is advocated for by homiletics theologians such as Long, Fry Brown, and Childers. Yet, more “on its feet” practice done in concert with other aspects of a thorough preaching preparation process is needed. In the arguments presented by the thesis, there is a challenge to the impression that the mind and spirit are vital to the preaching process, but the body is treated as an adornment, rather than as a resource. An introduction is being made to propose how this disconnect can be addressed with actor training techniques and methodology.

Can you compare the training, preparation, and process of artists engaged in other art forms to the training, preparation, and process of the preacher/artist? Explicitly and implicitly, Long, Fry Brown, and Childers do make these connections. Considering this dialogue, how might homiletics classes, minister-in-training classes, continuing education workshops, and the like be informed concerning the conservation and preservation of the art and the preacher/artists? This chapter expressed how the points of homiletical theory and theology offered by Long, Fry Brown, and Childers are a jumping-off point for a deeper and wider dive into a theology,

practice, and pedagogy of preaching as an art form and preachers as artists. This study argues that a bridge that traverses the chasms left by the lack of a practical application method is needed for the development of incarnational, embodied preaching. This kind of practice can be found in an experiential collective learning environment, per Childers' mindset, that explores and organically crafts an embodied, incarnate preaching practice. Thus, the following chapters leave the space of Long, Fry Brown, and Childers, and most other homiletical application methods, to create a unique and much-needed space for this kind of exploration within the preaching academy and pulpit. The baton is handed off, and this thesis propels homiletics theology and pedagogy into new and exciting territory.

The performing artist techniques mentioned in this chapter will be more explicitly explored and assessed for viability within a practice of preaching in upcoming chapters of this study. In the next chapter, a theology of embodied and ingrained homiletics will be examined. It is essential to place this dialogue within a sound theology that touches the larger scope of Christian thought, feeling, and perception. This theology reflects the importance of defining what preaching is and how preaching functions within the Church practically.

## Chapter 3: Theology of Embodied and Embedded Homiletics

### 3.1 Introduction

Preaching is the art of making a sermon and delivering it. Why no, that is not preaching. Preaching is the art of making a preacher and delivering that. Preaching is the outrush of a soul in speech. Therefore, the elemental business in preaching is not with the preaching but the preacher! It is no trouble to preach—but a vast trouble to construct a preacher. What then, in light of this, is the task of the preacher? Mainly this, the amassing of a great soul as to have something worthwhile to give—the sermon is the preacher up to date with God.<sup>111</sup>

Pastor and preacher Ralph Turnbull's definition of preaching is an opening to the discussion of a theology of preaching that is practically accessible and purposed. One who begins this kind of exploration may ask, "What is preaching? Is it revelation? Is it tradition?" If both are encompassed in the moment of proclamation, how does the preacher arrive at the moment, fully embedded in the word, and fully embodied in the moment? There is no one size fits all formula for preaching and preaching development. The Church has many thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about preaching. However, there can be a framework, built through an apparent, as well as a mysterious, process involving the preacher's mind, body, and spirit. This framework includes a method of addressing fears concerning accountability and grounded authority within the process of preaching as an oral art form. It is also a method of realizing the formation of preacher/artists in a way that is holistic.

This framework encompasses more than the moment of proclamation. Furthermore, the moment of proclamation is the culmination of this practice and process. The climax is the moment when the word meets the listeners' ears and God's dramatic dance with humanity continues. For this type of work, the formation of body, mind, and spirit is necessary and must be included in the pedagogy of homiletical discourse.

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<sup>111</sup> Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 99.

Although defined by scripture and tradition, preaching is also defined by the person of the preacher.<sup>112</sup> By this, it is meant that the primary listeners of the message learn from the preacher's modeling of what the role entails. This communication is inherent. The preacher, and the role of preaching, is not only the moment of proclamation but also the very person of the preacher.<sup>113</sup> This is not to say that the preacher exists outside of the other realities of life. On the contrary, this means that the life of the preacher is best used as a resource when it embraces integration and engages practices that enhance all aspects of the preacher's formation. How might education and training assist the preacher in cultivating life and practice that speaks to holding this role with sincerity, authenticity, authority, and humility? It should be noted that, for the purpose of this thesis, when practice is mentioned, it is in reference to a preacher/artist practice cultivated in the homiletics classroom. This discussion begins by looking at the historical theologies and theories about preaching and how it is taught.<sup>114</sup>

This chapter will discuss a theology of preaching that assesses how preaching is defined biblically, as it is imperative to understand the role grounded in the sacred text from which preachers proclaim. It is also important to discuss historical theories and theologies about the role of preaching within culture and the Church. After all, the role of preaching is impacting by these historical narratives, even if the impact is more implicit rather than explicit. Additionally,

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<sup>112</sup> There are useful definitions found in Turner, M. D. and Hudson, M. L. (2014). *Saved from Silence: Finding Women's Voice in Preaching*. St. Louis: Lucas Park Books. Although this text focus on women and preaching there are definitions that pertain to preachers in general, including the voice of the preacher, find your voice and a preacher, and claiming your voice as a preacher. See also Barth, K. (1957) *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. New York: Harper and Row., especially the fourth chapter, "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching".

<sup>113</sup> Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, 67 – 80. In *The Preaching Life*, it is set forth that preaching is an act of worship and therefore the spiritual formation of the preacher is key to the art of preaching. This discussion is framed within the idea that the preacher's tool – words – come from the worship life of the preacher.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas Long and Lenora Tubbs Tisdale, *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 4. "Each of us has within us already the effective preacher God wants us to become. We teachers of preaching know that when we guide wisely in the process of learning preaching, we help students cultivate and harvest what God has planted in them, through genetic inheritance, personality, life experience, and church background. We aim to help each person in class start on the road to becoming with God's help the best preacher each has it in them to be."

the connection between a theology of the embodied preacher and how preaching is taught will be explored. This will lead to an offered framework for proposed building blocks within an embodied preaching process.

### 3.2 Preaching Defined by the Bible: Revelation through Humanity

In the Old Testament, there are prophetic<sup>115</sup> voices who act as heralds of God's voice.<sup>116</sup> Although a distinction is made between the role of prophet and the role of preacher, both are messengers called by God. Contemporary preachers look to these voices for guidance in carrying the word of God to the people, especially concerning the role that the prophetic voice has upon the moment of proclamation.<sup>117</sup> Prophets also provided an example for the formation and ethical discernment necessary in the life of a messenger.<sup>118</sup>

The primary model of Christian preaching is found in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>119</sup> He followed a line of edification as a teacher in the Jewish tradition. However, he also took this mantle and created a type of homiletical model that called for the preacher to be amongst the

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<sup>115</sup> Katharine Sakenfeld, "Prophet," in *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Vol. 4* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009), 273.

<sup>116</sup> See Grabbe, L. (1995) *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel*. Valley Forge: Trinity Press; and Lindblom, J. (1962). *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. Grabbe and Lindebloom expand the understanding of the prophet's role as messenger within the biblical witness. It is necessary to grasp an understanding of this role to build upon this foundation when defining the role of preacher. This includes the social and cultural contexts that impact the role of prophet.

<sup>117</sup> See Chalmers, A. (2015). *Interpreting the Prophets: Reading, Understanding and Preaching from the Worlds of the Prophets*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press.; Huffmon, H. (1997). "The Expansion of Prophecy in the Mari Archives: New Texts, New Readings, New Information", in Gitay, Y. (ed), *Prophecy and Prophets: The Divinity of Contemporary Issues in Scholarship*, SBL Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Scholars Press. pp. 7-23.; and Brueggemann, W. (2012). *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipatory Word*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. Aaron Chalmers, H. B. Huffmon, and Walter Brueggemann each illustrate how aspects of the model of prophet can be and should be seen as aspects necessary to a biblically sound model of preaching.

<sup>118</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 27. "It turns out that YHWH is also waiting. YHWH is waiting restlessly, at the end of the royal consciousness, lurking in the pages of the canon, waiting to reemerge, to reappear, to be reuttered in thickness... And when the prophets speak, they do so imaginatively; they voice 'prophetic imagination,' and YHWH is played into the midst of royal history as an awkward misfit who does not accommodate the ancient regime. YHWH reemerges in metaphor and in image, in poem and in oracle." It is to be added that YHWH reemerges in the body and practice of preachers and listeners. Although there is a difference of context and circumstance between prophetic utterance and prophetic preaching, there is a connection running through the role of the messenger.

<sup>119</sup> See the works of Howard Thurman and Mike Abendroth, regarding Jesus as a preacher. Abendroth, M. (2008). *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers: Learning from the Teaching Ministry of Jesus*. Leominster: Day One Publications.; and Thurman, H. (1996). *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Thurman does a thorough job of illustrating Jesus' strengths as a model for preachers. He focuses on the importance of adhering to this model. Abendroth presents an argument for looking to Jesus' teaching method as blueprint for contemporary preachers.

listeners in mind, body, and spirit.<sup>120</sup> This necessitates being amongst oneself in awareness and reflection of mind, body, and spirit experiences. The homiletical method of Jesus certainly seems to be speaking to a responsibility that facilitates justice, mercy, and love, hearkening to the Jewish tradition.<sup>121</sup> He is physically present with a group of hearers of the word, and he is instructing them in a life of being a doer of the word.<sup>122</sup> He is operating as an ocular demonstration as he preaches, within his identity. The identity of the preacher is part of the message. This aspect of transparency calls for the preacher to accept that he or she is one that must surrender to the call with a deep sense of vulnerability and openness.

St. Paul also provides a model of preaching, especially as one who is seeking to build community through his preaching.<sup>123</sup> He was shaped as a preacher by his experience of Christ, and he was shaped as a preacher by his contextualized experience of tradition and culture. How he preached and was formed as a preacher is not separate from each of these influences. “Why? Because in the realm of human discourse, and in religious or moral discourse in particular, presuppositions and practice tend to reflect one another rather closely. To understand the practice, we must understand the presuppositions.”<sup>124</sup> Thus preachers must understand their own

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<sup>120</sup> Long and Tubbs Tisdale, *Teaching Preaching*, 187. “Preaching brings people into the presence of God... This reflection on God may be normally engaged through lifelike conversational style that introduces God not in abstract propositional ways, but in narratives, images, ideas, and metaphors that resemble how life is typically lived and experienced. The sermon is thus not simply information about God, or communication of certain doctrines, though it certainly and importantly includes these. God speaks in and through the sermon, and people appropriately listen to sermons with the expectation of hearing Christ speak. Preaching is an announcement of what God is doing, an encounter with the living God, who wills to be known in this way, for, as Christ said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matt. 18:20).”

<sup>121</sup> Mic 6:8, NASB. “He has told you, mortal one, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

<sup>122</sup> James 1: 22 – 24, NASB. “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was”.

<sup>123</sup> Daniel Patte, *Preaching Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Daniel Patte’s thesis, in *Preaching Paul*, makes a connection between the preaching of St. Paul and preachers today. He emphasizes that contemporary preachers can learn how to traverse the dual nature of contextualized preaching from St. Paul. He shares that the struggle to deliver the message always interplays with the specific cultural reality of the listeners.

<sup>124</sup> Duane Litfin, *Paul’s Theology of Preaching: The Apostle’s Challenge to the Art of Persuasion in Ancient Corinth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 32. Furthermore Duane Litfin describes Paul’s preaching in this

presuppositions so that they may come to the practice of preaching with humility and an openness to understand the inspiration, revelation, and communication of God.

St. Paul was a profoundly gifted communicator, certainly. This gift was wrapped within his developing theology of self and community, as he also sought to become closer to God. His instruction is a discourse that stresses the point that the person does not supersede the purpose. He gave ultimate credit to a trinitarian understanding of how God gives humanity the capacity to share the Word.<sup>125</sup> This is the aspect that preacher/artists can utilize for their own practice of preaching.

St. Paul was not alone in his belief that God's Spirit is an enabler of preaching. *Pneuma*, that is the Spirit of God, is understood to be a vital aspect in the facilitation of the Word of God becoming words in a sermon.<sup>126</sup> Inspiration meeting revelation, and henceforth becoming proclamation, is a process that engages the entirety of human resource and experience as it is impacted and imprinted upon by divine interaction. The Spirit of God is needed for illumination. "The religious leaders of Jesus' day knew the written word, but they were wrong in their understanding of the word; people need to be illuminated by the Spirit in order to comprehend the word, and an emphasis on yielding to the Spirit's present work for preaching is critical."<sup>127</sup>

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way, "when it comes to human communication, presuppositions and practice tend to be organically related—the practice developing naturally from the presuppositions that generate and support it. This is especially the case when the subject is moral or religious."

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 260. An argument is present for the basis of St. Paul's theology of preaching to be being rooted in Christ, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit above human resource, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit for wisdom.

<sup>126</sup> See Moltmann, J. (1977). *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*. New York: Harper and Row. Jurgen Moltmann helps to clarify the work and impact of the Holy Spirit within the role of preaching and the role of the Church in general.

<sup>127</sup> Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 260. Heisler stresses that since it is the preacher's soul that is engaged in receiving revelation, it is the Spirit that can communicate in this kind of mysterious and mystical communication. "We now cast ourselves upon the Holy Spirit to internalize and incarnate the truth we are going to preach. The good news is that the Holy Spirit has been helping us do this throughout our lives, and therefore the process of internalization is cumulative. We internalize internalize God's Word when we know it and apply it to our lives so that its impact stays with us. It is more than memorizing a verse for Sunday morning's sermon; it is inviting the Spirit to deeply rub the Scriptures into our souls."

Thus preaches need the guidance and bolstering of the Spirit of God in order to point towards this illumination.

Within a biblical understanding of proclamation, preaching and preacher development are influenced by an understanding that preaching is an illuminating spiritual practice meant to inhabit more than merely the moment of proclamation behind the pulpit. This practice is engaged not only in the moment of proclamation but also in the methodology of preaching preparation. For Christians, preaching is a holistic endeavor, impacting and engaging the cognitive, spiritual, and physical senses of the preacher.

### 3.3 Historical Theologies and Theories: Processing the Revelatory Role

Theologies of preaching run the gamut of understanding, interpretation, and occurrence, as does Christianity. There are schools and styles that prioritize different aspects of the biblical witness, discussed above, and the interpretation of these aspects. A broad understanding that preaching is an appointed role within an appointed context, leads to an understanding of the weight of the call, even if there are many divergent characterizations of the role. An integrated theology of homiletics is a vital aspect of fully realizing the preacher/artist model, in that the theology is a fundamental part of the foundation. Interestingly, a well-fleshed-out theology is often not prioritized within the larger culture of preaching, giving way to denominational traditions. It is taken for granted that “the church” knows what preaching is, theoretically and practically. This study needs to acknowledge any assumptions for those engaged in the work of preaching and the training of preachers.

The context, cultural and otherwise, of the preacher is also central to these theologies and theories.<sup>128</sup> In many ways, cultural shifts precede the shifting theologies and theories concerning what preaching should and could be in the life of the Church.<sup>129</sup> From three points and poem sermons to topical vs. expository preaching, the arena of homiletics has been differing and diverse because culture is multi-layered.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> See discussions about culturally aware and sensitive preaching in David Lose’s *Preaching at the Crossroads: How the World - and Our Preaching - is Changing*, Mark Powell’s *What Do They Hear?: Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit and Pew*, and Matthew Kim’s *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons*.

<sup>129</sup> Wilson, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 186. See discussion on the communal action of the preaching moment and how the person of the preacher, both as pastor and as prophet, is an important aspect of this communal action.

<sup>130</sup> See a survey of preaching philosophy and methods from the perspectives of Karl Barth in *The Doctrine of the Word of God: Church Dogmatic*, Dietrich Ritschl in *A Theology of Proclamation*, Williams H. Willimon in *Word, Water, Wine, and Bread: How Worship Has Changed Over the Years*, Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki in *Whispered Word: A Theology of Preaching*, Paul Scott Wilson in *Preaching and Homiletical Theory* and Illion T. Jones in *Principles and Practice of Preaching*.

What then is a helpful method of wading through these theologies and theories, for the sake of implementing a pedagogy in the classroom that is informative and transformative for preachers? An answer to this question is found in a definition of preaching and the preacher, and a presentation of a pedagogical model that integrates all aspects of this definition. Looking at the history of theologies and theories about preaching within the Christian context offers much to this examination.

Who and what has defined Christian preaching since the call from Jesus of Nazareth to set the captive free<sup>131</sup> and the charge from St. Paul to “be ready in season and out of season”?<sup>132</sup> The biblical definition of a call to preach is paired with the interpretation and involvement of this role in real-time. The culture of preaching is impacted by how the zeitgeist views preaching. It follows that the culture of Christianity has sought to encapsulate how preachers are and should be viewed, for the sake of the role as well as the purpose of proclaiming the word of God.

Karl Barth defines the two purposes of preaching in a straightforward manner. An aspect of Barth’s preaching that makes him a useful dialogue partner for this thesis is the missional thrust of his preaching philosophy and practice.

“Barth’s homiletics reflects his mission theology. He does not attempt to distinguish missionary preaching from preaching in a Christian church service, as it is generally understood. All preaching is a call to repentance and faith. All preaching bears the task of missionary proclamation to the world...Proclamation is a missionary communication of God’s divine grace.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Luke 4: 18-19, NASB. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

<sup>132</sup> 2 Tim. 4: 1- 2, NASB. “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

<sup>133</sup> Dae Ryeong Kim, “Karl Barth and a Missiology of Preaching,” in *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission*, ed. Charles Van Engen (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 23.

Following this missional throughline, the practice of preaching is holistic. In addition, this view engages the preacher in a mission that necessitates acknowledgement of that preacher's unique capacity to accomplish the mission. Consequently, preachers must enter a process of knowing and exploring their individual capacity, so that they might preach and edify the communal capacity.

Barth argues for a definition of preaching that allows for the process between God, preacher, and listener to be centered on obedience and accountability to God's mission on earth.

Preaching is the Word of God which he himself has spoken; but God makes use, according to his good pleasure, of the ministry of a man who speaks to his fellow men, in God's name, by means of a passage from Scripture. Such a man fulfills the vocation to which the Church has called him and, through his ministry, the Church is obedient to the mission entrusted to her. Preaching follows from the command given to the Church to serve the Word of God by means of a man called to this task. It is this man's duty to proclaim to his fellow men what God himself has to say to them, by explaining, in his own words, a passage from Scripture which concerns them personally.<sup>134</sup>

In "his [or her] own words" the preacher is working through the text with listeners. God is making use of humanity through preaching, rather than pushing the humanness of humanity aside. Thus, that humanness is a resource that begs for intentional and active engagement in the preaching process. Barth's thoughts are especially important to include in this thesis, due to Barth's impact on theological understanding and the use of his works in contemporary theological education.<sup>135</sup> However, his voice is not the only one that contributes to a communal understanding of preaching.

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<sup>134</sup> Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York: Harper Row, 1958), 79. Barth continues to explain that an absolute definition of preaching is inherently elusive due to the mysterious nature of the communication between God and humanity. "God cannot be enclosed in any human concept; he lives and acts by his own sovereign power."

<sup>135</sup> Heinz Zahrnt, *The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1969), 116. The goal of this use of Barth is not to name him as inherently foundational to the development of current day Christian thought on and practice of preaching. His influence is unmistakable, although it is sacred. Zahrnt correctly points out that Barth helped and hindered the practice of preaching. Barth's preaching theology left suffered from ignoring intangible and holistically resonating elements of the preaching process. "There is no

Phillips Brooks, a well-regarded Episcopalian priest, was looked to during his lifetime, and afterward, as one who was living out the call to preach in a way that was impactful to preaching culture. His definition of preaching was simple, in words, as was Barth's.

What, then, is preaching, of which we are to speak? It is not hard to find a definition. Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men[sic]. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching...It is in the defect of one or the other element that every sermon and preacher falls short of the perfect standard... Truth through personality is our description of real preaching.<sup>136</sup>

Brooks' point is a sound one, in that it simplifies what many may attempt to make complex to the point of disconnection and distraction with the person of the preacher and the preaching moment. Truth through the preacher is another way of describing and framing the acting of preaching. The preacher is not pushed aside for the sake of the sermon, but rather he or she is formed and transformed by the act of receiving homiletical reception through personhood. This reception is propelled from the Triune God and held by the preacher. What happens when the definitions leap off the page and lands in a homiletical pedagogical method?

Although both definitions are simple on the surface, the difficulty lies in the underlying reality of acting out these definitions in a holistic way. The definitions encompass the perfect infinity of God and yet for the preacher, it is about the process wrapped in human finitude. It is a process that is taught, at least in theory, in homiletics classrooms and this process is one that should encompass the entirety of human engagement with God. Some aspects can be communicated through cognitive learning, while others are better taught through creative experiential learning that engages more intangible aspects of revelation from and relating to God.

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question that preaching in Germany today, and not only in Germany, would be very different without Karl Barth and his theology. But the effect of Barth has been twofold. On the one hand, without it present-day preaching would not be so pure, so biblical, and so concerned with central issues, but on the other hand, it would also not be so alarmingly correct, boringly precise, and remote from the world."

<sup>136</sup> Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1888), 8 – 9.

This defining process, absent a way of implementing the definitions that can guide preachers through their progression, has led to a certain limitation in the process of spiritual formation and the ability to sustain the deep engagement of the preaching life. Something has been lost in translation and compartmentalized. The words of Howard Thurman about preaching hint at a way to reconnect what has become disengaged.

The sermon is the distillation of the thinking, reading, observation, brooding and mediation of the preacher. The assumption is that it is [one's] privilege to withdraw from the traffic of life periodically and regularly in order that [one] may take the kind of long hard look at the world, the society, [one's] fellows, and speak the authentic word which will stimulate the mind, inform even as [one] kindles the emotions, and inspire [one's] fellows to live the good life responsibly.<sup>137</sup>

Thurman's words explain the need for preachers to have a process of brooding and meditating to wrestle with and receive God's messages. Not only done in solitude in the preacher's study but these reflective practices can also be done in community in homiletics classroom, allowing for a formation process that invites experimentation and freedom to enhance what God has placed within the preacher and the community of preachers.

### *3.3.1 Images of the Role of Preaching: Revelation Manifestation*

Arriving at the point where definition meets pedagogy, integration is the key to creating a learning environment that is deep and wide enough to form a sound preaching method and nurture the formation of preachers. This instruction process has centered around cognitive learning and preaching practicum. This is not wholly wrong, but it is incomplete for the purposes of embodied learning. Preachers are asked to engage their minds, bodies, and spirits in the work of preaching. Yet, for the most part, it is their minds that are explicitly occupied in the curriculum. Yes, there must be a rubric that can be identified and quantified. However, there

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<sup>137</sup> Howard Thurman, "Worship and Word: A View of the Liberal Congregation and Its Sermons," in *Contemporary Collections – Howard Thurman Papers* (Washington, D.C.), 5.

must also be room for the unquantifiable elements that are nevertheless vital. As it stands today in most preaching classrooms, implicitly, the whole self is invited to the process, but the pedagogical manifestation, does not fully engage all these dynamics.

Released in 1989, *Learning Preaching: Understanding and Participating in the Process* was a collaborative declaration on preaching pedagogy written by members of the Academy of Homiletics. It outlined a pedagogy that stemmed from the idea that “Each of us has within us already the effective preacher God wants us to become. We teachers of preaching know that when we guide wisely in the process of learning preaching, we help students cultivate and harvest what God has planted in them, through genetic inheritance, personality, life experience, and church background.”<sup>138</sup> This pedagogy focuses on an inward trajectory, seeking to draw what is inside out and develop it as a homiletical resource.

In 2008, Thomas Long and Lenora Tubbs Tisdale led a charge that included several homiletics professors in challenging this inward pedagogy trajectory. “Our primary pedagogical emphasis now is not on what is allegedly “in there” in each student, a ‘little preacher’ waiting to grow, but on what is ‘out there,’ namely the age-old practice of Christian preaching into which each student must be initiated.”<sup>139</sup> Long and Tisdale argued that the pedagogy must immerse the preachers in the tradition of the role of preaching. It is surmised that through this external focus, preachers would hone their internal process and be empowered by the vitality of the “older, larger, and more vital” communal witnesses of preaching.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Don M. Wardlaw and Fred Baumer, *Learning Preaching: Understanding and Participating in the Process* (Lincoln: Lincoln College and Seminary Press, 1989), 10.

<sup>139</sup> Long and Tubbs Tisdale, *Teaching Preaching*, 5.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 79 - 82. In addition, Long inserts this analogy to further define this distinction in pedagogical focus. “By analogy, it would make little sense to say that each of us has within us already the effective neurosurgeon or torts litigator God wants us to become. Medicine and law are widely recognized as practices, and aspiring physicians and attorneys must learn the skills, procedures, traditions, and ways of thinking appropriate to these practices. Personal gifts and aptitudes are important, but there are also habits of mind, patterns of action, and ways of being that must be acquired for the effective practice of law or medicine.”

This study asserts that these two foci, internal and external, are not entirely separate, and both deserve focus in preacher training. The internal moves with the external to build a strong underpinning. This is reminiscent of the process that performing artists work within to bring stories to life. This connection between drama and theology has been made by many.<sup>141</sup> Preachers can be well served by an integrating formational practice that gives room for both internal and external processing.

### 3.3.2 *The Connection Between Preaching and Acting: Revelation as Performed Proclamation*

Due to the nature of this thesis centering around preaching as an oral art form, it is also necessary to discuss the historical connections between preaching and acting. It can be said that preachers and actors are drawing upon the same resource of inspiration, although the manifestations of performance and proclamation have distinct differences.<sup>142</sup> Actor training pedagogy techniques can help bridge the gap between defining preaching and being formed as a preacher. At this point, it is important to include the connection and contribution that acting technique and preaching have had with and upon each other in previous eras. There is a cultural connection that has been explicitly lost yet implicitly maintained. “Preaching and acting were analogous arts. Preachers were more likely than actors to consign their ideas about performance to writing, and Marc Fumaroli argues that the first developments in conceptualizing stage acting

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<sup>141</sup> See the theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar in his *Theo-Drama, Volumes 1 - 5*, for the major theological work that is drawn upon by contemporary scholars. For a more specific look at theology and liturgy, see David Brown’s *God and Mystery in Words: Experience Through Metaphor and Drama*, Roger Grainger’s *The Drama of the Rite: Worship, Liturgy and Theatre Performance*, and Ben Quash’s “The Density of Divine Address: Liturgy, Drama, and Human Transformation”, in *Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture Responses to the Work of David Brown*. A work that speaks to the cathartic quality that a dramatic lens offers to liturgical studies is Edward Bundock’s article, “Liturgy and Drama: A Context of Catharsis and Transcendence”.

<sup>142</sup> A concise but thorough survey of this idea can be found in the works of Elizabeth Achtemeier, Charles Rice, Edmund Steimle, and Bruce C. Salmon. Each one approaches preaching as an artistic endeavor and storytelling. Therefore, their works lay a foundation for a pedagogy that includes artistic, storytelling elements in the homiletics coursework.

derived from debates about preaching”.<sup>143</sup> Uncovering what has become hidden is a benefit of rediscovering these connections within preacher training.

George Whitfield, 18th-century evangelistic preacher, had skills that seemed to be akin to those of an actor. Celebrated actor David Garrick expressed, “I would give a hundred guineas, if I could say 'Oh' like Mr. Whitefield’.”<sup>144</sup> It certainly cannot be stated that this was due to Whitfield engaged in professional performing artist training, although he did have experience with theatre acting in his youth.<sup>145</sup> The point of this type of training is not focused on a particular performance style or ability to entertain, but rather on the hope of receiving God’s revelation through all the human senses. Preachers are the instrument of God, continuing the divine work of word and flesh becoming incarnate word, and thus they must engage practice and performance as such.

In a sermon preached for the king, Donne likened himself to a musical instrument, and explained how a terrifying blast of his trumpet would always be followed by more harmonious music...he proclaims that just as Christ was not a word but the Word, so ‘the minister is Vox, voice; not A voice but The voice, the voice of that word, and no other...’<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> David Wiles, *The Players' Advice to Hamlet: The Rhetorical Acting Method from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2020), 111. “...Preaching, like stage acting, was concerned with the emotions in a face-to-face encounter, and for this reason we learn much about stage acting from discussions of ‘sacred oratory’.”

<sup>144</sup> John Charles Ryle, *A Sketch of the Life and Labors of George Whitefield*. (New York: Anderson D.F. Randolph, 1854), 59. Furthermore, Garrick stated, “Whitefield's action was perfect—so perfect that Garrick, the famous actor, gave it unqualified praise—that his voice was as wonderful wonderful as his action—so powerful, that he could make thirty thousand people hear him at once; so musical and well-attuned, that men said he could raise tears by his pronunciation of the word "Mesopotamia:" that his fluency and command of extemporaneous language were of the highest order, prompting him always to use the right word and to put it in the right place.”

<sup>145</sup> Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 13. It is interesting to note that Whitefield renounced theatre once he became a minister. Perhaps he was influence by the dualistic view of theater in relationship to the church.

<sup>146</sup> Wiles, *The Players' Advice*, 103.

### 3.4 Theology of the Incarnate, Embodied Preacher and Homiletical Pedagogy

The moment of preaching is a climax, rather than a beginning. It is born of the moments that come before and the relationship between the preacher, God, and the congregation.<sup>147</sup> Each of these aspects is impacted by context.<sup>148</sup> Preaching is not meant to be an exercise in taming the Church, but rather a journey of enlivening the Church. The preacher is a leader in this journey and must acknowledge that his or her own process as a human creature is not separate from what he or she will be able to communicate to human creature listeners.

Soren Kierkegaard offers helpful insight into this reality. “Since Kierkegaard’s sole hermeneutical concern was inculcating response in the ‘hearer’ of the Word of God, he argued that preachers must appropriate the text first to themselves, before attempting to proclaim it to others”.<sup>149</sup> The preaching process of a preacher/artist is one that holds space for hearing the word before and during the sermon crafting act. This guards against complacency in the sermon development. Kierkegaard’s parable, “The Tame Geese”,<sup>150</sup> places the responsibility to guard against mindless and routine Christianity squarely in the lap of preachers. The message in this is that humility does not equate to impotence, and a pulpit is a place of plentifulness.

As the history of preaching and the endeavor to define preaching becomes clearer, what also becomes clear is the focus of the preaching process as multi-layered. There is

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<sup>147</sup> The dialogue concerning the impact of the preacher’s role as witness and how this shows up in the pulpit is brought forth in Anna Carter Florence’s *Preaching as Testimony* and Charles Bartow’s *The Preaching Moment*.

<sup>148</sup> See the essays in *Interpreting the Prophets* by multiply authors. William L. Holladay’s “The Years of Jeremiah’s Preaching” and W. Sibley Towner’s “The Preacher in the Lions’ Den” are particularly useful. Although these essays speak to the prophetic contextual role, the definition of the role is understood to include proclamation.

<sup>149</sup> O.C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching, Vol 1 and 2*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 184 – 185. “For Kierkegaard, personal transformation is the primary goal of hermeneutics, taking the reader ‘from literary imitation to existential imitation’ . . . . Kierkegaard’s critique of preaching is not – like so much of contemporary homiletics – against preaching, but rather against the preacher.”

<sup>150</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, “The Tame Geese”, in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed. Robert Bretall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 433. The parable of the tame geese was a critique of preaching and a mirror held up to the preaching culture.

communication from God, the process of hermeneutical inquiry, exegetical work, the tasks of writing and the moment of proclamation. Throughout this process the preacher is navigating the experience of God's revelation, trying to harness inspiration, and honing creativity. All this navigation can be overwhelming, especially if done only in the place of the intellectual prowess of the preacher. Participating in this process with the whole of the self, by participating with the body along with the spirit, increases the capacity for the preacher to embody the message. This embodiment makes the delivering of the sermon a fruitful and mutually beneficial experience, warding off a sterility of spirit.<sup>151</sup> Integration of these foci is the goal. This is a distinction rather than a departure. It is the melding of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Preachers are endeavoring to put their bodies in a spiritual space and the spirit in a body space.<sup>152</sup>

Reading the theologies, theories, and testimonies is an inroad, but it is only a beginning in opening the self to incarnational preaching. Along with engaging the foundations of writing a theologically sound and spiritually honest sermon, the homiletics classroom can and should be a place of experimentation for the body and spirit. One "how" of engaging the whole self towards an integrated and lived theology is utilizing actor techniques to engage the senses. Suzuki Actor Training, the Alexander Technique, and Linklater Voice training are some of the examples of training that can lead preachers in personal and collective formation practice.

...creativity may be defined simply as the bringing of something new into the world. 'it is catching and holding fast a fleeting moment of truth...' It is discovering a new interpretation or taking something that already exists and changing it in an unpredictable way... The interpretive process is a generative and incarnational activity. Something new is born out of the coming together a text and interpreter.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Josh Samuel, "The Spirit in Pentecostal Preaching: A Constructive Dialogue with Haddon W. Robinson's and Charles T. Crabtree's Theology of Preaching," *Pneuma*. 35, no. 2 (January 2013): 210. "Through the written word we encounter the revelation of Jesus Christ and his redemptive work, but without an emphasis on the present work of the Spirit in preaching, 'biblical' preaching can become sterile."

<sup>152</sup> Wiles, *The Players' Advice*, 70. "The dichotomy of sight and sound is in any case simplistic, for here is an 'action of body' that makes people listen."

<sup>153</sup> Childers, *Birth of the Sermon*, 167.

When the whole self, as seen through the experience of the preacher with God and with the Church, is engaged, there is a possibility for a kind of joy that transcends time and space. The joy of surrender and sacrifice are explicitly acknowledged and accepted into the process for preachers when they can embrace the whole of the process with their mind, body, and spirit. There is also a joy in the humble reception of the practice in its entirety.

I once heard someone say that preaching is a terrible joy, and I find that description true of my own experience. Whether I have preached to fifty or to fifty million, it has been nothing but joy to sense a call from the Spirit of God in my soul and train and prepare my mind to be used by God to declare eternal truths within temporal space. It is a humbling joy to have the assignment of communicating a kairos encounter in the midst of this world's kronos.<sup>154</sup>

This joy is embodied by and embedded in the preacher and his or her process. It is then transferred to the listener receivers of the incarnate word.

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<sup>154</sup> Frank A. Thomas, *How to Preach a Dangerous Sermon*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018), 9.

### *3.5 Revelation Made Flesh: Building Blocks of Embodied Preaching Process*

A theology of embodied and embedded homiletical practice seeks to involve all the senses by participating in practices that rely on God's revelation and the preacher's action. The received homiletical revelation is the core message when preachers are engaged in incarnational, embodied preaching.

#### *3.5.1 Revelation and Incarnation*

God's revelation is the fuel and focusing agent of preaching. It is the reason for the event of proclamation. The continuing creative work of incarnation is the key to understanding why preaching is an incarnational art form whose practicing artists are preachers. The pathway of inspiration through revelation to proclamation is one that is embedded in the narrative of how divinity engages with humanity. Therefore, between the spaces of revelation, incarnation, and proclamation the preacher negotiates how to follow the lead of the message while authentically claiming the space of being the messenger. "On the one hand there needs to be an impulse to step forward in an empathetic embrace of human creatures furnished by the imagination, and on the other hand an impulse to step back, weigh the evidence, and contemplate in wonder the extent of human difference."<sup>155</sup> The revelation is received, and it is imparted, wrapped in the flesh and experience of the preacher.

#### *3.5.2 Homiletical Ethics*

A sound hermeneutic is a necessary foundation for sound biblical interpretation. Developing a method of hermeneutics is best done in community with those who have experience and expertise in this arena.<sup>156</sup> An ethical hermeneutic grounds a sermon and the

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<sup>155</sup> Wiles, *The Players' Advice*, 8.

<sup>156</sup> The area of hermeneutics has been studied and written about by many. Some of the noteworthy contributors include Duvall and Hays' *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, Goldingay's *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*, Gorman's *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide*

preacher, while it wards off the temptation to “be” the divine rather than sharing the divine with others. An ethical approach is essential for the process of the humble formation of the preacher. The work of preaching and the process of being formed as a preacher is one that is built in a tradition and yet embedded in the context of the moment.<sup>157</sup> Any theology of preaching is untethered without this part of the sermon preparation process.<sup>158</sup> The reality of walking this ethical line benefits from a holistic practice and community of preaching.

### *3.5.3 Holistic Experience*

When speaking of holistic experience in this thesis, it is meant that all aspects of personhood are allowed and encouraged to partake in the practice of receiving homiletical revelation and preparing the sermon for the proclamation moment. This holistic process is also rooted in relationship, formation, and sanctified imagination.

#### *3.5.3.1 Relationship with the Preaching Moment*

It is not a lecture but a movement of the Triune God that the preacher finds himself or herself amid when preaching a sermon. This is a truth that forms the preacher and the listener. The lecture style may feel controlled and appropriate, but does this method touch the holistic lives of the hearers? “The lecture method very few people at any deep or long-lasting level. It normally does not touch the unconscious, where all our hurts and motives lie hidden and

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*for Students and Ministers*, Hallo’s *The Context of Scripture: Vols 1-3*, and Tate’s *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*.

<sup>157</sup> Litfin, *Paul’s Theology of Preaching*, 99, See the argument for a process that seeks to balance human weakness, modesty, and confidence for the sake of a correct ethic within the preaching process. This argument also supports a hermeneutic that is unifying for the church.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 106. This thought on biblical hermeneutics is offered. “I would argue that what I mean by ‘biblical theological hermeneutics’ is that the scriptures be interpreted according to the intention of the text of the scriptures, and that due to the attempt to respect the intention of the text of the scriptures, every interpretation of the text should be respected. My position is close to the position of finding the authorial intention of the scriptures by means of finding the intention of the text. Therefore, I am only excluding the interpretations of the scriptures that do not respect the authorial intention of the text.”

disguised”.<sup>159</sup> It is into the lives of the Church that incarnational, embodied preaching speaks and nurtures transformative reflection upon the revelation of God.

The moment of proclamation begins at the moment of inspiration. Rather than trying to harness the reigns on the journey, preachers can cultivate a process that helps them to ride the winds<sup>160</sup> of the process.<sup>161</sup> Although this language seems intangible, the process becomes tangible in the engagement with a practice that speaks to full-body handling of the moments leading up to the moment in the pulpit. One can look to the same willingness to participate in the Eucharist, a full-body ritual that has literal and metaphorical import, to embrace the mystery of being a vessel for the message of God.<sup>162</sup>

### 3.5.3.2. *Relationship with Listeners*

Preachers must embrace the reality that they are involved in a mutual interaction with the listeners of the word.<sup>163</sup> Part of what prepares preachers for this mutuality, is the acceptance of vulnerability from a position of authority. How to handle this authority with humility and

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<sup>159</sup> Richard Rohr, “Alternate Orthodoxy: A Minority Position,” [Blog] Center for Action and Contemplation. viewed 21 January 2020, <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>.

<sup>160</sup> John 3: 8, NASB.

<sup>161</sup> This is a mysterious element of the inspiration process. It is something that humanity can experience, through all the sense, and yet cannot be rationally explained. It is essential to the preaching process. Rudolph Otto expounds upon this element of mystery, the “mysterium tremendum” in *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*. Also, see *Humphrey and Laidlaw’s The Archetypal Actions of Ritual*.

<sup>162</sup> Christina M. Gschwandtner, “Mystery Manifested: Toward a Phenomenology of the Eucharist in its Liturgical Context”. *Religions* 10, no. 5 (2019): 315. “He maintains that the Eucharist reactualizes the mystery as phenomenon each time we participate in it: ‘Because we participate in the Mass consciously, or rather, through our consciousness, we are inclined to forget the silent experience of the body-to-body [referring to hand-to-hand combat, as in Jacob’s struggle with the angel] of human and God that should guide us here’. Our whole body must participate in this.”

<sup>163</sup> Paul Scott Wilson, “Marks of Faithful Preaching Practice”, in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*, eds. Thomas Long and Lenora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 188. “Preaching is a practice that enrolls listeners into its worldviews and values. It takes seriously the world of the listeners as both the hearing place of the text and the place where it will be lived out. This practice is communal and has the effect of transforming hearers into an authentic community that does justice, loves kindness, and walks humbly with God (Mic. 6:8).”

integrity is part of the preacher's spiritual and ethical formation.<sup>164</sup> Much as any other skill, preachers benefit from experiential practice that allows this kind of sensitivity to engaging with listeners to be sharpened.<sup>165</sup> Culture and context also impact this dynamic. Therefore, preachers must learn to exegete the listeners.<sup>166</sup> This is an essential aspect of building and nurturing community through the art of preaching. It is an aspect that happens before the moment of preaching, during preaching as one engages in real-time with the listeners and continues after the words of the preacher's mouth have ceased and the work of the Spirit continues.

#### 3.5.4 Practice as Formation

Ritual is practice, and ritual is formation.<sup>167</sup> As has been discussed thus far, a practice — that engages the body, mind, and spirit — is necessary for the formation of a preacher and an incarnational, embodied preaching method. Participating in a practice is participating in God's model of creating.<sup>168</sup> This participation signals a willingness to receive revelation for the pulpit as well as for the rest of life. Thus, practice is forming skills as an orator and spiritual resilience. It is formational for the spirit as well as for the body.<sup>169</sup> This hearkens to Augustine's thought on

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<sup>164</sup> Elizabeth Koepping, "Preaching, Listening, Respecting: Views from the Pews in Australia" *The Expository Times* 114, no. 6 (July 2003), 196. See Elizabeth Koepping's discussion about the preacher's choice to give the 'silent Other' that is the listening crowd the space that they deserve in mutual relationship.

<sup>165</sup> See the input of Allen in *Hearing the Sermon: Relationship, Content, Feeling*, Stephen H. Webb's *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound* (especially chapter 2 and his discussion of the theology of sound and hearing, which he refers to as 'theo-acoustics', and Clement Welsh's *Preaching in a New Key: Studies in the Psychology of Thinking and Listening*. It should be added that this work is best done in practice rather than in theory.

<sup>166</sup> The discussions brought forth by Craig Dykstra in "The Formative Power of the Congregation", James R. Nieman and others in *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies* and within *Listening to the Listeners: Homiletical Case Studies*, edited by John S. McClure, are useful resources on the topic of exegeting the listeners of the word.

<sup>167</sup> A discussion about the formative elements of ritual, especially as it is practiced within Christianity, is found within Catherine Bell's in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice and Teaching Ritual*. Other important voices within this discourse include Lori Branch's *Rituals of Spontaneity: Sentiment and Secularism from Free Prayer to Wordsworth* and Terence Cuneo's *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy*.

<sup>168</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 57. "If preaching is in fact a learning-centered practice, it participates in what God is doing in the world, and some of its features must be key in effecting that participation."

<sup>169</sup> A more in-depth discussion of spiritual formation through experiential knowledge is formed in hearing the arguments of Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, Celeste Deschryver Mueller, Ruth Haley Barton, and *The Sacred and The Profane* by Mircea Eliade and Willard Trask.

students of the word opening secrets through practice and sharing those secrets with others.<sup>170</sup> It is also important that this proposed preacher practice be experienced and applied within communal and experiential learning. Thus, the model of communal revelation is grounded in the entirety of the proclamation progression - from inspiration to impartation.

### 3.5.5 Imagination

One of the greatest tools and resources for a preacher is imagination. There is a connection between imagination and the “faith of a mustard seed”<sup>171</sup>. One must engage the imagination to leap with faith and image the reality that God desires to lead humanity into with love and mercy. Imagination is the linchpin that connects inspiration and effective communication that can holistically engage the listeners.<sup>172</sup> A preacher/artist practice stretches the legs of a preacher’s imagination and the capacity to commune with God and others spirit to spirit.

“Thus, imaginative preaching contributes to the process of God’s renewal of the world only as it renews both God’s image and God’s likeness in its hearers, inducting our creative freedom into a relationship with God’s creativity as its source and form. This is why preaching must be not merely imaginative, but scripturally imaginative.”<sup>173</sup>

Preachers are guided by the Holy Spirit and the example of the Abba Father’s imagination and creativity.<sup>174</sup> A key element of this is the ability to see and participate in God’s kingdom.

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<sup>170</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 11. “There are certain rules for the interpretation of Scripture which I think might with great advantage be taught to earnest students of the word, that they may profit not only from reading the works of others who have laid open the secrets of the sacred writings, but also from themselves opening such secrets to others.”

<sup>171</sup> Matt. 17:20, NASB.

<sup>172</sup> Walter Brueggemann has written much about imagination. His works that focus on preaching and imagination include a chapter in *A Reader on Preaching: Making Connections* entitled “Preaching as Reimagination” and *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*. Useful voices held in concert with Brueggemann are Mary Catherine Hilkert in *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* and Paul Ricoeur in “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling”.

<sup>173</sup> Stephen Edmondson, “Coleridge and Preaching a Theological Imagination,” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 3 no.1 (January 2005), 91.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 91. See Edmondson’s discussion of Coleridge’s definition of imaginative creativity that is “both a derivative and finite imitation of God’s creativity.”

Imagination seen in this light brings on empowerment and confidence that is enhanced by practice.

### *3.6 Conclusion*

Historically, the role and act of preaching has benefitted from a biblical and theological understand of what it is to preach and who is doing the preaching. Biblically that historical path was paved by those, such as St. Paul, who perceived the beginnings of Christian preaching as we know it. Theologically, history has shown that preaching has been manifest in the culture of the Church in a myriad of ways and understandings. A theology of homiletics that encompasses the tangible and intangible elements that define the call and role of preaching is vital to the health of the Christian church. This chapter has explored the framework of how the role of preaching is defined for preacher/artists. Ways in which preaching has been defined and embodied were presented for consideration. In addition, aspects of a theology of preaching that encompasses a preacher/artist model of the role of preacher were introduced.

The thesis discussion will continue by expounding on the foundational elements that build an artistically enhanced theology of homiletics. This is a theology that is meant to translate into curriculum and experience. The theory gives way to the practice, while not being left behind, and focuses on formation as opposed to performance as delivery. A pedagogical model will be developed, and this model will incorporate the philosophical, theological, and practical import that seeks to invite and provide an all-inclusive learning atmosphere. Preaching is a process of renewal and cyclical creation that models the same process within the life of God's creation. A preacher/artist practice that aids in living out this theology is the centerpiece of a homiletical pedagogy, grounded in history and tradition, which seeks to help students discover their preaching voice in a holistic manner.

In a preceding chapter, the contributions of homileticians, as well as theologians, was engaged in this work. The benefit of this work resides in seeing the need for a holistic pedagogy and practice of preaching. When one sees the interplay of the desire and need for the preacher to be enabled and empowered to bring his or her full self to the moment of proclamation, the need for experiential training that engages mind, body, and spirit is obvious. The biblical and cultural tradition of preaching along with the need to engage the whole self in the training is clear in the way that the theological argument is presented. Once the theology is clear, then the next natural step to explore the practice of engaging the theology on its feet. This thesis is a practical bridge between theory and practice. It fills in the gaps left by a homiletical tradition that expounds holistic inclusion but teaches almost exclusively towards a cognitive understanding of preaching.

In the next chapter, incarnational preaching is discussed as an aspect of embodied and embedded homiletical understanding and practice. Incarnate word preaching is a celebration of the possibility and transformational reality of embodiment, not only for preachers but for all those seeking to live out theology “on its feet”.

## SECTION TWO: HOLISTIC IMPORT

### 4. Incarnate Word - Christian Preaching as a Celebration of Embodiment

#### 4.1. Introduction

Before discussing the parameters of incarnate word preaching, within the world of this thesis, an understanding of “incarnation” must be identified. Absent theological or spiritual import, “incarnation” means that something is “in the flesh”.<sup>175</sup> In Christian theology, the “Incarnation” refers to Jesus Christ. This act of salvific enfleshment was necessary in that,

God was revealed in a personal way to humankind, and thus in a way which is more adequate for a personal God than revelation through the display of his glory as Creator in the world (Ps. 19.1) or even through personal communication in the words of prophets, law-givers and the wise. At the same time it enabled God to be united with humanity...<sup>176</sup>

The “Incarnation” facilitated personal revelation between God and humanity, independent of, although able to participate with, general or specific revelation. For preachers, this provides an initial glimpse into what it means to preach the word of God. Preaching is revelation between Divinity and humanity that can stand on its own, although supported by other means of revelation. In addition, the “Incarnation” facilitated unity between God and humanity. This is another marker of the role of preaching within Christianity. From an understanding of the “Incarnation”, preachers can begin an exploration of what “incarnate word” means for the preacher and his or her preaching process and practice.

Incarnate Word refers to the revelation of God in the divine-human, Jesus Christ. This is not only descriptive but prescriptive.

“Jesus as Word provides responsive readers/listeners imaginative transit between ontological realms as they step into his vivid parables and pithy tropes. Both poet and text, Jesus invites us to read him as a kind of subject in process, a

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<sup>175</sup> Ian Howard Marshall, “Incarnation” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T Desmond Alexander et al, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 576.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 577.

perpetually evolving poem that binds heaven and earth within powerful metaphors of identity and change. While the synoptic Gospels' parables and similitudes highlight Jesus' role as extraordinary poet, in his Johannine "I am" pronouncements and the theophany of the Son as visible voice that appears to John of Patmos, Jesus takes the form of a sacred poem, beckoning his audience(s), particularly (potential) disciples, toward their own creative, salvific rebirth.<sup>177</sup>

Jesus is a sacred poem and preachers are students of this poem. Preachers are called to represent the poem when they preach. When this thesis speaks of incarnate word, concerning a proclaimed sermon, it is speaking of the visceral and holistic embodied revelation and perception of God. This "incarnate word" is the reality that base and holy not only engage with one another, but they interrelate with one another. Thus, human flesh and its baseness is deemed eligible to receive divine revelation. For the preacher, incarnate word is theologically understood and viscerally experienced.

For we discover that when we want to evoke religious experience, merely piling on the etherous superlatives—holy, mysterious, wondrous, glorious—does not work. In fact, it is decidedly counterproductive. Only when we are willing to get down to the nitty-gritty, returning to that manger stall, as it were, with its earthy smells, chill air, and a baby's cry, is it possible for our words to incarnate religious faith. Only then can our words invite the reader to discover, not ideas about the holy, but an experience of it.<sup>178</sup>

Preaching is incarnational in that it is the word of God incubated and delivered through the flesh of the preacher. This is a holistic process. Incarnation is theologically, spiritually, and physiologically provocative. How is it possible that divine infinity can become manifest within the confines of human finitude? This is a question that has been considered for millennia. The goal of this thesis is not to solve that mystery. After all, mystery amidst surety is an integral part

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<sup>177</sup> Teddi Lynn Chichester, "The Word as Poet and Poem in the Christian Gospels" in *Pacific Coast Philology* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2017), 31.

<sup>178</sup> Kathleen Norris, "A Word Made Flesh: Incarnational Language and the Writer" in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 303.

of a lived faith. Rather than solving the mystery, this study is engaged with the nature of incarnation and the connection between incarnation and the practice of Christian preaching.

While Incarnation, in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, is a core confession and conviction within the Christian church<sup>179</sup>, it can be said that it is most holistically embraced as an identity-forming spiritual belief rather than a cognitive understanding. Incarnation is formational within the Church and is explicitly and implicitly present in the life of the Church in many ways. “Christian sensibility to this ‘bodily’ event means that many kinds of expression come into play, as in the languages of metaphor, symbol, sacrament, devotion, and spirituality, art, and moral praxis”.<sup>180</sup> Therefore, there is an inherent expectation for incarnational practice to be embedded in all aspects of the practices of faith and community.

The provocative nature of the incarnation is a central aspect of the role and occupation of Christian preaching. Preachers harness the inherent ethos and the essence of incarnate proclamation of God’s self-revelation, modeled by Jesus of Nazareth, to creation. Wrapped in the flesh of humanity, preachers are messengers. The message is most profoundly, humbly, and inclusively shared when the homiletical style is one that is fully embodied, thus transforming the abstract, in the person of the preacher.<sup>181</sup> If Jesus of Nazareth was the Word incarnate, God’s

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<sup>179</sup> Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 19- 20. “In general, beliefs can be sorted into three categories. First, some are confessional beliefs, which function as cognitive ideas, focusing on the intellect. For instance, I may embrace the confessional belief that advanced forms of technology do not innately advance the human race. Second, convictional beliefs resemble values and impact one’s behaviors and actions. A young person who believes that education matters will find a way to finish college or graduate school. A person who believes that there is a God will take proactive steps to find out who this God is (e.g., attending a religious service or reading books on religion). Beliefs are ‘different from feelings or opinions because they make a ‘cognitive claim’—that is, a claim to some kind of knowledge’.”

<sup>180</sup> Anthony J. Kelly, “The Body of Christ: Amen!: The Expanding Incarnation”. *Theological Studies*, 71 no.4 (December 2010): 792. Kelly helps in framing the event of the incarnation within the life of the Church. “For Christian faith, the incarnation is the singular, constitutive event: ‘for in him the whole fullness of deity (theototes) dwells bodily (somatikos)’ (Col 2:9; Jn 1:14).”

<sup>181</sup> Fry Brown, *Delivering the Sermon*, 59. “Embodiment is the act of representing something in a bodily or material form. It occurs when someone speaking uses their physical self to transform an abstract, mental idea into a concrete form, shape, or representation in order to assist in establishing its meaning for the audience.

self-revelation encased in humanity, what does this mean for preaching and preachers? How does the human sensory experience of the preacher impact and enhance the continuing work of incarnation within proclamation? How are these sensory experiences harnessed and articulated as a resource for the sake of the proclamation? What role does embodiment play in answering these questions?

Embodiment is an often-discussed topic within preaching circles, and its uses within this thesis must be clarified.<sup>182</sup> One can look to a theological understanding. Such an understanding situates the body in terms of temporal life and eternal life, with the body being the temporary home of the soul. “Embodiment, therefore, is the state of human existence between conception and death, and again after the resurrection of the body and for all eternity. The normal state of human existence is an embodied existence.”<sup>183</sup> Integrated embodiment is normal.

Compartmentalization is abnormal. Therefore, preachers must endeavor, and be guided in the process, towards integration. This is a beginning, but it is also useful to look at a definition from a cognitive science perspective. Thus, one can expand from a religious, spiritual, or innate understanding of “embodiment” to an integrated holistic definition.

There are four parameters housed under a “social embodiment” philosophy with cognitive science that are beneficial for this discussion. Social embodiment is defined as embodied cognition and is described as “an approach that emphasizes that cognition typically

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<sup>182</sup> Embodiment is a broad topic within theological studies, as well as other disciplines. For further study on the theology of embodiment see Benedict Ashley, *Theologies of the Body: Humanist and Christian* (Braintree: The Pope John Center, 1985); John Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); and Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

<sup>183</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 13 no. 2 (2009): 5.

involves acting with a physical body on an environment in which that body is immersed.”<sup>184</sup>

Here is a definition of embodiment that names the importance of physical engagement that is done in an immersive environment. A homiletics classroom can serve as such an experiential learning environment. A holistic practice of preaching that engages the mind, body, and spirit can function as an ongoing, intentional embodiment environment. This practice can be modeled to facilitate a four-pronged embodiment strategy, bolstered by performing artist methodology. “First, perceived social stimuli don’t just produce cognitive states, they produce bodily states as well. Second, perceiving bodily states in others produces bodily mimicry in the self. Third, bodily states in the self produce affective states. Fourth, the compatibility of bodily states and cognitive states modulates performance effectiveness.”<sup>185</sup> The proposed experiential learning model for preachers, which will be more specifically described in Chapter 8, introduces bodily states for the reception of homiletical revelation, provides a framework for self-discovery of one’s preaching voice, opens a pathway for multi-sensory response to the perceived revelation, and enhances the holistic proclamation performance.

Integration of these definitions, intangible and tangible integration, aids the development of how this thesis uses the term “embodiment” as it pertains to preachers. There are ways that a preacher can know that they are in his or her body. This is the physical awareness of embodiment. This is objectively tangible. Additionally, there are ways that a preacher can know that he or she can, having experienced stimuli, receive, mimic, respond emotionally, and perform from this place of knowing. This is subjectively tangible. Then there are ways that the preacher

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<sup>184</sup> Sebastian Schneegans and Gregor Schöner, “Dynamic Field Theory as a Framework for Understanding Embodied Cognition”, in *Handbook of Cognitive Science: An Embodied Approach*, eds. Paco Calvo and Toni Gomila (San Diego: Elsevier Science, 2008), 264.

<sup>185</sup> Lawrence W Barsalou, Paula M, Niedenthal, Aron K. Barbey, and Jennifer A. Ruppert, “Social Embodiment”, in *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, ed. Brian Ross, (San Diego: Academic Press, 2003), 43.

can know that there is a connection between the objective and the subjective, and that there is a holistic embodiment that engages all aspects of personhood and facilitates the making of meaning and understanding of purpose in life. This is intangible understanding but that does not make it is too vague to engage as a resource for preachers.

Embodiment is viewed as a positive attribute of preaching, but it is often relegated to a description of the delivery style rather than the entire process of preparation and proclamation. There are not many clear practical methodologies of embodiment offered to preachers. There are several schools of thought about embodiment and preaching. Often a dividing point is found between two distinctions. The first is that it is the Holy Spirit that orchestrates and orders the act of preaching embodiment. The second is that it is the intentional study and exegesis of the text that leads to authentic embodiment. This thesis does not see these distinctions as mutually exclusive, but rather partners with a third distinction of artistic methodology for preachers. The combination of the three is a manifestation of inspiration.

Inspiration, as a consideration for this study of incarnational preaching, springs from three main areas of focus — phenomenology, deep incarnation, and the formational drama of incarnation — and how these focuses impact and are integrated into the practice of preaching. There are myriad voices that have explored the nature and the notion of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.<sup>186</sup> There are also conversations about what incarnational preaching is in definition and manifestation.<sup>187</sup> This portion of the thesis dialogue will draw upon the inspiration of Michel

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<sup>186</sup> Stephen W. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human: The Story of Christ and the Seven Ecumenical Councils*. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 2008), 41-62, 81-92, and 93-108. The incarnation, in the person of Jesus Christ, is noted and addressed from a Christian viewpoint at the First Council of Nicaea, the Council of Ephesus and the Council of Chalcedon. See also *On the Incarnation* by Saint Athanasius, which is a seminal work on the topic.

<sup>187</sup> Elvin K. Mattison, “Incarnational Preaching,” *Faith Pulpit* ( November 2002). See Elvin K. Mattison’s definition of incarnation preaching as characteristically revelational and inspirational in spirit based on the model of the preaching of Jesus Christ. Mattison pays close attention to the importance of sanctification and being empowered by the Holy Spirit in his definition.

Henry's philosophy of phenomenology, Niels Henrik Gregersen's theology of deep incarnation, and Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological viewpoint of theo-drama. Each of these offers an entry into the deeper and wider dialogue of Christian preaching that necessitates integrated and embodied pedagogy and practice for the training of preacher/artists.

The continuing creative work of incarnation is the key to understanding why preaching is an incarnational art form whose practicing artists are preachers. Engaging embodiment practice methodology is the heart of this thesis, just as it is the rubric for engaging pedagogy and practice. The defining question is, "Does this incarnation idea or theology impact and enhance the understanding and practice of embodiment for preachers?" Experiential understanding of this faith truth rests in embracing the ambiguous analogy as well as the unambiguous realism evident in undertaking the practice.<sup>188</sup> The pathway of inspiration through revelation to proclamation is one that is embedded in the narrative of how divinity engages with humanity.

In this chapter, the philosophical and theological implications of incarnation for preachers will be examined. In addition, a viewpoint of how incarnation is connected to preachers and preaching will be explored. This discussion proceeds from the previous chapters theology presentation and delves into the practical and spiritual formation import for preachers.

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<sup>188</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1941), 22-23. See also Sayers' discussion in *The Mind of the Maker*. "All language about God must, as St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out, necessarily be analogical. We need not be surprised at this, still less suppose that because it is analogical it is therefore valueless or without any relation to truth. The fact is, that all language about everything is analogical; we think in a series of metaphors. We can explain nothing in terms of itself, but only in terms of other things.

#### 4.2 Incarnation: Philosophical and Theological Implications for Preachers

As previously stated, incarnation is a central theological theme in the Christian narrative. Moreover, it is the hinge point for the Christian understanding of divine interaction with creation<sup>189</sup>. The truths that one adheres to, as a Christian, depend on an engagement with the idea that God is present with us, and the prime example of this presence is in the person of Jesus Christ as Immanuel. “Likewise, Jesus’ biblical name, Immanuel (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23) has particular power today, telling us who Jesus is by placing him within the context of the history of God’s coming closer and closer to be with his people.”<sup>190</sup> At this point in the thesis, it is necessary to state, more explicitly, how embodiment stems from a theology of preaching as an incarnational act. Jesus Christ was with humanity and all of creation, and preachers must practice preaching in a manner that cultivates and nurtures “witness”. Michel Henry’s philosophy of phenomenology, Niels Gregerson's theology of deep incarnation, and Hans Urs Von Balthar’s theo-drama are voices that help formulate a deeper understanding of preaching as an incarnational, embodied practice that can be enhanced by actor training methodology.

For preachers to perceive Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the first fruit and primary model for proclamation practice and tradition means that they must acknowledge that they have access to a continual incarnational reality. In this reality, preachers are placed in a position of catalyst and conduit. Philosophical understanding must partner with theological understanding to enact a

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<sup>189</sup> Daniel Whistler, “Kant’s imitation Christi,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 67, no. 1 (February 2010): 29. “Kant begins with the Incarnation as an assumed fact, ‘If a human being of such a truly divine disposition had descended, as it were, from heaven to earth at a specific time...’. Kant, then, goes on to assume a number of the tenets of theological orthodoxy that Christ ‘exhibited in his self, through teaching, conduct and suffering, the example of a human being well-pleasing to God’ and also that he instigated ‘a revolution in the human race’ towards the good.”

<sup>190</sup> Donald Goergen, *Jesus, Son of God, Son of Mary, Immanuel*. (Eugene: Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 152. Additionally, Goergen expresses that, “Today we continue to search expressions, old and new, by means of which we might best express our faith in Jesus...As ‘Son of God’ and ‘son of Mary’ Jesus is revealed in his twofold solidarity and deepest levels of identity.”

lived theology that is inherent within the practice. Incarnation philosophy and theology is a vast study and conversation. Though this study will not delve into every aspect of incarnation theology, there are several foundational points that must be addressed, as they pertain to the arguments presented by this work.

Incarnation is a reality that has, as far as the average Christian practitioner can tell, has always been real. Yet, what does this reality mean to the formation and living of the practices, such as preaching, within Christianity? How does the present-day Christian engage their belief in incarnation? How does it impact the lived theology of the Body of Christ? These communal questions impact individual faith practice and processing for Christians. Perhaps the life of Jesus and the integration of self, for the sake of serving a larger purpose, is an example for preachers. “Yet Jesus was also a social being... The Jesus story is thus the fulfillment of God’s unitive aim of conjoining with all ways of the flesh so the world of creation can be one with God: ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son’ (John 3:16).”<sup>191</sup> What does the flesh of Jesus and how he ministered through word, have to say to the flesh of those who minister from the pulpit today? Concisely, the answer is that Jesus embodied his experience and turned it into a resource and framework for his preaching. He preached from his self, knowing that coming from the self was revelation. Although, preachers are not Christ, they are held under this lineage of incarnational, embodied preaching. Specific to this exploration, before incarnational preaching can be spoken of and taught as an inroad to embodied preaching, the lineage of the incarnation must be mined.

The heart of the practice of preaching has not changed much, in the life of the Christian church, though the manifestation has certainly evolved.

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<sup>191</sup> Niels Gregersen, *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 239.

...the early history of the central core of the Christian confession enables us to understand particularly clearly just to what extent the preaching of the early Church is still the norm of faith for Christians today...all ecclesiastical paraphrasing of the faith only defines the boundaries...and never sounds the depth of the faith which the churches confess.<sup>192</sup>

The “why” and “what” of preaching has remained fundamentally the same. Having set this foundation, one can now look to the inspiration sources for this study of incarnation and embodied preaching, beginning with Michel Henry.

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<sup>192</sup> Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*. (New York: T & T Clark Ltd, 1994), 4. Furthermore, throughout this work, Basil Studer provides a thorough examination of the development of the theological and cultural understanding of the incarnation by the Church before, during and after the First Council of Nicaea and the Council of Chalcedon. Studer gives thought to political influences on the developing theological viewpoints as well.

### 4.3 Michel Henry's Phenomenology and Embodied Preaching

Michel Henry provides helpful and expansive language to guide the conversation of how embodiment is an avenue to receive and impart revelation for preachers. This thesis utilizes Henry's work as a reflection point for incarnational, embodied preaching. The goal is not to say that Henry's work is explicitly connected to the work of homiletical training or practice, but rather to highlight the benefits that phenomenology provides to a theology of embodied preaching. In addition, Henry's view of incarnation is useful for this thesis.

Henry's work was instrumental in the form of his contribution to the philosophy of phenomenology. For incarnational, embodied preaching, phenomenology is useful as a framing mechanism for utilizing actor training methods as entry points into the practice of embodiment. "Phenomenology is a means of being led by the phenomenon through a way of access genuinely belonging to it."<sup>193</sup> This means experiencing through the bodied sensibilities and acknowledging the import of this experience as revelatory. Henry's work with phenomenology speaks to a viewpoint that allows for the created (preachers) to engage with the Creator (God) through intentional as well as pre-intentional means. "Perhaps the most characteristic, as well as most controversial, feature of Henry's phenomenology of life is that it grounds intentionality in a pre-intentional form of appearing, namely immanent affectivity or "life".<sup>194</sup> Thus, revelation is already present, and the preacher is seeking to experience the revelation by first believing it is present. This belief enacts engagement. This supports a reality that advocates for blending

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<sup>193</sup> Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 128. Palmer continues with "...phenomenology means letting things become manifest as what they are, without forcing our won categories on them. It means a reversal of direction from that one is accustomed to: it is not we who point to things; rather, things show themselves to us. This is not to suggest some primitive animism but the recognition that the very essence of true understanding is that of being led by power of the thing to manifest itself."

<sup>194</sup> Frederic Seyler. "Michel Henry", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Zalta. (Fall 2019). viewed 18 May 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/michel-henry/>.

practice and inspiration, rather than arguing that preachers must choose one over the other. By practice here, it is meant the formational exercises of preachers through pedagogy and craft training that enhances spiritual and ability formation. Henry creates an aesthetic in which the artist/preacher may thrive philosophically, and this allows for growth in theology and homiletical methodology. It is an aesthetic that makes room for an all-encompassing approach that includes the entirety of self and experience.

Henry's philosophy of incarnation is vigorous as it is a product of his unique viewpoint within the study of phenomenology. Homiletical studies can be motivated by this vigor. The arena which he creates to discuss his views is robust and able to sustain the definition of enfleshment that is the foundation of this thesis' view of embodied preaching through performing artist training.

For the purposes of this discussion, enfleshment is defined as the wrapping of humanity in flesh that serves two purposes. The first purpose is a biological manifestation, and the other is a spiritual manifestation. Henry's words help to enhance this definition. "Thus the mystical body of Christ grows indefinitely from everyone who is sanctified in Christ's flesh. In this potentially indefinite extension, the mystical body of Christ is construed as 'the common person of humanity' and 'that is why it is called the New Adam'."<sup>195</sup> The mystical body of Christ, of which Henry speaks, helps to interpret the mystical nature of preaching as a continuation of incarnation reality and the word of God coming into the flesh of humanity. This common nature exists pre-intentionally, and yet there is intentionality necessary to prepare the body, mind, and spirit for the ongoing process of inspiration. This is where the practicality of actor training can be introduced to the philosophy of Henry to inform homiletics pedagogy. The outcome is

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid, (2019).

discipleship that enables the message and the messenger to hold the space that Christ has created in coming into being.<sup>196</sup>

Henry lays out a pathway that leads to the conclusion that humanity is in a continual process of revelation of self through communion with the Word. The flesh is a resource in this process. For him, this is an almost biological process that comes from the relationship between our flesh and being known by God.

Life 'reveals itself' in flesh in a way that no act of thought, philosophical or otherwise, can do, since it is only by being alive that we know, with an invincible certainty, what life is. In the immanence of life in flesh, all of life's modalities are revealed – as what they are...life in the flesh is real life in real flesh, the life that allows each of us at every moment to say, and say with certainty, 'I am alive'.

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Thus, we human beings are inheritors of incarnation, and Christian preachers have this as a cornerstone for spiritual and homiletical development. One cannot speak explicitly about Henry's viewpoint concerning the connection between preaching and art, because no precise proof of this connection exists from his own work and words. However, his work does speak to the power of sensibilities, which is another way to think of artistic aesthetic engagement, by speaking to the original purpose of created life and encouraging reflection upon the manifestation of createdness and creativity.<sup>198</sup> The work done by Henry looks to and illuminates alternate routes to engage and investigate the possibilities of life - tangible and intangible - as does this thesis' approach to embodied preaching.

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<sup>196</sup> John 1, NASB.

<sup>197</sup> Michel Henry, *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 180.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 3-21. According to a phenomenological theme that Henry traces back to Husserl and Heidegger, the world is not limited to any existing world, but includes the possibility of creating new fields of experience for the human. Art would thus be such a possibility, insofar as the artist surpasses "habitual facticity" and establishes through the work of art a dimension of being that is "absolutely specific" and "original". Above all art reveals, through its ability to create a new ontological dimension, a more fundamental reality than the world itself, namely "the possibility of world" as such.

Every moment of sermon proclamation imparted through an enfleshed preacher serves as a continuation of the reality that we are alive in the flesh and the flesh is an aspect of how we engage with the spirit and the Holy Spirit. The bodied experience is itself a surrendering vessel of engagement with and worship of the Triune God. Dallas Willard shares that our bodies need to “conquer habits of thought, feelings, and action” if we are to fulfill the purpose of living worshipfully. Willard also encourages us to surrender the body to God, let go of idolizing it, and learn to use and care for it properly so that we are habituated in the ways of Christ—a hard work never possible without the Holy Spirit and God’s grace.<sup>199</sup> Caring for the body properly includes allowing it to completely fulfill its position as a part of the inspiration, revelation, and proclamation process. The moment of proclamation is a living moment of revelation. This truth is in danger of being sanitized to mere conversation or lecture if the preacher is not prepared philosophically, theologically, and practically to participate in the spiritual and physical dynamics of this living moment. Although there may be a tone of conversation or lecture present in the moment of proclamation, the essence of the moment is more heightened than these tonal options. This is a moment of incarnational wording that moves through a message with a purpose.

Divinity is moving through the preacher and the message, towards the listeners, and into creation. There is a bursting into reality that echoes the coming of Christ into the world. When this truth is lived out through the discipleship of the preaching methodology there is a call and response that enhances the capacity to live out theology holistically. The listeners are allowed

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<sup>199</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1997), 354. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 172 – 174.

to implement the same level of incarnation connection that the preacher engaged, and they are enabled to acknowledge the living revelation in their individual and communal lives. Thus, the incarnation and embodiment transformational process is continued, and preaching has served as a catalyst. This is the creative inducing and producing engagement that this thesis envisions preaching training and practice to be for preachers and the Church.

Additionally important in this exploration of how Henry's work engages the arguments of this thesis, is the engagement of our senses and the manifestation of our experience of Life.<sup>200</sup> The steppingstones of his philosophical exploration of experiencing - sensing and living - are alive in the same laboratory in which the idea of preachers as artist resides. Looking at Henry's definition of Life illuminates the usefulness of the self-awareness that actor training brings to recalling our selves through the lens of Divinity. "Life, life as we experience it, which is our life, is in itself a revelation - this unique form of revelation in which who reveals and what is revealed are one and the same. For this reason, I have called it a self-revelation."<sup>201</sup>

Actor training techniques, such as Viewpoints Training, are practical and repeatable exercises that are used to enhance the actor's skill at self-awareness and interpreting meaning not only through words but through physicality.<sup>202</sup> The use of such exercises with preachers could allow for a similar kind of meaning-making, which would enhance the capacity to utilize this self-revelation as an interpretive tool in the sermon preparation process. The enhanced connection to self heralds an enhanced connection to Divinity, which in turn forms the sermon. The preacher is being shaped by the process of engagement with the acting exercises and can create sermons that are viscerally dynamic, just as God's inspiration is such.

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<sup>200</sup> Henry, *Incarnation*. Capitalization of "Life" is based on Henry's usage of the same.

<sup>201</sup> Michel Henry, *Words of Christ*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 1278.

<sup>202</sup> Bogart and Landau, *The Viewpoints Book*, 57.

Along with “Life”, for Henry there is “sensing”. When we add shading to this definition of “Life” by engaging Henry’s definition of “sensing”, a deeper layer of understanding is revealed.

But as we have just recalled, and in conformity with the duplicity of appearing, our thingly body is two-faced.” It does not only expose on the outside the surface on which the sensible appearances are spread out as so many properties or sensible qualities of this thing, from which angle it very evidently appears– it also has an “inside”, it’s dynamic revelation in our flesh. This radical phenomenological duplicity of our own thingly body is the duplicity of our own skin.<sup>203</sup>

If our senses, through our flesh, are an entry-point to the appearance of divine revelation in our lives, then some guidance on how the process can be knowingly accommodated is helpful. Actor training is a way to do this.

The training is both cognitive and experiential. The training is in the body and in real-time.<sup>204</sup> The flesh-aware revelations have a space in which to appear, and in this space, they are the leaders rather than an after-thought of which to be suspicious. Actors know that practice is necessary to develop these skills as manifestations of reality. To tell the holistic story of the human experience, it is crucial to engage ourselves holistically in the preparation process. This is a truth that preachers can take from the world of Henry’s phenomenology and performing artist training and apply it to the process of preaching as a way of allowing the process to become complete. From Henry’s philosophy of phenomenology, and the connection to revelation reception, a discussion of Niels Henrik Gregersen’s deep incarnation highlights the need for a methodology that bridges the gap between the infinity of incarnation and the finitude of incarnational preaching.

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<sup>203</sup> Henry, *Incarnation*, 32.

<sup>204</sup> Earle Ernst, *The Kabuki Theatre*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), 72- 80. See the discussion of how the artist and the object find balance between body, mind, and experience that allows for authentic life representation.

#### 4.4 Niels Henrik Gregersen's Deep Incarnation and Embodied Preaching

For this exploration, deep incarnation provides a useful theological lens from which to view the import of incarnation for embodied preaching. Niels Henrik Gregersen's work is a support in understanding this import. "The incarnation is 'deep' in the sense of being deeply embedded in the frail, suffering, and mortal history of the flesh."<sup>205</sup> It is this embeddedness of incarnation that speaks to the embodiedness of incarnational preaching. Embodied preaching resists superficial artifice by offering and allowing the entire bodily experience to be a guide and resource in the process, preparation, and proclamation of incarnate word. Furthermore, the human experience of deep incarnation is an inlet into cosmological anthropology.<sup>206</sup>

What use is this to the preacher? It is a permission-giving and active theology that allows for the proclamation of ambiguous absolutes, which speak to the surety of the Word and truths while advocating for both concrete and fluid interpretation and impartation. A deep incarnation-influenced preaching practice of embodiment is one that offers harmony and unity in apparent paradox.

A final note about the sometimes troubling word 'likeness'...This word allows for the ambiguity, emphasizing that he is similar to our humanity in some respects and dissimilar in others...because on the one hand he has fully identified with us and because on the other hand in becoming human he was not only human.<sup>207</sup>

Human beings are working within our own process of deep incarnation that is "like" the incarnation of Christ and yet not the same. A way of exploring the multi-layered exploration that is a practice of preaching is to live the theology of deep incarnation in a way that calls for inquisitive and expansive responses of body, mind, and spirit. These expansive responses

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<sup>205</sup> Gregersen, *Incarnation*, 184.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 184. See Deane-Drummonds argument on the anthropological cosmology and a cosmological anthropology—the human and cosmos understood in unison rather than in separation.

<sup>207</sup> Fee, "St. Paul and the Incarnation: A Reassessment of the Data' in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002),77.

cultivate curiosity that leads to encounters with revelation. These multi-layers are also indicators for exploration with the “hidden transcripts”, which are revealed through a process of embracing deep incarnational embodiment within individual and communal stories, beliefs, and values of faith that help frame the preacher and the preacher’s homiletical method and manifestation. <sup>208</sup>

The argument being presented here is that performing artist training enriches a lived deep incarnation theology for preachers, in that they both encourage the pairing down of the unhelpful performative nature. This is done for the sake of learning from and acting from the root of truth that is most edifying and transformative for the individual and the community. There is an aspect of this flow in actor training that can be useful for preacher/artists.

While Stanislavski shifts emphasis from emotion memory in the early part of his career to physical action in the later part, the two are deeply connected in his work. Each actor has a storehouse of emotion memories, which are useful in luring repeated feelings on stage. To access these emotion memories, actors use a variety of stimuli, including light, sound, sensation memory, and—perhaps most importantly—physical action. Stanislavski states, “Carrying out the logic of a physical action will bring you to the logic of emotions, and this is everything for an actor.”<sup>209</sup>

The physical action of performing artist training techniques, such as Viewpoints training, Linklater Voice Technique, and the Suzuki Actor Training Method, can help preachers touch

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<sup>208</sup> Joseph Urbaniak, “Between the Christ of Deep Incarnation and The African Jesus of Tinyiko Maluleke: An Improvised Dialogue”. *Modern Theology* 34, no. 2, (April 2018): 198. “Maluleke articulates a similar insight when he describes an African Jesus as someone approachable, someone who can be “taunted” into action, and not least, as someone whom “Africans are taking. . . by the hand, teaching. . . a few African ‘moves’ and sensitising. . . to local issues and conditions.” I find particularly compelling the intentionality with which Maluleke, in his own christologising, builds upon and gives a mature, prophetic expression to the experiential reality which he finds in African people’s attitude towards Jesus. Thanks to his theological work, often done by means of engaging with the “hidden transcripts” of African Christianity, we have seen the traces and the glimpses of this scandal of reciprocity in African theologies of the cross, the African approach to preaching, traditional choruses, and so on.”

<sup>209</sup> Shannon Craigo-Snell, *The Empty Church: Theater, Theology, and Bodily Hope*. (New York: Oxford University Press 2014), 56 - 57. Furthermore, Craigo-Snell states, “Stanislavski relies on the principle that body, intellect, emotion, and will are intertwined and develops the practical implications of this for actors. At least one commentator claims that the basis of using physical action to stimulate emotion is biophysical, such that a particular physical gesture will evoke a specific emotion through biophysical responses. Moore asserts, “Science established that every nuance of emotion is connected with a particular physical action. Therefore, that action must be carefully selected on the basis of the play’s circumstances. It must be the indispensable physical action connected with the emotion which the actor must bring out.”

upon lived deep incarnational theology and the stimuli that opens avenues of proclamation reception and deliverance. From deep incarnation, the next step in this framework of the celebration of embodiment is embracing the drama of incarnation within the processing and practice of preaching.

#### 4.5 Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Theo-Drama* and Embodied Preaching

Deep incarnation also engages with Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology of *Theo-Drama*, continuing the study of the significance of incarnation and embodiment for preachers. The drama of creation, and consequently Divinity relating to creation, for Balthasar, illuminates elements that originate in Divinity, resonate with humanity, and replicate. Preaching is a catalyst and an instrument of this process, including the facilitation of self-surrender that centers around freedom. "This is the theo-drama into which the world and God have their ultimate input; here absolute freedom enters into created freedom, interacts with created freedom and acts as created freedom."<sup>210</sup> Thus preaching is a process of freedom receiving and freedom giving. These dual attributes can be cultivated in the homiletics classroom through the introduction of practices, such as Viewpoints Training, that usher in the freedom that comes with full-body learning experiences.

Viewpoints leads to greater awareness, which leads to greater choice, which leads to greater freedom. Once you are aware of a full spectrum, you do not need to choose all of it all the time, but you are free to, and you are no longer bound by unconsciousness. Range increases. You can begin to paint with greater variety and mastery.<sup>211</sup>

As the name of the acting exercise technique suggests, Viewpoints training is a way of physically engaging the space around us, for the purpose of shifting, and perhaps expanding, the view of what is possible within the ordinary and extraordinary.

Another point of inspiration from Balthasar's work is the interplay of imagination and preaching. Imagination is a way that preachers facilitate the imaging of God for the listeners of the sermon. Imagination is also a way that preachers sense and gather the fruit of the message,

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<sup>210</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: The Action, Vol. 4* trans. Graham Harrison. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 318.

<sup>211</sup> Bogart and Landau, *The Viewpoints Book*, 19.

and it is a pathway to embodied reality and possibility. Walter Brueggemann aids with this notion.

Every text that describes and redescribes presents something that is not in hand, until the text is appropriated and all reality is passed through the text... The preacher traffics in a fiction that makes true. But that is why preaching is so urgent and must be done with such art. This world of the gospel is not real, not available, until this credible utterance authorizes a departure from a failed text and appropriation of this text.<sup>212</sup>

Considering Brueggemann's thought here leads one to analyze not only the sacred text that is being interpreted but also the text of the sermon manuscript. In many ways, the preacher is also a text that is describing and redescribing something that is not in hand. This process is aided by performing arts training, as this training knocks one out of preconceived ways of bodily habitation, which interacts with cognitive, spiritual, and emotional habitation, that can inhibit the expanse of the imagination. The connection to Balthasar can be made in that there is aesthetic intentionality, one might suggest an art, to engaging imagination in spirit and in truth.

For Balthasar, our knowing of the world 'in spirit and truth' intimates the uncreated theological (and ultimately Christological) light in which we live and move, and the dramatic relation we have to supereminent form... Artistic truth thus becomes, like artistic beauty, not just an ontological reality but a theological one, each painting making a wager on the infinite.<sup>213</sup>

Preacher/artists are those who craft an artistically beautiful and, more importantly, artistically truthful word that makes a wager on the infinite.

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<sup>212</sup> Brueggemann, *The Practice of the Prophetic Imagination*, 321.

<sup>213</sup> Brett David Potter, "Inside Out and Outside In: Art, Truth, and Phenomenology in Hans Urs von Balthasar". *Heythrop Journal* 61 no. 3 (February 2020): 434. Furthermore, "However, its phenomenological treatment of truth—a philosophical method which opens onto worldly truth as the truth as the Trinity—has much to offer a Balthasarian phenomenology of art. If the origin of the work of art is ultimately not just Being, but Christ who as ultimate 'form' casts light on all derivative earthly forms, Truth itself is deeply (and dramatically) connected to Beauty. Theo-Logic fills out the central analogy Balthasar employs in his aesthetics: that of the experience of the great work of art. A beautiful painting or symphony catches us up both in a miraculous event of rapture and ekstasis and reveals to us in a flash like lightning the hidden structure of Being—namely, beauty, truth, and goodness united by love."

The connections made here are in the spirit of Balthasar's own succinct identification of the connection between aesthetics — such as can be defined as art, imaginative, and sensitive — and the essence and functionality of the revelation of God in word. “An apparent enthusiasm for the beautiful is mere idle talk when divorced from the sense of the divine summons to change one's life.”<sup>214</sup> Revelation delivery is not only enhanced by aesthetic attention being paid but additionally revelation is received aesthetically. This is due to the drama-infused nature of divine creativity, human creativity, and mutually nurturing creativity.

The theory of dramatic interpretation of the human condition - God's and ours - is important in redeeming the arena of performance as a sacred and sanctified realm. In an explicit way, this section empowers preachers through a discussion of how, having received the inheritance of incarnation, preaching students can boldly walk in the reality of the inheritance. It is a weighty inheritance, and when it is ignored, as sometimes happens without this kind of explicit acknowledgment, a hollow theology of preaching can manifest as a hollow preacher. This acknowledgment is another area in which this thesis contributes to the current state of homiletical education.

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<sup>214</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Revelation and the Beautiful,” in *The Word Made Flesh, Vol. 1, Explorations in Theology*, trans. A. V. Littledale with Alexander Dru. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 107.

#### 4.6 Incarnational Preaching: Celebrating Embodiment

The possibility and reality of the incarnation are, in and of themselves, issues of faith knowledge rather than issues of empirical knowledge. The self-revelation of God, as exposed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is central to Christ-centered lived theology. This self-revelation is also representative of the dichotomy of God's interaction with humanity. It realizes "anthropomorphic and theomorphic" truths that are foundational to the understanding of the persistent work of incarnation.<sup>215</sup> The limitations of the natural human physical body can carry, supernaturally, the word of God. This is a seeming contradiction, just as much as any aspect of faith reality. Faith reality is that which is known, experienced and inspired by spiritual meaning-making.

That is, religions (and theologies) provide us with construals of the ultimate mystery within which human life transpires – construals which are sufficiently meaningful and intelligible to enable human beings to come to some significant understanding of themselves in relation to the enigmatic context within which their lives proceed, and which are sufficiently appealing to motivate attempts to live fruitfully and meaningfully within this context.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Dearman, "Theophany, Anthropomorphism, and the Imago Dei: Some Observations About the Incarnation in the Light of the Old Testament", in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 36 – 37 and 39. Andrew Dearman highlights the taking on of human characteristics by God in the Old Testament, thus illuminating incarnate works before the arrival of the incarnate word in the manifestation of Jesus Christ. These arguments help with a "modern" interpretation of the incarnation that considers the entirety of the biblical narrative. "By way of summary it can be said that anthropomorphic appearance is a significant part of the theophanic traditions in the OT, both in the guarded way that God is said to 'appear' and in the way that his messengers appear. If there is an intrinsic link between anthropomorphism and divine appearing in these accounts, it is assumed rather than explicit. Moreover, there are other claims in the biblical tradition that discourage thinking of God in human form (see below). Nevertheless, a unique relationship of form between God and humankind is explicitly claimed in the first account of the creation of humankind (Gen. 1: 26– 8), and to this and related texts we turn next for commentary on the significance of anthropomorphism in the OT... The question is more than that of the best way to represent the disparate biblical traditions, some of which represent God anthropomorphically and some of which either avoid such representation or radically reinterpret it: It is whether Israel's effort to depict God anthropomorphically is also a way that the invisible God has chosen to reveal himself, and if so, to what end? If, indeed, such was the way of divine revelation, the incarnation can be seen as the ultimate 'fleshing out' of Israel's 'portrait' of God and a goal for which anthropomorphism and the imago Dei in human-kind were preparation. Although naive and limiting in some respects, the anthropomorphism of the OT can be understood as divine preparation, pointing forward to a Christophany/theophany in which the difficulty of 'seeing' God has given way to the Lord who appears in the fulness of time."

<sup>216</sup> Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 62. See also the works for further discussion of faith and reality in theory and practice. "Renegotiating Aquinas: Catholic

There are various ruminations that help faith followers find and make meaning out of this seeming disconnection. There are also experiential activities that can help bridge the gaps left by dualistic, contextualized interpretations of the connection between body and spirit call and response with God. For preachers to enact embodiment, they must engage these exercises. Activities such as the Viewpoints exercises mentioned previously, Linklater Vocal Techniques, and Suzuki Actor Training provide such opportunities.<sup>217</sup> The act and practice of preaching within the Christian church is a particular and peculiar manifestation of this process of recognizing and reconciling the natural and supernatural, in a holistic manner that captivates mind, body, and spirit.

Delving more deeply into how this may be addressed in homiletics practice and training is facilitated by returning to the inspiration of Michel Henry. Henry's work with phenomenology speaks to a viewpoint that allows for the created (preachers) to engage with the Creator (God) through intentional as well as pre-intentional means. The emphasis on sensory revelation opens the door to speak to the benefits of sensory practice within performing arts training. It is necessary to draw upon this shared emphasis. There is also benefit found in this discussion of how humanity might experience and share, in a way outside of mental cognition, revelation from divinity. The redemption of the bodily senses, in collaboration with the cognitive and spiritual sensing capacity, is the new and necessary aspect offered here.

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Feminist Ethics, Postmodernism, Realism, and Faith” by Lisa Sowle Cahill; *The Mystery of Being. Vol. 2, Faith & Reality* by Gabriel Marcel; *Faith and Reality* by Wolfhart Pannenberg; *Reality and Faith: The Theological Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* by Heinrich Ott; and *The Reality of Faith: A Way Between Protestant Orthodoxy and Existentialist Theology* by H. M. Kuitert.

<sup>217</sup> These performing arts techniques are discussed in further detail in other chapters of this dissertation. For further study see, Bogart, A. and Landau, T. (2005). *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*; Suzuki, T and Rimer, J. (1986). *The Way of Acting: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*; and Linklater, K. (2006). *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language*.

There is a provocative divergence from a sterile theology of lived theology to Henry's philosophy that marries well with the proactive divergence of the preacher artist archetype. "So my flesh is not only the principle of the constitution of my objective body, it hides in it its invisible substance."<sup>218</sup> This interaction between tangible and intangible is precisely the focal point of much of the actor training methods that are introduced during the awareness training that many schools of acting employ. The point is to help actors be present to themselves, the other actors, the audience, as well as the ongoing interpretation of the text. It's a way of engaging multi-listening that is also useful for preachers in the moment of proclamation.

Much can be mined from Henry's philosophy of the flesh, for the purpose of supporting the need for training for the body to marry with the training that the mind receives in current homiletical pedagogy. The core of what is useful for this discussion is the idea of appearing that has happened in the flesh. Appearing, for Henry, speaks to the knowing of something through revelation as opposed to knowing through learning the verbiage of the thing.<sup>219</sup> The way of knowing our beings, and thus what revelation becomes manifest, is by experiencing them within the movements of life, rather than through an understanding of learned vocabulary about this revelation.

Taking what Henry offers and then building a visceral and livable theology of the preacher's body and flesh is the goal. The value of the flesh and the experiences of the flesh are problematic within certain theological interpretations. Exegeting the experience of the flesh is also, therefore, problematic. Henry's contribution to the redemption of flesh considering its history within Christianity is much needed. Historically in the Christian narrative, the flesh has

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<sup>218</sup> Henry, *Incarnation*, 110.

<sup>219</sup> Henry, *Words of Christ*, 21 - 57. For Henry, "appearing" is the phenomenon of the revelation itself as well as the process of the revelation's appearance. This is the basis for his explorative work in phenomenology. He expounds on this explanation of "appearing" in Chapter 1 of *Words of Christ*.

been viewed under the cover of sin. Whether through an inheritance from Greek philosophy or cultural and moral interpretations, it has been a complex journey when seeking to define the goodness of the flesh for its own sake.<sup>220</sup> The body has been separated and compartmentalized, disconnected from the realm of fostering communion with God. This has caused a rift within the spiritual formation of the Church as a whole. Henry offers a way to reconnect the flesh and spirit as both being needed aspects of experiencing life in Christ. “In being made flesh, however – according to John’s Word, which fascinated the Fathers, and tore them from the horizon of thought surrounding the antique world – the Word brings salvation to men. Taking a flesh like theirs and like him.”<sup>221</sup> For preachers, this offers a perspective that advocates for time spent, in reflection to identify their flesh with the flesh of Christ, in terms of homiletical formation. This is a statement that could be engaged theoretically but should also be engaged practically through the level of experimentation for the sake of revelation that actor training methods introduce.

The reality of proclamation calls for the body to be present to the bodies of others as a vessel but also for its own sake. There is a surrender of self — mind, body, and spirit — that is offered from the preacher to the listeners. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, current homiletics pedagogy speaks to the mind and the spirit of this surrender but does a poor job of speaking to how the body fits into the equation. This is where the preacher can extrapolate from the process of the actor. The actor’s process of becoming present in the body is an entryway to the preacher engaging the revealed message and the anticipation of imparting this message to listeners.

There is also the consideration of the whole of the drama, which is the world of creation crafted by God. It is possible for the preacher/artist to be fully present to all these embodied

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<sup>220</sup> Emma Wasserman, “Paul Among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Romans 6-8,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 30 no. 4 (2008), 393 - 402. See Wasserman’s discussion of the Platonic influenced present in Pauline Theology and the topic of sin, specifically Romans 6 -8.

<sup>221</sup> Henry, *Incarnation*, 147.

realities in the moment of proclamation. For this thesis, the preacher is both audience and actor, in that he or she has been the receiver of the message from God and will be the messenger for the listeners. The play is God's theo-drama, and the characters are the attitudes, actions, and attributes of God that are imbued within the message.<sup>222</sup>

The body is the carrier of the message, so it must be intentionally a part of the process. Considering and using the body as an instrument of the message is a skill, and the skill-building laboratory can include aspects such as the recovery of the natural voice. An authentic intrapersonal relationship between the preacher and his or her body is vital. This includes an understanding of the preacher's body in the "space" of the pulpit. "Bodies are always located, and this includes in 'the field'. Bodies are also always interpellated by a range of ideological practices and this includes research practices...Bodies produce space and knowledge, and space and knowledge produce bodies. Being and knowing cannot be easily separated."<sup>223</sup> This "body in space knowing" needs an experiential learning environment in which to flourish. This type of learning is a way to refine the carnal expression within the incarnate proclamation preparation and process.

Preaching is a psychophysical act, in the same way that it is a spiritual act. "In relationship or dialogue with the interpreter's [preacher's] bodily presence placed at its disposal

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<sup>222</sup> Chaikin, *The Presence of the Actor*, 49-50. This actor to audience interaction is further explained here. "What is radical in Brecht's [Bertolt] requirement is that the actor as a private person be concerned with the matter of the entire play. In addition to his presence on the stage as the character in the given circumstances, he is sharing with the audience a response to the character's predicament. Each choice has to be made according to the logic of the playwright's intention, rather than exclusively with the characters. Moment to moment, the play is between actor and audience, as the actor's attitude changes about the character and his circumstances. The audience is the actor's partner as he plays the role of his character with the other characters. The actor does not have to wink, woo, or pander to win the audience's partnership; he begins with the assumption of partnership, and this assumption is the tacit understanding, the secret under the character façade."

<sup>223</sup> Robyn Longhurst, Elsie Ho and Lynda Johnston, "Using the Body as an Instrument of Research: Kimchi and Pavlova," *Area*, 4 no. 2 (June 2008): 208. "There is now an enormous amount of critical scholarship on the body and the various ways in which bodies and spatiality are closely entwined and yet it has taken some time for these arguments to extend into the realm of methods and methodology...There is less of a distinction between ontology and epistemology than might have earlier been assumed."

the poem [sermon] as word receives a human voice and achieves its entelechy, while at the same time it gives its potential speech over to a human subject.”<sup>224</sup> The sermon is formed in the spirit and in the vessel of the preacher, and in partnership with God. The mutual reaching toward, by the preaching and by the Triune God, is a manifestation of the Incarnate Word. Jesus Christ is present in the reaching.

This making, as it has been suggested, is the outcome of the joining of two beings in a single presentational event... This reaching out, this committed loving, is an ‘exercising of the spirit in the act of understanding,’ and it tends toward communion. Once again in terms of the theological metaphor, ‘[The Word] lived among us. The poem [sermon] as potential speaking-subject remains voiceless until it is taken into a body and allowed to resonate within. The gesture of the human body can release the word from its own interior.’<sup>225</sup>

As previously stated, Jesus the preacher is the first fruit of Christian preaching. For Henry, He is also the first fruit of experiential living. Preachers are empowered by this example, yet they may also be intimidated. A pathway to negotiating the tension between empowerment and intimidation is to receive the role of witness as a preacher.

The stakes are now higher, and the source of legitimation higher too, for if Christ is the Word of God, precisely his spoken Word, then the justification of this word ‘will only be able to come from God's word [parole] itself, lived in its original truth. It can only come from the Word [Verbe]’. The Law demands many witnesses, but Jesus links his own witness to his origin ‘even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from’.<sup>226</sup>

This statement speaks to the cyclical nature and witness aspect of incarnate Word to word action. Thus, the Word that is Christ is the message from God, self-revealing this message first through knowledge of self. This is a continual process of cultivation that unlocks the body, as well as the

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<sup>224</sup> Bozarth-Campbell, *The Word's Body: An Incarnational Aesthetic of Interpretation*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1979), 14. Bozarth-Campbell states that furthermore, “Through a complex process of dialogue, self-emptying assimilation and fullness, the interpreter enters into a mutually transforming relationship with the poem [sermon] that results in the incarnation of the word.”

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>226</sup> Henry, *Words of Christ*, 255.

mind and spirit, to embodiment. What this dialogue adds to Henry's argument is that one must cultivate a practice of embodiment preparation to live out the experiences that our sensing invites as "Life". This practice must include a reverence for the self that celebrates the contributions from the self as valid resources for spiritual formation and sound ministry practice, such as proclamation. This is the enhancement of what comes naturally with what comes through nurturing. It also speaks to a maturation process that is, perhaps, inherent in this kind of engagement between humanity and Divinity.<sup>227</sup>

This harkens to the previously posed question, "How does a preacher prepare to embody the word?". In a simplistic and perhaps comforting way, one could state that it is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, does the Holy Spirit work exclusively outside the bounds of human intentionality? Or is there a partnership? Consider these words of Henry. Consider the immersion into a sensory experience of revelation that they offer.

What is proper to a body such as ours, on the contrary, is that its senses every object that is close to it; it perceives each of its qualities, it sees its colors, hears its sounds, breathes in a scent, determines the hardness of the soil with the foot, and the smoothness of a fabric with the hand...in the effort it exerts to ascend the lane, and in the impression of pleasure that sums up the cool of the water or wind.<sup>228</sup>

How does this description of the human capacity to sense through the body interact with the words of Jesus as recorded by John in his gospel? There is a holiness of flesh introduced by Jesus in that he describes the capacity of the human sensory ability to engage the Holy Spirit. All that flesh is flesh and spirit is spirit, they are connected in our humanity.

Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is

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<sup>227</sup> Wallace A. Bacon, *The Art of Interpretation*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 451. "It is to the process of matching – of bringing his own life from for the moment into congruence with the life form of the poem – that the interpreter first and foremost devotes his attention. The process of matching is also a process of maturation; one grows by giving in to the otherness of the life of the text, by extending oneself, by reaching out, by loving."

<sup>228</sup> Henry, *Incarnation*, 145.

flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.<sup>229</sup>

Furthermore, is there a panacea offered to humanity in the face of the “pressing on it from all sides” that is a part of Henry’s description?<sup>230</sup> The answer is yes. There is a remedy to the tension offered and it is a way of negotiating the space between body and spirit. A preacher is enabled, by the machinations of performance training that tunes the body’s ability to receive spiritual direction from God, and to withstand the movements of self-revelation and Spirit-revelation due to the increased capacity to willfully hold the tangible and intangible in the same space. This also enables the preacher to formulate sermons and facilitate this same process within the experiences of the listeners. After all, what the preacher has not embraced for himself or herself, cannot be a part of what he or she offers in and to the moment of proclamation.

The embracing of the power of the Holy Spirit by the preacher enhances the capacity for the preacher to live and proclaim from biblical truths such as those presented in Joel 2: 28- 29. “It will come about after this, That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters will prophesy, Your old men will have dreams, Your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”<sup>231</sup> There is a promise within the power of the Holy Spirit, and it is this power that ushers in a celebration of the ability of humanity to carry this power through embodied, incarnate word. There is also a projection within this promise, that propels the hearer into a deeper and wider revelation of God’s word wrapped in flesh. There is unity found in this power and promise.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> John 3: 5 – 8, NASB.

<sup>230</sup> Henry, *Incarnation*, 224.

<sup>231</sup> Joel 2:28-29, NASB.

<sup>232</sup> Joel Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence: A Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel*. (Ann Arbor: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 218. Barker keys into the countercultural import and meaning of this promise and

Henry's offerings may be philosophical, but they are not disengaged from the practical focus of this work. It is a portion of a larger dialogue. He introduces a foundation from which the theological and pedagogical can flow. The theory that the encounter of Divinity is inherently one that is experienced through self, as it is rooted in divine createdness, is one that is best lived out in action. For preachers seeking to embrace the artistic aspect of the role, this living out can be formational. This formation is enhanced by actor training methodology and practice.

The Holy Spirit is the sacrament, sign, and communication, of Christ's love for creation.<sup>233</sup> The Spirit is the indwelling empowerment of incarnation. Described as a guide, comforter, advocate, and intercessor, the work of incarnation, cannot be completed without this active love presence at the core of the preacher and the preaching.<sup>234</sup> Engagement with the Holy Spirit is inherent and yet can be enhanced by actor training that creates space within the spirit as well as in the mind.

The performing artist trains for the purpose of being able to hold varied dynamics within the same plane of performance space for themselves and the audience. The goal is to illuminate the specific story, or message, within the larger context of the metanarrative of creation. This connects to the goal of preaching within the Christian context. A word from God, for the edification and transformation of creation through the process of revelation. Preachers can

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unity as it projects into future generations and across societal barriers. This counterculture aspect is part of the celebration of embodiment that is found in incarnate preaching. "For a universal audience, this passage is powerful in proclaiming the desire of Yhwh to pour out the divine Spirit across many different boundaries; neither age, nor gender, nor social category is a barrier to accessing the divine Spirit. Although the discussion above notes that the scope of those included in the category of "all flesh" is probably restricted to the Judahite community in the immediate context, Joel 3:1-5 invites the universal audience to consider Yhwh's intention to pour out the divine Spirit on a wide range of people, permitting a universal audience to consider themselves people to whom Yhwh gives the divine Spirit."

<sup>233</sup> David Coffey, "The Incarnation of the Holy Spirit in Christ," *Theological Studies*. 45 no. 3 (1984), 478-479. See Coffey's discussion of the sacrament of the Holy Spirit, Christ living in us, and Galatians 2:20.

<sup>234</sup> Joseph H. Thayer, ed., *Thayer's Greek to English Lexicon of the New Testament*. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 349.

benefit from the addition of similar kinds of experiential learning to enhance their embodiment and enmeshment skills as they are introduced to the skills while in periods of homiletical training.

#### *4.7 Conclusion*

The connection between incarnation and embodiment has been identified in this chapter. The connection involves the holistic realization of inspiration and revelation processed as proclamation. The work of Michel Henry, Niels Henrik Gregersen, and Hans Urs Von Balthasar aid the theological and philosophical framework of the proposed notion of building methodology that trains preacher/artists in the preparation elements of incarnate, embodied preaching practice. Actor training methodology is acknowledged as a practical way to bring these theologies and theories to reality within preaching.

Incarnation is a belief from which values and viewpoints burst forth. The belief in the incarnational reality is formational for the Christian church at large. This formation process extends to the process of proclamation, in that incarnation is the method and inspiration for the preacher's experience and homiletical method. This study takes inspiration from those who have considered incarnation from philosophical and theological perspectives, and then branches out into needed consideration for what incarnation means for the training and practice of preaching and preachers.

Michel Henry, Niels Henrik Gregersen, and Hans Urs von Balthasar provide points from which this chapter connects to the overall thesis, building a practical theology of incarnational embodied preaching practice that stands as a buttress for robust lived theology preached from Christian pulpits. Sense training and skill, deep incarnation, and aesthetically aware dramatic engagement are supported by performing artist training in this preaching theology. Additionally, engagement with an embodied theology of incarnation for preachers should necessitate the inclusion of pedagogical methods that create space for incarnate — body, mind, and spirit — revelation experience. Thus, preachers can receive and impart a lived theology of incarnation,

through the inheritance of incarnate word truth as practice. It follows that a practical approach to embodied preaching relies on acknowledging that it is through triple engagement between body, mind, and spirit that holistic preaching is set free to truly function as a tool of the Word. A pedagogy that embraces this reality must include ways to nurture all these aspects in the curriculum.

As Jesus Christ, the Word of God, burst into temporal reality wrapped in a body susceptible to the full gamut of being human. Yet, He was yet able to share the Word. Thus, his very person clarified the power of pairing the wisdom of the Word and the finitude of the body. Each aspect was an instrument of his proclaiming voice. Christian preachers can share in this reality.

Although preachers are not clones of Christ, they are conduits for the continuation of the incarnate Word through preaching. Preachers must be in-carnal, in the body of their person, just as they are in-spired, in the Spirit of God. It is the power of both that speaks effectively and holistically into the human condition. To speak hope from a place of frailty, to proclaim peace from a place of chaos, to preach wisdom from a place of finitude – these seemingly dualistic, seemingly opposing natures become non-dual fertile soil for the seeds of the Word through incarnation brought to holistic fruition through engagement in embodied preaching practices. The next chapter looks more specifically at how the body plays into this created space, as preparation for the discussion of preaching and embodiment.

## Chapter 5: The Body of the Preacher: Entry to Incarnate, Embodied Preaching

### 5.1 Introduction

Embodiment is not a purely physical process. It is holistic, involving and engaging the whole person and personhood of the preacher as a resource for incarnational, embodied preaching. The body, individual and communal, carries with it a complex history of discord. As the body has been neglected as a resource for preachers, this study lays out a method to rectify this history of oversight. In the words of body theologian Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, “A reorientation of Christianity must begin with a rediscovery of the body and its energies.”<sup>235</sup> Compartmentalizing the body, and relegating its import within the preaching process, is a risky distortion that leads to complacent preaching. When the body is not unambiguously addressed as a fundamental part of the preaching process and proclamation moment, there is also a threat — for the individual preacher and the Body of Christ — of reinforcing harmful theologies of the fear of the body, implicitly and explicitly. In this chapter, the strength of the body, as a conduit for the embodied message being proclaimed will be assessed as a resource for preachers and the proclamation process. Formational aspects of the history of the body and the church must and will be discussed. The anthropological lens of the body will be considered as it pertains to the union between the physical entity, culture, and society. Discussion of the body engaging with liturgy and craft will lead to an overview of the preacher as an artist.

The body of the preacher needs and deserves equal time and reflection, along with the mind and the spirit of the preacher. The body, as a part of a lived liturgy, and the history of how

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<sup>235</sup> Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment*. (New York; Continuum, 1995), 57. Moltmann-Wendel’s thesis is that the body and divinity are connected inherently. For her this connection necessitates intentional engagement, focused on the body, in public and private faith life.

the body has been addressed or negated is put into the context of this thesis. Body awareness and utilization is paramount, as it ought to be an aware body that shows up in the pulpit to preach.

Actors speak of being in their bodies as a commonly understood state of being. A holistic actor process of craft engages “walking the boards” as a way of understanding the world through empathy for self and others.<sup>236</sup> The bending of self towards another, for a purpose larger than self, requires physical engagement. The significance of putting foot to floor is also a way of discovering the thought-speech connection that develops through the text, whether it is the text of a play or the text of a sermon manuscript. Walking historian Rebecca Solnit’s observes that walking and traveling have “become central metaphors in thought and speech.” The physical activity engages the spiritual activity and brings synthesis.<sup>237</sup>

Going, doing, and being require a physical awareness that is cultivated in practice, as well as being inspired by the Holy Spirit. In part, this seems like common sense. How can one be anything else but in his or her body? In using this phrasing, “on its feet”, actors are acknowledging that, in fact, one can be in the body and yet not fully present to what the body has to offer in terms of revelatory knowledge. The theoretical can stay stymied in the mind if there is not an opportunity to “act it out”. One can logically suppose that Christian preachers would also like to be present in their bodies and to the possibility of receiving revelation through the experience of the body. This is not only beneficial for the purpose of embodied proclamation but

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<sup>236</sup> Carl Lavery, “Preamble: A Panegyric for the Foot,” *Performance Research*, 17 no. 2 (2012): 3. See Lavery’s discussion of the benefits of being in the body as a physical and psychological way of negotiating physical space. This practice of walking the boards is a way of connecting the physical, emotional, and mental experience of creating a body-space that is useful for the character, and thus the story, to come alive.

<sup>237</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. (London: Verso, 2002), 73, 76. Solnit goes on to say, “The scholarly emphasis is always on the device of the imaginary palace, in which the information was placed room by room, object by object, but the means of retrieving the stored information was walking through the rooms like a visitor in a museum, restoring the objects to consciousness...the landscape of the memory becomes a text as stable as that to be found in the garden, the labyrinth, or the stations.” For preachers, the inspiration and revelation are the stored information, and the activities of embodiment are the means of “walking through the rooms...restoring the objects of consciousness”.

for the spiritual formation of preachers as well. Following the lead of the body, in concert with the lead of the heart and mind, guides toward a kind of discipleship that is akin to craftsmanship.

## 5.2. *The Body as an Entry to Incarnational, Embodied Preaching*

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.<sup>238</sup>

In this urging to the Church in Rome, St. Paul sums up a holistic engagement of the full person as the “acceptable and perfect” sacrifice required in a relationship with God. Body, spirit, and mind are integrated and offered in service to a lived and lively faith practice.<sup>239</sup> Perhaps there is a sense of the tangibility of the body that will aid in leading the spirit and mind into this life of faith. As will be discussed further along in this chapter, this is not a connection that the Church has been able to hold onto, theologically or practically. The presenting of the body, for preachers, requires an intentional engagement of the body within the process, preparation, practice, and proclamation process. This can be aided by the integration of performing artist training methods within the homiletics classroom. A more specific explanation of these aspects of a proposed embodied, incarnate preaching practice will be observed later in this thesis. For now, it is sufficient to say that the current homiletical landscape must borrow St. Paul’s sense of urgency and seek to implement a methodology that guides preachers in presenting their bodies as sacrifices to the art of preaching. As Barbara Brown Taylor helps to clarify, it is the awareness of the bodied reality, in partnership with God’s benevolence and care, that allows for the transcendence of mere flesh and bone. This transcendence is manifest as embodiment that glorifies God and illuminates the sacred connection between body personhood and God.

Watching a preacher climb into the pulpit is a lot like watching a tightrope walker climb onto the platform as the drum roll begins. The first clears her throat and spreads out her notes; the second loosens his shoulders and stretches out one

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<sup>238</sup> Rom. 12: 1 – 2, NASB.

<sup>239</sup> Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek*, 3870 and 4983. Paul’s language is immensely strong, and the sense is urgent. He is exhorting the Church – παρακαλέω – to present their bodies - σῶμα. The body comes first in this tri-focal argument.

rosin-soled foot to rest the taut rope. Then both step out into the air, trusting everything they have done to prepare for this moment as they surrender themselves to it, counting now on something beyond themselves to help them do what they love and fear and most want to do. If they reach the other side without falling, it is skill, but it is also grace—a benevolent God's decision to let these daredevils tread the high places where ordinary mortals have the good sense not to go.<sup>240</sup>

Usually, kinesthetic learning is emphasized in coursework that explicitly needs a physical framework to understand the core of the curriculum. This is true with performing arts training. However, although the focus is on the physical aspect, the formation is meant to enhance the overall sensibilities of the actors. “Even for entering the scene it is required to exercise a specific body attitude of the character, but it also requires intense psychological training to master the emotions that dominate the actor, especially at the beginning of the performance.”<sup>241</sup> Body-awareness work is a part of holistic all-personhood awareness.

Homiletics has not historically been intentionally approached as a kinesthetic pursuit, at least not in the classroom. Preaching students “get up on their feet” to preach and receive feedback that includes their efficacy with carrying and delivering the word. This is a disjointed approach. Just as preaching students are taught to exegete the text and the listener group, exegeting their process is necessary. This self-exegesis should include elements of physical awareness that enhance the capacity to embody the sermon throughout the preaching process. After all, preachers are called to enact the practice through the body, which is certainly seen as the vehicle of the sermon.

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<sup>240</sup> Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, 81 – 82.

<sup>241</sup> Ana-Cristina Lese, “K. S. Stanislavski and the Physical Action,” *Timisoara Physical Education and Rehabilitation Journal*, 10 no.19 (2017), 68-69. In addition, “K. Stanislavski rightly affirmed that the analysis of the play, of the role, with a fair physical participation, creates the atmosphere of the truth of life right from the first rehearsals.”

This writer's experiential knowledge is based on training and work as a theatre actor and training and work as an ordained and licensed preacher within the Christian community. What was inherently synthesized for this writer can be acquired by preachers through the intentional integration of specific training borrowed from the world of performance training. The body can be trained to receive revelation, just as the mind is so trained. This kind of mind/body/spirit training allows for learning and formation that allows for an enriched homiletic imagination. "By physical participation is understood a simple jump to see beyond a high fence, and through rehearsals this mean or physical exercise takes shape, the rhythm and the attitude required by the role."<sup>242</sup> The body is a beginning to the conversation about incarnational, embodied preaching practice for preacher/artists, as an entry point for engaging revelation, inspiration, and the presence of the Triune God within the process of incarnate word and embodiment.

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid, 68.

### 5.3 *The Body and the Church – A Complicated Relationship*

The body is foreign territory, at least as the witness of church history seems to testify. There is a dualism present that those theologians concerned with the body and theology speak to in a multitude of ways.<sup>243</sup> Body theologians Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Smart look at this issue through the lens of reclaiming the body from a masculine definition that is seen as limiting and destructive. “Christology has developed along dualistic lines that owe more to Greek philosophy than to the Jewish origins of the Jesus movement... The thought patterns of Plato and Aristotle influence the growing movement.”<sup>244</sup> Deborah Beth Creamer comes from a perspective of how this dualism has impacted how Christianity views physical disability. “It is perhaps Plato’s division of mind and body and Aristotle’s division of normal and abnormal that set up an inescapable groundwork for Christian interpretations of embodiment and difference.”<sup>245</sup> Although the theological focus of these authors is not centered on homiletics, their voices help to paint the picture of the historical deficit from which preachers must separate to pursue a practice of embodied preaching.

One can look to the Rabbinic tradition found in Hellenistic Judaism and Rabbinic Jews for a pre and parallel theology of the body, which may help to guide the Christian process. “This ‘composure’ towards the ‘body’ is to be derived from ‘the immediacy of the bodily presence’. It is the immediate perception of the human body in Hellenistic Jewish thinking that can help us to

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<sup>243</sup> Thomas Ryan, *Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 8. Ryan traces the history of the body and Christianity through a Cartesian [stemming from Rene Descartes’s work] lens that offers “The Cartesian mind is removed from muscle, bone, movement, and blood. Here is born the mind-body dualism that has shaped modern philosophy, influenced contemporary theology, and rendered suspect the bodily gestures and practices that make faith devotions in ordinary Christian life. Here is the modern tendency to explain everything, to make religion understandable and inoffensive.”

<sup>244</sup> Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology*. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2014), 16.

<sup>245</sup> Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 41.

revolutionize our approach...”<sup>246</sup> The body is always present, and it is the conduit for experiencing and sensing. The sermon interpretation process and sermon preparation process need this sensory artifact because in many ways this is the root and foundation of how the truth of the sermon may resonate with the congregation.

This distrust of the body and its humors is inherited from culture as well as religion. From Shakespeare to St. Paul, society is suspicious of the body.<sup>247</sup> When speaking of embodiment, the body is the instinctive aspect of the equation. The body is capable of intuiting, through sensory experience, just as the mind is capable of cognitive investigation. Both are needed in the process of crafting a sermon. Moreover, both are needed in the process of homiletical discipleship. Without consideration of the body, there is a danger of preaching being a muffled embodied offering to the listeners, thus inhibiting the full impact of the message. This thesis puts this consideration, continually, at the foreground of its arguments. Considering the complicated historical disconnect between the body and Christian thought, it is not surprising that there is a deficit of critical reflection concerning how the preacher’s body is a part of a preacher’s homiletical method.

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<sup>246</sup> Kovelman, “Hellenistic Judaism on the Perfection of the Human Body,” *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 61 no.2 (2010), 209. On page 218 Kovelman goes on to synthesize what has been inherited concerning the body and argues that body is not only a symbol but is also a miracle. “The Hellenistic Jewish authors metaphorically considered the ear to be the organ that connected the body to God. A human body was supposed to mean much more than just a body. It was a miracle and a symbol. Jewish authors considered a human body just as miraculous as the miracles wrought by God in history.”

<sup>247</sup> Williams Shakespeare, and Sylvan Barnet, *Four Great Tragedies: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1982), 197. Act 1 Scene 3 “Virtue? A fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners. So that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many—either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry—why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most prepost'rous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts. Whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion.”

Looking first at the biblical witness to the relationship between body and message, St. Paul is perhaps the most explicit testimony. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves”<sup>248</sup> Yes, in comparison to the power and work of a triune God, the earthen vessel’s power and work is less potent but is it nonexistent? Is the body a non-entity in the movement and impact of the message? This discourse’s answer to that question is, “no.” Many interpret these verses in a dualistic manner, such as saying that the “messenger is disposable” because the message is most important.<sup>249</sup> The strength of St. Paul’s words may have been in response to his context, and in the generations to come has widened the chasm between body and message. A study of the biblical language can help to bridge this chasm.<sup>250</sup> This argument seeks to redeem the view of the messenger, which is a vital step to take before speaking of how the body of the messenger may be tuned in the homiletics classroom. Amid a cohesive and pertinent viewpoint of the power of Divinity in relation to the power of humanity, the messenger needs to be exposed to experiential learning. This experiential learning will allow for integrated spiritual and body formation. The messenger can fully embrace being an aid to the message, rather than seeking to remove oneself from the process.

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<sup>248</sup> 2 Cor. 4:7, NASB.

<sup>249</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), See Wright’s discussion of the disposability of the messenger. He was, however, responding to a misidentification of the messenger over the message. He compares the messenger to an envelope and wards against mistaking and emphasizing the perceived importance or lack of importance of the envelope, instead of the message itself. This is strong language that has greatly impacted the lack of attention paid to the person of the preacher, especially in terms of the physical body.

<sup>250</sup> Murray J. Harris, M. and Verlyn Verbrugge. *1 and 2 Corinthians: The Expositors Bible Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 234. “For Paul, the σκεῦος (skeuos, “jar,” GK 5007) was not more the container in which was placed the “treasure” of a ψυχή, (psyche, “life,” “soul,” GK 6034) than the “outer man” was a detachable outer garment clothing the “inner man.” σκεῦος( skeue, plural) refers to whole persons, who, although insignificant and weak in themselves, become God’s powerful instruments in communicating the treasure of the gospel.”

Moving past the biblical influence, the discussion must look to the impact that homileticians themselves have had on the tradition of preaching and how it is taught in the classroom. Bringing back some of this thesis' previous dialogue partners, while engaging other voices, is valuable at this point. Thomas Long highlights the importance of speaking the sermon before the proclamation to "absorb" it as the hearers will.<sup>251</sup> This is highly applicable to the preacher's process. However, the preacher must first know his or her own body to fully receive the revelation that comes through the body. Experiencing the body as an instrument insists upon an experiential, full-body learning environment. Jana Childers offers an integrated approach. This approach speaks to combining the physical awareness and spiritual formation of the preacher.<sup>252</sup> Childers advocates for a performance theory implementation within the preacher's learning process and practice.

Performance theory is something that Richard Ward also draws from, as he argues for preachers to embody the biblical text and the sermon. He speaks to making meaning by exploring the text's impact on the preacher through the experience of the body.<sup>253</sup> This, again, facilitates the integration of physical and spiritual formation. These examples highlight how a physical awareness component to the curriculum of preaching courses is not a simply a nice option, but rather a need. Considering the immense amount of contemplation that has been written about preaching and preachers, even in the realm of preaching as an art form, it is

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<sup>251</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 268 – 269. Long argues that the body is a tuning mechanism and listening to the sermon allows for fine-tuning. He offers that manuals are available to preachers who want to explore this tuning process further.

<sup>252</sup> Childers, *Performing the Word*, 49. See here again Childers' argument that was previously mentioned in this thesis. "Ideally, in the case of both theatre and preaching, performance means the use of self as vehicle – the disciplined giving of one's voice and body to a message, idea, or experience that needs one. Indeed, many artists have found such discipline to be a corrective for an inflated ego."

<sup>253</sup> Richard Ward, *Speaking of the Holy: The Art of Communication in Preaching*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 34.

astonishing how little has been offered to say how a preacher might practically engage preaching as a craft, such as artists engage their craft.

#### 5.4 The Preaching Body as an Anthropological Interpreter of Incarnate, Embodied Preaching

Preaching is partially an anthropologic endeavor in that it takes place at a point of physical, environmental, social, and cultural convergence. For human preachers and human listeners, a sermon speaks to our origin, our nature, and our destiny. A sermon is also mining and excavation, a process of seeking and uncovering. Much of this is experienced instinctually with our bodies in space and time. This placing and finding of one's physical self in space and time assists in the placing and finding of one's spiritual self within the life of a sermon being formed. "Time and space, seen cosmologically, are affected by the reciprocal and historical encounters between God and human beings."<sup>254</sup>

As with the rest of this discourse, the approach to the discussion of the body is a Christological one. Jesus teaches what it means to be preacher, but before that, Jesus teaches us what it means to be human. In claiming this narrative of lived humanity as our own, we are offered an archetype with which to relate. "But as God himself is immaterial, and therefore formless, the archetype of the image of God in man must be the incarnate Son of God."<sup>255</sup> If the incarnate Christ is the archetype to which we look for guidance in the process of embodied preaching, then preachers are ectypes. Preachers are made from the source, God's image, and Christ's lineage, yet placed in the circumstance of humanness. "Take it; this is my body."<sup>256</sup> This is a priestly act performed by Jesus. Yet, it paves the way for the formation of the

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<sup>254</sup> Johan Cilliers, "Between Dwellings and Doors: Spatial Perspectives on Preaching," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, 73 no. 2 (August 2017), 3. Furthermore, "This means that the fullness of experience of an encounter with God is a reality, that is, historically real, but as such also has an effect on things cosmological... But these experiences of fullness of encounters are also preliminary, that is, *pleroma* is preliminary, awaiting (further) fulfilment, without diluting the fulfilment of the historical dimension. Therefore, these experiences of *pleroma* are often given to us in the form of signs, fragments, and outlines – which could easily be overlooked, and which calls for discernment. In short, one could in fact miss out on being, or coming home – not reading the time correctly, not realising into what space you have been brought."

<sup>255</sup> John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 89.

<sup>256</sup> Mark 14:22, NASB.

proclaimers to come. These words speak through time and create an image — the vision of the Word offering the body itself as a sacrament. Word is provided through the body.

Part of an anthropological understanding of the bodies of preachers is found within the truth that the body is vulnerable. It is susceptible to the taking on of a multitude of circumstances and conditions that can bring harm, help, or a combination of both. Thus, the culture of preaching theology and practice must welcome vulnerability as a homiletical resource. The vulnerability resource manifests as an open witness to validation or a “saturated signification.” “In God’s decision—in God’s radical freedom and alterity—to be with us and for us in Jesus Christ and in the preaching event, the preacher experiences a saturated signification. It is to such an experience, such an encounter, such *jouissance*, that the preacher bears witness; it is only on account of such an experience that the preacher is able to bear witness”.<sup>257</sup> Here again, one sees the power of the preacher as witness who presents the testimony of personal experience for the benefit of the community.

Christ was vulnerable, yet divine. The offering of his body, broken for humanity, encapsulated the dynamic of power within vulnerability.

The *imago Dei* is vulnerable to God, having been created with the purpose of becoming “divine,” but at the same time vulnerable to ‘the world, the flesh, and the devil’. This results in a dynamic and holistic interpretation, which warrants serious consideration from contemporary theologians who are engaging with the Christian doctrine of humanity.”<sup>258</sup>

To whom and what are preachers vulnerable? To God certainly. To the individual experience, as well. To the experience of being amidst the many other *imago Dei* inhabitants, preachers are

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<sup>257</sup> Jacob D. Myers, “Erotic Preaching: Phenomenological Insights for Homiletics”, *Theology Today*, 77 no. 4 (February 2021): 406. “The preacher’s existence is not contingent on his thinking or knowing (*qua ego cogito*); rather, he discovers himself in and through the Word, which signifies a reality that precedes and supersedes his intuition: ‘I love you first.’...It is this unpredictable and unplottable movement of God in and through the Word that is worthy of the name preaching.”

<sup>258</sup> Oliver Crisp, *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity (Proceedings of the Los Angeles Theology Conference* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 218), 110.

undoubtedly vulnerable. Creation is full of aspects to which we are vulnerable. To remain open to these many layers of vulnerabilities, for relationship and revelation, is a risk of the artist way of life that preachers can adopt. Engagement in training such as Suzuki Actor Method and Viewpoints is a way of combating the buffered self and ushering in an authenticity that is lent to telling a character's story.<sup>259</sup> Certainly, performing artists do not explicitly see this as a theological or spiritually defined exercise, but it is such. Authentic acting and character development is akin to the process of knowing God through knowing the self.

Another side of the anthropological coin, in terms of the body of the preacher, is physiological and spiritual considerations within a theology of the Imago dei and its import for preachers. This viewpoint is a helpful aid in a process of viewing Christ as an archetype and humanity as ectypes living in this image.<sup>260</sup> Humanity serves as a material form of the image of God. Our material form is vital to our relational existence with and from God. We cannot separate the body from the Imago dei, so how do we nurture and cultivate our capacity to receive revelation through bodily experience? After all, Imago dei is a state of being, not merely a term to define.

In this view, the imago Dei is not a finished product, but a work in progress. Irenaeus' notion of imago Dei as the outcome of a natural growth process has been mainly adopted in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, where it is regarded as a dynamic project with a clear teleology, the deification (theosis) of humanity. Humans are called to actively participate in sharing in the likeness to and union with God, a project that attains its full realization in Christ.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 134. "The buffered self represents a radically different "existential condition" since for the "modern, buffered self the possibility exists of taking a distance from, disengaging from everything outside the mind."

<sup>260</sup> Ryan L. Showler and Veronica Wike, "Kant's Concept of the Highest Good and the Archetype-Ectype Distinction," *Journal of Value Inquiry*. 44 no. 4 (December 2010): 524. "The archetypal idea is the original idea and is generated for the purpose of finding and unconditioned and grounding a pure practical philosophy...the ectypal idea is an idea uniquely suited to the anthropological situation of a human rational being." Christ is the archetype and humans are the ectypal.

<sup>261</sup> Helen Cruz and Johan Smedt (2014). "The Imago Dei as a Work in Progress: A Perspective from Paleoanthropology," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, 49 no. 1 (March 2014), 150.

The “work in process” benefits from a process in which to work through the process intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally.

Bodies are engaged in ways that allow for physical awareness to lead to a spiritual awareness within the person and the community. The moment of proclamation is a moment such as this if we have primed the physical self to be and model the vessel process. This priming happens in a time of contemplation and reflection that is conducive to the goal, just as our cognitive capacity is primed in environments shaped for cognitive growth.

The resulting intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogue is not one of compartmentalization. Embodiment is an engagement that calls on all parties — Triune God and humanity — to be present and fully engaged while knowing the role that they are playing.<sup>262</sup>

Here we have the actualization in history of a reality that has shaped the identity of the Son from all eternity, the archetype for those creatures that God will create to be his image bearers, the ones through whom he will manifest his divine presence and reveal himself in the world. For Irenaeus, that is the only adequate ground upon which to base a properly theological understanding of the human person.<sup>263</sup>

Being present in the body is where the activities of performing artist training are a necessary tool for preachers.

Much of identity, even the identity of self as a preacher, is constructed. Rather than shy away from this reality, preachers can lean into and mine this construction method for spiritual formation. Much is available for guidance in a spiritual quest for identity through spiritual practices which explicitly engage the mind and spirit. The body is invited in this process but

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<sup>262</sup> Marc Cortez, “Idols, Images and a Spirit-ed Anthropology: A Pneumatological Account of the Imago Dei,” in *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, ed. Myk Habets (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 275. It is important to note that Irenaeus does include the holy spirit as an active agent in embodiment.

<sup>263</sup> Crisp, *The Christian Doctrine*, 40.

when it comes to pedagogy in the homiletics classroom, it is often an implied invitation offered with a tentative and tenuous guide.

The work of Ryan S. Peterson helps to make a path through created and constructed identity and informs this discussion of the body, in terms of practical engagement and formation.

Created identities are those divinely determined realities that (1) make a creature the particular creature that it is, (2) fix the creature's purpose within creation, and (3) fix the creature's appropriate end... As a creature of God, humanity's identity is located in the *imago Dei*... When I refer to human structures, I am thinking of those features that have been understood classically to belong to soul and body. A person's faculties depend upon these structures, including the ability to reason, to will, to remember, to imagine, to love, to perceive, to use language, and so forth... So, the particular structures humans have and the faculties that belong to those structures are intended by God to facilitate human life as God's image.<sup>264</sup>

The "and so forth" of Peterson's thoughts above is the gap in which performing artist training builds a walkable bridge for preachers between the call of preaching, the artistic discipleship of being a preacher, and the moment of proclamation. Our physical faculty, skills enhanced through training, facilitate preaching that is embodied and resonates with our created identity of being humans living life in God's image. The vocation of the preacher is located within our identity, and we worship, imitate, and witness within this role.<sup>265</sup> Our ability to do so is inherent in our ectype and enhanced through our practice and constructed identity.

Although done within a grid of space and time, impacted by known and unknown factors, constructing identity is an individualized process.

Constructed identities are self-characterizing interpretations of (1) one's particular existence within creation as an individual human being, (2) one's connection to other particular human beings, and (3) the roles and responsibilities one has or ought to pursue. As creatures of God, humans interpret their existence socially and individually before God.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Crisp, *The Christian Doctrine*, 138-139.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*, 141. See Petersen's discussion on God's image, love, forming our vocational acts.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid*, 140.

Though individual, there are social influences, whether they are intentionally or tangentially engaged, and they are continually influencing the process. Even from the pulpit, the preacher is being formed by the spoken and unspoken engagement between God, self, and others. Is it possible to navigate this mysterious course actively present rather than passively put upon? Can one harness the wind — Wind of the Spirit and Word — so to speak? The answer is a resounding yes. If it were not so, we would not be imprinted with the desire to do so in our life as God's image. Yes, we can ride the wind of the spirit and performing artist training, is one way to do this.<sup>267</sup> A laboratory can be created, in which created and constructed identity can engage and bear fruit. This is spiritual fruit that will form the preacher and thus, form the homiletical style of the preacher.

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<sup>267</sup> John 3: 8, NASB.

### 5.5 *The Body as the Place of Liturgy*

In the contemporary study of worship, especially as viewed through a lens of artistic import, liturgy, and the importance of acknowledging the impact of the liturgy on the human spirit have emerged as a central theme. "...liturgy is focused on vocal prayer, on commemoration, on the handing on of tradition, and more recently, on a call to social action. The problem is that such meaning and relevance can only be sustained by what Charles Davis calls 'an explicit, personal awareness of the presence of God'.<sup>268</sup> Therefore, another way to speak of liturgy is to speak of the body engaged in bodied theological belief. After all, liturgical study is the study of the body's engagement in worship, ritual, and tradition. Liturgy points to movement — of the Church, of the spirit, and of the body.<sup>269</sup> Whether grounded in high church ritual and tradition or extemporaneous expression, the body is a conduit needing to be primed. That priming is spiritual and practical. One would not expect the church musicians to not practice and hone their craft because the Holy Spirit was being anticipated. It is not expected that priests do not learn and practice the movements and mechanisms of the rites they will perform. Yet, there is a feeling that practice for the preacher is a dangerous doorway to artifice. For the purposes of this thesis, when speaking of liturgy, one is speaking of a general sense of the body and the Body of Christ in space and time recognizing the presence of Divinity through multi-sensory engagement.

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<sup>268</sup> Casey Rock, "Voices from the Mat," in *Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality*, ed. Thomas Ryan (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 99. "To many people, both in churches and in yoga classes, any comparison between worship and yoga might be odious. Christian liturgy does and is about is in no way comparable to what a yoga class does and is about...Whatever the reason-cultural/societal shifts, education, the growth of democracy, sheer benightedness -Christian churches have lost the authority to arouse or to foster this awareness. ness. Conversely, in the yoga class, students raised in completely secular environments often express a desire for a "spiritual" dimension to their lives. They struggle for a vocabulary to explore or describe their own religious experience."

<sup>269</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 86. "I want to distinguish liturgies as rituals of ultimate concern: rituals that are formative for identity, that inculcate particular visions of good life, and do so in a way that means to trump other ritual formations."

James K. A. Smith offers a useful hypothesis from which to work. His liturgical theology invites an understanding of the body as a location and a compass in the pursuit of revelation inspiration and reception. The body helps preachers make meaning of the revelation, thus being able to impart that revelation. In addition, the body leads the preaching in utilizing the imagination in more than a purely intellectual manner. “A liturgical anthropology is rooted in both a kinaesthetics and a poetics – an appreciation for the ‘bodily basis of meaning’ (kinaesthetics) and a recognition that it is precisely this bodily comportment that primes us to be oriented by story, by the imagination (poetics).”<sup>270</sup> From Smith’s hypothesis, it follows that neglecting the bodily basis of meaning limits access to Divinely appointed imagination. Thus, the preacher needs a craft practice that seeks to harmonize body and spirit. It is difficult to lay down the complicated inheritance that was spoken of earlier in this chapter. However, it is the practice that will allow for this redemptive process to flourish. “My body is not something I have, but something I am; it is the ‘me’ that dwells in the world. This means that my body, for the most part, is not something of which I am consciousness. It is my constant background.”<sup>271</sup> Bodied practice is engagement with the holistic self, and the acknowledgment of this allows one to place oneself — mind, body, and spirit — in a practice of preaching that invites holistic flourishing for the preacher and the preached incarnational, embodied word.

In a model of pedagogy for preachers that is more inclusive of an integrated learning process, a corporal focus must be part of the integration. Is this not a path of formation and transformation that is rightly aligned with a call to preach that centers around a message that is itself redemptive? In addition, the audience has a role in the liturgy, and there is a need for the

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<sup>270</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 29.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 49. Smith also shares that, “My body is not an ‘object’ for me – it is not a thing among things, something I ‘see’ or ‘touch’ like I do a tool or an instrument or even the body of another person”.

preacher to expect and welcome this engagement. Kinesthetic empathy is defined as “conceptualized as an automatic, involuntary, kinesthetic response of one body to another”.<sup>272</sup> The physical aspect of training and performance increases the preacher’s capacity to enter a relationship with the audience that is kinesthetically empathetic.

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<sup>272</sup> Wanda Strukus, “Mining the Gap: Physically Integrated Performance and Kinesthetic Empathy, ” *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 25 no. 2 (Spring 2011), 89.

### 5.6 *The Body as the Place of Incarnate and Embodied Craft for the Preacher/Artist*

Craft bleeds into art, as Divine manifestation works through the ordinary body of the preacher. Craftsmanship is the engagement of skill for the purpose of creation. The word invokes images of laying hands, or the body, to the raw materials. Crafting is a process that involves full-body engagement, and this engagement allows for a type of learning that cannot be replicated in a purely cognitive learning environment.

Within embodied practice, this domain can become a space where it may feel as though time stands still as the inner eye observes the sensations that the body is receiving/perceiving (heart rate, breath, heat on face from light, twinge in ankle due to muscle fatigue in lower leg) or when you become aware that you have just responded in a way that you feel was outside your habitual repertoire of responses.<sup>273</sup>

When it comes to preaching, it is important to look at the notion of craft and skill, and how they can enhance a preacher's homiletical method and style. This is in some way more difficult to define and describe than say the craft of visual arts. At the end of the process of crafting a piece of art through skill, there is a physical manifestation, and the process can be witnessed through the sharing of the produced artifact. With the performing arts, the process is less verifiable through tangible and repeatable means and thus may seem more elusive. Yes, the performance can be witnessed but only by those present at that moment. Once the performance is over, even if the program has multiple showings, that specific manifestation is gone. What is left of the performance, is how it impacted the participants, performers, and audience alike. The crafter must accept this liminal and somewhat limiting aspect of the art form. Accepting this is part of the performing artist's preparation. Preachers share in this necessary acceptance in the art form of preaching. There is a craft and skills that need to be honed. There are preachers who

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<sup>273</sup> Rea Dennis, "Viewpoints, Creativity and Embodied Learning: Developing Perceptual and Kinaesthetic Skills in Non-Dancers Studying Undergraduate University Drama". *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 4 no. 3 (October 2013), 347.

need this holistic approach to feel self-unified within the role of preacher. This self-unification gives way to a communal experience during proclamation, which is also unifying.

In a conversation about how preachers can utilize performing artist training for the purpose of embodying the word, a useful first step is to look at the place of craft and skill in Christian thought and scholarship. When David is brought to Saul in 1 Samuel 16, he is described as playing his harp skillfully (יָדָבֵר). In this case, the Hebrew alludes to experience as the foundation of the skill.<sup>274</sup> It follows logically that David had spent time honing the craft of playing the harp and that craftsmanship could be known to others experientially. David himself speaks of the virtue of experiential skill (הִיטִיבוּ) in Psalm 33.<sup>275</sup> This comes from the same word origin as the usage in 1 Samuel 16, speaking to doing well and thoroughly.<sup>276</sup>

Skillfulness is part of the foundation of craftsmanship, along with gifting (χαρίσματα) and anointing (מִשְׁחָה).<sup>277</sup> The gifting and anointing are the work of God, while the skill is the artisan's to steward. It is the focus on nurturing of the gift that builds towards a heightened craft. It is the humble stewardship of the anointing that has been given that speaks to openness in continuing the reception of word for the preacher and the listeners. Skills manifest in many ways and it is the practice of craft that allows the artisan to learn and grow within these manifestations.<sup>278</sup> These learnings and leanings build upon each other until the art has become manifest.

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<sup>274</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishing, 1996), 55.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 405. 3190 - yatab

<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, 603. 4899 - mashiach

<sup>278</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 87-88. See Schechner's discussion of the benefit of the repetition of practice as well as the power of spontaneity. He argues that it is the combination that allows the audience to trust and engage with the performer.

In the New Testament, the term *χαρίσματ* is utilized in a way to mean grace-gift, given for the purpose of being offered in service to a divine assignment.<sup>279</sup> It is given through the power of an infinite God, and yet is meant to work within the finitude of humanity. It is not meant to enhance superficial presentation, but rather as a resource for sustaining the very essence of unique personhood. In addition, there is a broader understanding of grace-gift, as a “tangible power at work within the believer”.<sup>280</sup> This gifting comes through the body, and is nurtured, in part, by engaging the experience of the world through the body. Actors enhance the capacity to do this through specific training with the body.

Having traveled through the history of the body and the church, theological scholarship of the body, and the notion of craftsmanship as a baseline, the question of how to engage the body in practice remains. Returning to the original hypothesis that preachers would want to be present to the body’s capacity as a catalyst for revelation knowledge, it is time to delve into how this excavation process might proceed. Throughout this thesis, whenever the body is referenced, there are at least two levels of reality being addressed. First, there is the body of the preacher, the individual physical manifestation of humanity that each person seeks to know and be known.

“In some deep part of our knowing, we sense that we are a unique reflection of our Source, but we are easily seduced by the urge to be our own source... To be human is to be embodied. Fashioned from the dust of the earth and animated by the breath of God, humans do not merely have bodies: we are our bodies—just as we are our minds, souls, and spirits”.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, 601. “...extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit”.

<sup>280</sup> John Nolland, “Grace as Power,” *Novum Testamentum*, 28 no. 1 (January 1986): 30. See Nolland discussion of Classic Greek and Jewish Greek influence that enhances an understanding of the gift of *χαρίσματ*.

<sup>281</sup> David G. Benner, *Spirituality and the Awakening Self*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 89-90. Continuing, “But if the self is ever to soften its attachment to body and trust its more ethereal nature, it must first embrace its rootedness in the body. Any attempt to escape our bodies leads to distortions of mind, soul, and spirit and ultimately also damages the body. Even if and when we move to higher centers to organize our self, our body remains our connection to matter. In the words of Scripture repeated in funeral masses and graveside homilies in all branches of the Christian church, from dust we have come, and to dust we shall return (Gen. 3:19).”

Knowing the self does not have to result in a self-centered lived theology. We recognize and are continually known by God through our bodies, just as we are through other aspects of our faith practice. Secondly, there is the Body of Christ.<sup>282</sup> The Body is brought together, through the Triune God's formation work, and is meant to operate through individual and communal gifting. The work the Suzuki Actor Training Method, helps explicitly with the first and implicitly with the second. The work of the former opens one's capacity to work within the latter is united.

During this conversation about the body, it is necessary to discuss a framework of how performing artists approach work with the body. What are the hows and whys that lead actors as they seek to create space within themselves for the story of the character? How does this translate to preachers? What are the shared pedagogical opportunities? The core of this argument is the idea that the body is a resource in our spiritual practice as preachers. Spiritual discipline, as a part of our homiletical process, necessitates engaging the body as well as the mind. Mary Katherine Deeley defines a holistic understanding of discipline.

Discipline is training or teaching that corrects, shapes, and forms the whole person, body and mind. To be disciples is to subject ourselves to a disciplined life designed to form us in particular ways. To be Christian disciples means to embrace our identities as disciples of Jesus and thus embrace those disciplines that conform us to Christ.<sup>283</sup>

If the preceding is true, then is performing actor physical training a valid spiritual practice for preachers? Consider the following. "Behind his plea to vigorously identify and overcome obstacles is an imperative to focus on process, not product: a manifesto imploring us to change the paradigm of our lives, to live not in the solution, but in the problem; not in the answer, but in

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<sup>282</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005), 93.

<sup>283</sup> Mary Katharine Deeley, "Spiritual Disciplines: Introduction," *Liturgy*. 26 no.1 (November 2010): 1.

the question.”<sup>284</sup> Although this quote has hints of an assessment of Christ’s overarching message of love,<sup>285</sup> or a Pauline paraphrase<sup>286</sup>, this is actually a quote about Tadashi Suzuki, a Japanese theatre director and the creator of the Suzuki Actor Training Method. This viewpoint shares a viewpoint with poet, Rainer Maria Rilke.

I want to beg you as much as I can...to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves...Do not now seek answers which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer...Take whatever comes with great trust, and if only it comes out of your will, out of some need of your innermost being, take it upon yourself and hate nothing.<sup>287</sup>

Suzuki’s method is meant to aid actors in using their bodies as tools for receiving revelation for the purposes of embodying a character. Preachers can take this methodology, using the training to receive revelation as they work towards embodying the message to be proclaimed. The point of Suzuki’s work opens the preacher to engaging the storytelling with the body. Experimentation, humility, and building a language of physicality are the practical tools harnessed and honed within this practice. Suzuki’s Actor Training Method can be used in the redemptive bodywork of preachers during their training and formation. Additionally, there is a focus on the word-body relationship within Suzuki’s work. “The most important point is a sense of corpus – the relationship between the word and the body...the word is a kind of

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<sup>284</sup> Tadashi Suzuki, *Culture is the Body: The Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*, trans. Kameron H. Steele (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2015), 3.

<sup>285</sup> John 3:34 – 35, NASB. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

<sup>286</sup> 1 Cor. 2: 6 – 9, NASB. “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; <sup>9</sup> but just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And *which* have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him’.”

<sup>287</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1954), 27.

gesture...Japanese words, all of them, involve this sense of body – they are physiological, very close to the Japanese sense of corpus.”<sup>288</sup> Here there is evident an even more intimate connection between word and body. There is much good fruit to be born when that connection is acknowledged, studied, and utilized as a homiletical resource.

Just as a Christian preacher is seeking to be transformed towards Christ and the message for this time and this season, an actor is seeking to be transformed toward the character and the story for this day and this audience. The goal is not perfection but rather a process and the realization of how one is changed amid the process. The benefit is accessed by the individual and by the community. This work is hard and thrives in consistency. Through the process, meaning is made and thus keeps the practitioner grounded in the process, despite the continued difficulty. Thus, being in the practice is the key to staying in the practice and finding worth in the practice. Furthermore, the practice being done in community demystifies the trajectory of action-reflection-action and normalizes the ambiguity of success or failure.<sup>289</sup>

The best way to understand the Suzuki Actor Training Method is through the philosophy and words of Suzuki himself. The following word of wisdom rose from Suzuki’s acknowledgment of the tension between basic tenets of actor purpose and training and how it interplays with basic tenets of preacher purpose and training. “The limit of the actor approaching zero thus describes the ceaseless quest for ways to realize, however miniscule, the ever-elusive

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<sup>288</sup> Tadashi Suzuki, “The Word is an Act of the Body,” Interview by William O. Beeman, *Performing Arts Journal*, 6 no. 2 (1982), 90. Suzuki’s response to being asked his thoughts on the central element of theatre.

<sup>289</sup> Erin F. Johnston, “Failing to Learn, or Learning to Fail? Accounting for Persistence in the Acquisition of Spiritual Disciplines,” *Qualitative Sociology*, 40 no. 3 (June 2017), 368. “If all cultural systems inevitably face anomalies, ambiguities, and failures that threaten their validity and coherence, then successful communities—whether they be religious, political, occupational, educational, or therapeutic—must provide tools for confronting and overcoming them. My research suggests that communities may anticipate and counteract potential threats by transmitting a shared vision of individual and collective projects in which failures are both constitutive and valuable experiences. Rather than categorizing themselves as failures, practitioners in these communities learn to view struggles and obstacles as normal, universal, and even beneficial experiences.”

state of absolute freedom in performance.”<sup>290</sup> Rather than mourning that there is a gap between our finitude and God’s infinity, Suzuki’s approach allows one to revel in the process of discovery within self and for sharing in community. What might this look like practically? Instead of preachers seeking to emulate a particular preacher or preaching style, external to internal transference, the preacher begins the journey internally. The groundwork of a sound hermeneutical process and exegesis is fluid within the zero/limit work of the method. This is an act of creation, rather than an act of replication. “In practice, this means cultivating an awareness of the gap between the ideal self and the actual self, identifying the obstacles to closing that gap and experimenting with ways to overcome them”.<sup>291</sup> This methodology honors the internal making of each individual preacher. It calls for imagination and humility based on what is produced in communion with God and models a spiritual practice of such for others.

“Thick practices are identity-forming, *telos*-laden, and get hold of our core desire – our ultimate love that defines us in some fundamental way.”<sup>292</sup> Although not self-identified in this way, Suzuki Actor training can be classified as a thick practice. The actor’s core desire guides self-definition as the training practice is engaged. The self-discovery leads to the manifestation of storytelling that shares the desire and allows other to engage the desire.

Suzuki’s philosophy motivates us to reclaim our social agency through exploring the primitive, animal energy that lies dormant in the contemporary body. His training method wakens and develops this in actors, empowering them in turn to provoke the audience and demonstrate how “culture is the body”: that by embracing the mystery of life, engaging our bodies, and thus reconnecting to the natural world, differences of color and creed, class and education, politics and history can be overcome. Suzuki shows us how to live in the question, not the solution; to infinitely go toward the difficulty instead of accepting the status quo,

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<sup>290</sup> Tadashi Suzuki, and J Thomas Rimer, J. *The Way of Acting: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc, 1986), 5. “In analytic geometry, an asymptotic limit approaching zero refers to the convergence of a curve and a straight line, or asymptote... In other words, the curve and the line grow incrementally closer to each other, but never meet... If zero signifies perfection, then the “limit” represents how the artist persistently advances toward that perfection, knowing it will never be attained.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>292</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 85.

so that as artists, and as citizens of the world, we may inspire new ways of living in it.<sup>293</sup>

To witness a Suzuki training class is a mystery experience. The observer may not exactly know what the “point” of all these movements and manifestations is in the moment. However, they are invited to listen to the movements and try to hear the story that is being told. The point is not to figure out the message, but to engage with the body storytelling. To be a participant in a Suzuki training class is also a mysterious excavation process. The point is not for everything to be evident from the beginning, but rather for there to be an ongoing process of experimentation. It is humbling and takes one off the center of gravity that has been previously relied on, but there is always a path back to the center. Energy, breath, and core engagement are the compass and the key. When one moves out of the way of self-revelation, then the attempt at communal revelation is possible and has implications for the larger spiritual, religious, social, and cultural aspects of life.

Practice is essential to the process of formation, of whatever modality. Practice is one way that human beings live out the desire to strive towards and with God.<sup>294</sup> Practice is a method of engaging the now as well as the not yet.<sup>295</sup> Practice as liturgy raises the stakes in that it takes seriously the work of intentionally integrating sacred and secular. Any good actor knows that raising the stakes is what deepens one’s capacity to care about the story in which one is playing a part.

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<sup>293</sup> Suzuki and Rimer, *The Way of Acting*, 70.

<sup>294</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 75. “...human beings are fundamentally *lovers*; that is, we are not primarily ‘thinking things’ or ‘believing animals’ but rather desiring agents with a passion orientation to the ultimate – to a vision of ‘the kingdom.’”

<sup>295</sup> Poul F. Guttesen, *Leaning Into the Future: The Kingdom of God in the Theology of Juergen Moltmann and the Book of Revelation*. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Company, 2009), 39. See argument stemming from Moltmann’s kingdom theology that hope is the reality and anticipation of God’s Kingdom on earth.

### 5.7 Role of the Preacher/Artist Body in Incarnate, Embodied Preaching

“The role of the artist in society must be, rather, to give people an opportunity to perceive the world anew, to stimulate their imagination so they may ‘live in the question’.”<sup>296</sup> Living in the question is a kind of freedom, and it is permission to preach from the center of the question. This falls in line with the directive under which Jesus preached and to which preachers today are called. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”<sup>297</sup> This is the role of the preacher, freedom from a multitude of oppressions for the sake of true relationship with God and with one another. To fill this role, an integrated approach to formation, preparation and proclamation is necessary for the preacher.

For actors, this actor training method is Suzuki’s solution to the problem of unawareness to physical sensibilities and the resulting atrophies that this produces.<sup>298</sup> This atrophy gets in the way not only of the actor’s ability to communicate with the audience but also restricts a person’s ability to communicate in everyday life. At an acceptable point in the training, the voice is added to the process as a connecting device in the actor’s own process and towards the audience.<sup>299</sup> The purpose is connection and increasing the capacity to facilitate connection. Connection is the foundational message that runs throughout every story, whether the story

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<sup>296</sup> Suzuki and Rimer, *The Way of Acting*, 10.

<sup>297</sup> Luke 4: 18 – 19, NASB.

<sup>298</sup> Suzuki and Rimer, *The Way of Acting*. 14. “As we have moved through the agricultural, industrial and information ages, our bodies have become progressively divested from the struggle for survival. Much of Suzuki’s philosophy is in response to this de-physicalization of the human race, which he sees as a direct result of contemporary civilization’s almost complete dependence on non-animal energy.”<sup>298</sup>

<sup>299</sup> Ibid, 15. “The purpose of this method is to make the actor newly aware of the physical sensibilities that have atrophied in his or her everyday life, and to reveal how this debilitated state prevents him or her from effectively cozening the audience. As the training reinvigorates these dulled corporeal sensitivities, I introduce a vocal component that connects the voice to the body.”

highlights the effects of disconnection, the journey to reconnection, or a combination of the many variations on these themes. This reality is shared with the message of Christianity.

“Spiritual love is a going out of oneself (ecstasis, excessus), a being raised (raptus) above the ordinary capabilities of one’s faculties, one’s soul being entered and taken possession of by God in a union of love.”<sup>300</sup> Holding to St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s definition of spiritual love, it can be said that the Suzuki method is a facilitator of these interplaying progressions of love. Although aspects of Suzuki training may seem disconnected from the work to be done on the stage, it is a method of disconnection, reflection, and reconnection. The reconnection to self, the other, and then the character is the goal of the process.

There are three elements that Suzuki claims make up the ability to facilitate this connection. Energy production, breath calibration, and center of gravity control are the pillars of the acting method. For him, these are the elements that help maintain health and participation in society.<sup>301</sup> So again, it is seen that these skills are highly transferrable and useful, not only from the stage to everyday life, but from the actor to the preacher. Suzuki sees actor training as building the community of actors, the community of the audience, and the community at large, and the training has implications beyond the theatre.

Flexibility and sensitivity of mind, body, and spirit can be explored concurrently. Ultimately, this training is meant to partner with the other work done by actors, according to their holistic understanding of their craft work, the philosophy of creating the world of the play, and a their “spiritual disposition”. “This is not simply a matter of technique, but of possessing a base

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<sup>300</sup> Kobus Kruger, “Christian Love in Inter-Religious Perspectives,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*. 72 no. 4 (April 2016), 2.

<sup>301</sup> Suzuki, *Culture is the Body*, 45. “Since energy, oxygen and gravity cannot be seen with the naked eye, they do not receive a lot of attention in our daily life. However, difficulty with any of them compromises our ability to maintain health and participate in modern society.”

level of concentration, imagination, and capacity to perceive and manipulate physical sensibilities and action”.<sup>302</sup> This is an integrated approach that begins with the body but has resonance with the preachers acknowledgment and reception of spiritual and homiletical import.

A training session is structured in a similar way to a dance class, in that the actors proceed through a progression of physical exercises that build in difficulty as the class proceeds. This structure helps the practitioner’s body and mind warm into the curriculum, whether they are a first-time participant or a veteran. This also enables the actors to build a vocabulary of gestures and references for the session but also for performance. There is also a kinship to dance classes in that the practitioners are meant to listen and respond with their bodies first, allowing the body to lead.<sup>303</sup> This is a trajectory that can be assimilated to the homiletics classroom.

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid, 57. Continuing, “Of course, my training alone will not automatically bring an actor to the top of his or her art. This depends on whether the actor understands the training philosophy deeply enough to use it as a springboard into performance, and whether he or she possesses an actor’s spiritual disposition.”

<sup>303</sup> Rebecca Enghauser, “Developing Listening Bodies in the Dance Technique Class,” *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*. 78 no. 6 (August 2007), 33 - 39. See the discussion of the differing types of body listening that are engaged during a dance class. This includes spatial-perceptual listening, kinesthetic listening, listening through breath, eco-somatic listening, and listening through the creative process.

## *5.8 Conclusion*

The body is inescapably a vital component of engaged and innovative incarnational, embodied, preaching. Regardless of the historical distortions within the culture and the Church, there is no need to fear the body. Holistic engagement with the whole person is a vital aspect of the incarnational, embodied preaching process. In fact, the body can perform as a leader in the pursuit of sacrificial, lived theology coming to the forefront in the pulpit. Preaching is an art form that calls for preacher/artist proclaimers. These proclaimers need a holistic pedagogy that allows for them to receive revelation through their mind, body, and spirit connection to themselves and to the Triune God. This kind of integrated coursework necessitates a healthy view of the body and exploration and experiential learning through the body. Negotiating the history of the body and the Church, and the limitations present within the current scholarship is an initial step. The anthropological steppingstones help to build a framework for building an embodied preaching practice. The next steps can be guided by engaging certain methods of performing actor training, such as the Suzuki Actor Training Method. The structure is holistic, and the benefits are holistic. Physical awareness, spiritual formation, and an openness to engaging the intangible as well as the intangible are markers of this craftsmanship.

In this chapter, the body has been placed in the center of the conversation of practicing preaching as an incarnate, embodied art form. After being explicitly decentered, by a complicated relationship between body theology and the church, a recentering is necessary. The body is walking through the cultural context that the preacher is seeking to preach to and within from the pulpit. The place of literal liturgical movements is reflected and processed in the body. Thus, the body can function as the laboratory for an incarnate, embodied preaching practice. This identification does not exclude other aspects of the preacher/artist's cognitive, emotional,

and spiritual personhood. On the contrary, this allows for holistic integration and skill enhancement.

In the next chapter, a model of integrated and embodied lived theology will be reflected upon, as it is found in the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus' body, the human flesh, is central to an understanding of incarnate word preaching. Jesus is also an example of honoring the body, within a holistic understanding of offering body, spirit, and mind as living sacrifices within God's empowering compassion work with creation.

## Chapter 6: Actor Training as an Entry into the Homiletical Method of Jesus

### 6.1 Introduction

God must not be looked for in the unlimited which bounds the limited or defined as the totality of the timeless and the non-spatial...God is infinite in his own way.<sup>304</sup>

These words from theologian Karl Barth concerning the limitlessness of God aid in building the framework for this discussion about the reflection of acting methodologies that can be found in the homiletical method of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth was the realization and a participant in the Triune God's dramatic revelation of self. His life was centered on his being the Word of God incarnate.<sup>305</sup> His preaching was a manifestation of operating within this role. His preaching was informed and formed by faith history and holistic reception and impartation. This chapter represents a novel interpretation and approach to describing the homiletical method of Jesus. However, it is one that allows for breaking through barriers that inhibit authentic incarnational, embodied preaching.

Engagement with the homiletical method of Jesus guides the process of discerning what should be included in a preaching practice and process. What is limitless within Jesus of Nazareth, needs help to manifest within the limited yet incarnational, embodied preaching of the preacher/artist. An initial step in referring to Jesus of Nazareth as a model of incarnational and embodied preaching is to, for a moment, look to his body.

God the Son, in virtue of being incarnate, is related to his body just as you and I are related to our respective bodies. For, given this assumption, one's view on how each of us is related to his or her body should dictate one's view on how the Son is related to his body... For the incarnate Son is fully human and so, presumably, human in the same sense that you and I are. Part of being human, at least in this life, is having a body. And so, presumably, the Son has a body in the

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<sup>304</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, Volume 2, Part 1: The Knowledge of God; The Reality of God*. eds. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 466.

<sup>305</sup> John 1: 1 – 5, NASB.

same sense that you and I do. More generally, he is related to his body just as each and every other human is related to his or her body.<sup>306</sup>

For the preacher, embodiment is relational. Jesus of Nazareth related to his body, rather than dismissing it. He had a bodied mission. So, the process of relating to the body and intentionally engaging the body, holistically, is not separate from a theology and practice of incarnational and embodied preaching. In a preaching practice, acting methodology can serve as a practical entry to the way that Jesus related to his body and utilized that relationality as a proclamation resource.

An actor enters the stage with the goal of connecting to the audience so that the story, and underlying meaning-making significance, can be shared. The words used are grounded yet dynamic, commanding yet inviting. Truth resounds in the moment, and it is offered and received within the vast spectrum of the capacity of the actors and the audience. The experience will be passed along to those outside of the immediate experience by those who happen to be present in real-time. Process and preparation have culminated in a moment of performance. The actor gives of the self to make the story come alive. Then, the actor exits the stage. The moment of performance has ended but the story remains.

What if the word ‘actor’ was replaced with the word ‘preacher’? What if the experience is not a presentation of artifice, but rather it is a manifestation and representation of edification? This thesis argues a trajectory of thought and theory for preacher/artists to look towards Jesus of Nazareth as a model for an acting technique-informed practice of incarnational, embodied preaching. Jesus of Nazareth entered the stage of creation with a goal to connect and reconcile humanity with the Triune God and to elucidate the meaning of God’s kingdom come on earth as

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<sup>306</sup> Trenton Merricks, “The Word Made Flesh: Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, eds. Angus J. L. Menuge, Jonathan J. Loose, and J. P. Moreland (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 218) 461.

it is in heaven.<sup>307</sup> His preaching was a re-presentation of this work. The words and methods that were utilized in His preaching were grounded yet dynamic, commanding yet inviting. Truth resounded in His preaching message and methodology. The experiences of His preaching were and still are, passed along to those outside of the immediate experience. Process and preparation culminated in a moment of performed proclamation. Jesus gave of Himself and made the story come alive as lived theology.<sup>308</sup> The moment of performance ended, but the essence and edification of the message remains to this day. When looking at the homiletical style and method of Jesus of Nazareth, the practical definition of preaching is enlivened, informed, impacted, and formed. How might this renewed and re-engaged viewpoint inform the culture and training of preacher/artists? This chapter will look at the aspects of impact, but first, the notion of “performance” must be redeemed.

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<sup>307</sup> Luke 4: 18 – 19, NASB. In proclaiming “the favorable year of the Lord”, Jesus is being the Incarnate Word by bringing the word. He is the bodily interpretation of God’s revelation of self.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid. The biblical narrative shares that Jesus’ proclaims that the Spirit is upon Him. He is a vital part of the impartation of the Word. The word is pouring out from the Word in a personal manifestation.

## 6.2 Redeeming and Resourcing “Performance” as Methodology

“Performance” is seen as a secular endeavor by many. As has been previously discussed in this thesis, the Church has not always welcomed the notion of “performance” as an identifier of the elements of worship. “The early Christian church, forced to carve out an identity in a world saturated in the eloquence of pagan wisdom, sometimes viewed anything that represented secular culture as a threat to the identity and practice of the church.”<sup>309</sup> Thus, restoration of a holistic engagement with “performance” is a must for preacher/artist consideration and pedagogy. This is a theoretical and practical question of redemption, and this redemption concerns a point of reconciliation rather than a completely new perspective. The Triune God is a creator operating in many ways such as author, imager, and instigator. God is continually performing the work of creation, integration, salvation, and universal interaction.

God the Redeemer is the author of all dreams and visions, the author of the imagination which seeks the new Jerusalem and anticipates it in structures here and now. I speak here of God, the origin and end of good – which is to say, creative, reconciling, redeeming – human action. God sustains in being all that is, works in and through all events, and elicits response in all created reality.<sup>310</sup>

Performing can be a holy endeavor, setting one’s artistry up as a God-revealing effort, when modeled after God’s example as a performer. Creation is sustained by God’s imagination and the expressions of that imagination. The performance of God’s imagination in myriad ways is inspiration for the performance of preached word by preachers.

How might preachers gain or reclaim the benefit of the preached message and messenger found in a holistic theory of preaching as performance? This redemption stems from a return to

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<sup>309</sup> Trygve David Johnson, *The Preacher as Liturgical Artist: Metaphor, Identity, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ*. (Eugene: Cascade, 2014), 56. Johnson goes on to say, “One could say that ‘worldly’ association tainted rhetoric of many Christians and inspired them to fortify themselves against any form of engagement with such ‘worldly’ matters.”

<sup>310</sup> T. J. Goringe, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2002), 5.

the root of the art of preaching. This requires a clear definition of performance as it pertains to Christian preaching. Performance, as it pertains to preaching, is the capacity to engage mind, body, and spirit with heightened skills and awareness to carry and proclaim the heightened message of revelation to God.

To redeem the idea of performance in the world of preaching, the beginning is the strongest foundation on which to stand. Jesus of Nazareth is the beginning. At this point, it is important to note that the following discussion surrounds a reflection upon the historical Jesus. The area of study known as the “quest for the historical Jesus” is a complicated area of research and engagement.<sup>311</sup> It is not within the scope of this thesis to explicitly engage the strengths and limitations of this quest. However, it is helpful to mention a particular dynamic within the quest, as this dynamic is a fruitful engagement partner. This is due to the fact that it is the historical Jesus of Nazareth - his humanity and contextualized personhood - as a preacher that this thesis utilizes as a homiletical model. “Jesus invited his hearers to become part of the story. His radical narrative summed all and sundry to celebrate with him the real return from exile, the real forgiveness of sins. He was offering the latter precisely because he was enacting the former”.<sup>312</sup> The question being asked by this thesis is, “What is the work of becoming part of the story”? This work goes beyond believing the story, and moves toward embodying the story. The fruit of the work is revealed in the engagement of practical methods of embodiment. As Jesus models embodiment of freedom and reconciliation, he is also ocularly demonstrating the power of

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<sup>311</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 12. “The quest as predominantly carried out over the last two centuries has been seriously flawed—and flawed from the outset in the perspective from which Jesus and the quest have been viewed. Quite proper concern to strip away later accretions has failed to distinguish the effect Jesus (must have) had from the subsequent evaluation of him. There has been too much looking back at Jesus through the lens of a long-established literary culture and too little appreciation of how the impact of Jesus would have made lasting effect in an oral society. The overall impression left by Jesus has been subjected to fine-detail critique and reconstruction without adequate appreciation of the extent to which that damaged the whole picture.

<sup>312</sup> N. T. Wright, "The Historical Jesus and Christian Theology," *Sewanee Theological Review* 39 (1996): 404-412.

embodiment. The embodiment is tangible and intangible, simultaneously. There is found in the person of Jesus, a resistance to duality, and preachers can ‘become part of the story’ by engaging the holistic work of embodiment.

As previously stated, Jesus’ homiletical method is the starting place for Christian preachers. Every moment of Christian proclamation since Jesus has been an interpretation of his homiletical method. There are principals that illuminate not only the “what” of Jesus’ preaching but also the “how”.

There are two things to keep in mind in any exploration of Jesus’ unconventional teaching and preaching methods. First, Jesus was a Jewish preacher, not a Greek preacher. He majored in images and stories, not in ideas, syllogisms, and propositions. But Jesus chose to communicate bi-culturally: He had to speak to Greco-Roman linear thinkers and to Hebrew nonlinear thinkers. Jesus, Paul, and Peter showed us how to do cross-cultural communication.<sup>313</sup>

The cultural background of Jesus’ person was a vital part of his homiletical style. In addition, his deep understanding of his cultural character allowed him to preach cross-culturally. Knowing himself expanded his capacity to know other and preach to them from this knowing. This is an aspect of his homiletical style that modern preachers can emulate.

Jesus preached as the son of a carpenter from Nazareth and the Son of man. He preached as the fulfillment of the prophetic word and as the Word of God. He preached from his spiritual and historical context.<sup>314</sup> As far as it can be discerned, he brought his full self, informed by all

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<sup>313</sup> Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola. *Jesus: A Theography*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 189.

<sup>314</sup> See arguments on Christology found in the writings of Church Fathers Justin Martyr, Ignatius, and Hippolytus of Rome. Saint Justin Martyr, “*Dialogue with Trypho*”, ed. Michael Slusser (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003).; William Cave, “*The Life of St. Ignatius [extr. From Apostolici. With A Tr. Of St. Ignatius’ Epistles to The Ephesians and Philadelphians]*” (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2012). 30-31.; and Antipope Hippolytus, “*Philosophumena or the Refutation of All Heresies, Vol. I*” (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921). 150.

elements of life, to the moment of preaching.<sup>315</sup> It also seems that he brought an understanding of human communication, especially in the context of oral to aural connection.

The fact that Christ had people following him for days highlights his ability to communicate effectively...He was an expert when it came to interpersonal and persuasive communication...Bennett states ‘Jesus chose terms suited to his listeners, and whose associations reinforced the lessons he was trying to teach. He used images that were appropriate to the culture, appropriate to the disciples’ stage in the process of leadership development, and appropriate to the particular circumstances in which he taught them’.<sup>316</sup>

This type of communication is enlivened and enacted, in that it speaks to a cyclical relationship that is mutually beneficial and dependent. The dynamics that are present call for performing with the skills of an actor, as it concerns embodying a message and offering that message to willing listeners. This is a nontraditional viewpoint, although it may be in the subconscious ethos of modern preaching theology and practice.

The greatest communicator who ever lived had a nontraditional communication style. Jesus did not speak as other speakers or as an exegete. He did not present Himself as a footnote to other rabbis...What He is, however, is a storyteller, metaphor maker, and sage who is always ready with a proverb, aphorism, riddle, and other one-liners... Whatever form of communication Jesus used, He was audience-specific, highly participatory, and scripturally tethered.<sup>317</sup>

The communication skills spoken of here are formational to the preacher and the proclamation. These skills enable the preacher to harness the power of a heightened moment, so that eyes can see, and ears can hear.<sup>318</sup> When one looks at the circumstances of who Jesus was and how holistic self-awareness impacted how he preached, an informative picture is revealed. To perceive this picture with a perspective toward homiletical theology and training, one must

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<sup>315</sup> Williams C. Wilkinson, “Jesus as Preacher,” in *The Biblical World*, 6 no. 6 (December 1895): 476. Wilkinson emphasizes that “It is of himself. It is the natural language of the speaker. Instead of being put on, it is such that it could not even be conceived as put off...In the case of Jesus, the style is he.”

<sup>316</sup> Mike Megrove Reddy. “Christ the Communicator and Educator,” *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 98 no. 1 (2017), 4 - 5.

<sup>317</sup> Sweet and Viola, *Jesus: A Theography*, 187.

<sup>318</sup> Matt. 13: 15 – 17, NASB.

distinguish the aspects of the homiletical style of Jesus of Nazareth that might hold import from the world of performing artists.

### 6.3 Troublesome Context

It is necessary to concede that although acting and preaching share some aspects of public speaking, these vocations are not interchangeable. In addition, they occupy space on opposite sides of any line separating the sacred from the secular. They do not seem to overtly come from the same root, so how can the fruit be complimentary? The history of the manifestations of these callings, to the stage and to the pulpit, is complicated with derision on both sides of any apparent boundary line. This tension stems from the method of defining “sacred”<sup>319</sup> and “secular”<sup>320</sup>. For the purposes of this thesis, the definitions encompass what is viewed as “inside God’s anointed space” (sacred) and “outside God’s anointed space” (secular). It is important to note that an understanding of the secular often follows a trajectory that leads to a definition that is synonymous with profane but that is not the perspective of this study. What is “sacred” and what is “secular” can be viewed as a matter of perspective and perception.

In between the radical transcendence of the sacred and the social dynamics of the sacred, we find ongoing mediations, at the intersections of personal subjectivity and social collectivities, in which anything can be sacralized through the religious work of intensive interpretation, regular ritualization, and inevitable contestation over ownership of the means, modes, and forces for producing the sacred.<sup>321</sup>

Jesus of Nazareth seemed to transcend the division of sacred and secular. His “performing” was a manifestation of his true nature. Additionally, he did not claim to be an actor, although this thesis will spend some time highlight aspects of his preaching methodology

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<sup>319</sup> Liliana Gomez and Walter Van Herck. *The Sacred in the City*. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012), 3. “According to the historical encyclopedia of philosophy, *Heilig/Heiligkeit* (sacred) refers in Greek to *agios* and in Latin to *sanctus*, originating from *sancire* which what is means to enclose, to encircle, that is, to delimit an area or district, while what is outside of the district (*fanum*) is referred to as *pro-fanum*. This origin is also present in Hebrew taking it from *qados*, referring to ‘separate’.”

<sup>320</sup> Lois Lee, *Recognizing the Non-religious: Reimagining the Secular*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 203. “Secular: A condition in which religion is a subordinate cultural or political authority or concern (though it may be an important secondary authority or concern). There are numerous alternative understandings of the term in circulation, though the idea of religion being (at least) a secondary authority is common to all of these.”

<sup>321</sup> David Chidester, “Sacred,” *Material Religion*, 7 no. 1 (April 2011), 84.

that can be framed as performance techniques. These techniques are a part of a larger whole that comprised his homiletical method. “Jesus poetically spins a world ordered by God’s will and purpose out of everyday things and scenarios. Taking a cue from his teaching style, an artistic/poetic approach is offered as an alternative to the expository/didactic method.<sup>322</sup> The poetic, storytelling and story-shaping, approach reveals the intangible and tangible revelation of God. Jesus introduces theological and practical reflection points, stimulating the truth that created humans can relate to because of the Creator. For those seeking to honor this method and create their own method, based on the example of Jesus of Nazareth, acting approaches are accessible and applicable resources.

For some, to call Jesus an actor is to call him a mere entertainer or to accuse him of manipulation. Acting, without the benefit of a deeper examination of the vocation, can be seen as a reductive way to interpret the homiletical method and proclamation work of Jesus. Throughout this discussion, this deeper examination will reveal that acting is not merely a means of tickling the itching ears of the crowd or seeking the spotlight.<sup>323</sup> Actor training methodology and techniques can be methods of receiving and communicating revelation, which illuminates the inner life of humanity. Acting, the process and the performance, is a tool of reflection and engagement that has importance beyond amusement and distraction. The critical distance, yet intimate connection, that acting techniques nurture can manifest as deep reflection, engagement,

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<sup>322</sup> Neil Pembroke, “Artistry in Jesus’ Parables and in Preaching on Them,” *Practical Theology*, 11 no. 2 (December 2018): 127. Continuing Pembroke shares, “Furthermore, Jesus employs the techniques of indirection and open-endedness. He shows rather than tells. In this way, Jesus stimulates, teases, provokes his listeners to think for themselves”. It can be argued that Jesus’ homiletical method encompasses a holistic understanding of exegesis of the revelation of God, as well as enacting the process of engaging the narrative of God and humanity in an intrinsically inherent and urgent capacity. Jesus was transcendent and contextual as a preacher. He was a narrative preacher who preached through story, a preacher who revealed the role of Christian preaching by being the example, and a Holy-Spirited aided preacher. See articles by Samuel Wells “Narrative Preaching” and Jennifer Lord “Preaching and the Holy Trinity: Dwelling in God”.

<sup>323</sup> 2 Tim. 4:2, NASB.

and transformation in the preached word. The goal is not to say that Jesus is an actor, but rather to say that he utilized acting skills and an actor's expansive response perspective as a preacher. Therefore, present-day preachers can benefit from using these tools as well.

#### 6.4. *What Are Actors Doing?*

For this thesis, an actor is defined as one who embodies story and presents the story to an audience. Although the actor plays one character in the story, the entirety of the story is taken into consideration during the character development work.<sup>324</sup> The acting moment is an amplified moment that calls for amplified presentation. This amplification does not happen in a vacuum. An actor trains their whole person — mind, body, and spirit — to see the life of the world as a connected story. The actor elucidates the story and connections as cast and tasked to do. Preachers are similarly cast or called, then ordered and ordained to see the world of God’s creation and then elucidate the received revelation through the preached word.

This chapter will first explore the process of acting and an actor’s mindset. Also, the question of whether it can be said that Jesus was engaging his audience as an actor, or through performing artist methodology, will be addressed. Whether or not Jesus was an actor is not the question, but rather the question for this thesis is, “Can present-day preachers use acting techniques to engage a Christological homiletical method?”. Lastly, the impact of this Christology and the formation of present-day preachers will be briefly discussed.

As was stated above, actors and the headspace of actors are not based in frivolity for frivolity’s sake, although it may seem fantastical or mystical to define the art form. The endeavor is connection, and the connection matters in and of itself. In the words of director Max Reinhardt, “We can telegraph and telephone and wire pictures across the ocean; we can fly over it. But the way to the human being next to us is still as far away as the stars. The actor takes us

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<sup>324</sup> There are useful definitions and descriptions of the character development process for actors in sources such as: Howey, B. (2005) *The Actor’s Menu: A Character Preparation Handbook*. St. Petersburg: Compass Publishing.; Rosenfeld, C. (2014). *Acting and Living in Discovery*. Newburyport: Focus Publishing.; Stanislavski, C. (2013). *Building a Character*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.; and Vened, C. (2000). *In Character: An Actor’s Workbook for Character Development*. Portsmouth: Heinemann Drama.

on this way.”<sup>325</sup> The art of acting encourages the actor to create a foundational grounding — holistically inclusive — that is honed as a craft of personification rather than pretense.<sup>326</sup> This includes an awareness of self and others that leaves room, on multiple levels, for the many movements of the human spirit.<sup>327</sup> “Both theology and the art of the theatre are rooted in humanity and relating through that humanity. Christianity is not just a religion of dogma; it is a faith-based relationship. Likewise, theatre is a relational art.”<sup>328</sup> What follows is a brief introduction to the craft and work of an actor. Going forward, when the actor and actor’s work is defined, the definition pertains to the preacher and homiletical work as well. Moreover, some of the aspects of an actor’s process can be found within Jesus’ homiletical method.

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<sup>325</sup> Carole Zucker, *In the Company of Actors: Reflections on the Craft of Acting*. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid, 7. In *In the Company of Actors: Reflections on the Craft of Acting* director Sir Richard Eyre offers a description of the acting craft that useful for this study. “Acting is a mystery: in the medieval sense, it’s a handicraft, and it’s also something that’s hard to understand...It’s a pragmatic craft: the actor imitates other people, and has to retain a child’s appetite for mimicry...an actor has to see with a child’s heart, innocent of judgment.”

<sup>327</sup> Konstantin Stanislavski and Jean Benedetti. (*An Actor's Work on a Role*. (London: Routledge, 2010), 164. Stanislavski lays out the dual nature within the work of actors when they reflect the story while they are analyzing the portrayal. This is in alignment with everyday human behavior. “At the opposite end are the many theatre managers, actors, audiences, critics who love and acknowledge only the slice of life, naturalism, realism onstage – the truth...They aren’t afraid of strong impressions, to participate indirectly in the life of the play. They want a reflection of the genuine ‘life of the human spirit’ onstage.”

<sup>328</sup> Todd Johnson and Dale Savidge. *Performing the Sacred*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 132. This element of “relational art” is key to this discussion, in that it necessitates a mutually intentional investigation into the parts – preacher and word - and the whole – incarnate word - of the relationship.

### 6.4.1 Creating the Space

The first step in an actor's creative process is to create a space in which the story and the characters can be developed. This is a space for nurturing the life of the character. There are tangible skills involved in this work, as well as intangible sensibilities cultivated by embracing what is between the lines of the explicit world of the text.<sup>329</sup> The explicit is enhanced by the intricate inclusion of the implicit within the practice.

Breathing life into the reality of the dramatic circumstances is a significant aspect of the development work of an actor. What is on the page only comes alive through the person of the actor. The text becomes incarnate. The connection to the Christian narrative is clear. There is a creative action that, in the Christian narrative, stems from the original act of creating. In other words, there is a creative act, and this act is literally interpreted through personification. "One day the Eternal God scooped dirt out of the ground, sculpted it into *the shape we call human*, breathed the breath that gives life into the nostrils of the human, and the human became a living soul."<sup>330</sup> God created the space of the person to be the vessel for life, just as the space of the cosmos was created to be the holder of a universal story. This act is not only a unique encounter, but it is also an all-encompassing and continual symbol of the whole.

In the view we have put forward, Christ appears essentially as one of the actors in the world drama (albeit the chief actor); now, however, we need once more to step back to a more formal perspective in which he appears, not as an individual actor, but as the very condition that renders the play possible. He is, as it were, the one who creates a "stage" in the first place so that characters can appear on it—and here "stage" means, paradoxically, both a "concrete area" and an "empty area".<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Suzuki, *Culture is the Body*, 4-5. Suzuki argues that it is words and gestures that are the actor's tools to communication profound, universal truth. Thus, the words and gestures must be cultivated into the character development with intentionality, and they must be allowed to develop holistically.

<sup>330</sup> Gen. 2:7, The Voice.

<sup>331</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar. *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: The Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ, Vol 3*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 128. Theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar, in developing a theology of theo-drama, goes on to say that "For, prescinding for the moment from the preliminary developments found in the Old Covenant, it is only when "the Word becomes flesh" that a concrete area comes into being for the interaction of God and man; originating in the person called Jesus Christ, a vast wealth of possibilities of

The “stage” is an overarching, unfolding drama called creation. Christ was one of the actors, the primary actor, and he was the text of the play itself. The stage — tangibly and intangibly defined — is continually and intentionally occupied by those who follow this incarnate example. The preacher is another one of the actors in the drama of creation, taking up the space on stage as he or she is guided by the hand of the Playwright.

Jesus engaged the process of creating space on multiple levels. The first is introduced in the Gospel of John account of his being present before time began.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.<sup>332</sup>

This is the origin of creating a space for the story of God and creation to thrive through the continual self-revelation of God to creation.<sup>333</sup> The personal investment of the Triune God is evident. “From start to finish, love characterizes the divine initiative that brings about the self-revelation of God. It is a love that crosses the infinite distance between the creator and the

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specific interplay is opened up between God and man, heaven and earth. Yet this concrete area remains initially “empty”: we can postpone any discussion of the other characters who are to appear on the newly opened stage and of how they will act upon it.” So, there is fulfilment found in every encounter of incarnate word coming forth from the preached message.

<sup>332</sup> John 1: 1 – 5, NASB.

<sup>333</sup> Gerald O’Collins. *Revelation: Toward Towards a Christian Interpretation of God’s Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6 – 7. “Instead of highlighting God revealing hitherto unknown truths (lower case and in the plural), many theologians came to understand revelation to be primarily the self-revelation of God who is Truth itself (upper case and in the singular). They expounded revelation as first and foremost the gratuitous and redemptive self-manifestation of God who calls and empowers human beings to enter by faith into a new personal relationship. Over and over again the Scriptures witness to revelatory events, in which God personally encountered such figures as Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Isaiah, Peter, Mary Magdalene, and Paul, and in unexpected ways called them to rethink their worldview and turn to a new faith commitment...Thus revelation is not primarily a matter of revealing truths (plural) about God or even the truth (singular) about God. It involves God disclosing the Truth or Reality that is God. Primarily, it reveals a person, or rather three divine Persons, rather than information about a person or about three divine Persons. We can summarize revelation as X reveals Y to Z, and Z believes/accepts this disclosure, adding at once that not only X (God) and Z (human beings) but also Y (the divine Selves) are, primarily, personal.”

creatures. ‘Crossing’ an infinite distance, our loving God is revealed to us and saves us.”<sup>334</sup> Here is illuminated an inherent element of immersing the self in the process for the sake of the whole. This is sacrificial and attunes to an important ethos within the preacher. This ethos is the decisional zone, an ethic zone, of the preacher and therefore a touchstone for the proclamation work of the preacher. Thus, the idea of a need for a type of ethical center is raised, and Aristotle helps us to consider this idea.

What this means is that the ethos for Aristotle is neither an image nor an impression, but is rather that crucial decisional zone within the human personality where excellence of proportion in passion and reason harnessed together in the service of truth generates what ethics is all about...For Aristotle ethos is an embodiment.<sup>335</sup>

The one is inherently part of the other when it comes to embodiment and ethos, even though there may be varying levels of acknowledgment and articulation of this connection. The preacher brings the self and the particular manifestation of ethos through self into the embodiment process of the sermon.

What is offered from the creator – Triune God, actor, preacher - must be fully given to the creation – creation, play, sermon - with an open hand. All aspects of how the creation will continue to grow and change are not immediately evident. “So, it is with those who have to preach the word of God.’...If preaching gives birth to faith, who gives birth to preaching, and how? How can a preacher find herself with enough milk to feed her baby?”<sup>336</sup> This birthing

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid, 21- 22. See also Jean Luc Marion’s treatment of God’s love revealed through revelation of self, “Loving requires an exteriority that is not provisional but effective, an exteriority that remains for long enough that one may cross it seriously. Love requires distance and the crossing of distance. Loving requires **more** than a feigned distance, or one that is not truly dug out or truly crossed. In the drama of love, actions must be accomplished effectively over distance.” Marion, J. L. (2007). *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. S. E. Lewis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 46–7.

<sup>335</sup> Andre Resner. *Preacher and the Cross: Person and Message in Theology and Rhetoric*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 21.

<sup>336</sup> Childers, *Birthing the Sermon*, 9 - 10. “Preaching is a mother who conceives and gives birth to faith...As surprising as it may be, this is hardly a new metaphor. Even John Calvin, in a sermon on 1 Timothy 4: 6-7, compared preachers to wet nurses. The dissolute nurse wastes her energies and has not milk to give the child, he wrote. But ‘she who will work readily and will take food and sustenance along with her normal rest, she will be able to feed her baby’”.

analogy guides one toward an understanding of creation and creator being connected on a vigorously interdependent level. The imagery brought forth by these words of Jana Childers further illuminate the interdependent nature of preaching, preacher, and the Triune God. Creation begets creation. For preachers, the outcome — the sermon message — is not completely in control or in the fisted hands of the preacher, but rather it is an unashamed offering to the movement of the faith encounter between God, preacher, and congregation.<sup>337</sup> This offering is an outpouring of experience and knowledge formed in relationship with the Triune God. Heightened intuition and trust engage with the work of the Holy Spirit and the incarnate word flows and comes forth.

Therefore, part of experiencing the presence of God in our lives is appreciating the importance of our creative intuition and trusting that the Spirit is already at work there, often working in between established zones of culture. Our creative intuition, fused with the work of the Spirit of God, can become the deepest seat of knowledge, from which our making can flow.<sup>338</sup>

In this flow, preacher/artists operate as makers of the word, as it extends from the Maker. Revealed knowledge – of God, the self, and others and the centering purposes of life – is brought to the forefront amidst the intuitive engagement.

This is certainly true of the acting process. Theater performance that is shaped, molded, and created by the performer is offered to the audience. They become creators, forming and shaping what resonates and gives life to the story. “Therefore, our work with character remains a study of open questions. We find ourselves formed by the setup and may respond in one of two

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<sup>337</sup> Sunggu Yang, “Picasso for Preaching: The Demand and Possibility of a Cubist Homiletic,” *Religions*, 11 no. 5 (May 2020): 11 – 12. “All three key players of preaching—text, preacher, and participant—are in flux. The ever-changing textual matrix created by all three involved encourages both the preacher and the participant to open themselves fully to ever-unfolding meanings of the text and, eventually, the revelation of the Divine Eternal. Neither the text, nor the preacher, nor the participant can or should constrain the eternal and universal nature of God.”

<sup>338</sup> Makoto Fujimura. *Art and Faith*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 15.

ways. We continue to re-create ourselves or we reinforce where we find ourselves to be. Both these ways require the same amount of energy.”<sup>339</sup>

Jesus takes the next step into creating the space for the story of humanity and divinity interaction and interconnection by diving into the earthly realm wrapped in flesh. This act of vulnerability signals that the risk involved as a creator is very real.<sup>340</sup> For mutual experience the creator cannot stand safely behind a pretense or hollow attempts at the enactment. The full body is engaged in the act of creator and creation performance of the shared story. Creating the space is a picture of power within vulnerability. Control is not the goal. Living and thriving in the paradox is the goal.

A clue lies in Philip Streatfield’s *The Paradox of Control in Organizations* (2001), in which he argues that the notion of being in control needs to be distinguished from the sense of coherence in experience. This may have even been part of the motivation for people to connect with each other and produce meaning together. So, Streatfield concludes, it is the capacity to live with this paradox of order/disorder, and have the courage to continue, in spite of not being in control, that enables a person to creatively participate in life.<sup>341</sup>

The body is a vital aspect of this willingness to become vulnerable for the sake of the mission of creation. An intentional way of wrestling with this paradox is needed for actors and for preachers in their crafting process. The preacher/artist experiential learning environment can function as such a space for such wrestling.

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<sup>339</sup> Chaikin, *The Presence of the Actor*, 32.

<sup>340</sup> Abraham Van de Beek. “Jesus and the Church as Vulnerable Strangers,” *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 2 no. 3 (August 2008): 256. “He comes from the Father, and since people do not know the Father, they also do not understand the Son...He is alone. Nobody really shares his life. Because of this, he shares the life of the strangers...If the deepest vulnerability of a stranger is to be alone in the denial of your very identity, then the willingness to share this fate by someone else tears down the wall of isolation. That is what Jesus does.”

<sup>341</sup> Mark Cariston Seton, “The Ethics of Embodiment: Actor Training and Habitual Vulnerability,” *Performing Ethos: International Journal of Ethics in Theatre and Performance*, 1 no. 1 (March 2010): 17. This includes a view of perception and the negotiation of anxiety, as it pertains to barriers in the process of embodiment. “The tendency he sees is that people move too easily from a perception of order in the world to the belief that they can control some part of it. This is done in an attempt to keep anxieties associated with disorder and unpredictability on the margins of consciousness.”

The final movement in the methodology of creating space for the Jesus inspired preacher/artist is meeting people in their spaces. There is a bit of divergence between the actor and the preacher in this movement. Rather than the audience coming to play, the word comes to the people. Jesus provided a prologue to his dramatic work at the beginning of his life of ministry. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”<sup>342</sup> This prologue, and the way that it was delivered, set the tone for the space that Jesus would occupy. It would be a mobile space, encountering and journeying with the mission and led by the mission. Jesus was setting the space for the story of traversing communion between humanity and God. Elements of mystery and transparency were present, heralding an experience that would be a new kind of storytelling.<sup>343</sup> Although congregations come to the pulpit, the preacher’s work is to reach out in return.

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<sup>342</sup> Luke 4: 18 – 19, NASB.

<sup>343</sup> Mary Jerome Obiroah and Favour Chukwuemeka Uroko. “The Spirit of the Lord God is Upon Me (Is 61:1): The Use of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 74 no. 1 (October 2018): 5-6. The Hebrew word *ruah* [רוּחַ] contains multiple meanings that speak to the mystery of God. Christ revealed himself in a way that was a key to a way of revealing tangible within the intangible.

#### 6.4.2 Defining the Character

The space of the acting, the stage, has been discussed. Now there must be a discussion about who is occupying the space, as the character is developed. As has been stated, an actor is one who brings the story to life, allowing the audience to see themselves in the life of the story. The character is the conduit for this intimate and creative work. There are many schools of acting and many theories connected to these schools. In fact, the theory of acting has not changed much through the years, even as methodologies have come and gone.<sup>344</sup> More than merely learning lines and blocking, there is a root of creation at the heart of acting. A role is the canvas, but the creation is unique to that actor, at that time, for that production.

“But to be able to penetrate someone else’s heart, make communication with his life, I need Adaptations...Adaptation is one of the most important techniques in communication, even when we are alone, since we need to adapt to ourselves and to our own state of mind if we are to convince ourselves...Each actor has his own adaptations of varied origins and varying effectiveness, which belong to him alone. It’s the same thing in life. Men, women, old people, children, the great, the humble, the angry, the kind, the irritable, the calm and so on, have their own particular kinds of Adaptation.”<sup>345</sup>

No matter how many have played the role before, every time the role is taken on by an actor it is an act of creation. Preacher/artist can take this responsiveness into their practice of preaching. Additionally, part of the process is how the preacher/artist is willing and able to adapt for the sake of a heart-penetrating incarnational, embodied word. The hearts of the preacher and the listeners are penetrated by God.

In support of this discussion, the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Konstantin Stanislavsky provide an entry into the craft of building a character as an actor. They are useful in this way

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<sup>344</sup> Richard Hornby, *The End of Acting: A Radical View*. (New York: Applause Theatre Books, 1995), 5. “Acting theory in America remains pretty much where it has been for the pasty sixty years...it is a mimetic theory, reflecting the influence of the realism that prevailed in the theatre during Stanislavsky’s early years...”

<sup>345</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work on a Role*, 260.

because both had a viewpoint that saw acting as representative and true to the human experience rather than play-acting.<sup>346</sup> Rather than compare these philosophies, they can be unpacked for a more inclusive perspective.

Bakhtin states that authorship is equal to the creative act of building a character. “Bakhtin’s early theory of creation of a character involves an observer who needs to stand back in order to create the finished visual image.”<sup>347</sup> Thus, he is a proponent of critical distance. This translates to an ability to use the cognitive capacity to forge the character as a structure. This idea is much like the perspective of William Wordsworth’s view of poetry. “The spontaneous overflow [artistic pursuit] ...it takes its origin from emotion recollect in tranquility...our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts.”<sup>348</sup> In this train of thought, it follows that the actor is the lead in the character development process, as opposed to the character taking the lead. An actor is enabled to negotiate the emotional life of the character, building the visual image suggested by Bahktin, without giving over completely to the character. The self is not lost. This does not mean that the truth of the character’s story is artificial. As Bahktin comes after Stanislavsky, he is perhaps responding to a desire to quell the chaos possible in Stanislavsky’s method.

“Some criticize Stanislavsky’s work for being grounded in a private narrativity, a closed sense of character, and psychological realism. They assert that it reifies a nonexistent ‘self’ at the expense of ignoring socially conditioned aspects of identity...Some say the system consigns us to a naïve, anti-intellectual investment in narrative closure, ‘realistic’ mimesis, and continuity that erases difference and ignores social critique.”<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Dick McCaw. “Paradoxes of Acting: Bakhtin and Stanislavsky,” *New Theatre Quarterly*, 30 no. 1 (March 2014): 29.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>348</sup> Hornby, *The End of Acting*, 47.

<sup>349</sup> Rhonda Blair, “Reconsidering Stanislavsky: Feeling, Feminism, and the Actor,” *Theatre Topics*, 12 no. 2 (September 2002):179.

Stanislavsky is a proponent of empathetic character work that necessitates a deeply personal connection between the actor and the character. "...Stanislavsky's approach to an image of the character, which is based on empathy, a coming towards, indeed a merging with the character."<sup>350</sup> This "coming forward" is vital to an authentic embodied performance.<sup>351</sup> The human spirit is created, inherently, to sense the inauthentic and manufactured. Therefore, the actor seeks to deeply immerse him or herself into the character in a way that does not judge and does not place preconceived limits on the development. This method of acting is based on embodiment.<sup>352</sup> The embodiment of the characters thoughts, feelings and perceptions put into action, for Stanislavsky, is the way to bring forth the truth. "That means, I am, I live, I feel, I think as one with the role. Where truth, belief, and "I am being" are, inevitably you have genuine, human (and not theatrical) experiencing."<sup>353</sup> Jesus' acting technique can be classified as a mixture of these two theories - empathy and embodiment. This is an integration that preacher/artist can cultivate as well.

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<sup>350</sup> McCaw, "Paradoxes of Acting", 30.

<sup>351</sup> Hornby, *The End of Acting*, 114. "Besides, the actor is not really pretending in this sense. The audience knows full well what he is doing. We can think of him as hiding his true self from us if we wish, but that is not how it usually seems to the audience, nor how it usually seems to the actor himself. I might just as well say that an automobile mechanic, working on my car, is "hiding" his at-home self as a husband and father, since he is not showing me that self. But the mechanic is not hiding his mechanical skill; nor does he achieve that skill by having the unseen husband/father self-manipulate his hands. Like the actor in performance he is absorbed in his work, whose mental component is fully apparent as it progresses."

<sup>352</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actors Work on a Role*, 321. Here an understanding of how embodiment makes the invisible visible, and "conveys the life of the human spirit" is laid out through the lens of the actor process.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid*, 398.

## 6.5 Was Jesus of Nazareth Using Acting Techniques?

To be clear, it is not being suggested that Jesus was explicitly utilizing an actor's paradigm in his homiletical mission and methods. Rather, it is the goal of this discussion to suggest that preachers can access a pathway to full realization of incarnate preaching by engaging actor training methods. These methods are an aspect of a practice of preaching and not the entirety of the practice. Jesus' kenotic nature reached towards humanity and humanity occupies methods of reaching toward Jesus.<sup>354</sup> Those methods, placed in a framework of actor training methodologies, are explored below.

### 6.5.1 Jesus' Acting Method

When he preaches, Jesus is not putting on a show, but rather enacting, continually, the incarnation and the mission at the heart of his life. He is acting in that he is constantly observing and perceiving how the text is being interpreted in the world. The perceptiveness that is demonstrated by Jesus' preaching style can be viewed through an actor's perspective and ability to create space and aids the capacity of the listeners to negotiate the intangibles within the tangible. Thus, a method of engaging Jesus' homiletical method is provided. Jesus accomplishes perspective and inhabits this ability from an empathetic yet embodied critical distance. When Jesus preaches, he is offering a heightened response to a heightened need.<sup>355</sup> This is very similar to the way that actors respond, in the moment, to the particularity of the moment.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> David S. Robinson and Jennifer Wotochek, "Kenotic Theologies and the Challenge of the 'Anthropocene': From Deep Incarnation to Interspecies Encounter," *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 34 no. 2 (May 2021): 217. "...it is critical that such particular, relational encounters—modeled in Jesus and now to be exercised in our lives—be set alongside the 'identification' of the Logos-become-flesh with the greater creation." To model in Jesus and exercise in the preacher's life, application methods – such as actor training techniques – must be contemplated.

<sup>355</sup> Returning to the mission evident in his message found in Luke 4. There is a need for those who are imprisoned, blind and oppressed to be freed.

<sup>356</sup> Tzachi Zamir, "Watching Actors," *Theatre Journal*, 62 no. 2 (May 2010): 230. "Actors, I suggest, amplify their own lives by imaginatively embodying alien existential possibilities. Like the pining for the fountain of youth or the aimless counting of hordes of money, such as Spenser's Mammon, Eliot's Silas Marner, or Marlowe's Barabas, acting forges a link to a potentially unlimited range of new, hitherto unimagined possibilities through the intimate

The Jesus at the moment of proclamation is not separate from the Jesus at rest or in moments of private fellowship, although his charisma was present in all relational aspects of his life. This charisma was a product of his gifting and mission.<sup>357</sup> He is continually enacting his message and his mission in a way that encompasses all aspects of life – sacred and secular. In the same way, the actor is not separate from self when on stage, but he or she is intentional about the mission of relating self and relating to the story. An actor’s charisma gifting is more than show. It is resource and tool.

Jesus’ acting method can be viewed as a synthesis of Bahktin’s and Stanislavsky’s methods. He vacillates between critical distance and enmeshed empathy. Thus, he promotes this kind of fluidity as formational for the preacher/artist who wishes to embody the message that was given and is to be received. He is present to the needs but not overtaken by the emotion, although he feels and expresses emotion, for the sake of staying present to the entirety of the drama.

Additionally, like an actor, Jesus wisely assesses what is needed to draw his audience into the story. Moreover, he invites them to see themselves in the story, through cultural contextualization. This is reminiscent of the approaches used by many teachers in wisdom traditions. “The hallmark of these wisdom teachers was their use of pithy sayings, puzzles, and parables rather than prophetic pronouncements or divine decree. They spoke to people in the

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identification required by theatrical embodiment. Actors either experience or merely project such expansion; the audience only perceives it. But the audience's perception is itself not some passive encounter with an external input, but a form of imaginative participation.”

<sup>357</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz. *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 236-237. “Jesus was a charismatic who had an almost inexplicable aura: fascinating to followers, provocative to opponents...Here charisma proves to be the capacity to advocate unconventional values and modes of behaviour...According to Paul, charisma shows itself in extraordinary human gifts, above all in prophecy, miracle-working and teaching (cf. Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12:30).”

language that people spoke, the language of story rather than law.”<sup>358</sup> It is also reminiscent of utilizing audience awareness as a resource within acting theory<sup>359</sup>. This unpretentious work of awareness is done intentionally, because, as it has been stated, he had a mission that focused his tactics, which personified love, grace, mercy, and truth. “Christ claims to introduce a qualitative polarization into the world drama on account of his own person; he claims to comprehend it in himself, to transform it by the power of his life.”<sup>360</sup> Jesus entered the world dramatically and the way he engaged his mission was dramatic, striking tones and undercurrents that engaged all the senses and sensibilities of humanity. This creates a sanctified space wherein truth can be experienced and received, ushered in by a mystical — all at once definable and undefinable — and idealistic — wholly determined to be a purely authentic, teacher. Here again, we see the technique of an actor. “[Stanislavsky] sought to create a religion of art, in which the theatre was a temple, the audience worshippers, and the actor celebrants in a mysterious rite. A mystic and an idealist, he tolerated his own mechanization of the art he loved only within definite limits.”<sup>361</sup>

Jesus of Nazareth extends a particular legacy to those who preach today. He may not have been literally an actor, but the metaphor is appropriate. One way that preachers today can apply his homiletical method is to utilize acting techniques as a part of a preaching practice in the preparation and in the proclamation. To use Jesus’ homiletical method is to accept an

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<sup>358</sup> Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind - A New Perspective on Christ and His Message*. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2008), 23.

<sup>359</sup> Zamir, “Watching Actors”, 230. “In a good performance, a bond is gradually formed between actor and auditor, one in which the audience is socially validating the extension that the actor is momentarily appropriating, playing along with the request implied by the actor’s acting to be recognized as someone else. The audience is thus not merely present in the theatre as a passive recipient of a creative offering, spending some of its lifetime simultaneously with the actors, but is completing the act of acting by recognizing and responding to the actor as character. Actors need an audience not just because only an audience can praise their artistic success or because of financial motives, but because only a spectator is able to give the external indication that the actor momentarily exists in this amplified form. The audience provides the inter-subjective context of recognition, playing along with what the actor undergoes.”

<sup>360</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: The Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, 32.

<sup>361</sup> Joseph Roach, *The Player’s Passion*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2011), 217.

invitation to risk vulnerability, mindful critical distance, embodiment, and outrageous empathy while preaching the word as Jesus did. This is the creation of the preacher/artist. This is an expansive understanding of the role of the preacher that seeks integration of theology, practiced spirituality, and human experience. Thus, the preacher/artist is embracing a transformative experience of incarnate word that can create and re-create the mission of incarnation repeatedly.

An actor should strive to be alive to all that he can imagine to be possible. Such an actor is generated by an impulse toward an inner unity, as well as by the most intimate contacts he makes outside himself. When we as actors are performing, we as persons are also present and the performance is a testimony of ourselves. Each role, each work, each performance changes us as persons. The actor doesn't start out with answers about living – but with wordless questions about experience. Later, as the actor advances in the process of work, the person is transformed. Through the working process, which he himself guides, the actor recreates himself.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Chaikin, *The Presence of the Actor*, 23 – 24.

### 6.5.2 *Specific Acting Techniques Used by Jesus*

The performing of the word involves engaging the essence of the Word. In other words, Jesus is the enactment and the ethos of God's revelation. The use of acting methodology is one way for preacher/artists to dive deeply into the preaching method of Jesus. This is holistic, incarnational preaching with embodiment that beings with a willing spirit that can negotiate cognitive, physical, finite, and infinite truths. Preachers are given the capacity to weather this negotiation process by God, thus illuminating ultimate truth.<sup>363</sup> Along with the overall theory of Jesus as a preacher/artist, an integral part of this study is the examination of specific acting techniques that can be employed to engage Jesus' homiletical method. The following examination of Jesus' acting technique, or techniques that can illuminate his homiletical methodology, considers that the sermon is always an in-the-moment, oral to aural, mutual dialogue.

#### 6.5.2.1 *"Playing Opposites"*

There is a concept of opposites within acting theory. This is the idea that human experience is not linear and therefore the performance of human experience is also not linear. Playing up the opposites is a way to illustrate the dynamic nature of the human experience.

"Every part should contain them. They are the perfect dimensional tool...One wildly useful thing about opposites is the need to define what you are doing and playing so as to find the opposite. As a matter of fact, almost anything you establish for your character – rhythm, tone, dress, ego placement, sense of self – can allow you the opposite as an acting choice."<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Luci Shaw, "Reversing Entropy," *Image* 41 (Winter 2003): 96. "Have you ever wondered why some of Jesus's stories seem to complicate or even obscure truth rather than clarify or simplify it? Perhaps it's that God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, is not content to speak simply to the rational intelligence, but informs us instead through imagination, intuition, wonder, and epiphany".

<sup>364</sup> Jon Jory, *Tips: Ideas for Actors*. (Hanover: Smith and Kraus, Inc., 2000), 170.

In a sense, this is the soul of acting performance theory.<sup>365</sup> That is to say that actors are finding a way to manifest, in a tangible and planned way, what is possible in an intangible or unplanned way. Just because it is produced does not make it artificial or untrustworthy. A scripted performance moment is representative of the overall mission of the Triune God's self-revelation through the word, but it is also a moment of its own in a season all its own. Perhaps Jesus was performing something in-between scripted and improvisation, introducing a unique genre of theatre.

The Beatitudes presented in the Sermon on the Mount are a moment where Jesus preached opposites, while also presenting himself as an ocular demonstration of these opposites. Jesus creates a space that was a familiar narrative by walking up a mountain, as Moses had done<sup>366</sup>, and sitting down to preach with the people gathered around him, as rabbis in the synagogue did.<sup>367</sup> This was a delicate and intensified moment. The hoped for has sprung forth into the present bringing all the import of promise and providence. This was Holy Theatre.

The Theatre of the Invisible – Made – Visible: the notion that the stage is a place where the invisible can appear has a deep hold on our thoughts. We are all aware that most of life escapes our senses: a most powerful explanation of the various arts is that they talk of patterns which we can only begin to recognize when they manifest themselves as rhythms or shapes. We observe that the behaviour of people, of crowds, of history, obeys such recurrent patterns. We hear that trumpets destroyed the walls of Jericho, we recognize that a magical thing called music can come from men in white ties and tails, blowing, waving, thumping, and scraping away. Despite the absurd means that produce it, through the concrete in music we recognize the abstract, we understand that ordinary men and their clumsy instruments are transformed by an art of possession. We may make a personality cult of the conductor, but we are aware that he is not really making the

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<sup>365</sup> Stanislavski and Bendetti, *An Actor's Work on a Role*, 60. See the discussion of acting as a translation and interpretation of human experience. This explicit connection to the lived – embodied – experience is the catalyst to intentional engagement with the entirety of the preaching person.

<sup>366</sup> Exodus 19 and 20, NASB.

<sup>367</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5-7*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 11. Commentary by Charles H. Talbert outlines the connection to the teaching posture of rabbis. "To sit", as outlined in the Talmud, is identified with "to teach".

music, it is making him—if he is relaxed, open and attuned, then the invisible will take possession of him; through him, it will reach us.<sup>368</sup>

Did Jesus give himself over to becoming a vessel of the dramatic to bring forth the invisible Kingdom of God? This is question that cannot be answered for him, yet it is useful to engage the question with a viewpoint that is able to handle the mystery of Divinity. One way to this is to willingly suspend disbelief. This is a way to investigate differing viewpoints intentionally while acknowledging that the act is postponing cognitive judgment for the sake of experiencing other avenues of knowing such as emotional and spiritual life. “When we are suspending disbelief in the Coleridgean manner, we accept for the moment the most impossible things...More properly, we do not disbelieve them. That state, though, lasts only for those moments when we are ‘rapt’ or ‘absorbed’.<sup>369</sup> Those who believe with faith are willingly suspending their disbelief in that they are seeing with faith rather than sight.<sup>370</sup> Thus preacher/artists should come from this same willingness and openness when practicing the art of preaching.

Did Jesus utilize the acting technique of opposites as a tool for this revelation? Again, we cannot definitively say what was in the mind of Christ when it comes to his communication techniques. We do not need to for our purposes. This can be said about many perspectives of trying to understand and engage with the person of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>371</sup> Looking at the potential

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<sup>368</sup> Peter Brook, *The Empty Space - A Book About the Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate*. (London: Penguin, 2008), 42.

<sup>369</sup> Norman Norwood Holland, “The Power of Literature: A Neuropsychological View,” *New Literary History*. 35 no. 3 (Summer 2004): 396.

<sup>370</sup> See Scripture references in 2 Corinthians 4:18; 2 Corinthians 5: 7; and Hebrews 11:1.

<sup>371</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, “The Social God and The Relational God: Toward a Theology of the Imago Dei in the Postmodern Context,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 24 no.1 (May 2002): 44. “Personhood, then, is bound up with relationality, and the fullness of relationality lies ultimately in relationship with the triune God. Creating this relational fullness is the work of the Spirit who places humans ‘in Christ’ and thereby effects human participation in the dynamic of the divine life. Moreover, being ‘in Christ’ entails participating in the narrative of Jesus...an identity-constituting narrative, I would add, that is a shared story—a communal narrative.”

actor archetype of Jesus' preaching style is a way to learn from and continue the essence of his homiletical method.

What can present-day preachers learn from Jesus' "on-stage" preaching persona? The audience as captive and Jesus as captivator is an image that is scandalous and intriguing, due to the nature and parameters of the captivation.<sup>372</sup> Here again, is the need to redefine terminology that has negative connotations. To be a captivator does not necessarily mean manipulation is the means to an end. Rather it can mean using knowledge of interpersonal relations, and a truly holistic sense of self and others, within moments of revelation to inform and enhance one's performance. "We have subtle subconscious faculties we are not using. Beyond the limited analytic intellect is a vast realm of mind that includes psychic and extrasensory abilities; intuition; wisdom; a sense of unity; aesthetic, qualitative and creative faculties; and image-forming and symbolic capacities."<sup>373</sup> Jesus' homiletical method made use of these subtle subconscious faculties.

#### 6.5.2.2 "Staying Onstage"

Now this brings up one of the most useful questions in acting – why is your character staying on the stage during this scene. Why doesn't she leave? What crucial thing keeps her there? The question leads us to an important insight – just what is it that your character has to lose if they exit? Very often actors can articulate what they want to win, but it is equally revealing to understand what they cannot emotionally afford to lose. Fear is a great motivator, and all characters are not the bravest of souls.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Sweet and Viola, *Jesus: A Theography*, 184 – 185. "This was the mission of His entire ministry. But for Jesus' peers, a life of holiness, or kingdom living, involved round-the-clock vigilance in keeping oneself separate and uncontaminated from any uncleanness. And the "unclean" in Jesus' mind was another word for "in need," which came with a call, not to stay away but to come close. It was in the nature of Jesus to explode boundaries between cultures, sexes, races, divine and human, pure and impure—to exalt the humble and humble the exalted.

<sup>373</sup> Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, 36. Furthermore, contemplative theologian and Episcopal priest Cynthia Bourgeault shares "Though these faculties are many, we give them a single name with some justification, because they are operating best when they are in concert. They comprise a mind, moreover, in spontaneous connection with the cosmic mind, the total mind we call 'heart'."

<sup>374</sup> Jory, *Tips: Ideas for Actors*, 179.

The preacher preaches because he or she believes there is a word from the Triune God that is part of the larger story of God and humanity that needs to be shared.<sup>375</sup> This is in and of itself an act of performing onstage, and certainly Jesus subscribed to this persistent acting technique. He stayed and is staying “onstage”, persistent and with a sense of practical urgency.<sup>376</sup> He had themes, cadences, and a through-line that centered on connecting while he was “acting” onstage.

“Jesus Christ was a leading communicator of Truth to an extensive diversity of listeners. He undoubtedly communicated in a way that combined the finest rudiments of ‘teaching, inspiring, persuading, entertaining, correcting, rebuking, illustrating, questioning, encouraging, exhorting and listening’...Above all Jesus built relationships with His audiences and He facilitated a two-way flow of information.”<sup>377</sup>

God calls the preacher/artist to the stage, the preacher/artist answers and funnels the call to the audience.<sup>378</sup> Succinctly, the preacher/artist is consistently on the stage of the story, because the “play” of creation and Creator is never-ending. “This includes the ability to situate one’s own life in a transcendent narrative context. [Walter] Brueggemann writes that the substance of a call assumes the particularity of God who has a purpose for the life of this individual...”<sup>379</sup>

Preacher/artists must persist in the narrative.

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<sup>375</sup> Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 10. “This is most remarkable when you consider that our best preaching does in fact feel like a story. It is indeed The Story, and our task is to tell it, to form it, to fashion it—not to “organize” it... I propose that we begin by regarding the sermon as a homiletical plot, a narrative art form, a sacred story.”

<sup>376</sup> Rohr, *The Universal Christ*, 106. “Jesus was clearly more concerned with what Buddhists call “right action” (“orthopraxy” in Christianity) than with right saying, or even right thinking. You can hear this message very clearly in his parable of the two sons in Matthew 21:28–31: One son says he won’t work in the vineyard, but then does, while the other says he will go, but in fact doesn’t. Jesus told his listeners that he preferred the one who actually goes although saying the wrong words, over the one who says the right words but does not act. How did we miss that? Humanity now needs a Jesus who is historical, relevant for real life, physical and concrete, like we are. A Jesus whose life can save you even more than his death. A Jesus we can practically imitate, and who sets the bar for what it means to be fully human. And a Christ who is big enough to hold all creation together in one harmonious unity.”

<sup>377</sup> Reddy, “Christ the Communicator, 10.

<sup>378</sup> Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 13. Note the discussion of the word as a gift and the preacher as a midwife of the word.

<sup>379</sup> Cameron Lee, “Agency and Purpose in Narrative Therapy: Questioning the Postmodern Rejection of Metanarrative,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 32 no. 3 (September 2004): 121.

In Matthew 13 Jesus preached a sermon of four parables by the sea.<sup>380</sup> Again, he sets the stage for drama by preaching from a boat while the audience listens from the shore. He begins with one parable. The audience questions, “why use parables?” Jesus answers and preaches three more parables. The dramatic dialogue continues between Jesus and the disciples as they walk home. The Holy Theatre space is portable. He engages in an interwoven drama, a call and response, that points to a high-stakes inner monologue for this preaching performer. There is an urgency to the parabolic repetition. Urgency in energy is the coal in the furnace of an engaged acting performance. “Energy is the delivery system for the idea or action. Without the ideas, energy is callow. The greatest sap of acting energy is simply the fear of acting. Get into the scene, find the action, pursue it ferociously and forget yourself. The energy will appear.”<sup>381</sup> Jesus remains on the stage, and brings the stage with him, as he is wholly engaged in a living performance while he preaches. He lives the preaching moment. The moment of preaching has been taken out of the town square, for the most part, out of the boat, and out of the walk home. It has been placed behind a pulpit. However, the lesson, at the core, is still relevant.

### 6.5.2.3 “Image”

There is the image the character wishes to present in each circumstance and the image he fears he presents. Both of these, once articulated, are of obvious use to the actor...An evening at home identifying the various images presented and the moments of success and failure can add great savor to your work. The tension between image and reality adds a whole new dimension.<sup>382</sup>

Image is a tense subject when speaking of the preacher. Being concerned with image, historically, is the antithesis of being a person of spiritual depth. Due to certain teachings and definitions about humility within Christian doctrine being concerned about one’s image is

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<sup>380</sup> Matt. 13, NASB.

<sup>381</sup> Jory, *Tips: Ideas for Actors*, 208.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid*, 192.

something that makes people skeptical of one's authenticity.<sup>383</sup> Yet image, that is the perception of self amongst others, is a context that the biblical witness encourages us to engage with freely. "Me" is a part of our engagement with God.<sup>384</sup> Certainly this is a humble and holistic view of the image of self, but it is a view that is necessary. Exploring the *imago Dei* and our reflection on it is a recurring theme in the story of how humanity tries to understand divinity and self.<sup>385</sup> Image, whose we are made in and whose we reflect, is one of the avenues Jesus walked for self-identification. "Christ was in touch with his full self and harmonized this knowledge with the message, creating an image that was true to person and to the message".<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Maxwell, "The Virtue of Humility", 157. See Jaclyn Maxwell's discussion of how this dichotomy can be traced to Late Antiquity Christianity. The self is to be denied and yet the practical application of this denial is often rejected, or at the very least not genuinely wrestled with for the sake of a deeper understanding. "But humility was less clearly defined, and difficult even for the Church Fathers to achieve. While Basil and his contemporaries had much to gain by persuading the rich to relinquish their wealth to the church, they would probably not have benefited from haranguing friendly public officeholders to relinquish their offices. But the difference went beyond this – it was simply more difficult to fathom that the high status that came from a good family, a good education, and public offices could or should be rejected. Instead, in the case of the Cappadocians, they thought in terms of how these privileges could coexist with Christ-like or apostolic humility. They could be charitable to the poor, but they did not aim to live in a classless society without cultural distinctions. Likewise, they did not think that honors and privileges needed to be renounced; instead, they required an attitude adjustment. Outside of systematic discussions of humility, which tended to reach more radical conclusions about social distinctions, the Cappadocians (and Chrysostom to a lesser extent) consciously or subconsciously chose to promote coexistence and accommodation between biblical social reversals and the reality of social hierarchies, regardless of the gap we might see between the two."

<sup>384</sup> Psalm 139, NASB.

<sup>385</sup> Grenz, "The Social God", 42. "The concept of the *imago dei* as destiny, which views humans as history or a narrative, provides the hermeneutical perspective for constructive theological engagement with the contemporary context."

<sup>386</sup> Bart D. Ehrman. *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014, 74-75) It is helpful to acknowledge the connection between image and knowledge of self, and how these aspects impact the outward manifestation of proclamation. Logos, the Word, is the outward manifestation, informed by self-image and self-knowledge. Preachers are in a paradigm, and as such must wrestle with this image and knowledge of self tension. Additionally, the preached word, logos, is crafted within a dialogue between Logos and preacher. "Philo maintained that the Logos was the highest of all beings, the image of God according to which and by which the universe is ordered. God's Logos was, in particular, the paradigm according to which humans were created. It is easy to see here that Logos is taking on the function also assigned to Wisdom, which was thought to be the creator and ordering factor of all things. In some sense the Logos is in fact "born" of Wisdom. If wisdom is something that people have within themselves, then Logos is the outward manifestation of the wisdom when the person speaks. And so, in this understanding, Wisdom gives birth to Logos, which is, in fact, what Philo himself believed. Moreover, as the mind is to the body, so the Logos is to the world."

When Jesus is preaching, he places himself amongst the people so that they can absorb his image and not only hear his words.<sup>387</sup> He is the ocular demonstration of the message, living the word in actuality. How is the preacher's image, his or her placement and view of self, amongst the people, a resource for embodied preaching? John 4's sermon for the woman at the well begins with a description of bodies in space that sets the tone for the words that follow.

“And He had to pass through Samaria. So, He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.”<sup>388</sup>

Image, meaning how his action would be seen and how her outward actions spoke of inner turmoil, is a character in and of itself in this moment of the narrative. Jesus allows for this multi-level engagement as a tool for his message. The “me” in the message is present as an extension of the message and must be attended to by the preacher/artist.

#### 6.5.2.4 “Impulse”

You feel it, you follow it, then you consider it. The impulse is grounded by the knowledge of the text and the character and the action the character pursues. Lots of things prevent following the impulse: stage fright, fear of criticism, fear of committing yourself, even fear of the other people in the room...The impulse is the wellspring from which movement and gesture spring. To make acting from impulse, you must be sensitive to its stimulus. It demands concentration, focus and a belief in the scene...Let it into your body. Feel it. Commit to it. Move with it.<sup>389</sup>

In the Upper Room, Jesus introduces his sermon with a piece of bread used as a symbol during a meal of nourishment for the body and soul.<sup>390</sup> In John, he physically stooped

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<sup>387</sup> Sweet and Viola, *Jesus: A Theography*, 177. “Jesus pioneered voice application for large crowds by using a boat as his podium, the water as a sounding board, and the sloping hills and curving coves where people would sit as a natural amphitheater.” The people were absorbing the holistic image of Jesus as he preached as well as the sound of Jesus as he preached.

<sup>388</sup> John 4: 1 – 7, NASB.

<sup>389</sup> Jory, *Tips: Ideas for the Actors*, 210.

<sup>390</sup> Mark 14: 12 – 26; Luke 22: 7 – 23, NASB.

down to write words in the sand.<sup>391</sup> Were these impulses born out of a response to the people and the message in the moment? He has a knowledge of the story that is playing out and a desire to help his audience see their roles in the story. This thesis is connecting impulse to instinct. This impulse/instinct is grounded in the knowledge of the overall movements of the preaching moment. Accordingly, Jesus engages the work of honing skills to tune into the incitement of Holy Theatre. This is something that preacher/artists can take as a lesson from Jesus and his acting techniques. Preacher/artists can enhance their sensory skills while enabling impulse to be a resource. This is also an extension of the preacher's willingness to be vulnerable and present to the message.

#### 6.5.2.5 "Emotions"

Don't go chasing after them; don't try to force them; you can only create the conditions for them to appear. The emotionally available actor won't have to fake, and the emotionally blocked actor won't last long in the profession anyway. Do your work, trust your work, concentrate, and usually the emotion will be there when you need it.<sup>392</sup>

Emotional awareness and emotional intelligence capacity operate on a spectrum for human beings.<sup>393</sup> Theatre performers learn to use their own emotional life as implicit and explicit tools for authentic embodiment of a character. "All the arts involve emotion, both in the artist who creates and the reader or view or audience member who responds, but in no other form than acting is the claim made that the artist must actually feel the emotion he is portraying, her and now, as the basis for this work."<sup>394</sup> The use of emotion for the preacher/artist does not need to be extreme to be effective. Emotional availability is prescriptive rather than descriptive in the

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<sup>391</sup> John 8: 3 – 8, NASB.

<sup>392</sup> Jory, *Tips: Ideas for the Actors*, 212.

<sup>393</sup>Richard D. Lane, Donald M. Quinlan, Gary E. Schwartz, Pamela A. Walker, and Sharon B. Zeitlin, S. "The Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale: A Cognitive-Developmental Measure of Emotion," *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 55 no. 1-2 (June 2011): 124 – 125. See argument that emotional experience is organized through five levels of emotional awareness.

<sup>394</sup> Hornby, *The End of Acting*, 47.

arenas of acting and preaching. Embracing vulnerability in expressing emotion is a foundational skill. Jesus illustrates this in Luke 10 when he allows himself to be elated at the reports from the seventy disciples sent out to preach, and again in John 11 when he weeps at the death of his friend, Lazarus.<sup>395</sup> In these instances, elation and sorrow lead to a homily which elicited a response of awe at God's resource and openness to the movement of God's Spirit. Emotions are indicators and these indicators are resources for preacher/artists to home in on the heart and import of the sermon message.

#### 6.5.2.6 "Fighting Spirit"

The Japanese word *Zanshin* ("Fighting Spirit") implies a state of relaxed mental alertness in the face of danger. How useful to the actor, who must develop a will for concentration as well as great stamina, which keeps her from ever giving up before this great thing (the performance) has been made... The actor must remember that frustration is a creative state, the sand in the oyster, and if you have the fighting spirit to keep up the pressure on the problems, you will suddenly and often unexpectedly make significant advances.<sup>396</sup>

This "fighting spirit" can be tied to willingly riding the wind of the Holy Spirit in preaching.<sup>397</sup> It is the Holy Spirit that imbues the preacher with the "spirit" to endure the "fight" — journey of highs, low, tension, and revelation — of the preaching preparation and proclamation. In addition, it is the Holy Spirit that guides the hand and voice of the preacher during the mystery of preaching.

"When a preacher opens the Bible and interprets the word of God, a mystery takes place, a miracle: the grace of God, who comes down from heaven into our midst and speaks to us, knocks on our door, asks questions, warns us, puts pressure on us, alarm us, threatens us, and makes us joyful and free and sure. When the Holy Scriptures are brought to life in a church, the Holy Spirit comes down from the eternal throne, into our hearts..."<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> John 11: 30 – 38, NASB.

<sup>396</sup> Jory, *Tips: Ideas for Actors*, 213.

<sup>397</sup> John 3: 5- 8, NASB.

<sup>398</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Douglas W. Stott, and Isabel Best. *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Volume 2*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 11.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit is often seen as being tied to artistic expression. Help is needed to harness the expression, imaginatively, when the preacher/artist is dedicated to truly staying in the mystery of the self-revelation of the Triune God. This is a seeming dichotomy that theologian Jeremy Begbie helps the preacher to reconcile. “As far as Christians are concerned, the reasons for wanting to loosen the ties between God’s Spirit and specific beliefs when engaging the arts are understandable: among them is the desire to do justice to God’s activity beyond the confines of the church, and to take seriously what many see as a close association of the arts with the broad category of ‘religious experience’.<sup>399</sup> The Holy Spirit is a unifier that strengthens the resilience of the preacher/artist.

In addition, there is also the inherent collaborative ethos and reality that is enhanced when the preacher embraces the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is also true of collaboration found in acting practice. It is also cultivated in acting practice, in the activity of a collective, that enhances sensory skills.<sup>400</sup> Jesus had this “fighting spirit”, and is perhaps a nurturer of this spirit as a creator, actor, and preacher. He willingly surrendered to the work of the Spirit.<sup>401</sup> This resilience feeds the preacher and the community through the preached message.

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<sup>399</sup> Jeremy Begbie, “The Holy Spirit at Work in the Arts: Learning from George Herbert,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, 66 no.1 (January 2012): 41 – 42.

<sup>400</sup> Suzuki and Rimer, *The Way of Acting*, 48-49. Note the discussion of the development of sensory awareness. “Relevant experience must be developed by the actors through their own self-consciousness of those changes...Human experience, then, requires development over an extended period of time...What then becomes most important is the way in which he deals with them. The strength of his art comes from the value he places on the skills developed in his own body.”

<sup>401</sup> Luke 22:42, NASB. This is especially revelatory testimony from the person of Jesus, as it demonstrates the tension between surrender and willingness.

## 6.6 Is Incarnation an Acting Role?

Every actor cannot play every role. An actor's "type" is based partially on their ability and training and partially on the inherent self that they bring to the role. The consideration relevant to this dissertation is not the overall life of Jesus, but rather the question of whether acting was/is a part of his homiletical method. Jesus is a leading man working in avant-garde theatre that borders on a kind of street theatre. His mood, mode, mission, and method are engagement.<sup>402</sup> He is not a mainstream artist, but rather he is a grassroots artist. This colors his acting style. "Engaged art does not require less craft than mainstream professional art; arguably it requires more. Trained artists are responsible for shaping collective expression when the participants lack not commitment and connection, but artistic means of expression."<sup>403</sup> The fulfillment of the Incarnate Word in Jesus Christ was a once in a lifetime role and reality. The mission of the incarnation is the crux and the motivation of this role, and it invades every aspect of how Jesus occupied this role.

Jesus revealed himself as proclaimer and proclamation before time began. Proclamation is a kind of representation of the incarnation role.

Before time itself was measured, the Voice was speaking. The Voice was and is God. This *celestial* Word remained ever present with the Creator; His speech shaped the entire cosmos. *Immersed in the practice of creating*, all things that exist were birthed in Him. His breath filled all things with a living, breathing light— A light that thrives in the depths of darkness, *blazes through murky bottoms*. It cannot and will not be quenched.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde: Theory and History of Literature Volume 4*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 55-82. Description of avant-garde ideals in art that lend towards Jesus as marrying an organic engagement style with a style that tears down barriers between onstage and offstage.

<sup>403</sup> Cohen-Cruz, *Engaging Performance: Theatre as Call and Response*. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 167.

<sup>404</sup> John 1 – 5, The Voice.

The incarnation of Jesus is a manifestation of God's engagement with humanity. Jesus is the living hermeneutic and the revelatory exegesis.<sup>405</sup> His incarnation is the continuation of the self-revelation of the Triune God.

If it is true that the word of God, which "of old spoke to our fathers by the prophets in many and various ways", has at last been distilled and simplified into the single Word of the Son (cf. Heb 1:2), and if he is the Word of God made flesh (Jn 1:14), then this Word, this Son must also be God's final interpretation. "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (exegesato, Jn 1:18).<sup>406</sup>

Therefore, incarnational preaching is a theological viewpoint. However, it is also a strategy for building a preaching practice that is holistic. A preacher is aware of his or her humanity and the strengths and limitations of such. Intentionally incarnational and relevant preaching and homiletics training must nurture values and attitudes that offer methods of engaging the reality of being human and the reality of preaching the Divine.

...orthodoxy insisted upon the two natures, human and divine, coexisting in the one historical Jesus Christ. But orthodoxy has never been able to give this idea any content. It remains a form of words without any assignable meaning. For to say, without explanation, that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square...It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the real point and value of the incarnational doctrine is not indicative but expressive, not to assert a metaphysical fact but to express a valuation and evoke an attitude.<sup>407</sup>

These values and attitudes have room to flourish in a preaching process and practice that includes ways, such as those found in actor training methodology, of engaging the entirety of the human self and the human experience.

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<sup>405</sup> Charlene Burns, *Divine Becoming: Rethinking Jesus and Incarnation*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 23 - 24. "The doctrine of incarnation is central to Christianity. It is an extension of the Jewish belief that the creator of the universe is personally involved in human history: God is so deeply concerned about creation that God enters into space-time at a particular point in history so as to reveal the depths of divine love. To downplay this aspect of the tradition is to lose a foundational concept."

<sup>406</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar. *Does Jesus Know Us - Do We Know Him?* trans. Graham Harrison. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 68.

<sup>407</sup> John Hick. *The Myth of God Incarnate*. (Norwich: Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd., 1977), 127.

Along with being rooted in bodied experience, incarnation is an incessant act.<sup>408</sup> This, incessant continuity, is a value and attitude that informs how humanity views the continuing work of incarnation. Intimacy is a keen motivator in the kind of relationship that incarnation catalyzes. The seeds of incarnational insistence bear the fruit of the possibility of participation in Jesus' preaching/acting style.<sup>409</sup> The Incarnation cannot be replicated but embodiment can be emulated in preachers. This emulation is not only a process of training but also of spiritual formation. Such is the nature of craftsmanship and artistry.

Ultimately it is the temporal dimension of experience that creates the very possibility for creative acts, therefore, becomes the ground of its emergent meaning and value. The physical of art, which is only the spatialized outcome of the process of art making, is then not the work of art. Instead, the work of art is the temporal undergoing – the acting and doing – which is ultimately an act of reconstruction: a participation with the world in the co-construction of the world.<sup>410</sup>

Renewal of the mind within temporal undergoing was a part of the transformation message of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Word. If present-day preachers are the inheritors of Jesus' preaching, then it is worth it to look at the entirety of his homiletical method. This homiletical method is found in the "message" of Jesus' life, not only in his preaching.<sup>411</sup> This includes the putting on of his actor preacher archetype as a way of putting on the mind of Christ.

In summary then, the Kingdom of Heaven, as seen and preached by Jesus, is a nondual consciousness which sees no separation between God and humans, or

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<sup>408</sup> Burns, *Divine Becoming: Rethinking Jesus and Incarnation*, 67 - 72. See the argument that Jesus' incarnation is perpetual in that he is participating in the "cognitive and affective lifeworlds of others."

<sup>409</sup> Ibid, 169 - 175. "Incarnation is itself a relational concept. And so, relationship becomes primary, and the humanity of Jesus crucial... The sense of self matures in correlation with the capacity to enter into the experience of others".

<sup>410</sup> Aaron Stoller, "Time and the Creative Act," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 52 no. (Winter 2016): 59.

<sup>411</sup> Graham Stanton. *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 7. We see a picture of the message of Jesus' life within the gospels. "Jesus' actions and teachings are inseparable: taken together they are 'message', not only in the setting of a teacher-pupil relationship but also in terms of Jesus' opponents and uncommitted enquirers. Jesus' words were not merely words of instruction, or even words of revelation, but proclamation of God's kingly rule. The gospel traditions not only tell what Jesus did and taught, but indicate, in various ways what sort of a person he was; their deeply 'personal' perspective marks them off from comparable Old Testament and rabbinic material."

between humans ourselves. To put on the mind of Christ, therefore, is to experience this nondual consciousness (awareness) for ourselves. And, once we do put on the mind of Christ, we, like Jesus, will see the Kingdom of Heaven all around us here and now. We see ourselves and everyone else, no matter who they are, as divine. And we will be living in the Kingdom of Heaven right here on Earth.<sup>412</sup>

Building relationship is an integral aspect of the role of incarnate word preaching. Acting for Jesus, and for others, is a way of building relationship through the shared story of human and divine experience.<sup>413</sup> The core of human vulnerability is shared and received between actor and audience. It is a way of knowing and being known. The aspects of acting methods shared in this thesis are pathways to relationship rather than barriers built of artifice or for mere entertainment.

And yet, if God concludes a covenant with men and perfects it in Jesus Christ, he must wish to be known by them. We have already spoken of this “knowledge of God”; it must now be perfected in our knowledge of Jesus. But if God cannot be grasped by the human mind, giving himself and yet withdrawing from any attempt to clutch at him, then this is something which must be evident in the existence of the interpreter.<sup>414</sup>

Jesus the actor is Jesus the interpreter. His actor self is seeking to know and be known. Acting is a process of creating this intimacy for the purpose of breaking through the barriers.<sup>415</sup> Acting, in the way that it has been defined here, does this for him. He is a contemplative preacher/artist. “It is difficult therefore for the Prudent Man and the artist to understand one another. The contemplative and the artist on the other hand, both perfected by an intellectual

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<sup>412</sup> Jim Marion. and Ken Wilber. *Putting on the Mind of Christ*. (Newburyport: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2011), 12.

<sup>413</sup> Alan Read, *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 95. A discourse that identifies theatre as a resource that preaches to life and “reminds them who they are and what is worth living and changing in their lives every day.”

<sup>414</sup> Balthasar, *Does Jesus Know Us*, 56.

<sup>415</sup> Thiessen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 235. “Nevertheless, we know his person. For who someone is becomes evident not only in the sequence of different stages of life but to an equal degree in inter-personal relations. We are what we are in our relationships. And the sources about Jesus show a whole mass of these; some of the most certain pieces of information about Jesus involve his relationships. These give us relatively precise profile of his person – though only for a short section of his life, the time of his public activity.”

habit binding them to the transcendental order, are in a position to sympathise.”<sup>416</sup> This contemplation is vital element of the process of discerning relationship between humanity and divinity. Preachers who seek to follow the example of the original preacher, Jesus, can reflect, act, and reflect on the layers of embodied and heightened engagement that Jesus the preacher/artist offers.

### *6.7 Becoming Preacher/Artists*

The process of enculturating an actor's perspective as a preacher is not about manipulating a certain product in the pulpit. Rather, it is a process of being formed and disciplined through the example of Jesus the preacher/artist. “It is generally accepted that, however emotionally intense artistic creation may be, the artist also operates through conventionalized means that must be mastered through long study and employed with great precision. Even romantic views of the artist, which stress emotional expression, do not limit themselves to emotion alone.”<sup>417</sup> This work calls for the courage and know-how to create space without having to own that space exclusively. This work calls for vulnerability, risk, and sacrifice in the face of the mystery of incarnational storytelling. This is the work of meeting people in their spaces of lack, loss, love, and liberty, with the ability to preach truth outside the restrictions of temporality. The critical distance necessary in this work is paired with the kind of empathy that embodies the story of humanity in relationship with divinity. This is the receptivity framework of the preacher/artist, as learning at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth.

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<sup>416</sup> Jacques Maritain. *Art and Scholasticism*. trans. Joseph Evans (New York: Scribner, 1962), 78.

<sup>417</sup> Hornby, *The End of Acting*, 47.

## 6.8 Conclusion

At the conclusion of a play, it is useful to return to the beginning, following the example of Puck at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*<sup>418</sup>. What is the purpose of Christian preaching? Why does it matter that a preacher reflects upon Jesus' preacher/artist method? Part of the answer is found in the knowledge of how expansive Jesus' preaching was and is for the Church. In addition, his homiletical style is a template for historically informed and holistic preaching. The preaching of Jesus shows preachers the way to implement a methodology for realizing incarnational, embodied preaching. Another part of the answer, pointing reflectively at Jesus, will be valuable in preaching Jesus. "But the artist's creation is not the end of the process, as it is often thought to be. The process continues as members of the community experience the release, the inspiration that allows them to en flesh the message and begin activating the change in their own terrains".<sup>419</sup> Actors create space and develop character as a means of embodying the story of the message of the play. This is akin to the work that preachers do as they seek to embody the message of the mission within incarnational preaching.

Looking at what Jesus brought to the table as a preacher enhances homiletical theory and praxis for the sake of embodied proclamation. There are elements of actor theory found within the homiletical method of Jesus of Nazareth. These elements allow for the incarnate word, ongoing and innate, to be accessible and transferable as the message is proclaimed.

Preachers can engage this incarnational preacher methodology by utilizing an interdisciplinary approach in their preaching practice. The use of performing artist actor training

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<sup>418</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, eds. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine, (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2016), 62. Act V Scene 1. "If we shadows have offended, Think but this, and all is mended, That you have but slumber'd here, While these visions did appear. And this weak and idle theme, No more yielding but a dream, Gentles, do not reprehend: if you pardon, we will mend: And, as I am an honest Puck, If we have unearned luck Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue, We will make amends ere long; Else the Puck a liar call; So, good night unto you all. Give me your hands, if we be friends, And Robin shall restore amends."

<sup>419</sup> Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1996), 91.

theories and methods serves to broaden the preacher's ability to embody the mission and the message of restoration that is a continuation of the call of Jesus. Jesus is a kind of accidental actor, in that he seems to come to the act naturally without artifice. He reveals a redeemed definition of performing that includes meeting the heightened nature of incarnate word with a heightened and embodied "performance" of self and belief. It is fortuitous that preachers can extrapolate from his process and develop methodologies to attain through an integrated practice what, perhaps, came inherently to Jesus due to his nature as an outpouring and revelation of the Creator God. This intentional and integrated pursuit leads to the process of becoming one who is a preacher/artist. This practical ministry and artistry are grounded in the homiletical method of Jesus of Nazareth, who preached from his holistic making — mind, body, and spirit. Thus, a platform of engagement is formed, and this platform presents a solid foundation upon which one can build a theology of embodied and embedded homiletics.

This chapter of the thesis has stated that the preaching method of Jesus can be viewed through a lens that highlights the ability to embody not only the message of the moment but also the story of God's drama of creation, creating, and continuing creativity. Connections were made to acting methods, the definition of an actor, and six acting techniques that can be connected to the preaching of Jesus. The inherent connection between acting and incarnation was also discussed. The reality that this is a unique way to speak about the preaching ministry of Jesus was acknowledged. Although on the surface the argument of Jesus as preacher/artist may seem controversial or scandalous, the conversation is one that is grounded in the marriage between sound critical acting and homiletical theory.

In the next chapter, the building blocks of the process and purpose of preaching, which have been presented thus far, will be expanded upon to provide a more specific assessment of the

practical application of actor training techniques within homiletical training. This is not a sterile meeting of the two disciplines, but rather an immersed integration of the benefits of each. A new and innovative space for the foundation and formation of the preacher/artist and his or her preaching practice is needed.

## Chapter 7: Actor Training Methods: Embodiment Techniques for Preachers

### 7.1. Introduction

The body of an actor must absorb psychological qualities, must be filled, and permeated with them, so that they will convert it gradually into a sensitive membrane, a kind of receiver and conveyor of the subtlest images, feelings, emotions and will impulses.<sup>420</sup>

The filling and permeating process for preacher/artist needs a methodology in order to be fully realized. Arts theologian Jeremy Begbie asks the question that this thesis is presenting to the homiletical landscape, in terms of a practice of preaching that allows for incarnational, embodied preaching to come alive. “How might the arts bear their own kind of witness to divine transcendence?”<sup>421</sup> This question focuses on the connection between theology, imagination, and the arts. Theology is grounded in thought, tradition, and experience. Each of these elements are enhanced by the imagination that enriches lived theology and faith. The arts allow for the grounding and elevation to combine, resisting a debate about which is better or “more faithful”. The three aspects — theology, imagination, and the arts— are integrated. They inform and impact the human experience of each other. Without the arts, theology and imagination lack a worthy arena to question and grow outside the confines of distorted bounds of reason or superficiality. “The essential is to know how to see...But this...This calls for deep study, Learning how to unlearn...I try to get rid of what I learned, I try to forget the way I was taught to remember, And to scrape off the paint they used to cover my senses”.<sup>422</sup> At this point, this thesis begins to explicitly illustrate how actor training methods can enhance a preacher/artist capacity

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<sup>420</sup> Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor*. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2.

<sup>421</sup> Jeremy Begbie, *Redeeming Transcendence in the Arts: Bearing Witness to the Triune God*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 127. Begbie is pushing for a deeper dive into how art reflects the transcendence of the Triune God. This study is arguing for an even deeper and wider dive into how the practice of artist reflects discipleship in the light of transcendence and yet grounded in the earth-bound.

<sup>422</sup> Ruben Alves. “The Essential.” in *Transparencies of Eternity*. (Miami: Convivium, 2010), 28.

to — informed by history and holistic revelation processing — participate in fully-realized incarnational, embodied preaching.

The role of the preacher, the practice and process of preaching, includes experiencing all aspects of the homiletical process with the entirety of one's being. Borrowing from Howard Gardner's theory of eight intelligences, a pedagogy of preaching practice that is all-inclusive will engage the myriad ways that preachers are created and the ways in which they learn and process.<sup>423</sup> The intelligences of each preacher are enhanced by a focus on the Linguistic, Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist aspects of Gardner's theory. Therefore, the actor training methodologies identified as resources for the preacher/artist engage the preacher's capacity within linguist usage, visualizing with the mind's eye, controlling one's body, holistically connecting with others, holistically connecting with the self, and a holistic understand of the human creature engaging with God's creation as a way of knowing God.<sup>424</sup>

Rather than embrace a methodology that seeks to transcend the bodied experience, as in negating the body as a source of knowing and knowledge within the process of homiletical revelation<sup>425</sup>, this thesis argues for a holistic homiletic practice. This formational practice invites an integrated approach to transcendence, inspiration, and revelation that makes room for receiving supernatural vision amid negotiating the barriers of natural human limitation. Thus,

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<sup>423</sup> Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice*. (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 8 - 21. Gardner outlines the eight intelligences which include: Linguistic, Logical – Mathematical, Spatial, Bodily – Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid, 53 – 88. Gardner illustrates how the intelligences can be integrated into the educational environment.

<sup>425</sup> James McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology Volume 1, Revised*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 97. Theologian James W. McClendon seeks to clear the path of some of this distorted and inherited theology concerning the body. “Perhaps modern alienation from biblical ways of thought has been inevitable, given the changed world in which we live. For the Bible does not so much emphasize embodied selfhood as assume it, and the assumption itself is no longer self-evident. What is still clear in Scripture from beginning to end, though, is that believers “live and move and have our being” (cf. Acts 17:28) in ongoing relation to God. God creates, God sustains, God redeems, God renews, God judges; he is the absolute context, the everlasting environment (Ps. 139) of life. So perhaps our latter-day difficulty can be described this way: we simply do not believe the Scriptures, do not believe that God will have to do with things.”

the goal is to view the body as an active partner in the work of preaching in the process and in the pulpit. The preacher/artist is seeking to find and make meaning of the revealed word from the Triune God and must employ all available tools in authentically reaching towards this goal.

Aesthetic artistry can be an entry into holistic preaching practice.

Further, the creativity and imagination of the aesthetic arts are called forth more by the deep values and ethos of particular pedagogical environments than by specific techniques to be learned or imitated. Accordingly, while artistic techniques are teachable, creativity, imagination and personal world-engagement involve deep communal structures and values. Further, technique, style, and other elements of aesthetic art can come together in preaching.<sup>426</sup>

The Suzuki Actor Training Method is an actor training resource that may offer access to a holistic practice of preaching for preacher/artists that has already been discussed in this study.

The training method could be said to speak to the spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. What follows in this chapter is a description of several additional actor training techniques that engage the body as a resource and aid in the progression of embodied preaching. Some of these techniques have already been mentioned within this overall thesis, as the hypothesis of the preacher/artist has been described. The benefit for preacher/artists to utilize these techniques will be discussed. How might participation in these methodologies enhance the process of revelation reception and delivery for the message proclaimers and the message receivers?

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<sup>426</sup> Edward Farley, "Can Preaching Be Taught?," *Theology Today*. 62 no. 2 (July 2005): 176.

## 7.2 Discipleship: Intentional Incarnational, Embodied Practice

To be effective messengers of hope we must trust our inner voice, our intuition that speaks into the vast wastelands of our time. In this way we can train our imagination to see beyond tribal norms so we can take in the vista of the wider pastures of culture. Our creative intuition, fused with the work of the Spirit of God, can become the deepest seat of knowledge, from which our making can flow.<sup>427</sup>

It should be noted that discipleship, in that world of this thesis, is an extension of craftsmanship.<sup>428</sup> The above quote from arts theologian Makoto Fujimura provides an access point within the conversation about the discipleship aspect of preacher/artist training, by outlining the connection between being messengers of hope, intuition, and making. This is the craftsmanship found in an artist's "making" process.<sup>429</sup> In a partial response to the query of how participation in actor training methodologies might enhance the process and practice of preaching, this discussion envisions a picture of discipleship that includes an image of the

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<sup>427</sup> Fujimura, *Art and Faith*, 15. Mako continues this argument by expanding an understanding of the contribution of the artist. "I often describe artists as "border-stalkers" in our cultural ecosystem. They cross tribal norms to see the whole, to navigate in between the walls erected to protect the tribes. Therefore, part of experiencing the presence of God in our lives is appreciating the importance of our creative intuition and trusting that the Spirit is already at work there, often working in between established zones of culture." The power of the artist archetype is made clear and the usefulness for the preacher is also defined. It is the ability and capacity to "see beyond borders" that is needed for embodied, incarnate word.

<sup>428</sup> Pauline Allen, *Let Us Die That We May Live!: Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria c.350-c.450 AD*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 68-69. Early Church father, St. Basil the Great, provides a comprehensive, yet concise, image of the connection between the lived faith life of discipleship and artistic crafting. He also makes a connection to sacrifice within this process. "Come then, let us bring [the martyrs] in our midst by remembering them, let us present to those who are here the common benefit deriving from them (κοινήν τὴν ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὠφέλειαν), demonstrating to everyone, as if it were in writing (ἐν γραφῇ), the acts of the men's prowess. When often both historians (λογογράφοι) and painters (ζωγράφοι) express manly deeds of war, the one embellishing (διακοσμοῦντες) them with words, the other engraving them onto tablets, they both arouse many others to bravery. The factors which the historical account (ὁ λόγος τῆς ἱστορίας) presents by being listened to, the painting (γραφικὴ) silently portrays by imitation (διὰ μιμήσεως). In this very way let us too remind those present of the men's virtue, and as it were by bringing their deeds to their gaze, let us move their conduct towards the imitation (τὴν μίμησιν) of those who are more noble and appropriate. I mean that this is the encomium (ἑπαιτήριον) of the martyrs: the exhortation of the congregation to virtue (πρὸς ἀρετὴν). For sermons about the saints should not be constrained by the rules of encomia (καταδέχονται νόμοις ἐγκωμίων δουλεύειν)."

<sup>429</sup> Morwenna Ludlow, *Art, Craft, and Theology in Fourth-Century Christian Authors*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 2. "Throughout this passage, Basil exploits the breadth of the Greek verb γράφω, which literally means to make a visible mark, to scratch, or to inscribe. He urges himself to present to his audience something which is as clear and vivid as the pictures of painters (ζωγράφοι, or 'life-inscribers') or the written words of historians (λογογράφοι, or 'word-inscribers'), comparing his spoken words to γραφή—that is, a written or a drawn line."

preacher/artist engaging, consistently, in mind, body, spirit engagement that mirrors the immersive learning experience of the disciples who walked with Jesus of Nazareth. This means embracing the spectrum of seeking and knowing. Acting techniques are guides in the process, rather than being leads in the process. The discipleship of a preaching practice is focused on the lived faith and belief of the practitioners of preaching.

Throughout this thesis, the argument being presented centers around the need for preachers to participate in embodiment methodology as a vital aspect of their preaching process and proclamation moment. This participation can be described as a discipleship methodology, akin to a spiritual practice. When speaking of the discipleship of preacher/artists there is some need for clarification, to distinguish from the multiple definitions and views of discipleship present within Christian conversations on the theory and practice of faith. This thesis defines a disciple as one who is an active participant in a learning process that engages multiple aspects of mind, body, and spirit awareness and revelation reception.<sup>430</sup> David Brown identifies discipleship as “imitation and relationship” within community.<sup>431</sup> One may be a disciple of a teacher, a tenet, or a thematic trajectory. For the purposes of this discussion, it is necessary to highlight the experiential learning aspect, in that the preacher/artist must be engaged in learning activities that engage the cognitive as well as behavioral opportunities to absorb the teachings. This is a formational discipleship process.

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<sup>430</sup> James Strong et al. *Strong Exhaustive Dictionary, Abbott-Smith's Manual Greek Lexicon of the NT, Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon and Thayer Greek Lexicon combined: Volume 2 with 3101-5632*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2021), 91. “μαθητής, μαθητοῦ, ὁ (μανθάνω), a learner, pupil, disciple: universally, opposed to διδάσκαλος, Mt 10:24 Lu 6:40; τίς, one who follows one's teaching”.

<sup>431</sup> David Brown. *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2. Throughout his book, Brown expands this definition to include the importance of imagination within the reality of discipleship. It is this combination of imitation, relationship, and imagination that necessitates a bodied practice. It is also important to note that imitation is not the same as inauthentic artifice, but rather it's a beginning point for the disciples as he or she seeks to learn holistically.

Although it is not proposed that this theology be absolute or exclusive, one can borrow from a portion of the physicalist theology viewpoint. This physicalist lens is merely an aid in helping to create a space of discipleship that highlights the need for an active and vulnerable learning process for the preacher/artist.

“My central thesis is, first, that we are our bodies – there is no additional metaphysical element such as a mind or soul or spirit. But, second, this “physicalist” position need not deny that we are intelligent, moral, and spiritual. We are, at our best, complex physical organisms, imbued with the legacy of thousands of years of culture, and, most importantly, blown by the Breath of God’s Spirit; we are Spirited bodies.”<sup>432</sup>

Philosopher Nancy Murphy’s words here speak to an integration of the self as a “complex physical organism” impacted by a complex individual and communal contextualization. How might a preacher artist navigate these complexities, while hoping for and listening for the word from the Lord? An answer to this question is found in the formation and implementation of homiletics pedagogy within a discipleship practice framework.

The complex landscape of receiving and imparting the revealed Triune God, as is the role of the preacher, necessitates a complex pedagogical approach in the homiletics classroom, complex discipleship, so to speak. It is precisely this kind of questing and questioning that actor training methodologies can help homileticians to engage with a sense of specificity as well as sincerity. Actor training methods and techniques can be an essential aspect of the makeup of this practiced discipleship of preaching, by engaging the preacher/artist in mentally, physically, and spiritually challenging exercises that aid the revelation process.

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<sup>432</sup> Nancy Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies? (Current Issues in Theology)*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9.

### *7.3 Viewpoints Actor Training: Creating Space for Incarnation and Embodiment*

Actor training techniques can serve preachers and preaching. These techniques are entry points into embodied, incarnate, communal preaching practice with a holistic formational emphasis. In the following sections, several acting techniques will be introduced. The import of these techniques, for the process of preacher/artists and their practice, is the focal point of the discourse. The techniques are grounded in a physical approach, although they are not exclusively concerned with a physical response. The physical is the doorway to other aspects of awareness and reflection. How might each technique contribute to the embodied practice of preacher/artists, thus allowing for holistic reception, integration, and pulpit conveyance of the incarnate word from God? In addition, are there areas of practicing the techniques that speak to complexities present when one is parsing the reality of the nature of the human condition, and how does this inform the preacher's process? Viewpoints is the first technique examined. It should be noted that the technique is referred to as simply "viewpoints" in this thesis, as this is the way that the technique is identified within the performing arts arena. This technique engages the spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences.

According to world-renowned practitioner and instructor Anne Bogart, Viewpoints is "an open process rather than a closed methodology".<sup>433</sup> This is exactly the type of approach that enhances a theology and practice of preaching that intentionally works to integrate the mystery and faithfulness of divine inspiration, impartation, and proclamation. It is an approach that begins with a curiosity that supports the benevolent love and communication of the Triune God.

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<sup>433</sup> Bogart and Landau. *The Viewpoints Book*, 84.

Viewpoints is comprised of physical and vocal exercises that prioritize observation over emotion and metaphor over naturalistic storytelling.<sup>434</sup> These exercises shape the “view” and “viewing” capacity of the actor, as well as the formation of the internal and external space in which the actor is creating for the character to come alive. In a class session, participants work through the exercises with the goal of observing and then interpreting through basic movement and vocalization. This observation is of the self but also of the group. The actor builds upon these observations — incorporating the physical and vocal aspects — as the character forms. In the moment, the base “text” is the exercise.

The benefits for actors can be categorized as a three-part, interconnected foundation. First, working in a group helps to facilitate a stronger relationship with others in pursuit of a shared purpose. It is also a fertile and welcoming environment for experiencing unexpected inspiration because there is an inherent hope of “revelation”. The actor takes these tools with him or herself, not only as an actor but as an observer of the world. “Once your eyes are open to it, you see Viewpoints everywhere. Like a flock of birds in the sky, or the New York traffic organizing itself to run smoothly, or people on the subway responding to each other. How people hold themselves in the world has become fascinating to me.”<sup>435</sup> The actor sees the movement of creation — natural and human-made — as speaking to the human experience and revealing the human experience. This is all applied to the character work. Secondly, there is no “right” or

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<sup>434</sup> Tatum Hunter, “Understanding Viewpoints: Using Observation and Movement to Make Bold Acting Choices,” *Dramatics*, viewed 13 May 2021, <https://dramatics.org/understanding-viewpoints>. “Physical Viewpoints - Spatial Relationship: The distance between things (objects, bodies, etc.) onstage. Kinesthetic Response: How performers respond to movement from other people, objects, or design elements. Shape: The outline of a body in space. Gesture: A behavioral or expressive shape that has a beginning, middle, and end. Repetition: When performers recreate something they have done or seen. Architecture: A performer’s physical environment. Tempo: How fast or slow something happens onstage. Duration: How long a movement lasts. Topography: The onstage pattern or design a movement creates. Vocal Viewpoints - Pitch: The highness or lowness of a sound. Dynamic: The loudness or softness of a sound. Acceleration/Deceleration: Speeding up or slowing down a sound. Silence: The absence of sound. Timbre: The texture or quality of a sound, distinct from its volume or pitch.”

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

“wrong” choice, as the goal is to experiment for the experiment's sake, in the moment. “One of the goals of Viewpoints is to use accidents. This means that no matter what choice an actor makes, the ensemble should affirm that choice and incorporate it. For Viewpoints practitioners, there is no right or wrong. This belief opens an actor’s range of choices, so performances become more dynamic.”<sup>436</sup> The full interpretation and application points come later, therefore more time can be spent in the mode of reception before rushing to interpretation or application. Lastly, the actors employ the practical measure of literally getting on their feet. “Movement is the key to finding interesting choices. A lot of people don’t like to use their bodies for expression. It’s a very vulnerable thing. But once they get into the work, they realize how useful it is to get up and start trying things.”<sup>437</sup> Being in the body and utilizing the body’s sensibility as a tool of interpretation is vital as the ultimate manifestation is “on its feet” on the stage.

These benefits for an actor’s process can also be applied to the preacher/artist process. Although working in a group is not normally part of an individual preacher’s exegetical process, is there not import to be minded from a group experience? Preachers have specific moments of inspiration, but the overall work of incarnate word preaching is unification within the Church. A secure support system is one formational benefit within this unification process.<sup>438</sup>

It is also useful to look at the role of community in faith life.<sup>439</sup> The points made concerning surrendering control while engaging in Viewpoints exercises, are also applicable to

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid. Hunter goes on to say, “...Viewpoints students are often surprised by what occurs when they stop trying to make the “right” choice and start trusting the ensemble. Coincidences happen onstage without you even knowing how. When actors give over to that, they don’t have to be in control all the time.”

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Jeroen Janssen, Femke Kirschner, Gijsbert Erkens, Paul A. Kirschner, and Fred Paas. “Making the Black Box of Collaborative Learning Transparent: Combining Process-Oriented and Cognitive Load Approaches”. *Educational Psychology Review*. 22 (2010): 142.

<sup>439</sup> Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 24. “The word community has many connotations, some positive, some negative. Community can make us think of a safe togetherness, shared meals, common goals, and joyful celebrations. It also can call forth images of sectarian exclusivity, in-group language, self-satisfied isolation, and romantic naiveté. However, community is first of all a

preacher/artists. Working within a mindset that helps the preacher to resist rushing to “right” or “wrong” homiletical choices or constrictive absolute interpretations, enhances the possibility that the preacher is continually moving within the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the specificity of the contextualized message. The hope is that this methodology also invites a frankness to the process for preacher/artists. This would be an openness to the mystery of divine communication with humanity, the work of the Holy Spirit in the complexity of human communication and formation, and an overall willingness to participate in a transformable and accessible lived and lively hermeneutic.<sup>440</sup> This is a practical way to enact walking with questions that are an unavoidable part of faith life.<sup>441</sup> “Viewpoints is more than an artistic method; it’s a way of seeing the world. It’s fun, it’s joyful, and it’s kind of mind-blowing when you realize you can’t do anything wrong. Real Viewpoints practice is so delightful, and the answers exist in the other. That’s a really good thing to practice in this world.”<sup>442</sup>

In addition, there is a dynamism that is introduced when one is on his or her feet, and this dynamism reflects the dynamism that emanates from the creativity of God. The “in the body-ness” of a physical and vocal practice takes one out of an exclusively cognitive processing reality

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quality of the heart. It grows from the spiritual knowledge that we are alive not for ourselves but for one another. Community is the fruit of our capacity to make the interests of others more important than our own (see Philippians 2:4).”

<sup>440</sup> Traber, 209. “Communication, apart from sense perception, requires that we ‘assimilate’, and make our own message from that received from another person. Jean-Louis Barrault, the French actor and director, described the process of finding ‘meaning’ as follows: “Knowing something means having forgotten it and having found it again, inside. It is a ‘digested’ knowledge. By study we get to the core of a thing, we know it, then we forget it; at last, we find it again inside ourselves. From that moment on, we know the thing.”...A communicative mind is one which has reflective consciousness. Such a mind spans time and space and therefore recognizes the universality which is immanent in a particular sense perception.”

<sup>441</sup> Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, 12. “I want to beg you as much as I can . . . to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves. . . . Do not now seek answers which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. . . . Take whatever comes with great trust, and if only it comes out of your will, out of some need of your innermost being, take it upon yourself and hate nothing”

<sup>442</sup> Hunter, 2021.

and into an inclusive full bodied and holistic processing reality. This is the kind of creative and formational space that is an essential habitat for preacher/artists.

“Teaching and practicing Viewpoints with your company helps you observe and articulate the individual Viewpoints around you. By sharing, you are practicing. Be sure to practice what you preach. If you say that being open is important, then be open. If you say that no one needs to feel the pressure to come up with stuff alone, then take that pressure off yourself. If you say it is important to use what you are given rather than what you want, then use what you are given. Work hard in every day of rehearsal to exemplify the philosophic goals of Viewpoints: listen, pay attention, be open, change, respond, surprise yourself, use accidents, work with fearlessness and abandon and an open heart.”<sup>443</sup>

Listen, pay attention, be open, change, respond, surprise yourself, use accidents, work with fearlessness and abandon and an open heart — are these not qualities found in the ethos of preaching practice as a model of the message itself? Viewpoints aids practitioners in sensing and creating space in grounded, yet often unexpected, ways. This applies to preacher/artists for the sake of their own processes, as well as in the preparation of the sermons.

Within this brief overview of the Viewpoints technique and how it functions as a training method, there is an area of critique that must be discussed. Viewpoints being an open process rather than a closed methodology works effectively in the realm of performing artist training. For preacher/artists, there needs to be an additional aspect of tangible process management, so that the preacher can translate what is gained during Viewpoints training into an accessible aspect of the sermon message. Actors do not need to explicitly translate their Viewpoints process, as it is for their performance and character development. It is an internal process for actors, which manifests in implicit ways during a performance. However, preachers must share, in a concise and accessible way, what the training has offered to the message. It is an internal process that must find rooting in an external manifestation for preachers. Viewpoints must serve

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<sup>443</sup> Bogart and Landau, *The Viewpoints Book*, 203 - 204.

the sermon. For the preacher/artist, perhaps this means making explicit connections to the sermon text or the contextualization of the congregation. This specificity will aid in the clarity of the process for the preacher, as well as highlighting the capacity for the intangible to become an accessible revelation for humanity in engagement with Divinity.

#### 7.4 *The Alexander Technique: Clearing the Way for Incarnation and Embodiment*

The interdisciplinary approach of integrating performing artist training into the pedagogy model of a homiletics classroom would benefit from the inclusion of the Alexander Technique of body awareness. This technique is utilized by actors as a pathway to embodiment through increased capacity to engage with all dynamics of the body as an instrument of creativity and craftsmanship. A definition describes the technique as “a means for changing stereotyped response patterns by the inhibitions of certain postural sets” and “a method for expanding consciousness to take in inhibition as well as excitation (i.e., ‘not doing’ as well as ‘doing’) and thus obtaining a better integration of the reflex and voluntary elements in a response pattern.”<sup>444</sup> Although the goal is to correct, it is done through an invitation to awareness. It is a gentle and grace-filled holistic process of integration work that can help preachers embrace authenticity and the ability to carry a message within the available and appointed vessel. The practitioner learns the power of choice within the body as well as in the mind and spirit. This technique, with its focus on connection, is a good fit within a spiritual and applied practice of incarnational, embodied peaching in a communal setting.

The Alexander Technique is a method of embodiment awareness originally developed by actor F. M. Alexander. The technique engages the linguistic, bodily–kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences. This technique is difficult to define in many ways. It is easy to find a myriad of definitions for the practice, but they are all equally adept at tangibly describing

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<sup>444</sup> Frank Pierce Jones. “Method for Changing Stereotyped Response Patterns by the Inhibition of Certain Postural Sets,” *Psychological Review*, 72 no. 3 (1965): 212 - 213. F. M. Alexander was striving to achieve freedom of choice in movement through the release of inhibitions named as “stereotyped response patterns”. “The principle of inhibition, as it has been developed here, offers a new approach to the problem of behavioral change. In the close connection between inhibition and postural tonus is a mechanism which not only reveals the inner pattern of a stereotyped response but brings it under conscious control. In so doing, it greatly enlarges the area of behavior where free choice can operate”.

ways that are seeming intangible because they are meant to be understood by experience.<sup>445</sup>

However, Kyra Miller, a practitioner and teacher of the technique aids in a theoretical understanding. “The Alexander Technique is a method of understanding and developing one's own movement patterns, and by declension, one's whole self. The focus is on becoming attuned to one's entire "psycho-physical" functioning, which F.M. Alexander referred to as a person's "use."”<sup>446</sup>

During an Alexander session, practitioners enact activities that are pertinent to the goal of the work for the individual.<sup>447</sup> While doing these activities, attention is paid to coordination with the inherent and efficient nature of the individual anatomy as the priority. Creativity, spontaneity, and adaptability<sup>448</sup> are the markers of the hoped-for ethos, for the participants to become aware and move toward holistic integration using the physical being as a compass.<sup>449</sup>

With all of this in mind, what might an Alexander Technique session with a preacher/artist look like in a preaching practice? Certainly, there are some possible benefits for the efficient delivery of a sermon. These benefits include an ease in producing physical

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<sup>445</sup> Kyra Miller, 2020. Playwright Robertson Davies shares his experience, saying, “I learned that not everything which is clearly understood may be clearly expressed — not, that is to say, in words. I have had several Alexander teachers and I have never had one yet who could explain the work to me adequately...and I doubt if any two people feel it quite alike because that which is perceived is perceived in the mode of the perceiver....”

<sup>446</sup> Ibid, 2020. Miller goes on to say, “This can also include habits of mind and emotion as well, although we begin by looking at the relationship between the skull and the spine. Studying the Alexander Technique can result in greater presence, breath capacity and vocal function; diminished chronic pain, improved coordination & balance, a better relationship to gravity, increased proprioception & spatial awareness; and a finely tuned sense of the learning process in any human endeavor.”

<sup>447</sup> The technique has been applied in arenas outside of the performing arts, holistic health maintenance and pain management. See works by Brennan Richard, Jean M. Fischer, Michael Leeson, Catherine Sherrington, Serigne Lo, Robin Auld, Lisa Keay, J.P. Woodman, and N.R. Moore.

<sup>448</sup> Catherine Madden, *Integrative Alexander Technique Practice for Performing Artists: Onstage Synergy*. (Bristol: Intellect Books, Ltd., 2017), 51.

<sup>449</sup> Miller, 2020. “Areas of specialization include (but are not limited to): helping actors find greater expression and freedom in their work, navigating the physical effects of the crises of performance, character work and integrating direction, coaching auditions of any kind, acting coaching specifically for singers, working with non-actors to find greater ease, strength, balance and amplitude in their general daily experience, addressing somatic patterns in quotidian life (e.g. sitting or standing at a desk) to prevent work-related injuries, teaching Pilates-based movement to dancers (and civilians) using the Alexander Technique as a set of first principles.”

dynamics of the message, as well as managing the inner life of the preacher as he or she negotiates the proclamation process. These advantages will also benefit the receivers of the message. More holistically, though, there are deeper benefits for the person of the preacher and the life of the message. Finding greater expression and freedom in the work is akin to throwing nets into the deep, unaware, and perhaps even doubtful, that anything of value is present to be caught.<sup>450</sup> The Alexander Technique is a net, helping preachers to cast out into the depths of self and context. The abundance of fish caught, representing revealed knowing and knowledge, and the tearing of the very resource used to catch the holistic nourishment and provision, signifies the reality that the Triune God can and does use whatever is necessary to continue incarnate revelation of his own Self to creation. In addition, the abundant harvest of this work is gathered and shared by all, rather than being limited to merely personal provision. The witness of the act for the community is just as transformative as the experience of the act for the individual.

In utilizing the Alexander Technique within a preaching practice for preacher/artists, there is again the question of translatability and accessibility for the message. There is a danger that preachers, although personally impacted by the work, may not make the move from personal freedom to communal freedom while process the revelations experienced within the Alexander work. Preachers must seek to make the leap from an individualized viewpoint of the impact of

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<sup>450</sup> Luke 5: 1 – 11, NASB. “Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little distance from the land. And He sat down and continued teaching the crowds from the boat. Now when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon responded and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.” And when they had done this, they caught a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to tear; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, to the point that they were sinking. But when Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and likewise also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear; from now on you will be catching people.” When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

the human condition upon the body and holistic personhood and a communal realization that it is engagement with the Divine that is the ultimate answer within a Christian process of integration. The technique is not the answer, but rather a lamp post on the journey of walking with the questions of a lived faith, discipleship, and pathway to integrated faith life. Therefore, preachers must see themselves as a part of a whole even as they participate as an individual while practicing the technique. They must consistently and intentionally ask, “What does this personal revelation speak to the community. What does this body speak to the Body of Christ?” This is a part of the integration of community and communion-mindedness within the Christian faith.<sup>451</sup> As part of the preacher/artist process, this work must be explicitly expressed, perhaps manifesting as a written reflection after each session.

The Alexander Technique is a method that utilizes inherent strengths within the physical body and the body’s capacity to engage the experiences presented in life without distortion or dysfunction as the perceived reality. This thesis proposes that this technique will aid preachers in receiving a redeemed experience of and in the body. In addition, the hope is that practicing this technique will aid in the processing and carrying of the incarnate word that is inspired by God.

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<sup>451</sup> There are multiple examples of a theology of the Body of Christ being an interconnected manifestation of the incarnate Christ within Pauline theology. See passages in Romans 7 and 12; I Corinthians 10 and 12; Ephesians 3 and 4; and Colossians 3.

### 7.5 Linklater Voice: Proclaiming with an Incarnational, Fully Embodied Voice

Linklater Voice is the technique developed by performing artist Kristin Linklater. It is a method of engaging the linguistic, intrapersonal, and bodily–kinesthetic intelligences. It is a vocal instrument method that pursues the natural voice of the speaker.

“Linklater Voice takes you through a series of step-by-step practical exercises that include relaxation, awareness of breathing, the experience of voice vibrating in the body, how to open the throat, the development of resonance and range, and the articulating activity of lips and tongue. As you awaken your voice consciousness you will discover the expressive potential of the human voice and release your own eloquence.”<sup>452</sup>

This is the work of possibility, with the voice as an entryway to holistic engagement with text and message for the preacher. Connection is the central theme for Linklater work. The person’s “body, heart, and creative imagination”<sup>453</sup> are connected in self and then connected to the text.

There is increasingly more research being done on the capacity of the sensing capabilities of a person aiding the person in engaging information<sup>454</sup> or, for the purposes of this thesis, revelation.

Therefore, the sensing spark can lead the way for the fire of inspiration and revelation. Thus, preacher/artist must have an environment to explore this pathway in a practical and practiced manner, and Linklater Voice work is a unifying element of this environment.

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<sup>452</sup> Kristen Linklater, *About Linklater Voice*. Viewed 17 May 2021, <https://www.linklatervoice.com/linklater-voice/about-linklater-voice>. Linklater goes on to share that people come to this work for professional, personal, psychological, and political reasons. “At the Kristin Linklater Voice Centre, you can discover the inherent power of vocal communication and use it creatively to achieve your goals... Can you speak honestly when you want to? Linklater Voice training will help you answer these questions and solve the root problems in your personal communications. Perhaps it is time to be seen and to be heard with the help of the Linklater Voice Method... Is your voice caught in old, protective tones of justification, well-developed prevarication, false strength, pretended weakness, unreal brightness, breathy defensiveness? These tensions in vocal behaviour can be relaxed and you can regain the fullness of your naturally expressive voice with the Linklater Voice Method... What do I want to say and how do I best convey the issues and the conviction I have? The Linklater Voice Method will equip and inspire you to speak to and for your community.”

<sup>453</sup> J Weir Ousten, “The Feeling Voice: A Linklater Approach to Freeing the Voice through Embodied Connection to Image”. *Voice and Speech Review*, 15 no. 2 (March 2021): 2.

<sup>454</sup> See the works of Antonio Damasio, Stephen Porges, and Joanna Cazden especially on the topic of polyvagal theory. Social engagement is a vital aspect of this work.

The heart of the benefit of Linklater work for preachers is an ability to search for the truth in an imaginative way. The truth being sought is a reclamation of voice and personhood, all while receiving the incarnate word of God. This is not a simple task, and it requires vulnerability, discipline, and discipleship<sup>455</sup>. Yes, there will be sermon delivery benefits found in the work, but the significance is more holistic. Theatre is about finding ways of telling the truth and conveying deep truths to your audience. This requires pushing through blockages to discover your own truth, exploring, and examining your own internal experience so that it can emerge in your voice and body onstage.<sup>456</sup> As actors are a kind of disciple to the world of dramatic arts, the preacher/artist is a disciple of his or her faith and the performance of faith within the practice of preaching.

Linklater Voice is a method of learning and working the instrument of the voice. It begins with an almost mechanical focus on the aspects of the vocal instrument, although it does develop a kind of creative production focus. However, there are underpinnings of spiritual and emotional involvement. These underpinnings must come to the forefront for preachers because this is the fertile soil for the seeds of revelation meant for the preached message. There is a danger that Linklater participants may compartmentalize the physical aspects of vocal production while making the emotional and spiritual an afterthought. Linklater's technique is meant to instruct in the capacity to use the voice as an instrument meant to be played freely and "outside of the box" of conditional limitations. The work of the technique offers exercises for interpersonal and intrapersonal growth. Preacher/artist participating in the work will benefit

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<sup>455</sup> Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language, Revised and Expanded*. Hollywood: Drama Publishers, 2006), 9. "The paradox is that actors must train their voices so that they can sacrifice them. Actors' voices must learn to be dissolved by the impulses of thought and feeling. Actors must not use their voices to describe and transmit the story, but their voices must be wide and long and strong and tender enough to reveal the breadth and depth of the imagination."

<sup>456</sup> Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), .335.

from seeing the spiritual and emotional within the physical, as they work the technique. Again, this may be done by connecting other aspects of the exegetical process to the work done while engaging in the Linklater exercises.

## 7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has described several actor training techniques that are identified as being beneficial to a proposed integrated pedagogy of homiletical training for incarnational, embodied preaching practice for preacher/artists. Engaging in these techniques is holistically valid for preacher formation. When implemented into a preaching practice, the techniques utilize the body and voice as instruments of revelation reception, inspiration, and sermon formulation. These descriptions are also added to the introduction of the benefits of a discipleship framework for preacher/artist, akin to a craftsmanship framework utilized by actors.

Ultimately, the preacher and the actor both share in a process of discovery and meaning making in the hopes of embodying an authentic performance, whether one of theater or one of incarnate word.<sup>457</sup> There are many more techniques that could be utilized as resources for preacher/artists. The ones introduced in this thesis are a sampling of how the world of performing artist training and formation can interplay with the pedagogy and formation of preacher/artists. After all, there are some connections found in assessing the way that an actor interprets the play and the character and how the preacher interprets the theo-drama of creation, the character of God, and the message for the congregational context for the sermon.

It is necessary to say that although these techniques and methods impact the delivery and performance of the text, the point of the exercises for preachers is much more related to formation. It is from the formation that any enhancement of performance stems. Thus, performance for preachers is uncovered as a reality of formation, process, and occasional

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<sup>457</sup> David Farrell Krell, “The Moment of Nothing: A Philosophical Note on the Work of Kristin Linklater,” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*. 44 no. 1 (March 2011): 118 – 119. “Kristin Linklater loves the theory of *κάθαρσις* as Martha Nussbaum develops that notion in *The Fragility of Goodness*. “Purgation,” “cleansing,” “purification” is what the Linklater method is all about, not only for the individual actor in search of a voice but for the role of theatre in our society, “catharsis within the community,” as she puts it.”

awareness rather than a putting on of artifice. The training done within a practice of preacher/artist discipleship has the capacity to enhance the capability of the preacher to imagine, receive, and craft the messages inspired by God. There is intentionality necessary with crafting, just as there is intentionality within discipleship. Sacrifice and offering from self are also aspects of this tending and forming process for preachers.

More specifically developed for the purposes of this thesis, Begbie's question from the beginning of this chapter leads to another question. How might performing artist training bear its own witness to divine transcendence interacting with human imperfection? This is a guiding question that focuses the work of the preacher/artist practice. This question will be further examined in the following chapter.

In addition, the next chapter will expand upon how these techniques contribute to a pedagogy of preaching practice for preacher/artists. This training is integral to the integrity of the projected methodology. The techniques are experiential learning methods, and this is the model that preacher/artists need for their practice. These actor training methods are a part of a pedagogy that lifts and integrates experience and receiving knowledge for the purpose of serving the message of revelation from God. Thus, incarnate, embodied preaching emerges as a practical and formational method of engaging a practice of preaching, in real-time.

## Chapter 8: Embodied Pedagogy for Incarnational, Embodied Preaching

### 8.1 Introduction

“How might artist training bear their own witness to divine transcendence interacting with human imperfection?” This is a question, based on the thoughts of Jeremy Begbie, which was discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter will suggest a method of teaching preaching that seeks to answer this question in a practical way. All the historical and holistic elements that have been discussed in previous chapters will be brought together in a model of pedagogy. Facilitating instruction and implementation of incarnational, embodied preaching within a preacher/artist paradigm requires an introduction to accessible and practical modes and methods of processing study, exegesis, and the self-revealing Triune God. These modes and methods must introduce ways to train the imagination and the skill set of the preacher. Imagination and skill are foundations for preacher/artists who can fully immerse themselves in the incarnational and embodied nature of preaching. Thus, preaching as a spiritual and practical discipline is the framework from which this model emerges. Discipleship is what is necessary to bring forth the fruit of what has been planted within each preacher and within the Church. For the benefit of the community, the individual must become immersed in an ongoing, experiential practice of preaching.

“By analogy, it would make little sense to say that each of us has within us already the effective neurosurgeon or torts litigator God wants us to become... Personal gifts and aptitudes are important, but there are also habits of mind, patterns of action, and ways of being that must be acquired for the effective practice tice of law or medicine.”<sup>458</sup>

A practice — of craft, discipleship or preaching — is made up of applying skills that break the barriers and fill in the gaps between inspiration and proclamation, utilizing a theology

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<sup>458</sup> Long and Tubbs Tisdale. *Teaching Preaching*, 79.

of incarnate preaching and embodiment. Makoto Fujimura speaks to the importance of this barrier-breaking way of being present to “wider pastures” of God’s incarnate word. This is the work of artists.

To be effective messengers of hope we must trust our inner voice, our intuition that speaks into the vast wastelands of our time. In this way we can train our imagination to see beyond tribal norms so we can take in the vista of the wider pastures of culture. I often describe artists as “border-stalkers” in our cultural ecosystem. They cross tribal norms to see the whole, to navigate in between the walls erected to protect the tribes.<sup>459</sup>

It is one thing to talk and dream about a way for preachers to prepare their bodies as vessels of an embodied word. It is another thing altogether to bring those discussions and visions to fruition. The chasm between a lucid dream and a manifest reality is pedagogy. Pedagogy aids in building a pathway from theory to practice. This chapter will describe a proposed model of pedagogy for incarnate, embodied preaching practice. This model creates and holds a space for a theology of homiletics that enhances the formation of the preacher, the formulation of the message and the holistic formation of gathered worship and communion for the Church.<sup>460</sup>

The pedagogy model presented in this thesis is tied to and built on a foundation of a definition of preaching that calls upon messengers to receive and embody the word and deliver it to the people. The goal is to have a model that trains and nurtures all aspects of the incarnational,

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<sup>459</sup> Fujimura. *Art and Faith*, 15.

<sup>460</sup> Steven Tramel Gaines, “Redefining Preaching: A Beginning,” *Res Rhetorica*. 4 no.3 (July 2017): 43. Stephen Gaines describes a wide-reaching viewpoint that allows for a unity and deep communion found in the study and practice of preaching. This is essential within an embodied pedagogy model for embodied preaching. “We students of preaching should investigate, analyze, and write more broadly and diversely than we traditionally have. We need to widen our scope by expanding our definitions of preaching, by exploring rhetorical practices by women and members of cultural minorities, by engaging with non-Christian religions’ understandings and practices of preaching, and by privileging close reading over theological and philosophical reflection. When we think beyond our own religious traditions and move from prescriptive theologies and philosophies to descriptive analyses of diverse homiletical artifacts, we can transform our understandings of preaching, learn from previously ignored perspectives and experiences, connect with our globalized (and globalizing) cultures, and avoid anachronistic reasoning.”

revelatory, personhood and community work of preaching. It is an experiment with innovative, interdisciplinary teaching and learning that enhances the very nature of how to teach preaching. It is bold because preaching is bold. It advocates for a fully integrated curriculum base because an integrated preacher is a preacher who is present to God, self, and community.

Without a valid and viable learning strategy, any educational or spiritual import that may be offered from a preacher/artist practice in the homiletics classroom may fall by the wayside as an interesting idea that never comes to fruition. The wings needed to help this notion fly rest in the spiritual import and engagement, as well as the pedagogical import and engagement.<sup>461</sup>

This suggested model will be supported by, in part, the learning style first introduced by David Kolb in *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Kolb's work is an asset to this pedagogical model due to the focus on experiential learning. Experiencing God and self, through actor training techniques such as those presented in Chapter 7, is a part of the holistic balancing effort. Kolb's offering is contextually relevant, and another element of the equation, for the work of teaching preachers to embody the sermon process and proclamation. Ultimately, the primary focus of the balancing effort in the vision is a pedagogical model that guides the edification of preachers who are equipped and unafraid to claim their voices and the space of proclamation. Concerning Kolb, the main question in this exploration is, "How might the elements of the Kolb Model of Learning model partner with an incarnational, embodied preaching practice to integrate and create a holistic learning environment for preacher/artists?" In exploring this question, one can realize a way forward for facilitating incarnate, embodied preaching processing and practice.

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<sup>461</sup> See Charles Marsh's *Lived Theology: New Perspective on Method, Style and Pedagogy* and Andrew Wright's *Spiritual Pedagogy: A Survey, Critique and Reconstruction of Contemporary Spiritual Education in England and Wales* for two examples of arguments that articulate the connection between pedagogy and spiritual formation.

Generally, a pedagogical method benefits from being built upon a pedagogy that is reciprocally beneficial for instructor and student. The objective of rigorous pedagogy is to bring integration and growth to all parties involved in the process.<sup>462</sup> In addition, the theories that support the method should be diverse, thus providing multi-layered entry points to the material, space for new ideas, and the ability to be independently empowered while being communally formed.<sup>463</sup> For preacher/artists this includes a curriculum that engages the intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional aspects of personhood. This type of engagement calls for a response. In turn, responses can then be mined for import that impacts the sermon message. All the while the preacher/artist is being holistically formed by the process and God's hand.

Kolb's theory and methods provide these frameworks for such a pedagogical method. However, the theory is integrated with traditional homiletical study techniques and performing artist techniques that makes the model innovative and valuable. Additionally, the model is accessible to holistic learning and practice that facilitates the process of homiletical revelation reception, crafting and proclamation.

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<sup>462</sup> Integrated pedagogy is discussed in detail within the following resources: Betsey Halls' *Food for Thought: Crossing Disciplinary and Campus Borders with Integrated Pedagogy*, Alex Novikoff's *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance*, Jonathan Savage's *Cross-Curricular Teaching and Learning in the Secondary Education*, and Zamel and Spack's *Crossing the Curriculum: Multilingual Learners in College Classrooms*.

<sup>463</sup> Phillip Kitcher, *Abusing Science*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 45-48. See Kitcher's three properties of a useful theory. "One is explanatory power—a theory should have the ability to unify a variety of observations as the consequence of a single schema. The second is fecundity—a good theory should suggest new ideas of what to look for and how to test hypotheses. The third property of a useful theory is the presence of auxiliary hypotheses that can be tested independently of the theory's main claims. A good theory should illuminate not only the reasons why but also the conditions under which a certain approach might be effective as well as the conditions under which it should be discarded. It should suggest new approaches and be useful across multiple teaching contexts and levels. It may suggest adjustments that would make a particular approach more useful. These adjustments could be framed as hypotheses that are testable by experiment to measure any improvement."

## 8.2 Experience, Knowledge, and Revelation in Pedagogy

Before diving into Kolb, it is important to state a bit about experiential learning as it concerns the body as a pathway for receiving revelation. This is especially significant for the homiletics classroom. After all, preachers are seeking to be physical and spiritual vessels for God's word by experiencing the message and then proclaiming the message. The body and preaching have been discussed in Chapter Five of this dissertation. Now, the benefit of Kolb's Experiential Learning Method for bringing the body explicitly into the homiletical pedagogy process can be discussed.

Learning, at its best, is an integrated and all-inclusive process. "Learning is a comprehensive activity in which we come to know ourselves and the world around us...it is doing and submitting at the same time."<sup>464</sup> The knowing of self is fundamental for preaching students. It is vital to be able to extrapolate this knowledge and apply it to the learning concentration. One way to extrapolate is through physical awareness that enhances learning reflection.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty shares that, "The body is our general medium for having a world."<sup>465</sup> Following this proposition, a student's body engagement in the learning process is a foundational element in the journey of acquiring and assessing knowledge. Knowledge passes through the person's experience, through the body, and begins to form a picture.<sup>466</sup> From this starting point, knowledge contributes to the reception of revelation.

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<sup>464</sup> Michael Oakeshott, "Learning and Teaching," in *The Concept of Education*, ed. R. S. Peters. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 160.

<sup>465</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology Of Perception*. (London: Routledge, 2011), 54-55. See further discussion of phenomenology and the body as knowledge receptor in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* and *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology*.

<sup>466</sup> Frederick Aquino, *An Integrative Habit of The Mind: John Henry Newman on The Path to Wisdom*. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), 16. A basic definition offered by Aquino is, "The capacity to see how things fit together in light of one another and how an understanding of this sort relates to the situation at hand."

Revelation is a broad term that points to many things in the societal zeitgeist. Here, it is meant to point towards to revelation of God and the revelation of the human condition, as it concerns preaching. This is a core focus of Christian preaching. Revelation is the removal of the veil so that the vision is clear.<sup>467</sup> Revelation has a specific meaning in the words of “faith life” and “education”. For this thesis, a definition is needed that is concrete and yet fluid. Gabriel Moran offers a supportive definition for this work. “The alternative is an inclusivistic revelation; every place, every book, and every person can be revelatory, although none is guaranteed to be so.”<sup>468</sup> The slight difference in definitions within society does not have to equal a divide, however. Each definition – seeing how things fit together and the lifting of the veil - can learn from the other. Synthesis can be achieved by engaging each equally in the curriculum, and this can lead to new avenues of receiving revelation. Experience brings awareness and knowledge. This knowledge opens the self, the whole self, to revelation. Kolb’s theory, as it relies on experiential learning, helps students move through this trajectory. Thus, the body and its sensory experiences are placed in a position of importance as a resource within a holistic preaching process and practice. This is more than a philosophical, or even theoretical theological, move. This is an intentional and practical move that creates the opportunity for incarnational, embodied preaching practice to become fully realized incarnational, embodied proclamation.

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<sup>467</sup> Ian Ker and Terrance Merrigan. *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47.

<sup>468</sup> Gabriel Moran. “Revelation in a Culture of Disbelief,” *Religious Education*; 92 no. 2) (Spring 1997), 161. Furthermore, Moran offers, “Revelation is both universal and particular (in contrast to general versus special). There is no homogenizing of the revelation, for some things, some events, and some writings hold more revelatory power than others...nothing at all, including the experience of nothingness, can be excluded.”

### 8.3. Kolb as a Guide Towards Incarnation and Embodiment

Kolb's learning method is not a perfect model.<sup>469</sup> This model does not explicit account for the limitations of empirical thinking based on individualized experience. These limitations — such as false conclusions, explanation of change and new experience, and tendency towards dogmatic thinking — would need to be addressed in implementation of the overall preaching pedagogy model.<sup>470</sup> This thesis utilizes Kolb as a starting point in building an experiential preaching process homiletical method. It is a starting point rather than a direct template that the homiletics learning outcomes could be placed within without adjustments. What follows is the reasoning behind the benefit of utilizing Kolb's method as a starting point.

First, the basis of Kolb's work depends on a two-fold system, a four-stage cycle of learning and four separate learning styles.<sup>471</sup> This system is one that can be integrated into existing structures of the graduate theological study of homiletics. The basis is rooted in cognitive initiation that is enhanced with experiential discourse. Consequently, it offers the opportunity to expand upon what the cognitive process is offering to the student by insisting upon occasions to flex the cognitive muscles through full sensory engagement.<sup>472</sup> This is where the actor training methods come into play.

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<sup>469</sup> Although Kolb's Learning Method, as well as his and methods of learning assessment and inventory, have been prominent in the field of education for decades, there are those who critique his work. These critiques are important to provide as a counterpoint filter for this study. A noticeable initial critique came from Richard D. Freedman and Stephen A. Stumpf. The basis of their assessment stated that Kolb's theory is starting place but lacking "adequate evaluation and validation." Freedman, 446. Freedman and Stumpf's main concerns surround their perception that there is not an adequate amount of empirical support present in Kolb's work and that the proposed instrument of inventory is "invalid".

<sup>470</sup> Reijo Miettinen. "The Concept of Experiential Learning and John Dewey's Theory of Reflective Thought and Action," *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 19 no.1 (January 2000): 63-64.

<sup>471</sup> David A. Kolb *Experimental Learning*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 26 - 35.

<sup>472</sup> Jeffrey J. Koob and Joanie Funk. "Kolb's Learning Style Inventory: Issues of Reliability and Validity," *Research on Social Work Practice*, 12 no. 2 (2002), 294-295. "Kolb's model of learning styles was developed on the basis of Kolb's experiential learning cycle phases involving concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE) which aligned with the phases of scientific learning. Kolb Learning styles consist of four learning styles: Divergers, Assimilators, Convergors, and Accommodators. Learners are most successfully learning through concrete experiences and reflective observation for the Divergers, through

Based on this systematic whole-being theory, the possibility for whole-being engagement is presented. It follows that sermons crafted within the parameters of this holistic intent will more easily speak to the holistic needs of the listeners.<sup>473</sup> As with all learning, the outcome, or even the depth of the experience, is not guaranteed. However, the opportunity is overtly presented to the preacher/artist student.

Secondly, according to Kolb's assessment, learning is effective when progress is made through stages by the learners.<sup>474</sup> Kolb views integrated learning that flows mutually from one stage to the other. The interconnected of this approach prioritizes process over perfection. Here is where the import of spiritual discipleship come into play. The journey is the destination, so to speak. The preacher/artist is encouraged to hold the process with an open hand and an open mind. This is an empowering vantage point from which to learn. There is an inherent rejection of stagnancy in the learning process. In addition, the experiential knowledge gained can be passed on from preacher to listener.

Finally, this pedagogical methodology is one that provides a helpful structure for a teaching method for a preacher/artist homiletical approach, because it simultaneously speaks to the individual while the individual is actively engaged in community "on its feet". This is a term, used within performing arts pedagogy, that stresses the importance of acting out what we are theorizing. Much of the good news of the Christian message speaks to the necessity and power of community.<sup>475</sup> The experience of such is inherent in the classroom, yet this pedagogical

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reflective observation and abstract conceptualization for the Assimilators, through abstract conceptualization and active experiments for the Convergents, and through concrete experiences and active experimentation for the Accommodators."

<sup>473</sup> See discussion holistic preaching in *Preaching & Intimacy: Preparing the Message and the Messenger* by Charles Bug and *Integrative Preaching: A Comprehensive Model for Transformational Proclamation* by Kenton C. Anderson

<sup>474</sup> David A. Kolb. "Experiential Learning Theory and the Learning Style Inventory: A Reply to Freedman and Stumpf," *The Academy of Management Review*. 6 no. 2 (April 1981), 248.

<sup>475</sup> Michael Mawson. *Christ Existing as Community*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 157.

method leans toward a level of communal engagement that puts manifest community on its feet as an initial step towards being on one's feet in the moment of proclamation. The personhood of the preacher is addressed through the learning styles presented by Kolb. Working through these styles in a communal environment allows for real-time exploration and formation. The cyclical nature of the learning method translates and transfers within the cyclical nature of spiritual formation.<sup>476</sup> In addition, Kolb's system is one that is unapologetically designed for transformation. "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience."<sup>477</sup> The cycle of action, reflection, action creates a setting that leads to the learner intentionally seeking not merely cognitive knowledge, but also holistic change.

Ultimately, for this thesis, Kolb's basis in experiential learning is key to why his work is useful and formative. His theory is a tool to ground the artistic and discipleship aspects of the model within a strong model for learners. This resonates with a focus for preachers to use their personal development as a resource, in congruence with sound study and exegesis.

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<sup>476</sup> Susanne Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation in The Church and Classroom*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 87 - 89.

<sup>477</sup> Kolb. *Experiential Learning*, 38.

#### 8.4 Preacher/Artist Training: Enhanced by Experiential Learning

It is necessary to now move to a more specific explanation of how the Kolb method can partner with preacher/artist pedagogy. The four learning styles that Kolb articulates in his theory make room for the diversity of learning needs and preferences inherently present within any classroom. It is not expected that every style will resonate equally with every learner, but the goal is to offer variety and integration because every learner needs to be challenged in differing ways.<sup>478</sup> The process of learning, assessing, and integrating one's learning style in an explicit manner has literal and metaphorical benefits.

On the one hand, plainly, the learner can place his or herself at the center of their own learning process, rather than trying to meet external modifications that may create barriers for the learner. Effective learning relies on a combination of challenges and success, thus exposure to the varied styles strengthened the student's experience.<sup>479</sup> For preacher/artists this is vitally important, especially as it pertains to authenticity and authority within the pulpit. On the other hand, the metaphor of personal agency and the import of knowing the "vessel" to which and from which the word will be revealed, illuminates a particular message about the relationship between God and humanity. The preacher is not an empty vessel, but rather a vessel full of life experience that colors how the message is received and imparted. The homiletics learning environment needs to be a safe space for exploring personal vessel-hood.

To assess the specific benefits of Kolb's method within the homiletics classroom, it is necessary to look at the experiential education philosophies that are the foundation of Kolb's model and identify ways in which these philosophies can be integrated within the framework of

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<sup>478</sup>Ibid, 25-26.

<sup>479</sup> David A. Kolb and Alice Y. Kolb. "Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education," *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4 no. 2 (2005), 197.

an incarnational, embodied preaching practice pedagogy. This connection is possible due to Kolb's belief that his learning method is a whole life-encompassing method, as is the proposed preaching pedagogy model.<sup>480</sup> These philosophies function as benchmarks that guide the creation of curriculum for the preacher/artists. Specific activities can be tied to each philosophy, and as Kolb suggests, the focus can shift from outcome-based orientation to process-based orientation. For this thesis, the specific activities can and should include body awareness activities, such as the ones practiced within the Suzuki Actor Training Method.

The philosophies covered aspects that encapsulate learning as a holistic endeavor, which help learners to embrace the process of learning, assess their progress, and set the stage for continued growth even after a particular learning opportunity has ended. These are the strengths of these philosophies if they are seen through the filter of the pedagogical method that is being proposed in this thesis.

First, the process of learning, according to Kolb, should be conceived and facilitated as a process.<sup>481</sup> Outcomes are moving and changing targets. From the moment of conception, the learning environment is created with outcomes in mind. However, those outcomes are molded by the individual experiential learning of the students. Therefore, each outcome needs to encompass the capacity to hold a myriad of learner progress journeys. Incorporating the methods within actor training allows this by fostering an organic environment in which to learn.

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<sup>480</sup> Kay Peterson, *How You Learn Is How You Live*. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017), 6. "... awakening the power of learning that lies within us—to show how we can increase our capability to learn from experience throughout our lives, in each and every moment. To say that experience is the best teacher is an understatement—it is our only teacher."

<sup>481</sup> Alice Y. Kolb and David A. Kolb. *The Experiential Educator: Principles and Practices of Experiential Learning* (Kaunakakai: EBLS Press, 2017), 25. "Although punctuated by knowledge milestones, learning does not end at an outcome, nor is it always evidenced in performance. Rather, learning occurs through the process of ongoing experience; ideas and thoughts never remain the same but are formed and re-formed through experience".

This also speaks to the facet of Kolb's philosophy which states that learning is a continuous process grounded in experience. In some ways, this process of leaving space for the student experience, and for that matter, the instructor's experience, is organic and fluid. This is also how a way of engaging a Holy-Spirit embracing focus within the course work.

Second, a philosophy within Kolb's theory is the idea that learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.<sup>482</sup> Learning requires reflection upon challenges that arise within the process of growth. This reflection propels learners forward within the framework of the course work. Even more so, the conflict-reflection-conflict cycle propels learners outside of the framework into new territory. The Suzuki Actor Method provides specific actions that invite this type of positive conflict. For instance, within the silence and statue exercises of the method, it is the conflict between stillness and breath that allows for character revelation. For the preacher/artist method, adding the theological reflection — such as a portion of the scripture for a sermon — amid these exercises may produce a conflict-reflection-conflict cycle that informs the preparation and proclamation of the sermon.

Third, further fruit of this theory is the development of a mode of adaptation that is holistic and applicable outside of the classroom. This is imperative when the learner is being prepared for a contingent learning environment such as the stage or the pulpit. It is holistic because it is integrated, and compartmentalization is actively rejected within the learning

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<sup>482</sup> Kolb and Kolb. *The Experiential Educator*, 26. "Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process. These tensions are resolved in iterations of movement back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking. Learning is by its very nature filled with tension and conflict. Effective learners need four different kinds of abilities—concrete experience abilities, reflective observation abilities, abstract conceptualization abilities, and active experimentation abilities. That is, they must be able to involve themselves fully, openly, without bias in new experiences. They must be able to reflect on and observe their experiences from many perspectives. They must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories, and they must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems."

process<sup>483</sup>. This is the integration of mind, body, and spirit learning, as well as the integration of tangible and intangible revelation through the preacher to the sermon receivers. Thus, the preacher and the preached method illuminate a way of walking with the questions of faith that honors the certainty as well as the mystery of lived theology.

Fourth, there are transactions between the learner and the environment.<sup>484</sup> The learner is consistently negotiating the space between objective and subjective learning. Noticing this reflective process within the body, as well as within the mind, is a strength of the Suzuki Method. Participants are meant to bring the internal and external environment experiences gained within the practice to the “role”, or in this case the sermon proclamation.

Lastly, the previous philosophies continue to build to the point that learning creates knowledge.<sup>485</sup> As opposed to recitation, the learners must embrace the role of creator within the classroom. Beginning this creation work before any attempt to craft a sermon manuscript allows the preacher/artist to embody the role of creator more completely. In addition, this calls for an empathetic response towards self and environment, and the Suzuki Method is a guide in this type of learning.

How do these philosophies more specifically interplay with the philosophies of the Suzuki Acting Method? There is a congruency found in the foundations of the philosophies and

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid, 27. “Experiential learning involves the integrated functioning of the total organism—thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving. To learn is not the special province of a single specialized realm of human functioning such as cognition or perception. In addition to knowing how we think and how we feel, we must also know when behavior is governed by thought and when by feeling. In addition to addressing the nature of human specialized functions, ELT is also concerned with how these functions are integrated by the person into a holistic adaptive stance toward the world.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid, 27. “Knowledge results from the transaction between these objective and subjective experiences in a process called learning. The concept of transaction implies more fluid, interpenetrating relationships between objective conditions and subjective experience, such that once they become related, both are essentially changed. As learners, we do not simply respond to a fixed environment, but we actively create situations that meet our learning objectives.”

<sup>485</sup> Ibid, 30. “There is an intimate relationship between learning and knowledge. To understand learning, we must understand the nature of knowledge, and vice versa... In this sense, the content and the learning process is unique to each knowledge system.”

the training activities. This congruency centers are establishing, following, and trusting the process. The process is key. There are questions that frame the effort to establish and sustain the process. What is learned in the process? What is experienced in the process? How does the process become proclamation? The goal is to follow the questions to the truth of the sermon message.

The learning within the process is valued over outcomes.<sup>486</sup> Process is the very core of Suzuki's training method. He intentionally shies away from any hint that the actor is seeking an answer to the question of character development in the training process. Rather, the actor is seeking a way to quest within him or herself, so that the fruit of that quest can inform character development and delivery. The quest surrounds the ability to bring the characters to life for the sake of the message in the story. The preacher is seeking to bring the story of the personal into the story of the community, while proclaiming the message that has been given. The performance manifestation, however, appreciated by the listeners, is not the reason for the event of preaching. Instead, the import is found in the message and the transformative process of the messenger and receivers. The import is found in the encounter with the Triune God, and can be nurtured through the incarnational, embodied preaching practice.

The process is grounded in experience, even when that experience is seemingly intangible.<sup>487</sup> While practicing the Suzuki Method, general activities become enlivened with

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid, 28. "Although punctuated by knowledge milestones, learning does not end at an outcome, nor is it always evidenced in performance. Rather, learning occurs through the process of ongoing experience; ideas and thoughts never remain the same but are formed and re-formed through experience. No two thoughts are ever the same, since experience always intervenes. If ideas are seen as fixed and immutable, then it seems possible to measure how much someone has learned by the amount of these fixed ideas that the person has accumulated. Such fixed and constant view of thoughts and ideas has had a profound impact on prevailing approaches to learning and education, resulting in a tendency to define learning only in terms of outcomes. Approaches to learning and education focused on fixed outcomes can become a definition of non-learning, in the sense that the failure to modify ideas and habits as a result of experience is maladaptive."

<sup>487</sup> Kolb and Kolb, "Learning Styles and Learning Spaces," 27. "Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experience of the learner. Put simply, it implies that all learning is relearning. How easy and tempting it is

specificity by the actor's inner life. This experience is lived by the actor and observed by the audience. For the Christian preacher, experience is the central modality of receiving revelation. The biblical text points to experience and knowing as the path to being in relationship with God<sup>488</sup> and it is experience sharing – testimony – that is modeled as the core of preaching the good news.

The process of being is also rooted in resolving conflicts.<sup>489</sup> These conflicts are internal and external. Tension is constantly confronted within the framework of the Suzuki Method. In the body and in the inner self, tension is acknowledged and relieved through the breath. The tension is viewed as a signal to increase awareness while settling into the breath. Thus, comprehensive growth is nurtured. A connection can be made to the spiritual process of spiritual growth. The wrestling of Jacob, for the desired blessing of revelation, is a witness to this kind of spiritual struggle.<sup>490</sup> The Suzuki Method can provide a way for preacher/artists to enter an experience of tension in training, which can help them to translate and proclaim the role of tension in the Christian faith life.

The process is one of continual adaptation.<sup>491</sup> Adapting is a core tenet of Suzuki's method. How does the actor adapt to the environmental elements of one's own body and the

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in designing a course to think of the learner's mind as being a blank slate. Yet this is not the case. Everyone enters every learning situation with more or less articulate ideas about the topic at hand. One's job as an educator is not only to implant new ideas but also to dispose of or modify old ones."

<sup>488</sup> Paul K. Moser. *The God Relationship*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1 – 47. See Moser's discussion of human receptivity to relationship with God.

<sup>489</sup> David A. Kolb. *The Learning Style Inventory: Technical Manual*. (Boston: McBer, 1976), 26. "Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process. These tensions are resolved in iterations of movement back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking... When we consider the higher forms of adaptation—the process of creativity and personal development—conflict among adaptive modes needs to be confronted and integrated into a creative synthesis."

<sup>490</sup> Gen. 32: 22 – 32, NASB.

<sup>491</sup> Kolb, *The Learning Style Inventory*, 27. "Experiential learning involves the integrated functioning of the total organism—thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving. Learning is the major process of human adaptation. It encompasses other, more limited adaptive concepts such as the scientific method, creativity, problem-solving, decision-making, and attitude change that focus heavily on one or another of the basic aspects of adaptation. This concept of learning is considerably broader than that commonly associated with the school classroom. It occurs in

bodies of the other actors while training? These choices inform the character formation. For preachers, it is possible that this work with adaptation can allow for an increased capacity for creativity and preaching the word “out of season”. Transactional processing between people and the environment is at the core of Kolb’s theory, as it is in actor training.<sup>492</sup> In each, students feed off and learn from the immediate environment. Actors participating in Suzuki Method training create the world of transaction. They create the environment, when prompted by a general framework — i.e., an imagined train station — and interact with self and others in this created environment. It is a way of negotiating the space of the tangible within the intangible.<sup>493</sup> For preachers, this work can aid in managing the heightened space of proclamation. Additionally, this vacillation between tangible and intangible can provide a lived experience of moving from certainty to mystery and back in a life of faith.

Creating knowledge is core to the process, as well.<sup>494</sup> What is this experience for and to what end is the means utilized? The purpose of the Suzuki Method is the actor being able to know and embody the character and the message of the story. Preaching is a moment of creation culmination, the knowledge that has been found, and the revelation that has been made

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all human settings, from schools to the workplace, from the research laboratory to the management board room, in personal relationships and in the aisles of the local grocery. It encompasses all life stages, from childhood to adolescence, to middle and old age. When learning is conceived as the major adaptive process, it provides conceptual bridges across life situations such as school and work, portraying learning as a continuous, lifelong process.”

<sup>492</sup> Ibid, 28. “Knowledge is the result of the transaction between social knowledge and personal knowledge. The concept of transaction implies more fluid, interpenetrating relationships between objective conditions and subjective experience, such that once they become related, both are essentially changed. As learners, we do not simply respond to a fixed environment, but we actively create situations that meet our learning objectives.”

<sup>493</sup> For further discourse on this transactional learning see the work of Brian Massumi in “Parables for the Virtual, Clifford Geertz” in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*.

<sup>494</sup> Kolb. *The Learning Style Inventory*, 28. “There is an intimate relationship between learning and knowledge. It is essential for educators to take into account the nature of the subject matter to be taught in deciding how to help the student learn the material at hand.”

clear. Then, the message is crafted, and it creates a space, within the life of the intended community. This is a space where knowledge can flourish.

How might the effectiveness of these philosophies and training methods be measured? Mainly, within the life and sermon preparation process of the preacher/artist. What can be quantified is based on the action-reflection-action aspect of the pedagogical model. The hope is that the preacher/artist would be able to name the tangible aspects of the training that impact the process, and then be able to mold those aspects into the sermon and proclamation of the sermon.

I explore and conceptualize art research and practice with regard to his [sic Merleau-Ponty] ‘double reference’ of the body as binding, the enfleshment of its subject with its object as a continuum...I argue that this ‘double belongingness’ constitutes art-in-the-flesh, a double-coded figure of speech, a trope that suggests that the existential liveness of art, its ability to arouse and agitate the sense, to evoke and provoke thought, occurs simultaneously in the flesh of the body and in the world perceived as flesh in the body.<sup>495</sup>

The hope is that the preacher/artist would be able to arouse, agitate, evoke, provoke through mind, body, spirit integration. The bodied process is part of the intellectual and spiritual processing learned through multifaceted experiential learning. One informs and builds upon the other. The preacher/artist reflects and continues to process. At some point, the pen comes to paper and the message flows from the entirety of the experience.

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<sup>495</sup> Charles R. Garoian, *The Prosthetic Pedagogy of Art*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013),123.

## 8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a glimpse of how an incarnational, embodied preaching pedagogy model benefits from integration with an experiential learning model such as Kolb's model. The possibility of receiving revelation in an experiential learning environment was explored. Time was also spent identifying why Kolb is a valid partner for the proposed pedagogy model for preacher/artists. The philosophies presented by Kolb's model were engaged in conversation with aspects of the proposed pedagogy model, expressing the value of the partnership.

The one thing that has become clearer to me in the course of my life is that keeping an open mind is of utmost importance. The right kind of openness is the most precious human possession . . . We need to take a firm stand, but we also need to feel that we have not thus put our feet in shackles. Wherever we stand, we should stand free and unbiased and grow aware of the world. —Martin Buber. <sup>496</sup>

The incorporation of other aspects of an incarnational, embodied preaching process that may facilitate a spiritual discipline preaching practice was also explored.

The overarching benefits of an integrated pedagogical method are systematic and specific, for the educator and the student. The goal is for rigorous theology to integrate with sound teaching that allows for vibrant revelation and proclamation.<sup>497</sup> This means that the method should be able to encompass a variety of learning needs and envisioned outcomes. A method that engages all aspects of the learner, will allow for the possibility for measurable and immeasurable growth for the learner.

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<sup>496</sup> Ronald C. Arnett. *Communication and Community: Implications of Martin Buber's Dialogue* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1986),107.

<sup>497</sup> There are many resources that describe and prescribe effective theology and sound pedagogy. The following is a selection that represents a diverse offering that speaks to the convergence of theology and pedagogy. Erskine's *Black Theology and Pedagogy*, Rylaarsdam's *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of his Theology and Preaching*, Harris' *God and the Teaching of Theology: Divine Pedagogy in 1 Corinthians 1-4*, Neder's *Theology as a Way of Life: On Teaching and Learning the Christian Faith*, Price's *Pedagogy as Theological Praxis: Martin Luther and Herman Bavinck as Sources for Engagement with Classical Education* , and Mesa's *Ignatian Pedagogy: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Jesuit Education*.

Pedagogy supported by theory is imperative, and Kolb's theory is one that can partner with a preacher/artist pedagogy method. The focus on experiential learning works well with an emphasis that takes from artistic and theological schools of thought. Art may seem to be vaguely defined, but the pedagogical methods within arts curriculum are based on sound theory that seeks to make the intangible accessible.<sup>498</sup> There is a kinship with theological pedagogy, in that theology is inherently a study of what can be known from the viewpoints of the mind as well as from the spirit.

While engaging this model of homiletical pedagogy, preachers will gain competence in biblical interpretation through faithful use of the whole canon of Scripture in proclaiming the gospel. How to read and integrate the Christian sacred text will be an aspect of how this outcome is engaged by students. Exegetical expertise will be applied to the study of the sacred text in a way that allows for an increase in personal and communal interaction with a life of faith.

Performing the word, incarnationally, is an outcome that will also be tackled in the recommended curriculum. This includes evaluation and reflection upon the capacity to engage listeners through preaching as a formative activity within the context of worship. An important aspect of this learning outcome is the reality that the sermon is an aspect of the entirety of the worship experience, just as the preaching process is an aspect of the larger life of lived daily worship.

Within the curriculum, it would be vital to include an understanding of how the theology of the Church and its historical developments, including the practice of preaching, inform the proclamation of the gospel in the present. Context is key, so to speak, and without explicit

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<sup>498</sup> Dorothy Wallace. "Parts of the Whole: Theories of Pedagogy and Kolb's Learning Cycle," *Numeracy*, 12 no.1 (January 2019):52.

attention paid to the import of systematic theology, there is a danger of presenting a narrow vision that inhibits the reach of the preaching ministry.

This pedagogical model is the culmination of the overall aspects discussed in this discussion of incarnational, embodied preaching. The narrative framework, the historical and holistic import, has laid a strong foundation for the teaching model. The model, as well as the methodology, appease the fear of a preacher/artist viewpoint and practice. In addition, the gaps in the current homiletical landscape are bridged with the implementation of this model. Preachers can experience and be informed within a community that is engaging a practice of preaching, and this communal aspect is, in and of itself, a vital aspect of the continuing work of incarnation. The concluding chapter will engage an overview of this thesis and consider the impact of the contributions. The strengths of this thesis, as well as some limitations, will be reviewed.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion – Paving the Way for Incarnational, Embodied Preaching**

### *9.1 Introduction*

In addition to the many discussions that have been considered concerning preaching as an art form, there needs to be a particular and practical pathway towards the artistic discipleship of preachers engaged in incarnational, embodied preaching. This thesis provides a framework for this pathway, and the framework is informed by the history and holistic manifestation of Christian preaching. The path is one built upon a foundation of incarnational inspiration and embodiment practice methodology. The exploration is the result of research, reflection, critical engagement, and critical imagination. Moreover, this thesis is a well-measured response to the fear that preaching as an art form brings up for some. Integration rather than artifice leads the way. The work presents an artistically informed yet tangible and accessible process that creates a theological and practical environment of creativity for preachers.

An outline of the connection between the incarnate Word and incarnate word preaching was identified. The necessity and benefits of embodiment were also acknowledged. Due to the necessity of understanding the benefits of the artist archetype for preachers, the resources of actor training techniques utilized to enrich the artistic skill set were introduced. As with viewing a play in the theatre, the reader was invited to willingly suspend a belief that actor training and preaching training are mutually exclusive disciplines. Like a theatrical production, this thesis presented the background, setting, and prologue before diving into the high stakes of the main drama. The epilogue offered the image of a future where preacher/artists learn, train, and preach in the methodology of the fine art of preaching.

## *9.2 Research Questions*

Although preaching has been named an art form by many in the homiletical academy, homiletical training has not been explicitly approached in the way in which this thesis is proposing. There are pockets and portions of preaching classes that attempt to introduce the idea, but “art” has not been explicitly utilized as foundational for the overarching pedagogical approach to preacher training and formation. There is a missing step between theoretical proposition and practical implementation. The thesis presented a way of filling in the gap and naming what is missing as “found”.

The questions explored in this thesis were:

- 1). What is a practical and theological articulation of incarnate word and embodiment for preachers?
- 2). What might the formation and training of preachers look like within a framework of performing artist formation and training, as it pertains to incarnational, embodied preaching practice for preacher/artists?

Responses to these questions are presented in this thesis. Discussions of incarnational preaching and embodiment were engaged philosophically, theologically, and practically. In addition, the thesis provides a way of questioning that represents a thorough process of engaging the field of homiletics. The pedagogical model — one that is formational and instructional — is one that highlights a methodology of walking with and working within the questions of preaching while remaining ground in theory, theology, and praxis of incarnate word preaching and embodiment. The discussion presented represents a theological and pedagogical responsibility that takes seriously the necessity for an experiential, formational practice process that is integral in the homiletics classroom.

Defining preaching within a framework of “art” guided the argument while enhancing and broadening the terms of what is needed in homiletical training and education. The practical

definition of the art of preaching presented in this thesis includes an acknowledgment of God's dramatic act of incarnation, continuing revelation through incarnate word proclamation, and the reality that the preacher is an artist operating within the theo-drama of God's creation. Chapter 2 provided the contributions that current homiletical thought and training offer in defining preaching. This thesis extends these definitions and specifically speaks to preaching as an incarnate, embodied art form in Chapters 3 through 6. More than an exercise in practical application, the theory and pedagogy presented in this thesis represent a living and organic definition of preaching in process, preparation, and proclamation.

The arguments presented emphasized the need for a learning space that supports holistic, integrated, experiential, and experimental instruction and formation while highlighting elements that homiletics pedagogy should borrow from performing artist pedagogy. Chapter 7 delved more deeply into the specific benefits provided by enhancing homiletics curriculum with actor training methodology, speaking specifically to the second research question. This kind of curriculum inherently relies on mind-body learning methods that bring the preacher and the coursework into explicit collaboration. Thus, a synthesis is created and nourished as the learner allows for an expansion of the learner's sanctified imagination. Speaking specifically to the overall benefit for homiletics classrooms, it is an "on its feet" method of walking out a theology of inspiration, revelation, and proclamation being experienced and messaged through all the senses of human experiencing.

This thesis argued that the missed opportunities within other homiletical training approaches center around the lack of offering whole-being experiential learning such as that absorbed by actors studying for an MFA in Acting. The suggested integrated, interdisciplinary pedagogy model, proposed in Chapter 8, is developed in a manner that considers a fully cohesive

and integrated interdisciplinary tactic. This model proposes the immersion of preaching students into a process of coursework and exercises that will engage full-sensory revelation, processing, and formation. Beyond the classroom, this will allow for preachers to formulate sermons that invite the congregations to which they preach into an integrated engagement with their own faith life processes. Thus, the incarnation and embodiment resources found in a preacher/artist preaching process and practice will hopefully yield similar faith manifestations within the communal life of the message receivers.

### 9.3 Summary and Reflection

The narrative framework of this thesis, built around historical and holistic elements, includes the following:

Chapter 1: In this introductory chapter, the outlook and parameters of the study were stated. The reasons for the study, identified as gaps in the understanding, instruction, and practice of preaching, were delineated. The research questions were named, and the trajectory of the thesis was stated. In addition, the ethos of fearing a preacher/artist paradigm was introduced.

Chapter 2: The literature review was a foundational aspect of the thesis, utilized to contextualize the setting of current preaching culture and pedagogy. Thomas Long's work, *The Witness of Preaching*, has been a primary textbook in homiletics classrooms for decades. Jana Childers' *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre* is a newer text but has made quite an impact. She offers a practical inroad to the arena of preaching as an art form. Teresa Fry Brown, in *Delivering the Sermon: Voice, Body and Animation in Proclamation*, brings her integrated experience as a speech pathologist and a preaching professor into an integrated conversation that highlights the technical artistry found in the voice. These texts offer a range of thoughts that provide definitions of preaching and preachers. They also each seek to provide a certain methodology tackling the task of preaching, and in turn, speak to preaching pedagogy. Yet, the enactment of the methodologies needs a practical and integrated pathway towards manifestation. The process of embodied preaching is hinted at within these texts, and this process is more fully exposed in the work of the thesis. There is an implicit demand to introduce a methodology that is as strong in theory as it is in practice. This exploration presented such an approach.

Chapter 3: There was a necessity, within this thesis exploration, for the presence of a discussion of the theology of homiletics. For this thesis, this meant looking at the hallmarks of

revelation and tradition, and how they interact in the sermon preparation and proclamation processes. The perspective included biblical, historical, and cultural influences when defining what it means to preach.

Chapter 4: In this chapter, the theological and practical connection between incarnate word preaching and embodied preaching was examined. Also stated, was an encouragement towards the explicit inclusion of incarnation within a theology of embodied preaching. From a philosophy of incarnation, it was necessary to move to a theology of incarnation conversation. It is in this section that the work of the Holy Spirit within incarnation was introduced. In addition, the concept of deep incarnation was considered, along with the concept of the drama of God's work within creation. The impact of these concepts was also applied to a holistic preaching practice process.

Chapter 5: The redemptive work of examining a preacher/artist theological framework is continued in the redemption of the body as a vital partner in the work of incarnate and embodied preaching. Is the body a source of help or hindrance when it comes to receiving the revealed word of God? This thesis tackled this question as it stated the need for embodied practice in the practical application of a theology of embodied preaching as an art form. The answer to the question is that the body is a valid and vital resource for revelation reception as well as sermon delivery. Currently, in anything other than a superficial way, the body is ignored in much of the homiletical examination done in theological education. This is a great disservice that this section addressed, while it also offered a valid remedy.

Chapter 6: The next building step in the thesis was to track the focal model of preaching in the homiletical method of Jesus. This aspect of the work included naming the artistic elements, language, and form, within Jesus' preaching model. The argument was made that the

strength of the methods and modality of this preaching method, along with the power of incarnation, lies in the capacity to engage the listeners and embody the message being offered. Offering a Christology that relies on as much focus to the person of Jesus of Nazareth as a preacher as it does on the message of Jesus as Savior, is an enhancement of how homiletic uses the entire image of Jesus Christ in the education and training of preachers. The philosophy and theology of incarnation were engaged, as concerning the impact on embodied preaching. The thesis maintained that the work of incarnation, begun in Christ, is continued in the work of ministry within the Church. Preaching and preachers are a part of this inherited incarnational effort.

Chapter 7: This chapter presented an in-depth treatment of the benefits of actor training for preachers. Introducing the core tenets of suggested partners within performing arts training was an important step before revealing the proposed model of pedagogy in Chapter 8. Discipleship, as a partner with craftpersonship, was also articulated at this point. The inclusion of these aspects of performing artist training and the exploration of how these elements may work within an integrated pedagogy for homiletics students was needed to aid the reader in imagining the pedagogy model at work. This chapter also clarified how actor training creates a space for embodiment and the carrying of a message in a way that is transferable.

Chapter 8: All these elements came together in the form of a robust model of integrated pedagogy in this chapter. Going from theory to practice was the goal of the chapter. The pedagogical model advocated for a practice of preaching that includes every aspect of processing, preparing, and proclaiming the Gospel within an experiential learning model. The thesis clarified that there is more room for an intuitive and integrated curriculum within the

academic process of homiletical growth and learning. The specificity required in the model is the core and strength of this methodology.

As building blocks of a practical training methodology were presented, these building blocks pointed to the need for kinesthetic and experiential learning methods being unambiguously present in the homiletics classroom. This thesis provided support for the incorporation of these learning methods within an incarnational, embodied preaching practice.

Chapter 9: This concluding chapter provided a bird's eye review of the study. A discussion of the significant points was presented. Reflection, centered on the impact of these points for the preacher/artist and for the Church as a whole, was also presented.

#### *9.4 Contributions*

How were the research questions answered by this thesis, and how might this engagement contribute to the academy and practice of homiletics in a real way? The simple answer is that the practice and pedagogy introduced and argued for is one that offers holistic development to the field and the participants – proclaimers and receivers – of Christian preaching.

Preaching as an art form is defined, by this thesis, as an all-sensory practice that includes preparation as well as the moment of proclamation. The preacher engages in experiential learning that expands the capacity to receive and occupy revelatory, incarnate word, and impart this word to listeners. This definition considered the theological and philosophical definitions of preaching.

The preacher's artistic practice process allows for the acknowledgment of tangible and intangible dialogue that are manifestations of God's continual dramatic work of revealing Divinity to humanity. The practical application is found in the interdisciplinary work that is offered through the addition of Suzuki Training, the Alexander Technique, the Viewpoints Technique, and the Linklater Vocal Technique, in conjunction with more traditional homiletical education methods. In addition, aspects of what actors are doing, as expounded upon within an exploration of the homiletical style of Jesus of Nazareth, were identified.

This kind of training would be beneficial, as it is a practical way of allowing preachers to engage the entirety of the human experience as a vital and valid resource for the formation and facilitation of proclamation. The proposed practice is also spiritually formational and serves as a catalyst to engaging the homiletical imagination. The practice interacts with the image of the preacher in everyday life, not only in the moment of proclamation. This interdisciplinary work also allows the preacher to refine and explore the role of preachers within the life of the church.

The practice is a model of discipleship as well as a model of craftpersonship. The model of pedagogy that is presented includes the learning outcomes that build a framework for an all-encompassing theology and practice of preaching, in terms of dealing with the entirety of the preaching person and process. It is educationally and theologically worthwhile and relevant.

Students will engage in exercises and an action-reflection-action framework of processing that will allow them to identify with the ongoing reality of learning and growing as preachers. The process is the learning path. This ongoing processing will result in a facility within acknowledging preaching as a theologically reflective practice that serves the Church's calling to proclaim the gospel in the whole of life. Thus, just as life is in a constant flow of growth, preachers will be able to embrace their own process of consistent growth on many levels. They will also formulate a process of assessing the growth from an intimate attachment viewpoint as well as from a critically distant viewpoint. An understanding of preaching as an oral, embodied art form will be gained by the students. Consequently, preachers will be able to view their process as an artistic — all sensory engaging — one. They will also be able to claim and embrace the preacher/artist description, theoretically and practically.

The ongoing process of preaching as an aspect of an incarnational inheritance necessitates the inclusion of an understanding of preaching as a spiritual discipline to the curriculum. This means that students will engage in routine undertakings that allow for meditation, action, and formation of their spiritual life and relationship with God, the Church, self, and community.

A capacity to utilize the elements of an embodied preaching practice for sermon preparation, proclamation and preacher formation will be demonstrated by the students in all

aspects of the course engagement. Along the progression of the class, a practice of body, mind, and spirit development will be introduced, assessed, and performed by the students.

Instruction techniques would include instruction on the philosophy and theology of incarnation, as it pertains to the shared heritage of incarnate word amongst preachers, introduction to a spiritual discipline practice model that incorporates contemplative prayer, contemplative scripture reading, and embodiment actor training techniques that enhance embodiment, instruction on the Suzuki Actor Training Method — incorporating Silence, Stillness, and Breath Work —, instruction on The Alexander Technique and embodiment training, instruction on the Linklater Voice Technique, improvisation exercises and the Viewpoints Technique exercises.

The thesis research and arguments have presented a unique perspective, which fills in the gaps left by theoretical approaches to the art form of preaching. The theory is well thought out by many preacher theologians. The missing elements are interdisciplinary partners that are fully integrated within the theory and the practice. The problem of too much theory and not enough practice is solved in the thoughts and proposals of this thesis. The model of teaching presented is viable and engaging. Furthermore, it is based on a holistically accessible theology of preaching, incarnation, and embodiment.

Returning to the three-point framework presented by the main authors in the literature review, the contributions of the thesis are evident. First, where Thomas Long suggests that preachers are a witness to the story of God and humanity, thusly preaching from that place, there is a need for a plan for refining the capacity to be a storyteller witness. Next, when Jana Childers offers the theory that preachers should engage in some of the activities of performing artists, the question becomes obvious. Why should the interdisciplinary work not happen within the

homiletics classroom? Finally, Teresa Fry Brown empowers preachers and introduces how the marriage of technical and artistic skills creates an environment for spiritual skills to flourish. With each of these, the cognitive information needs an environment of experimentation to fully blossom holistically. This thesis proposes a blueprint for that experimental classroom. As performing artists know, all theory needs a safe place to come to life. Without this space, the knowledge has limitations of perpetuation possibilities. Rather than negating the work of God's spirit, this thesis proposes partnering with the Holy Spirit through the resources of incarnational, embodied practice during the entire trajectory of the preaching process.

### 9.5 Discussion and Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this thesis, the current compartmentalized theoretical, practical, and pedagogical perspectives on homiletical training are not completely serving a holistic theology of preaching. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address a quantitative study implementing the proposed pedagogical model in a homiletics classroom. Thus, any fear of the preacher/artist will be shown to be a fear with no valid basis.

Primarily, this thesis puts forth a hope that the academy of preaching educators and students embrace a position of inquiry into the practical observation of preaching as an art form and preachers as incarnational, embodied preacher/artists. This is not as remote a proposition, since many preaching practitioners already – in ways implicitly and explicitly – adhere at least partly to a view that preaching is an art. For those who have been the most revered voices, many for decades, on preaching, this means enhancing and stretching what is already their core homiletical viewpoint. For instance, how would the methodology presented by Thomas Long in *The Witness of Preaching* be brought to its feet in such a preaching curriculum? An exchange that Long highlights in his text, shows that his work is already framed on a foundation that can incorporate actor sensory training for preaching students.

Question: Why do you actors seem to make such impressions upon your audiences, while we preachers frequently leave our congregations cold?

Answer: Actors speak of things imaginary as if they were real, while you preachers too often speak of things real as if they were imaginary.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Long, 262. An exchange between the archbishop of Canterbury and English actor Thomas Betterton

The foundation is present, and now the rest of the picture must be filled in by theory and practice on all fronts. This study showed a way forward in making the imagined a reality in the bodied experience of the preacher/artist and thus in the Church

Secondarily, there needs to be an interdisciplinary, but integrated, curriculum developed to support and sustain the practice of preacher artists. Rather than bringing in acting instructors, Suzuki trainers, and Linklater technicians for one-off classes, allowance for the resources to be integrated throughout the entirety of the course work must be made. In addition, a challenge to the artist practitioners to engage the theological and philosophical aspects of preaching in a way that they can understand the framework of the preacher/artists is needed. This is where the work becomes expanded into something like a preaching conservatory program. Of course, this is not a simple enterprise, but the effort, in and of itself, symbolizes how seriously homiletics educators are willing to prioritize the holistic training of preachers.

Finally, the combination of the academy perspective and the curriculum enhancement calls for communal engagement that does not seek to amalgamate the discipline to the point that creativity and createdness is homogenized. Rather, the goal is to create space for the width and depth of God's continual plan of incarnate word to be realized within the lives of preachers and listeners of the word. The community being realized and experienced in a new way is a byproduct of the pursuit of the elements of this thesis.

### *9.6 Possible Barriers and Controversy*

It is fully recognized that the work proposed by this thesis is not without areas of concern, in terms of theoretical and practical application. There are possible barriers to the understanding and implementation of the pedagogical model. At this point, this conclusion will take a critical look at these barriers and engage in analytical dialogue about ways to combat these concerns.

As mentioned in the discussion of defining preaching as an oral art form, the first hurdle is the cultural distrust that is sometimes present between artistic pursuit and religious pursuit. There is a history of hesitant appreciation between the two. The redemption of this relationship necessitates intentional re-education on the historical connection between the arts and the church. Also necessary is a redefining of the art of preaching as an endeavor of formation as opposed to an exercise in entertainment. With these measures, one can combat the temptation to fear the image of the preacher as an artist.

Furthermore, students and instructors may reject the idea of being artists due to a lack of exposure and experience to the proposed techniques. In its current context, homiletical education is comfortable in the realm of the cognitive. Even in practicum exercises that include preaching, the action and reflection process is intellectual. The proposed pedagogical model of this thesis is designed to disturb and challenge this mostly cognitive way of teaching preaching. It is meant to allow those involved to move beyond the barriers of the exclusively intellectual. This is an attempt to embody the entirety of our human capacity to engage in relating to and with God. Therefore, the way to address this concern is to embrace the discomfort. The measurements of the learning outcomes may feel less traditionally structured than educators and students are used to, but that does not mean that the import is less valid.

The practicality of transforming homiletics classrooms from their current states to ones that include performing arts pedagogy may seem heretical to some. However, this change is not a complete demolition project. Rather, it is an expansion, as it is projected in this study. Yes, the idea challenges the separation of what is traditional sacred and secular and dictates interdisciplinary cooperation.<sup>500</sup> There is also a level of academic vulnerability and openness that may feel intimidating to occupy, as each discipline must acknowledge strengths, limitations, and the benefit of the collaboration. The disciplines must operate as co-experts, as well as co-learners.

Another area of concern may surround the tension towards the argument that preachers have inherited the incarnational mantle of Christ's preaching. One must accept and uphold this reality to embrace the recommended definition of preaching presented in this thesis. This work is clear in stating that preachers are not Christ incarnate, but rather they are successors of the tradition of incarnation. This is a necessary distinction, that may be glossed over by those afraid to name divinity in the human personage. It is worth noting that a discussion of *imago Dei* is a beneficial aspect of engaging this aspect of the study.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> Martin Davies, *Interdisciplinary Higher Education: Perspectives and Practicalities*. (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2010), 30. "Disciplinary structures have proven to be important in ordering knowledge for the student and researcher alike. They allow a focus on manageable chunks of knowledge and have also provided a vehicle for resource allocation and other necessary bureaucratic functions that facilitate the pursuit of knowledge. Disciplines represent 'a framework for the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next', according to Weingart and Stehr (2000, p. xi). In addressing this 'framework', we will focus on aspects of disciplines related to knowledge creation and organisational structures (e.g., academic departments), but we will not address how affiliation with a discipline affects a scholar's sense of identity. Within this framework, boundaries of disciplines are not permanent, inflexible or impermeable, nor are they always useful. Disciplinary boundaries can inhibit knowledge generation and application. They are largely irrelevant to the challenges of society (the space in which the authors' field of biotechnology operates), and they can impede the application of knowledge from one field in another."

<sup>501</sup> Claudia Welz. *Humanity in God's Image: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 167-195. See discussion of *imago Dei* and the impact on vision and speech. For preachers, embracing the idea that they are heir within the Divine trajectory of incarnation requires embracing the impact of a robust theology of *imago Dei*.

### *9.7 Final Words*

This dissertation represents a hopeful projection into the future of not only homiletics education but also for the sermonic manifestations in pulpits far and wide. The arguments were grounded in the belief that the human experience can be a valid and vibrant partner in the process of becoming one who is just as comfortable articulating the reality of the tangible presence of God as one is comfortable with the intangible mystery of God, both of which are present in the practice of preaching. The thesis is itself a model of this kind of nondualist approach to theology, practical ministry, and homiletical education. The research and arguments are meant to provide a foundation for future conversations and evolutions in the curriculum of and contributors to the homiletics academy. This dissertation is a hope-filled step towards an innovative way of doing, teaching, and practicing incarnational, embodied preaching.

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