A Homiletics of Communal Participation in the Spirit for the Contemporary Church

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Knox College and the Pastoral Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College

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Abstract

The New Homiletic movement that began in North America in the 1960s initially focused on individual listeners. Then, to incorporate the communal dimension, homileticians began to emphasise the importance of the faith community as a whole in the preaching event. The preaching method changed from a rhetorical style to one that was more conversational and participatory. In keeping with a postmodern context, Christian proclamation was also extended to marginalized, silenced, and oppressed others.

Yet what is lacking in all this is a balanced account of the role of the divine agency in proclamation. The Pauline vision of the body of Christ in the Spirit, together with Michael Welker’s doctrine of the Spirit as God’s force field and the public person of Christ, provide the grounding for claiming Christian preaching as communal participation in the Spirit’s working force for proclamation. Proclamation as a divine-human activity is not the preaching act of individual preachers, but a mutual giving and receiving of the manifestations of preaching by the whole church in the Spirit.

A homiletics of communal participation in the Spirit focusing on the initiating agency of the Spirit and the mediating agency of the church can provide practical styles of preaching that extend to the whole of God’s creation. To this end I draw on practices of the Korean Church that
embody the communal participatory spirit of the Korean people, specifically Korean madangguk, which is the contemporary heir to traditional Korean theatre arts.
Acknowledgements

What a privilege and glory it is to serve people with the word of God! Yet how many times have I experienced my limitations in the preaching ministry! At some point during my five-year full-time ministry as a Christian minister, I felt I had turned into a simple technician of preaching, eagerly scavenging for inspiring illustrations to attract more people. This was a fundamental crisis for someone called to be a minister of God’s word. From this crisis arose my calling to carry God’s word to the people of God, along with the following fundamental homiletic questions: What is Christian preaching? Why do I preach? Who is the preacher? How can meager human words be experienced by people as God’s divine word? This dissertation is the fruit of a homiletic journey with the very Spirit of God.

At every point in my journey I have received plentiful help and provision from a faithful God. First of all, I have met a number of unforgettable teachers in my field of study. The Rev. Dr. Chang-Bok Chung led me to the homiletic field. The late Rev. Dr. Syngman Rhee helped me begin my advanced studies in the United States. Drs. Thomas G. Long and Charles L. Campbell in Atlanta opened my eyes to the homiletic field. The late Rev. Dr. Arthur Van Seters accepted me as his doctoral student at Knox College. With deep generosity and steady encouragement, Rev. Dr. Paul Scott Wilson led me to complete my thesis. Rev. Dr. David Schnasa Jacobsen, Rev. Dr. J. Dorcas Gordon, Rev. Dr. Harold G. Wells and Dr. Nam Soon Song have been precious teachers helping me fulfill my studies. Finally, Rev. Dr. J. Glen Taylor and Rev. Dr. Lance B. Pape gave me their invaluable evaluation of the dissertation in their roles as internal and external examiners respectively.

During the extended period of my advanced studies many precious people have helped me with their prayers and financial support. My father-in-law, the late Jaesoon Kim, my mother-in-law, Yonghae Lee, my wife’s sister, Meeyong Kim and her husband Wanjae Lee, have all supported me with unlimited love and faithfulness. I cannot appreciate enough the incessant prayers and support of my parents (Youngsoo Lim and Bunhaeng Kwon). Gwacheon
Presbyterian Church and its members have provided financial support for many years. Sharing God’s missional vision and the glory of preaching the gospel, Toronto PSALM’s Church (Living Life Community Church) and its members have been with me since I first planted this church in the Greater Toronto Area. Because of this congregation, I can put into practice my homiletic vision and studies in the fields of life. I am aware that all this assistance and support are a debt of love.

Lastly I give thanks and compliments to my lovely wife, Mooyong Kim, and my three beautiful daughters, Stella, Ella, and Angela. Their love and commitment have been my joy and strength throughout, enabling me to complete this project.

It is my hope that this homiletics of communal participation in the Spirit for the contemporary church will function as a stepping stone for the whole church to preach the gospel of God in the world until we meet the returning Lord Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria!
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................................................ii
Acknowledgments ..........................................................................................................................................................iv
INTRODUCTION .........................................................................................................................................................1

CHAPTER 1. Pauline Vision of the Body of Christ in the Spirit ..........................................................9

I. Corinth and the Corinthian Christian Community .................................................................10

II. The Spirit and the Body – 1 Corinthians 12 .................................................................19
   A. The Substantial Criterion for the Christian Discernment .................................23
   B. The Unity and Diversity of the Spirit’s Work
      in the Body of Christ (4-11; 12-26) .................................................................27
   C. Paul’s Practical Claim for the Body of Christ in the Spirit (27-31) ........36


CHAPTER 2. John Calvin’s Spirit-centered Understanding of Christian Preaching ..........................45

I. John Calvin the Preacher and Preaching in Calvin’s Understanding of Church ..........50

II. John Calvin’s Spirit-centered Understanding of Preaching ........................................55
   A. Calvin’s Communicative Understanding of Preaching ................................56
   B. Calvin’s Sacramental Understanding of Preaching .......................................62
   C. Calvin’s Performative Understanding of Preaching ..................................67

III. John Calvin’s Practice for Ecclesial Participation in the Spirit’s Work ........72

CHAPTER 3. Michael Welker’s Postmodern Pneumatology for Christian Proclamation ................80

I. The Need for a Spirit-centered and Ecclesial Homiletics ...........................................83

II. Michael Welker’s Doctrine of the Spirit as Grounding for Christian Preaching ........85
   A. The Experiences of the Spirit in the Pluralistic Context ................................87
   B. The Spirit as God’s Force Field in the World ...............................................94
   C. The Pluralistic Community of the Spirit
       and the Public Person of the Spirit .............................................................102

III. Directions for Christian Proclamation ..........................................................110
   A. The Building Up of the Body of Christ for the Reign of God ................113
   B. The Experienced and Expected Truine God in
      Text and Context as Message .................................................................114
   C. Communal Participation in the Spirit as Method ......................................119
CHAPTER 4. Preaching as Communal Participation in the Spirit since 1960s

I. The Spirit and Contemporary Homiletics
   A. Spirit and Word ........................................... 133
   B. Spirit and Preacher ........................................... 138
   C. Spirit and Listeners ........................................... 147
      1. Spirit and Individual Listeners ............................ 149
      2. Spirit and Listeners as Community ....................... 152
      3. Individual and Ecclesial Experiences of Divine Grace in the Preaching Event ........................................... 157
   D. Spirit and World ........................................... 159
      1. The Wholly Other God and Social ‘Others’ .................. 160
      2. The Liberating God and the Oppressed ...................... 162
      3. The God of All and the Marginalized: Silenced Women .......... 164
      4. Spirit-centered Homiletics for Christian Ethics ............... 169

II. Contemporary Homiletics and Communal Participation in the Spirit ........... 170
   A. Preaching as Communal Participation in the Spirit for Individual Transformation ........................................... 173
      1. Artful and Communicative Methods ............................ 174
      2. Inductive and Narrative Methods .............................. 175
      3. Imaginative Connective Methods ............................. 179
   B. Preaching as Communal Participation in the Spirit for Ecclesial Formation ........................................... 182
      1. Conversational Methods through Narrative Character and Function ... 184
      2. Conversational Methods through Sermonic Roundtable .............. 186
      3. Conversational Methods through Mutual Critical Correlation ........ 188
   C. Preaching as Communal Participation in the Spirit for Social Incorporation ........................................... 190
      1. The Ethics of Preaching ..................................... 191
      2. Interactive Conversation ................................... 193

III. Perichoretic Preaching for Communal Participation in the Spirit .............. 195

CHAPTER 5. Preaching of Communal Participation in a Changing Context ....... 198

I. Potentials of Contemporary Korean Madangguk for Christian Preaching ...... 199

II. The Practices of Sharing, Testimony, and Open Prophecy in Korean Churches ........................................... 213
   A. Local Lectionary and Life Experiences ........................... 214
B. Small Churches in the Church ................................................................. 218
C. Preacher as Teacher and Gwangdae (Clown)
   for the Practice of Testimony ............................................................... 220
D. The Whole Church as Witness to Testify to the Triune God ............... 224

III. Interactive Sermon Form for Communal Participation in the Spirit .... 226
   A. George Moore’s Interactive Sermon by
      “Congregational Reflection (CR)” .................................................... 232
   B. Doug Pagitt’s Interactive Sermon by “Progressional Dialogue” ........ 234
   C. Description of Interactive Sermon Sample in My Own Church .......... 237

IV. Summary ............................................................................................... 243

CONCLUSION .............................................................................................. 246

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................... 248
INTRODUCTION

There is a wonderful moment when a living space becomes a home. In my seminary years, I lived in school housing for two years, and yet refrain from calling this home. After my wife and I got married and moved into our first apartment, there was a profound difference. We still had the same household goods, but this place felt different. There was warmth; not just physical warmth, but an indescribable warmth. One of my friends suggested it was a “woman’s touch,” but there was more to it than that. It had something to do with the presence of love and the sharing of a common purpose and task.

In preaching, we expect a similar experience of finding a “home,” a similar shared purpose in God’s Spirit. Some look to achieve this through human methodologies, and others look to the Divine initiative. In this thesis I will argue that since the act of preaching is generated by the Triune God, it is not a case of either/or, but rather of both/and when it comes to the divine and human dimensions of the preaching event.

The act of preaching is a complex practice of the church with at least three participants: God, preacher, and congregation. In contemporary developments in North American homiletics, I have observed a distinct move from “the above” to “the below,” signaling a move from God to preacher and then from preacher to congregation. What is now needed is an argument that takes full account of the dual participation of God and human beings in the preaching event.

In the context of worship, the preaching event as “proclamation” is not the lone act of the preacher.¹ Yet in the scholarship concerning homiletics, human agency in preaching does

¹ Here proclamation is understood to mean preaching as an event that accomplishes a purpose and task through the dual agency of the divine and the human.
tend to be limited to the role of the individual preacher. Preaching needs to become instead a practice for the whole church, in order to further God’s reign in the world. Preaching is thus a communal practice of the faith community in which God, preacher, and congregation interact.

Much can be affirmed in the “New Homiletic,” the movement in preaching that began in North America in the 1960s. The proponents’ arguments for listener participation, for the ecclesial dimension of preaching, and for participation by all in the preaching event are admirable. However, the movement’s rhetorical, theological, and ethical approaches seem to result in a loss of balance between divine and human agency in preaching. An increasingly dominant anthropocentric emphasis splits off “the Divine from the human, the above from the below.”2 Although most homiletic theories premise the Spirit as an essential agent of preaching, on the whole they tend not to include divine agency to the same extent as the preacher and congregation.

In a rapidly changing context, different approaches to preaching have emerged for the contemporary church. Each has its own focus. The rhetorical approach to preaching focuses on individual transformation; the theological approach centers on ecclesial formation; and the ethical approach concentrates on social incorporation. These three approaches have been made possible through the Spirit’s work in the dual participation of God and human beings. In Spirit Speech, Luke Powery seeks to discern the manifestations of the Spirit in the preaching event in terms of a holistic understanding of the Spirit’s work in the individual, ecclesial, and social realms, thereby going beyond the limited arguments about sermonic

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2 Paul Scott Wilson, Preaching and Homiletical Theory (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 145.
language, content, structure, and performance.\textsuperscript{3}

When it comes to the preaching event as proclamation, human agency in the Spirit’s work includes not only use of the gift of preaching but also the ability of individual believers, the faith community, and others in the wider society to receive this gift. In this thesis, I claim a communal divine/human agency of Christian proclamation as the emerging public event that accomplishes the sermonic purposes and tasks. For this, I will explore the dual participation of God and human beings in the three modes of preaching—for individual transformation, ecclesial formation and social incorporation—in order to wholly name the Spirit’s manifestations in those realms through the preaching event. When the sermonic purposes and tasks have been fully accomplished, we are able to discern this work of the Spirit in giving and receiving the gifts of preaching.

Since the Spirit is not limited by a human formula, it is not advisable to claim objective signs of the Spirit’s work in the sermonic moment. However, all kinds of participatory means of preaching that make possible the hearing of the word of God can be seen as promissory signs of the Spirit’s work in the sermon moment. The preaching event is impossible without human participation through giving and receiving the gift of the Spirit. Moreover, the testimonial, ministerial, and doxological confessions made in Christian gatherings that the crucified and risen Jesus Christ is Lord, can be considered criteria for discerning the work of the Spirit. Through these promissory manifestations of Christian confession, all believers who are baptized in the Spirit into the body of Christ have the potential for proclamation, in order that God’s word might be experienced communally through life experiences, as well as through texts. To this end, the human agency of the

preaching event needs to be extended to the whole church, rather than limited to individual preachers.

While the scholarship of contemporary homiletics does represent an unbalanced focus on human agency, this human agency is nevertheless understood in communal terms with emphasis laid on “communal participation” in the Spirit. In this thesis I will use the term “communal participation” to include individual participation, ecclesial participation, and participation of those beyond the faith community. And I will argue that from this participation, it is the Spirit that brings about individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation.

The preaching tradition in which individual preachers are so central tends to limit the signs of God’s activity in the preaching event to the individual agency of preachers. In contrast to this tradition, the focus on human agency in contemporary homiletic development can help us to discern God’s activity in the preaching event, because of the way preaching is now viewed as a communal act of proclamation.

As mentioned, this thesis seeks to find a preaching model that rebalances divine and human agency in proclamation as the preaching event. Here communal participation constitutes the human agency of the preaching event, but with divine agency given equal emphasis. Michael Welker’s concept of the Spirit as God’s “force field” will be used in developing this model. Welker’s concept provides preaching with a homiletic “home,” where the individual, ecclesial, and social dimensions of preaching converge in a confessing community of reciprocity. The Spirit constitutes public “force fields” in which everyone participates through mutual giving and receiving of the Spirit’s gifts that point to Christ. It is

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in such public force fields that both God and human beings come together so that they can serve God’s ongoing work of creation in making a new world. The signs of that world are individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation.

Divine agency and human agency interact in the Spirit to bring about these effects. The Spirit is manifested in the human participation that constitutes communal agency on the human side of proclamation. If we understand the human agency in the preaching event as a dynamic and communal human interaction in the Spirit, communal participation can arguably be a means of bringing about a better balance between God’s side and the human side in preaching. This enables us to talk about individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation while keeping the focus on God. Proclamation as a divine-human activity is thus not a preaching act of individual preachers, but a mutual giving and receiving of the manifestations of preaching by the whole church in the Spirit.

In conducting this exploration, I will take a biblical, historical, and theological approach to preaching, by looking at the apostle Paul, John Calvin, and Michael Welker. First, a biblical vision of the body of Christ in the Spirit will be explored through exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12. In the context of the diverse manifestations of the Spirit found in the Corinthian body of Christ, Paul seems to offer ecclesial directions for discerning who is and who is not speaking in the Spirit. In his ecclesial vision of mutual giving and receiving, the graced utterances of the Spirit are for the building up of the body of Christ. For Paul, preaching can thus be grounded as a communal practice of the body of Christ characterized by a mutual giving and receiving of the graced utterances of the Spirit.

Later in history, the medieval, clericalized model of preaching was challenged by the Reformation. As an historical example of a renewed style of communal preaching, I examine
John Calvin and his Spirit-centered understanding of preaching as a divine-human activity. Calvin claims preaching God’s word is a decisive factor in distinguishing the true visible church from the false. His preaching practice, based on a Spirit-centered understanding, is deeply connected with the communal nature of the church that is visible on earth.

In a contemporary context, I examine Michael Welker’s experiential and pluralistic pneumatology. He provides an extensive argument for the reign of God that goes beyond the visible church. The catalyst for Welker’s pneumatology is experience. He attends to the biblical testimonies in order to discern the diverse experiences of the Spirit. Welker claims the Spirit as God’s force field gives rise to a multi-place force field which is sensitive to differences. For Welker, the Spirit is Christ’s “public person,” to be concretized and realized in constantly new and diverse ways by the communion of the sanctified. Authentic human experiences of God are discernible through God’s initiative and human participation. People participate in the spread of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God through the Spirit’s power and presence. Through such participation, people can enter public force fields and be drawn into them, bearing and borne by the Spirit. This chapter will lay a grounding for understanding preaching as communal participation in the Spirit by the communion of the sanctified. The emphasis on the dual participation of God and human beings in the preaching event will center on the Spirit as the locative agency of proclamation. Following on from this, there is a call for open methodologies in the preaching practice.

I then survey developments in contemporary North American homiletics since the 1960s, with a focus on the Spirit’s work of effecting human participation in the preaching event. I suggest these contemporary developments in North American homiletics can be interpreted as an ongoing movement of the Spirit. “Communal participation in the Spirit” is
the phrase I use to explain the preaching event as proclamation in which divine and human agents work together. It is “communal” in the sense that a giving and receiving of God’s word through the preaching event then takes shape in the individual, ecclesial, and social dimensions of human life.

As part of this survey, I compare and contrast representative views of contemporary homileticians to discern how their methodologies relate to the idea that it is through the graced gifts of the Spirit that people take part in proclamation. Going beyond traditional preaching methods aimed at logical persuasion, some of these homileticians advocate the preaching methods of narrative identification or imaginative connection, while others suggest a conversational method, whether this be direct or indirect, internal or actual.

In the hope of reclaiming preaching as communal participation in the Spirit, I draw on practices of the Korean Church that embody the communal participatory spirit of the Korean people, specifically in relation to contemporary Korean madangguk, which can be considered the contemporary heir to Korean traditional theatre arts. Madangguk literally means “theatre in open field.” In the contemporary formation and development of madangguk, the spirit of communal participation of the Korean people has been embodied through a cultural movement in a social protest. As a performing art form, madangguk is characterized by mutual communication with openness to the active participation of the audience in the performance. Using this Korean communal mindset, I present an integrative approach to preaching that also utilizes the alleged marks of effective preaching in order to engage people in proclamation.

I conclude this study with a proposal for a homiletic style of communal participation in the Spirit for the contemporary church. Integrating existing and potential methodologies
into “communal participation in the Spirit,” I advocate the practice of Christian confession and communal discernment in Christian gatherings. The contemporary church in a rapidly changing postmodern context needs a more interactive and participatory approach to homiletics.
CHAPTER 1

Pauline Vision of the Body of Christ in the Spirit

God ultimately works all things in all believers for the common good. The very Spirit of God is the divine agent kindling the human agent to preach God’s word and to complete its purpose. Since God’s Spirit is the initiating agent of preaching and the human preacher is the attendant one, preaching is a dual activity of God and human beings. Without God’s presence and power, human effort in preaching is of no effect for God’s reign. All authentic preaching to bring about a new world is grounded in a “demonstration of the Spirit and power.” The necessity for the demonstration of the Spirit’s power and presence in proclamation calls for an ecclesial approach to preaching. This is because the pneumatically-constituted church is not only the primary means of preaching the gospel to the world, but also the central locus of God’s embodying power of the gospel in the world. Through the Spirit’s work, God’s people can live out the proclaimed gospel in their diverse concrete situations. The church cannot be identified with the Spirit because there is sin in the church. Nevertheless, the inseparability of God’s Spirit and the pneumatically-constituted body of Christ are ideally depicted in 1 Corinthians 12. Though his vision of the body of Christ in the Spirit seems to be ideal, here the apostle Paul offers an example of how the Spirit works all things in all believers and how all believers can participate in the Spirit’s work through their communal life as the body of Christ. The multifarious ecclesial practices embodying the Spirit’s presence and power in the body of Christ have the potential to lighten up preaching afresh. In light of the initiating work of God’s Spirit and its participatory embodiment in believers in all Christian ministries, a giving and receiving of the gift of preaching the word

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5 1 Corinthians 2:4
of God can be also approached as a communal event for all believers. This chapter examines how the apostle Paul sees the divine-human relationship in the life of the “body of Christ.” Through an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12, the potential ramifications for preaching are explored.

I. Corinth and the Corinthian Christian Community

Corinth is located between the mainland of Greece and the Peloponnesian peninsula and between the Saronic Gulf and the Corinthian Gulf. Because of its favorable location, Corinth developed into a multiracial, cross-cultural, international port city. Situated at the crossroads between north and south and between east and west, the city became “wealthy Corinth,” as ancient geographer Strabo described it in his Geography of 2 BCE: “Corinth is called ‘wealthy’ because of its commerce, since it is situated on the Isthmus and is master of two harbors, of which the one leads straight to Asia and the other to Italy; and it makes easy the exchange of merchandise from both countries that are so far distant from each other” (Geography, 8.6.20).

Corinth, as a great city-state leading the “Achaean League” and hosting the biennial Isthmian Games, was destroyed by Roman troops along with the rest of Achaia in 146 BCE. When Julius Caesar sought to reestablish Corinth as a Roman colony for retired veterans in 44 BCE, the dormant Corinth began to flourish once again as “Roman Corinth.”

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8 Michael J. Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord: Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 228-229. According to Witherington, rewarding veterans with land in the new colony was “a shrewd means of removing disaffected and potentially volatile elements
rapidly repopulated with Roman soldiers, freed slaves and other immigrants, including Jews, Syrians and Egyptians seeking social and economic advancement.⁹ Corinth, which allowed greater upward social mobility than most other Roman cities, attracted many people who were “attempting to better themselves on the socioeconomic ladder.”¹⁰ Almost immediately, therefore, Corinth recovered its prosperity and fame.

The Isthmian Games, which the neighboring town of Sicyon had managed in the meanwhile, returned to Corinth by 40 BCE.¹¹ Under Augustus, the new Corinth became the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia around 27 BCE. In 44 CE, it became more powerful when Claudius restored Achaia from an imperial province to a senatorial province. In the first century CE, Roman Corinth prospered more than ever to become one of the most important urban centers of the Roman Empire. The Corinthian people, who had increasing civic pride, were eventually “famed for boasting in their Corinthian citizenship.”¹² Their boasting and self-promotion were exhibited in art forms upon which they publicly inscribed their own accomplishments.¹³

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⁹ According to Strabo, Caesar colonized Corinth with “people who for most part belonged to the freedman class (Geography, 8.6.23c).” Army veterans were mostly former slaves, the so-called “Roman freedmen.” They did not have the status of freemen although they have been freed. Their move to Corinth meant “a step up the social order” because they were able to achieve social advancement through their economic success and social detachment from their patrons. See O’Connor, St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology, 64-65.

¹⁰ Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord, 228.


¹³ Witherington, Conflicts & Community in Corinth, 8.
In the course of its colonization, the new Corinth was rebuilt on a Roman pattern in which Roman laws were operative; Latin was the official governmental language; and the imperial cult was established. Much of its Greek identity, however, was reclaimed due to its central location in Greece and deeply-rooted Greek heritage. The Roman emphasis on social stratification and the Hellenistic emphasis on individual ability consequently converged in the new Corinth. Ben Witherington III points out that the “Romanization” of Greek Corinth is best described by the term “Greco-Roman.” Since it was mainly a “freedmen’s city” with no elite and nobility, Roman Corinth was a place of opportunity, in which “one could rise from level zero to social respectability and a measure of power.”

Anthony Thiselton comments on the conditions of the new and freshly Romanized city of Corinth: “Every condition was right: a cosmopolitan international center under secure Roman government order, with shipping routes to Rome and Ephesus and to the east; a plentiful supply of natural resources for manufacturing; and a vibrant business culture where quick success (or sometimes failure) was part of the cultural ethos.” Richard Horsley characterizes the social-cultural ethos of Roman Corinth as possessing “an atomized individualism, an obsession with status, and a competitive spirit.” With its commercial

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16 Witherington, Conflicts & Community in Corinth, 7-8.

17 Savage, Power Through Weakness, 39-40.


19 Richard A. Horsley, 1 Corinthians (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 30. First century Mediterranean people were more “dyadic” than “individualistic,” as in contemporary Western experience. Their individual identity was basically that of a member of a group such as family, clan, village, and city state.
centrality of trade, tourism, business and manufacturing, this social-cultural ethos brought a reputation for being “the most competitive of all cities” within the Greco-Roman world by the end of the first century CE.20

Greco-Roman Corinth became a hub not only of commerce, but also of religion. It was a collecting ground for various Roman Empire cults that retained the religious character of the Greco-Roman world.21 Not only Greek and Roman deities, but also Eastern cults were visible in Corinth.22 The varied cults in Corinth were “a transcendental stamp of approval to their lives” in the everyday existence of Corinthian people.23 Strabo calls Corinth a “city of love,” with the practice of sexual activity in the temples being one of the thriving industries of the Corinthian people.24

Most importantly, the Roman imperial cult as “a form of religious and nationalistic, or theopolitical allegiance, both to deified humans (the emperors) and to a cultural and political entity (the Roman Empire)” thrived in the new Corinth.25 Since people of the socially mobile class of freedmen were given a prominent role in the cult of the emperor and thereby acquired social status, the imperial cult was strongly promoted in first-century Corinth.26 The competitive pursuit of status through bringing glory to the Roman Empire

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22 There are “more than two dozen temples, statues, and monuments to Apollo, Asclepius, Athena, Demeter and Kore, Serapis, the emperor, and other gods” among the ruins of Corinth. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 228


24 *Geography* 8.6.20c, in O’Connor, *St Paul’s Corinth*, 55-57.


26 Witherington, *Conflicts & Community in Corinth*, 18.
with the emperor at the pinnacle of the hierarchical arrangement prevailed among the Corinthians. Horsley provides us with a political interpretation of 1 Corinthians which views the Corinthian church as “a new society alternative to the dominant imperial society.”

Although not all might agree with this political interpretation, it is unquestionable that the issues the Corinthian church faced reflected the political, economic, social, cultural and religious atmosphere of first-century Corinth.

The church in Corinth was planted around 50 CE by the apostle Paul during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17). According to Luke’s account, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth because the Roman emperor Claudius had expelled all Jews from Rome. Generally scholars date Claudius’ expulsion to 49 or 50 CE. Paul was also led before Gallio, the Roman proconsul of Achaia, during his eighteen months in Corinth. Paul’s sojourn in Corinth is thus usually assigned to 51-52 or 52-53 CE, because a fragmentary inscription at Delphi indicates this as the period of Gallio’s proconsulship. If we accept that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in Ephesus approximately two or three years after he left Corinth, the Corinthian congregation was a very young church of only about five years. Gorman simply points out, “The Corinthian community was Paul’s problem child. The believers in Corinth managed to misunderstand just about everything Paul said and did, to their own detriment and Paul’s utter astonishment. By the time Paul wrote the letter we call 1 Corinthians, the church, from the apostle’s perspective, was in utter chaos.”

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First Corinthians consists of Paul’s responses to the report about “quarrels (ἐρισίς)” among Corinthian Christians from “Chloe’s people (1 Cor. 1:11)” and to a letter inquiring about several conflicting issues within the congregation received from their delegations (1 Cor. 7:1; 8:1; 12:1 etc.). Gorman’s diagnosis is that “divisiveness based on social and spiritual status” was a “significant disease,” causing chaotic problems in the newly formed church. Since the Corinthian church mirrored the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of Corinthian people generally, many of their primary social values and cultural factors were brought into the church. A string of issues such as sexual morality, civil lawsuits, marriage, idol meat consumption, hairstyles, proper behavior in community worship, and the resurrection of the dead make sense in light of Horsley’s claim about an alternative society.

The chaotic conditions and divisive issues arose from the fact that Corinthian believers were “a very mixed group with several differing views and practices which put considerable strains on their common life.” Except for some Jewish Christians, they were predominantly Gentiles converted to Christian faith who were very religious (1 Cor. 6:10-11; 8:7; 12:2). The majority of the Corinthian church consisted of relatively poor people (1 Cor. 1:26-28). There were domestic slaves as well (1 Cor. 7:20-24). There were also a few wealthy people among the Corinthian congregation. Crispus and Sosthenes, who were “synagogue leaders (Acts 18:8, 17),” Gaius who was “host to the whole church (Rom. 16:23),” and Erastus who was “city steward (Rom. 16:23),” would have been a small
minority that could be called upper class. These differences among its members in social status, economic conditions, ethical values, cultural practices, ethnic attachment, religious background, and the like were undoubtedly significant sources of congregational divisions.

In particular, the four slogans reported in 1:12, “I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos,” “I am of Cephas,” “I am of Christ,” show that Corinthian factions claimed allegiance to Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ respectively. It is difficult, however, to find specific information about these four parties anywhere else in 1 Corinthians. It was Paul who laid the foundation of a church among the Corinthians. Out of the background of the Corinthian church that Paul planted and Apollos nurtured, we know only that the Pauline and Apollos parties might have been involved in partisan quarreling. Paul claims, however, that both he and Apollos were constructing the same building on the foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:9-10). There is no certain indication of theological differences between the parties. The structure of individual house churches would have tended to promote divisions in the church, however, because of a physical environment where believers could not all assemble together as a church.\(^{33}\)

In reading 1 Corinthians, we see that there were “divisions (σχίσματα)” at the Lord’s table between the rich and the poor (1 Cor. 11:17-34). Gerd Theissen suggests that the conflicts in the Corinthian church arose from socio-economic disparities between church members.\(^{34}\) Wayne Meeks points to the multiple dimensions of social status lying beyond Theissen’s focus on socio-economic factors. According to Meeks, social status should be measured not only by income or wealth, but also by other dimensions such as power, ethnic

\(^{33}\) According to O’Conner, the maximum number that any of the homes of the wealthy in Corinth could hold was fifty. See O’Connor, St. Paul’s Corinth, 178-182; and Witherington, Conflicts & Community in Corinth, 30.

origin, occupational prestige, gender, education, and so on. For Meeks, the conflicts in the Corinthian church point to the existence of different levels of social status of church members and of diverse ranking within each level.

From a social-historical perspective, John Chow seeks to understand the problems inside and outside the church in light of the convention of patronage in first-century Roman Corinth. According to Chow, a patron-client tie as “an asymmetrical exchange relationship” was “a hierarchy made up of the emperor, Roman officials, local notables and the populace.” Insofar as the patronal hierarchy was one of the important ways through which the social relationships in Corinth were organized, patronage is also helpful for understanding the relational ties in the Corinthian church and its divisive issues.

By analyzing Paul’s rhetoric, Antoinette Wire tries to reconstruct the Corinthian church as mirrored in Paul’s arguments. According to Wire, the theology, social status, behavior and self-understanding of the women prophets, can be found at the heart of every issue in the Corinthian congregation. From the perspective of the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, Margaret Mitchell reads 1 Corinthians as an example of “deliberative rhetoric”.

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39 In the ancient rhetorical practices, rhetoric was divided into three kinds of persuasive discourse: 1. judicial or forensic rhetoric, 2. deliberative or legislative rhetoric, and 3. epideictic or ceremonial or demonstrative rhetoric. Judicial rhetoric was concerned with the past by setting up “a useful formula for determining precisely the issue that was to be discussed” (150) in the courtroom. Deliberative rhetoric was concerned with the future in terms of “what we should choose or what we should avoid” (147) and its aim to “convince someone to adopt a certain course of action.” (148) Epideictic rhetoric was concerned with the
aimed at ending factionalism in the Corinthian church, although Paul’s rhetorical strategy seems to have fail.\(^{40}\) For Mitchell, 1 Corinthians represents “the fundamental problem of practical ecclesiology.”\(^{41}\)

Witherington provides a socio-rhetorical commentary examining the social context of the Corinthian church in relation to the Greco-Roman rhetorical system. Accepting that 1 Corinthians is mainly an example of deliberative rhetoric, Witherington suggests that “baptism, rhetorical eloquence, and pneumatic spirituality appear to have been involved in the Corinthians’ factionalism.”\(^{42}\) His suggestion is that Apollos’ rhetorical style and ability in contrast to Paul’s simple and less polished approach, caused factionalism between adherents of these two major foci of loyalty in the Corinthian congregation.\(^{43}\)

Most likely, it was Corinthian attitudes and behaviors, that in turn expressed the assumptions of Greco-Roman society about politics, patronage, rhetoric, and so on, which caused Corinthian factionalism. As Horsley points out, the arguments in 1 Corinthians need to be read as “windows onto the situations and conflicts of a divided community.”\(^{44}\)

In dealing with the divisive issues within the Corinthian church, Paul redefined Christian life, which was somewhat distorted by “Corinthian” ways, on the basis of the crucified and present by aiming “to praise or censure someone.” (152) See Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 146-155.


\(^{41}\) Ibid., 300.

\(^{42}\) Witherington, *Conflicts & Community in Corinth*, 84.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 83-87.

\(^{44}\) Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 22.
resurrected Christ, so that the Corinthian church as the body of the crucified and risen Christ could realize its unity in diversity in the Spirit.

II. The Spirit and the Body - 1 Corinthians 12

The context of 1 Corinthians is that a number of Corinthian Christians are involved in factions, bringing their diverse pre-Christian values and their socially diverse conditions into their congregational life, thereby dividing the Corinthian body. Paul’s radical remedy for Corinthian factionalism is the gospel of the crucified Christ, that is, the revelation of God’s power and wisdom. For Paul, the gospel of Christ crucified as God’s power and wisdom must be both preached and lived as the foundation of Christian life. Paul himself offers his life as an example of a cruciform life and exhorts Corinthian believers to live in conformity with the crucified Christ in their community (1 Cor. 4:16-17; 7:6; 9:1-27; 11:1). In a sense, responding to the contingent pastoral problems in the Corinthian church, Paul is seeking community formation in accordance with the gospel of Christ crucified. In other words, Paul calls Corinthian believers to see “their corporate existence as the church” in light of values shaped by the God revealed in the crucified and risen Christ. For Paul, the Spirit is the effective agent of God’s power and wisdom whereby Corinthian believers are enabled to fulfill their Christian life together as the church. Since God’s Spirit as the divine enfolded presence entitles all within the community to become the church, Paul’s theology of the Spirit is brought into close focus by his discussion of the gift of speaking in tongues and

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other spiritual gifts. Some scholars take 1 Corinthians 11:2-14:40 to be one argumentative unit dealing with Corinthian divisiveness in their worship.46

On the basis of Paul’s use of “περὶ δέ (now concerning)” as the introductory formula, however, 1 Corinthians 12-14 is regarded as a distinct rhetorical unit in which Paul aims to correct the Corinthian misunderstanding of “spiritual matters” and the subsequent distortion in their Christian life as the church.47 With regard to the precise meaning of “περὶ δέ τῶν πνευματικῶν” in 1 Corinthians 12:1, with which Paul introduces a new topic into his discourse, there has been much debate among scholars, because the genitive plural “τῶν πνευματικῶν” can be read as either a masculine plural that means “spiritual people” or a neuter plural that means “spiritual things” with the implied meaning of “gifts.”48 Scholars view “τῶν πνευματικῶν” as a reference to “spiritual gifts” from the entire context of 1 Corinthians 12-14 in which “πνευματικῶν (1 Cor. 12:1)” and “χαρισμάτων (1 Cor. 12:4)” are being used interchangeably to deal with the same issue, that is, spiritual manifestations.49 It is also possible, however, to interpret “τῶν πνευματικῶν” in 1 Corinthians 12:1 as a reference


47 Paul deals with a series of questions raised in the letter from Corinth one by one using the περὶ δέ formula. He uses this introductory phrase six times to imply the transition to a new topic (1 Cor. 7:1; 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). Margaret M. Mitchell, “Concerning ΠΕΡΙ ΔΕ in 1 Corinthians,” in Novum Testamentum XXXI, 3(1989), 229-256. According to Mitchell, the περὶ δέ formula in itself need not denote anything more than the transition to a new topic.

48 Grammatically “πνευματικῶν (1 Cor. 12:1)” may also be feminine. If read as a feminine plural, this introductory phrase would be, “Now concerning the spiritual women.” See Ralph P. Martin, The Spirit and the Congregation (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 7.

49 See Conzelmann, I Corinthians, 204; Dunn, I Corinthians, 79; Hays, First Corinthians, 207; Horsley, I Corinthians, 167; Witherington, Conflicts & Community in Corinth, 255.
to “people” rather than to “gifts” since the discourse that follows is concerned with people as much as with the gifts they receive.\footnote{John D. Ekem, “Spiritual Gifts or Spiritual Persons? 1 Corinthians 12:1A Revisited,” in Noet 38 (2004), 62.}

For many Corinthian Christians, spirituality constituted above all “a claim to high status within the community.”\footnote{Thiselton, First Corinthians, 191-192.} Some Corinthians considered themselves “spiritual people,” gifted with wisdom and knowledge which made them superior to other Corinthian Christians. They exercised the gift of speaking in tongues, in particular, as an expression of a superior level of spirituality in order to establish and reinforce their position as the spiritual elite in the faith community.\footnote{According to scholars, this high valuation of the gift of tongues would be influenced by the Corinthian’s pagan past. See for example, Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 234.} Furthermore, their abuse of the gift of speaking in tongues disrupted meetings and split the Corinthian body instead of building it up. In this larger context of the Corinthian church, it is generally acknowledged that Paul introduces the subject with the term “πνευματικόν (spiritual person),” which his Corinthian readers prefer, with emphasis on God’s grace as the source of all true spiritual gifts. Through chapter 12 he uses the interchangeable term “χάρισμα (gift)” he himself prefers, in order that he might reposition the way Corinthians favor ecstatic unintelligible speech within the broader category of gracious gifts that result in service.\footnote{D. A. Carson, Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition Of 1 Corinthians 12-14 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 23-24.} In other words, Paul seeks to reframe and broaden the issue so that all can find their place within it rather than against it.

From the beginning of chapter 12 to the end of chapter 14 Paul intends to correct the Corinthian’s individualizing and self-centered form of spirituality which is based on their
divisive overestimation of the gift of speaking in tongues. In response, Paul stresses the triune God’s initiative in bestowing all the spiritual gifts in grace, not for the advantage of individuals, but for “the common good.” Chapters 12-14 deal with the practical issue of “being spiritual” in Christian gatherings within the fractious situation of the Corinthian church.

The rhetorical unit of 1 Corinthians 12-14 can be analyzed as an A-B-A chiastic pattern.  

Chapter 12 is a more general and theological argument about spiritual gifts and their function in the Corinthian body. Chapter 13 is a Pauline digression on “love” as the heart of Christian life which must govern the exercise of all gifts for the common good. Chapter 14 is Paul’s concrete instructions for the use of spiritual gifts, particularly the two gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues, which are for the edification of the whole community. In the context of his confrontation with those among the Corinthians who consider themselves especially “spiritual,” Paul uses the body image in Chapter 12 to insist on the need for diversity and difference among the members of the Corinthian body, in which every member is worthy of the same degree of value and care. Those considered least valuable are to be given special value and care through the prominent motifs of Chapter 12, that is, the Spirit and the body.

Verses 1-3 offer a decisive criterion for discerning who is and who is not “speaking in the Spirit of God.” The discourse on the unity and diversity of the Spirit’s work in the Corinthian body of Christ consists of verses 4-31. Through these verses, the value of Spirit-
inspired utterance is viewed in the context of the diverse manifestations of the Spirit. In verses 4-11, Paul puts the diverse manifestations of the one Spirit within the church in a foundational theology of the triune God who works all things in all believers for the common good. In verses 12-26, he takes the “body” politics to reinforce “the need for a wide variety of manifestations of the one Spirit within the church.”

In verses 27-31, Paul concludes his argument with the mutual need and reciprocal respect of every member of the Corinthian body of Christ by emphasizing “that ‘not all’ are the same, nor are all ‘gifted’ in the same way.”

A. The Substantial Criterion for Christian Discernment (1-3)

In verses 1-3, Paul wants Corinthian believers to know what “being spiritual” means in Christian gatherings. He offers the substantial criterion for Christian discernment of who belongs to the Spirit and what the Spirit testifies through the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Paul contrasts the former Corinthian religious experiences with their current experiences of the Spirit as Christians in verses 2-3. These verses introduce the discourses of verses 4-31. In these introductory verses, the muteness of the former gods is contrasted with the living voice of God. The majority of Corinthian believers had a past in which they had been influenced and led astray by “dumb idols.” Although the speaking God is not mentioned at all in verse 2, “dumb idols” is an expression of the traditional Jewish polemic against other gods. Fee

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56 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 582-583.

57 Ibid., 583.

58 Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 206. The wording and construction of verse 2 are unclear because of the terseness of expression and its unusual grammar, but the verse is often taken as referring to occurrences of ecstasy in the pagan worship. With regard to the grammatical difficulties of 12:2, see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 204 n.2; and Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 576-578.
points out: “In keeping with his Jewish heritage, Paul scorns the idols as mute because they cannot hear and answer prayer; nor can they speak - in contrast to the Spirit of God who can.”\textsuperscript{59} Through this contrast between the living God who does speak and dumb idols that do not speak, Paul reminds Corinthian believers that speaking in the Spirit is to be “spiritual” in Christian gatherings. More importantly, however, the material content of “speaking” in the church becomes the decisive criterion for authentic Christian utterances inspired by the Spirit. This is because a reference to seizure by a demonic power in Corinthian pagan worship also alludes to ecstasy or inspired utterances.\textsuperscript{60}

Verse 3 begins with the emphatic inferential conjunction, “διὸ (therefore),” to indicate its logical connection to verse 2.\textsuperscript{61} With regard to the relationship between 12:2 and 12:3, Jouette Bassler proposes an analogous relationship between the way in which the Corinthians “were drawn and carried away (ἡγεσθε ἀπαγόμενοι)” by dumb idols in their past experiences and the way in which they are led by the presence of the Spirit in their current experiences as Christians.\textsuperscript{62} Although this reading of 12:2-3 is plausible, her analogy between

\textsuperscript{59} Fee, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 578.

\textsuperscript{60} Another approach to the allusion to the Corinthian past experiences in verse 2 is made by Bruce W. Winter in light of evidence of curse tablets in Corinth, the presence of religious curses in the Greco-Roman world, and the behavior of Corinthian Christians in later centuries. According to Winter, verse 2 refers not to religious ecstasy or inspired utterances, but to “the widespread custom of invoking a deity in another religion to grant a curse against an adversary in the Greco-Roman world.” See Bruce W. Winter, \textit{After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 164-183; and Thiselton, \textit{First Corinthians}, 192-194.

\textsuperscript{61} Carson argues that the connective “διὸ (therefore)” connects verse 3 not with verse 2 but with verses 1 and 2. Verse 2 simply reinforces Paul’s statement that he does not want them to be ignorant of certain central truths (verse 1), and then the hypothetical cursing of verse 3 is a statement that in his or her confession of Jesus as Lord every Christian has the Holy Spirit. For Carson, Paul’s essentially Christological focus is not to “provide a confessional test to enable Christians to distinguish true from false spirits, but to provide a sufficient test to establish who has the Holy Spirit at all.” See Carson, \textit{Showing the Spirit}, 24-31.

\textsuperscript{62} Jouette M. Bassler, “Critical Notes: 1 Cor. 12:3 – Curse and Confession in Context,” in \textit{Journal of Biblical Literature} 101 (1982), 417. Connecting 12:2-3 with the prevailing concern to correct the Corinthian’s divisive overestimation of \textit{glossolalia} in chapters 12-14, Bassler points out that Paul undermines any pneumatic
compulsion by the idols through which the δαίμων exercised total control over pagan worshippers and the Christian confession of Jesus Christ as Lord by the controlling presence of the Spirit is not consistent with Paul’s developing argument in the context of chapter 12. The Spirit-empowered confession of Jesus Christ as Lord comes by grace rather than by compulsion. The overall function of the passage, therefore, is to contrast and to compare the Corinthians’ former religious experiences with their current experiences as Christians.

In verse 3, in relation to being “spiritual,” and on the grounds of the content of such utterances, Paul presents a substantial criterion for discerning the authentic Spirit-inspired utterances from the false utterances inspired by other gods. According to him, no one who is speaking by God’s Spirit can say “Jesus is cursed (‘Ανάθεμα Ἰησοῦς)” and no one is able to say “Jesus is Lord (Κύριος Ἰησοῦς),” except “in/by the Holy Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι ἅγιω).” Whether the expression, “Jesus is cursed (‘Ανάθεμα Ἰησοῦς),” is from an actual case that occurred in the church is disputable. Many scholars interpret it as a rhetorical device to focus on a fundamental Christian criterion for distinguishing the true from the false out of all inspired utterances, that is, the basic Christian confession “Jesus is Lord (Κύριος Ἰησοῦς).”

The gift of speaking in tongues, identified with their pre-Christian ecstatic experiences in

elitism through demonstrating all Christians with a baptismal confession, Jesus is Lord, not a tongue-speaking few, are “πνευματικοί (spiritual people).”

63 Literally ‘Ανάθεμα Ἰησοῦς is “Curse Jesus” with no verb, but “Jesus is cursed” or “Jesus is a curse” could be more likely by analogy with Κύριος Ἰησοῦς which is clearly translated into “Jesus is Lord.” Either a Jewish heritage of “ἀνάθημα (annihilation)” or a Greco-Roman heritage of curse practices in pagan religion may be related to Ἰησοῦς (Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 204, n.8; Witherington, Conflicts & Community in Corinth, 256). A variety of possible explanations are suggested by scholars to explain the enigmatic statement, ‘Ανάθεμα Ἰησοῦς. See Bassler “Critical Notes,” 418; Walter Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 124-132; Winter, After Paul Left Corinth, 164-183; and Thiselton, First Corinthians, 192-194.

64 Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 204; Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 581; Hays, First Corinthians, 209; Horsley, 1 Corinthians, 168-169; and Sampley, “The First Letter to the Corinthians,” 941.
temples, seems to be Paul’s real focus. The problem in the Corinthian church seems to be that many considered ecstasy or inspired utterances as proof of inspiration by the Spirit. For Paul, in other words, the problem of authentic utterance inspired by God’s Spirit must be resolved on the ground of “the intelligible and Christian content of such utterances,” rather than their ecstatic or unintelligible nature. In this way, Paul rejects spiritual elitism by affirming that all baptized Christians can and should be “spiritual,” regardless of whether they are in ecstasy or not. The true working of the Spirit in the church is the speaking of the crucified and risen Jesus as Lord through all believers who gather together for worship and fellowship. Hence Paul’s point here is not that no one can possibly say “Jesus is Lord” without the Spirit, but that no one can confess “Jesus as Lord without the prompting of the Holy Spirit in the human heart.” For Paul, the criterion for distinguishing the true Spirit-inspired utterances from the false ones, or the test for discerning in whom the Spirit is at work, is the confession, “Jesus is Lord (Κύριος Ἰησοῦς).” He views this statement not just as a dogmatic assertion or intellectual conviction, but as a confession of faith. It is uttered in the multifarious contexts of daily experiences by God’s Spirit who actualizes the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the lives of all Christians. The confession “Jesus is Lord (Κύριος Ἰησοῦς)” needs to be examined further as a criterion or test for the actual Christian utterances in the church. Thus Witherington points out, “Throughout this section Paul

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65 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 578.

66 Witherington, Conflicts and Community in Corinth, 257.

67 “Lord (Κύριος)” is the title by which Paul includes Jesus Christ in the divine identity. Paul presents a shared Christian confession which recognizes that God has already inaugurated a new era of God’s Kingdom with Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus as the eschatological Judge is still to come in glory to bring God’s Kingdom to its consummation (1 Cor. 4:1-5). In this confession, thus, Jesus as the present Lord over all is the agent of God in Christian community and God’s Spirit is recognizable by making the historical Jesus present therein as Lord. See Fee, Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-theological Study (Peabody, MA:
stresses the agency of the Spirit and of God over against the agency of the individual human
who does the speaking. Thus he speaks of the ‘manifestation’ of the Spirit, what is to be
attributed ultimately to the Spirit, not to the human speaker. He does this to deflate the self-
estimate of certain members of his audience.\footnote{Witherington, \textit{Conflicts & Community in Corinth}, 257.}
Since Paul argues that manifestations of the Spirit in the church are not for human spiritual status but for exaltation of the Son in whom the Father is glorified, many of the Corinthians need to grasp the full scope of the confession of Jesus as Lord which refers to God’s divine activity in history.

Presumably Paul did not mean this as a kind of magic text. There is thus a difference between simple intellectual agreement and a confession of faith. To those who confess Jesus as Lord, the confessed Lord Jesus is the gospel of God within their concrete context. What is testified by the Spirit in the church is that the living God is working in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. Consequently, authentic Christian speaking, authorized by the Spirit in the gathered church, is discernable if it claims Jesus as Lord and then glorifies God.

\textbf{B. The Unity and Diversity of the Spirit’s Work in the Body of Christ (4-11; 12-26)}

Paul’s emphasis on God’s initiative in the kind of speaking that occurs in the church is developed into the sovereign initiative of God in allocating and empowering all spiritual gifts in the faith community for the common good. The foundational unity of believers in the public confession of Jesus as Lord, authorized by the Spirit, is illuminated in the diversity of spiritual manifestations. This diversity reflects the triune God by whom all spiritual gifts have been given to every believer of the church as the actual body of Christ. In Paul’s view, all kinds of differences in gifts, ministries and works are not a source of disunity or

\footnote{Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 20-25, 123-124.}
stratification, but part of God’s action according to God’s infinite plenitude for the world.

Paul argues against a divided community by saying that Corinthian church constituted by the Spirit in the uniting confession of Jesus as Lord is the body of Christ. In its continuing formation, the body of Christ makes God’s power and presence manifest in the world. In Paul’s vision of Christ’s body, each member is gifted and invaluable to the edification of the community which depends on participation from all.

In verses 4-6 Paul introduces God as the source of graced gifts (χαρίσματα), ministries (διακονίαι), and works (ἐργήματα) with emphasis on the varieties of such gifts, ministries, and works. Countering the Corinthian overemphasis on the gift of speaking in tongues, Paul emphasizes not only the divine origin, but also the diversity of the manifestations of the one and same God in the church by the threefold repetition of both the word “diversities (διαφέροντες)” in an emphatic position at the beginning, and its antithetic word “same (τὸ ἀυτὸ/αὐτὸς)” at the ending of all three verses.69

Paul’s triadic formula of the one Spirit, one Lord, and one God as the divine agents provides the theological context for the following discussion on God’s manifestations in the body of Christ through the Spirit in a great variety of gifts, ministries, and works.70

Revealing that the gifts are due not to human ability, but to divine “grace (χάρις),” the word χαρίσματα, which is associated with the Spirit, reflects the central concern of Paul’s present argument. The noun διακονίαι associated with Lord, is a general term used for all kinds of

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69 The exact meaning of διαφέροντες is controversial. It can mean either “distributions” or “diversities.” The term διαφέροντες can primarily refer to the meaning of “distributions” as we consider that its cognate verb διαφέρων in verse 11 has the latter sense, but the term might also indicate “diversities” in the distributions in relation to the upcoming list of the variety of gifts in verses 8-10. See Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 207-208, n. 9; Carson, Showing the Spirit, 32.

70 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 586-587.
service in the secular Greco-Roman world. Paul seeks to broaden the Corinthians’ understanding of God’s manifestations which is biased in favor of the gift of speaking in tongues. For Paul, regardless of the possession of ecstatic gifts, all believers have been assigned their own part in the faith community to serve one another for the Lord. In this vein, Conzelmann notes on “ministries (διακονίαι)”: “The essential point is precisely that Paul now sets everyday acts of service on a par with the recognized, supernatural phenomena of the Spirit.” Thus, breaking down the argument of the so-called hyper-spiritual group, the word ἐνεργήματα is associated with God, the one who is ultimately working all things including “gifts” and “ministries” in all believers, as opposed to only “spiritual” things only found in the so-called “spiritual elite.” In Paul’s mind, “all things done in the church are ultimately effected by the powerful working of God.” The same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God governs the diversity of God’s manifestations in the church, and this diversity is a given in the very nature of God’s equipping the church. Consequently by this parallel structure of the diverse manifestations of the one and the same Spirit, Lord, and God in verses 4-6, Paul’s argument about being “spiritual” in the church is viewed not in terms of any one gift per se, but in terms of the charismatic community of faith where God has given his manifestations to many different people in diverse ways.

Subsuming the three terms—χαρίσματα, διακονίαι, and ἐνεργήματα—to describe the full range of God’s initiatives within the church under the idea of “the manifestations of the

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71 Conzelmann, I Corinthians, 208, n. 13, 14; Carson, Showing the Spirit, 33-34.

72 Conzelmann, I Corinthians, 208.

73 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 588. D. A. Carson also remarks, “Paul tends to flatten distinctions between ‘charismatic’ gifts and ‘noncharismatic’ gifts in the modern sense of those terms.” See Carson, Showing the Spirit, 34.
Spirit (ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος),” verse 7 further stresses that they “are given (διδόται)” to each person not for personal status in the community, but “for the common good (πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον)” of the community. The many different inspired manifestations of God given to each person in the church not only have one single source, but also one ultimate aim, which is building up the faith community. Here Paul takes “Spirit” as standing in for all divine Persons and “manifestation” as encompassing all divinely-inspired activities in the church.

In verses 8-10, Paul offers a list of the manifestations of God’s Spirit in Christian gatherings, not as exhaustive but as representative. In light of the ecclesial situation in Corinth, the list illustrates the diverse ways in which the Spirit is manifested in Christian gatherings. Fee suggests a deliberate classification in this sample listing on the basis of Paul’s employment of two different words for “another,” which are ἀλλῶν and ἔτερων. Despite many attempts to classify a total of nine items of Paul’s list, his main focus, however, is not on ranking or grouping the gifts, but on displaying the diversity of the Spirit’s manifestations given to each believer. It is more notable that the diverse

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74 πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον is mostly translated as “for the common good,” but literally means “for profit,” or “for advantage.” The verse itself does not specify whether this profit or advantage is for the individual or for the community. In terms of the broader context of the immediate verses, communal profit or advantage is favored, because most likely all the gifts appear as useful for others. See Carson, Showing the Spirit, 34-35 and Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 208. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 26.

75 Paul places in parallel three groups of gifts, introduced by “to one (ὁ μὲν)” in verse 8 and “to another (ἑτέρῳ)” in verses 9 and 10b to stand for distinctions while using “to another (ἀλλῶν)” in verses 8, 9, 10a, and 10b. According to Fee, Paul’s first two gifts are chosen for specific ad hoc purposes to deal with the Corinthian pride in “wisdom (σοφία)” and in “knowledge (γνῶσις).” Then he adds a random list of five supernatural gifts and ends the argument of 1 Cor. 12-14 with the most problematic gift of speaking in tongues and its accompanying gift, interpretation of tongues. See Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 590-591; 584, n. 9.

76 The fact that the gifts of speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues are mentioned last in Paul’s lists (1 Cor. 12:8-10; 28; 29-30; 14:26) is to deemphasize what the Corinthians were overemphasizing, rather than to rank tongues as the least among spiritual gifts.
manifestations of the Spirit in Christian gatherings are prominently related to “utterance.””\(^77\)

In Paul’s view, being spiritual as a practical matter depends on the Christian practice of speaking in Christian gatherings. Whenever each person speaks in and by the Spirit, in other words, the gifts are diversely manifested for the common good of the community.\(^78\)

Paul concludes the arguments of this section in verse 11: “But all these things work the one and the same Spirit, distributing to each one according as the Spirit pleases (πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα διαίροιν ἰδία ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται).” Since the gifts are the actions of God’s Spirit, they are neither separable from the Spirit nor are they manifest without the Spirit in the church. The sovereign Spirit can also distribute and manifest new gifts for special needs in the life of the church. As Conzelmann remarks, Paul’s understanding of the Spirit is thus grounded in “the bond between the Spirit and the community.”\(^79\)

Paul’s emphasis in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 on the unity within diversity of the Spirit’s work connects to the next section (12:12-26) in order to argue for the diverse gifts given for the building up of the church by and through the one Spirit of God. Verses 12-26 deal with the one body of Christ in which each member contributes to the body as a whole. The logical

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\(^77\) Among the nine items of the Spirit’s manifestations, “utterance of wisdom (λόγος σοφίας),” “utterance of knowledge (λόγος γνώσεως),” “prophecy (προφητεία),” “different kinds of tongues (γενή γλωσσῶν),” and “interpretation of tongues (ἐρμήεια γλωσσῶν)” are clearly related to the divinely inspired utterance. Also “discernment of spirits (διακρίσεις πνεύματων)” is related to the divinely inspired utterance as we see it as “a specific assessing of prophecy” rather than as “a general testing of spirits” in the context of Paul’s argument. Further, “faith (πίστει),” “gifts of healing (χάρισματα ἰαμάτων),” and “workings of miracles (ἐνεργηματα δυνάμεων)” are not irrelevant to utterance because they are mostly actualized by the divinely inspired utterance. See Gillespie, The First Theologians, 105-106.

\(^78\) Paul’s primary focus of the entire section of chapters 12-14 is closely related to “speaking.” See Michelle V. Lee, Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 124.

\(^79\) Conzelmann, I Corinthians, 209.
“for (γὰρ)” in verse 12 introduces the section to elaborate the theme of the unity within diversity of the Spirit’s workings. In order to clarify his understanding of the Spirit’s workings, Paul offers the theological basis for the body imagery in verses 12-14 and then argues for diversity in the one body (vv. 15-20), and for mutual dependence among its members (vv. 21-26). In Paul’s time, the body image was well known and widely used as an analogy of human societies. The comparison between the human body and the social and political body was a rhetorical commonplace in Greco-Roman "homonoia (concord)" speeches of appeal for social unity. In the Greco-Roman homonoia rhetoric the body metaphor has a strong hierarchical element which stands for elite voices calling for social unity at the price of the diverse voices of women, slaves, and other marginalized people. However, Paul’s use of the body image is squarely different from “its usual role as a prop for upper-class ideology,” in that the Pauline version involves none of the hierarchical structure. He uses the body image to encourage “diversity” in the midst of Christian gatherings, by urging the strong of the community to respect and value the contributions of the weak. Fee argues that Paul’s point of the body image is “not the nature of the church per se but the need for it to experience its proper diversity in unity.” He remarks, thus, “Paul’s

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80 Here I follow Fee in dividing Paul’s argument into three sections: vv. 12-14, 15-20, and 21-26. See Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 600ff.

81 Hays, First Corinthians, 213. In some cases the body analogy was simply used to express the idea that individuals were parts of a social whole, sometimes to depict an ideal form of social organism, and most famously to legitimize the status quo and upper-class ideology. Mitchell reads Paul’s discourse of the “body of Christ” as a deliberative letter for the unity of the Corinthian believers against their factionalism on the basis of her exploration of the tradition of upper-class Greco-Roman homonoia rhetoric. See Mitchell, Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 68-83, 157-164; and Dale B. Martin, The Corinthian Body (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 38-68, 87-103.


83 Ibid., 47, 94.

84 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 602, n. 13.
concern is for their unity; but for him there is no such thing as true unity without diversity.”

Yet more importantly, Paul’s body analogy is made here to “Christ” rather than to the church.

In verse 12, Paul brings in the concept that Christ is the “σῶμα (body)” by making two points: “For just as the body is one and has many members (καθάπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἐν ἑστιν καὶ μέλη πολλὰ ἔκει), and all the members of the body, though many, are one body (πάντα δὲ τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος πολλὰ ἄντα ἐν ἑστιν σῶμα), so also it is with Christ (οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός).”

By the paired comparative particles καθάπερ and οὕτως, Paul applies the unity and diversity of the body to “Christ.” The identification of the body with Christ through the phrase “so also it is with Christ (οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός)” implies that Christ is one and has many members and all members of Christ, though many, are one body. Fee views the reference to Christ in this phrase as metonymy, where “Christ means the church as a shortened form for the body of Christ.” The “body of Christ” is a metaphor, but it functions to illuminate “the truth about the church’s union with and participation with Christ.” Hays rightly notes, Paul argues that the Jesus Community is “not merely a human organization; rather, it is brought into being by the activity of the Holy Spirit, which binds believers into a

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85 Ibid., 602.

86 Paul’s ecclesiological σῶμα language may originate from his own Damascus encounter with the risen Lord Jesus who identified himself with the believers. See Acts 9:22 and 26.

87 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 603. Carson also considers that the body metaphor takes a strange twist at the end of verse 12, suggesting Paul’s argument of the body metaphor is far more important than its other uses in Greco-Roman politics and rhetoric. According to Hays, Paul seems to make an ontological equation of the church with Christ by identifying the many members of the church directly with Christ. See Carson, Showing the Spirit, 42-43; Hays, First Corinthians, 213.

88 Hays, First Corinthians, 213.
living union with the crucified and risen Lord.”

Paul’s concept of the communal Christ as the “σῶμα (body),” is thus illuminated in terms of the Spirit in the following verse 13.

Joining verse 12 to verse 13 with another introductory “for indeed (καί γάρ),” Paul provides the basis for the idea demonstrated in verse 12. He states, “For indeed in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body (καί γάρ ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμείς πάντες εἰς ἑνὸ σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν), whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free, and all were made to drink one Spirit (εἶτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἶτε Ἑλληνες, εἶτε δοῦνες εἶτε ἐλεύθεροι, καί πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποσίσθημεν).” Paul’s concept of Christ as the “σῶμα (body)” is explicit here in light of the Spirit’s workings. According to Paul, all believers constitute one body by their baptism in the one Spirit. The emphatic phrase “in one Spirit (ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι)” is often rendered “by one Spirit” in reference to the Spirit as an agent of baptism, but the locative preposition ἐν stresses that the Spirit is not the agent of baptism but the location in which all believers become one body through baptism. Paul’s point here is that all Christians have been baptized “in (ἐν)” one Spirit “into (εἰς)” one body. In other words, the one Spirit is the communal sphere in which all believers have been placed by Christ, and the one body is the end for which the Spirit works in incorporating all believers into Christ as Lord. Here Paul

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89 Ibid., 213-214.

90 Christ is the baptizer who baptizes his people “in one Spirit” in light of John the Baptist’s prediction of the baptism in the Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). According to Fee, “in one Spirit (ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι)” is locative because nowhere else in the New Testament does this dative with “baptize” imply agency. Carson also notes that whenever the preposition ἐν is used with the verb “baptize” in the New Testament, it never expresses the agent. See Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 605-606; and Carson, Showing the Spirit, 47.

91 We can call the Spirit the “instrumental” agent in Christ’s placing of believers into the one body through his baptizing work. In addition, in the Pauline corpus “baptism into one body” means basically the same as “baptism into Christ.” Thus, “one body” in verse 13 indicates the communal Christ himself as the whole body with many members. See Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27.
refers to the Spirit’s activity of bringing God’s people to life and to their essential unity not in terms of the sacramental act of water baptism (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-17) but because of “their common experience of the Spirit” at the time of conversion. Fee notes that Paul’s two parallel descriptions of being baptized in “one Spirit” and being made to drink “one Spirit” in verse 13 refer to all believers’ common experiences of the Spirit as the basis of their unity. In Paul’s view, all believers are formed and built up into the one body of Christ with many individual differences, such as ethnicity and social status, in the power of the one and same Spirit who works on all believers to unite them to Christ and works in them to live in their union with Christ.

Verse 14 elaborates Paul’s other point of verse 12 with another “for indeed (καὶ γὰρ).” “For indeed the body is not one member, but many (καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἐστὶν ἐν μέλος ἀλλὰ πολλά).” Paul highlights again the necessity of diversity within the unified body with a negative contrast in which the one body has not one but “many” members. With regard to the implications of verse 13, it is the Spirit who forms the one body to unite all, no matter who baptized them. Fee remarks, “The Spirit is understood by Paul to be responsible for making ‘one body’ of the many people who become ‘members’ of the new people of God.” Paul’s concerns for diversity in unity are developed in verses 15-20 and 21-26, which apply the body imagery to Corinthian situation.

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94 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 607.

95 Ibid.
In his personification of the various parts of the body, Paul argues for the necessity of all members in the one body and against the Corinthian elitist view of the gift of speaking in tongues that divides the community. Every member in the Corinthian body has his or her own distinct part to play for the benefit of the community, just as each constituent part of the body has its own distinctive purpose in the functioning of the whole. Here Paul’s point is not the superiority or inferiority of some members but the need for all members. Since the body comes into existence in a practical way when all members function, they should not deny their need for one another as well as their own place in the body. Paul challenges the Corinthians to see their place in the body as a divine arrangement for the body as a whole. Since God is sovereign in placing the various members in the body, “[i]t is believers who are enabled and used by God; God is not used by them.” Every member in the body should use the gifts that God has given for the benefit of the community, rather than longing to be different or insisting on doing things that God has not gifted.

In contrast to the cultural hierarchical attribution of status and honor, in God’s arrangement the seemingly weak members are indispensable, the seemingly less honorable ones are given greater honor, and the seemingly less respectable ones are treated with greater respect. In his confrontation with those who think themselves especially “spiritual,” Paul calls for unity based on mutual care and empathy in which all members are suffering and rejoicing with one another as the members of the one body.

C. Paul’s Practical Claim for the Body of Christ in the Spirit (27-31)

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96 Hays, First Corinthians, 215.

97 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 610-611.

98 Witherington, Conflicts & Community in Corinth, 259.
Paul sums up his argument with another general list of the gifts in verses 27-31. In verse 27, he makes explicit what is already implicit, and identifies Corinthian believers as the body of Christ: “Now you are the body of Christ, and respectively members of it (ὡς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους).” In the following verses, Paul argues again for the need for diversity in gifts and ministries by means of a rather different list from the preceding list of gifts. In verse 28, again he makes sure that God is sovereign in placing the gifts and people in the church: “and God has appointed some in the church (καὶ οὐς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ).” Ranking apostles, prophets, and teachers by the explicit use of ordinal numbers “first, second, third (πρῶτον, δεύτερον, τρίτον),” Paul brings up a hierarchical order in the church. Then he places “various kinds of speaking with tongues (γένη γλωσσῶν)” at the end, after other unnumbered forms of “miracles, gifts of healings, helps, and administrations (δυνάμεις, χάρισματα ἱαμάτων, ἀντιλήψεις, κυβερνήσεις).” This listing includes gifts, persons, and ministries as the forms in which God is working for the common good of the community. The text itself is silent about the criteria behind this ranking. It is clear that his preferential view for the weak does not negate the differentiation of gifts. Here Paul’s practical claim for the Corinthian body of Christ seems to be a mix of his ideal vision of the body of Christ and his recognition of the differentiation of its constituent members. In light of both “edification (οἰκοδομή)” as the norm of exercising all gifts of grace in the consequent Chapter 14 and the stated purpose of the Spirit’s workings “for the common good (πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον)” of the community, his claim of priority for the apostles, prophets, and teachers is related to the functions of all three roles.99 Here Paul is broadening the range of

99 Gillespie, The First Theologians, 123.
the activity of God’s Spirit beyond the Corinthian bias for tongues. In the larger context of the Spirit’s diverse work in the life of the church, the order of Paul’s list seems to follow the importance and usefulness of each one in building up the Corinthian body of Christ. Here Paul’s primary concern, however, is listing gifts and ministries for diversity within unity of the body of Christ. In verses 29-30, Paul lists most of these gifts and ministries again in an emphatic series of rhetorical questions which expect a firm negative answer. Paul prepares Corinthian believers to apply his points from the previous sections in Chapter 12 to their situations by the repetition of “Are not all… (μὴ πάντες…)?” Thiselton rightly sums up Paul’s points in his arguments, “No single individual receives every gift; hence each Christian needs the other, and the whole church is interdependent in mutual need and reciprocal respect.” Lastly he refers to love as the right way and context in which all gifts, including the many possible manifestations of the Spirit, should be exercised. In verse 31, Paul urges the Corinthians to strive for the greater gifts which are more useful in building up the Corinthian body of Christ.

100 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 617. Carson also remarks that Paul’s purpose here is “not to establish ecclesiastical order but to stress the rich diversity of God’s good gifts poured out on the church.” Carson, Sharing the Spirit, 50. According to Hays, “[t]he numbering of the first three items (apostles, prophets, and teachers) may indicate something about temporal order in which these gifts come into play in the construction of the Christian community” and “the other items (miracles, gifts of healing, assistance, direction, tongues) are not arranged in any hierarchical order.” Hays, First Corinthians, 217. Witherington notes, “[t]he functions of all three roles are carried out by proclamation of the Word. The rest of both lists (v. 28 and vv. 29f) is not persons but of functions, and there is no indication that the ranking continues (from most to least important or in any other way) with these functions. They are given as simply a representative listing to show the diversity of the body.” See Witherington, Conflicts & Community in Corinth, 261.

101 Thiselton, First Corinthians, 215. This does not mean, however, that there is no order in the church. Even Paul himself has to make an argument for the primacy of apostleship and his calling as an apostle in order to claim the authority necessary to get the Corinthians to accept what he says. Paul’s arguments for the ecclesial interdependence in mutual need and reciprocal respect are not to give up any order but to present a way in which such order needs to be performed for the building up of the community of faith.
III. Christian Preaching and Pauline Vision of the Body of Christ in the Spirit

Paul’s theology of the Spirit is provided for the correction of the communal life of Corinthian believers within their context of diversity, conflict, and division. In dealing with divisions which have occurred over what it means to be “spiritual” in Christian gatherings, Paul attaches significance to the Spirit’s workings for all. Fee remarks in his exegesis of chapter 12: “even though the Spirit is not mentioned as such, the whole continues to deal with Spirit phenomena in the church.” First of all, Paul’s corrective of Corinthian abuse of the gift of speaking in tongues is to claim the initiating agency of God over any human abilities in their communal life as the body of Christ. In his view, the Spirit is the central locus of the powerful working of God who realizes all the accomplishments of the crucified and risen Christ Jesus in order for all believers to be the body of Christ. Paul argues that all members of the community are called to participate in the Spirit’s workings through their mutual giving and receiving of the Spirit’s manifestations “for the common good.” In this way they become one body and live out their Christian lives as the body of the crucified and risen Christ in the world.

Paul’s vision of the faith community in the Spirit was not actualized in the Corinthian body. It is an ideal. However, his arguments of the Spirit’s workings with diversity in unity for the “building up” of the body of Christ in Christian gatherings suggest to us some potential to radically reinvent preaching as a Christian utterance in the Spirit’s working. In light of the living God who works all things in all believers, Paul’s struggle with what the

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103 Ibid., 188.
Corinthian body of Christ should look like provides us with guidance for preaching with a “demonstration of the Spirit and power.” This enables us to approach preaching as an ecclesial dynamic of mutual giving and receiving of the Spirit.

Paul’s descriptions of the Spirit’s workings in Christian gatherings supply the encompassing direction for a clear sense of what Christian preaching should achieve. The Spirit is for him the unifying agent of God, who makes all believers one body through authorizing the public confession of Jesus as Lord. Furthermore, Paul associates the Spirit’s workings with the continual formation of the community of believers in the world. For Paul, the Spirit’s workings in Christian gatherings are not only to edify the “unskilled (ἰδιώται),” but also to bring the “unbelievers (ἄπιστοι)” to faith. 104

Instead of emphasizing one gift over others, Paul envisions a dynamic community of the Spirit in which all gifts are held equally. These gifts manifest the one Spirit who gives authority to testify Jesus as Lord and empowers all to function in their own parts for ecclesial edification.

A dynamic unity of the community of believers is experienced and operative in a divinely given diversity of spiritual gifts which are grounded in distinctive characteristics of personality and contexts. The Spirit is depicted by Paul as the locus or source of not only Christian unity but also diversity (1 Cor. 12:8-11, 13). Paul’s employment of the body image strengthens his correction of communal behavior in relation to the exercise of spiritual gifts and the factionalism among the Corinthian Christians. For him, the benchmark against which all behavior is measured is the mutual building up of the body of Christ through Christian exaltation of Jesus as Lord over all in every way and through every gift. The various

104 1 Corinthians 14: 23-25.
definable purposes of preaching are subject to the mission of the Spirit as the primary agent. These purposes are to build up the body of Christ and to transform all spheres of human life into the reign of God through the ecclesial embodiment of the Spirit’s power and presence in and for the world.

Paul emphasizes God’s primacy throughout the chapter by concentrating on the action and locus of power in God’s Spirit even though manifestations of the Spirit take a variety of forms in Christian gatherings. All Christians can and should be “spiritual” in Christian gatherings through actual speaking of the crucified Jesus as the risen Lord by and in the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Since it is the Spirit who is at work in confessing Jesus as Lord, all Christians at least potentially have the capacity for Christian utterances. Developing God’s primacy with regard to the origin, proper exercise, and understanding of spiritual gifts within the church, he presents a vision of the faith community in the Spirit who works for diversity within unity and for unity within diversity. Paul’s appeal is made on the basis of all believers’ common participation in the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Corinthian believers were a mixed group with differences. But in the Spirit they were all baptized “into one body.” The Spirit’s manifestations for the building up of the body of Christ are diverse, much as the needs and problems of the world are. Thus, for Paul, diversity is essential for and consistent with unity of the body of Christ for the redemptive reign of God in the world. In Paul’s vision of the body of Christ in the Spirit, worldly values are inverted by God. The seemingly inferior part receives the greater honor so that all might be considered equal in value (1 Cor. 12:22-24). Thus Paul urges an ethic of mutuality and regard for all with no exclusion of any members from the building up of the body of Christ in the Spirit’s work (1 Cor. 12:14-21).

Paul’s arguments for God’s fundamental and ultimate control over spiritual matters
provide the pneumatic and ecclesial foundation for Christian preaching through all believers’ participation in the Spirit’s workings. In Christian gatherings, Christian utterances involve a variety of speech forms, including not only preaching but also prophecy, teaching, prayer, and tongues (1 Cor. 12:8-10). Any form of Christian utterance can be a Christian proclamation insofar as Jesus is testified and exalted as Lord. From the Pauline vision of the body of Christ, more basically, we can conclude that Christian utterances are not simply the speaking of the “mouth.” They are the speaking of the entire “Body” through all believers’ attentive participation in that speaking. In terms of formal preaching, therefore, Christian proclamation is not a preaching of individual preachers but the preaching of the church through communal participation in the Spirit’s workings through mutual giving and receiving of the manifestation of preaching.

Throughout 1 Corinthians, meanwhile, Paul exercises authority as an apostle. Instead of appealing to the personal authority of an office, however, he grounds his teaching in the authority of the gospel of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ and in the Spirit’s work of bringing the church into being and then incessantly building it up as the one body of Christ. Since God is ministering to all members of the body of Christ through all things, no single person, group, culture, stratum, experience, or testimony can alone identify God’s Spirit. Thus, the body of Christ, shaped by the Spirit’s initiative, is characterized by the ministerial nature of each member making room for others according to the Spirit’s workings (1 Cor. 12:27). All believers have their own authority under the ministerial authority of the Spirit of God. The preaching event also occurs as the Spirit’s initiative works through all of the preachers and hearers who participate in the communicative acts of God’s Spirit “for the common good.” In the Pauline vision of the body of Christ in the Spirit, therefore, the office
of Christian preaching is primarily grounded in the communal act of the entire church. The communal office of preaching that belongs to the entire church has priority over the individual office of preaching bestowed to a preacher, and derives from the ultimate Preacher, God. Even the individual office of preaching is not just for the edification of believers in their daily lives, but also for the building up of the preaching community in the service of the Spirit in the world as a concrete preoccupation of the reign of God. Thus, a vivid feature of Christian gatherings in Paul’s vision is that all believers bring something of the living God who is experienced and mediated in their lives by the Spirit. The experience is shared by the word of teaching and revelation, spiritual songs, or speaking in tongues and the interpretations thereof (1 Cor. 14:26). In this manner, the faith community is built up in the Spirit to fully represent God in diverse concretion in constantly new ways.

In order to bring factionalism to an end, Paul argues that all gifts, assigned as the Spirit wishes, are for service of others, and all things done in the church are ultimately affected by the powerful workings of God. In the Spirit, he insists, all believers are incorporated “into one body” no matter who baptizes them and no matter how their culture, background and ethnicity differ. Paul asserts that they are built up into the body of Christ by their mutual embodiment of Jesus as their common Lord through the diverse manifestations of the various gifts given by the Spirit. The believers’ mutual giving and receiving of the manifestations of the gifts of grace in the Spirit become their very functioning as the body of Christ.

In calling for participation from all, Paul is encouraging the church as a living body to embody an alternative community of mutual love and care, which is a sign of God’s redemptive Kingdom in the world (1 Cor. 12:22-26). The various differences and issues
experienced by people in their daily lives are the resources for the deeper and broader actualization of the crucified Jesus as the risen Lord over all. In Christian gatherings, the Spirit thus works for proclamation through communal participation of every member for building up the body of Christ in the world. In terms of the common arguments for the “how” in preaching, we tend to focus narrowly on the sermonic invention of individual preachers for effective preaching. But this understanding of proclamation through all believers’ participation in the Spirit’s working calls for a more radical structure of proclamation that enables everyone’s contribution in the manifestation of preaching in Christian gatherings.
CHAPTER 2

John Calvin’s Spirit-centered Understanding of Christian Preaching

Paul’s vision of the body of Christ in the Spirit depicts God’s sovereign initiative and the communal agency of the entire church in proclamation. From the constitution of the Christian Church as the body of Christ to its fulfilled embodiment of God’s fullness and glory in the world, proclamation cannot be separated from its ecclesial dimension. As William Willimon claims, “Preaching is specifically Christian when it is biblical, but it is not biblical unless it is ecclesial.” In light of Paul’s arguments against a divided community, the preaching event can be viewed as an ecclesial dynamic in which the Spirit actualizes God’s presence here and now among the gathered church. God is involved in the preaching event through the Spirit’s work. In a dual activity of God and human beings in proclamation, the Spirit is the activated sphere where God is involved to empower all believers and where they speak and hear from their divinely-given place in the body.

Referring to the reciprocal pronoun “one another (ἀλλήλων)” as “an important part of early Christian ecclesiology,” Jeremy Thomson claims that preaching or teaching in the early church was a “mutual responsibility of all.” In this view, Christian utterance as an inspired activity in all its diverse forms and manifestations would be identifiable as proclamation, but no determined form of preaching can be identified in the early church. Due to the scanty documentary evidences of sermonic fixed form, the true beginning of Christian preaching has been traced back only as far as Origen’s preaching or the Paschal homily of

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Melito of Sardis in the middle of the second century. In the historical context of Jewish synagogue preaching and Greco-Roman rhetoric, however, the early church grew out of the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. In a culture of where oratory was prominent, the apostolic proclamation of the gospel was primarily to bear witness to the crucified and risen Christ as experienced in their own contexts. Though both the synagogue and the pagan world knew activities akin to preaching, its real origin was decisively the gospel, rather than the preparatory forces of ancient oratory and Hebrew prophecy. Most historians thus view the first two centuries before Origen as part of the history of Christian preaching. Paul Wilson argues for the necessity of the study of preaching in the early church: “With Paul and his community, we have no evidence of any interest in defining preaching or in setting the limits or conditions of a sermon. Indeed even contemporary definitions are inadequate to meet the rich and textured history of Christian proclamation in and out of church, by lay and ordered Christians, including martyrdom which was considered by the early Church to be the highest

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107 A homily in Greek, later called a sermon in Latin, took shape as a unique type of rhetoric in the time of Origen (ca. 184-254). According to Origen, homily is a distinctive form of preaching which is (1) preached in the liturgical assembly (2) with an indubitable prophetic quality, and (3) based on a running or continuous exposition of the biblical texts (4) in direct style and conversational tone. In his understanding of preaching, the homily was “a mutual search by preacher and congregation - a seeking after the voice of God which inflects towards them and a praying together for the Holy Spirit to give them understanding of its utterance.” See Thomas K. Carroll, Preaching the Word: Message of the Fathers of the Church, Vol. II (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 18, 42-61.

form of witness.”

Based on key Pauline texts, Thomas Gillespie argues that early Christian prophecy was a theological and ethical interpretation of the gospel in the local churches requiring testing by hearers. Alistair Stewart-Sykes also claims that prophecies and their communal discernment were a form of functional preaching in the household setting of the early church. According to Stewart-Sykes, the *homilia* (*ὁμιλία*), which means “conversation,” was a communal activity open to many different persons in Christian gatherings, as was testing the given prophecies under the reliable authority of the leading Spirit. The whole church thus shared the ministry of preaching the gospel for the building up of the church.

Through history Christian preaching unfolded in quite a different way, however. The early church became institutionalized under the impact of persecution, rising heresy, and increasing contact with secular culture. The adoption of the scholastic practices of synagogue preaching to read and interpret Scripture, and the Greco-Roman rhetoric to ethically persuade and harmonize people, meant a gradual shift from a variety of forms of extempore utterances to a sermonic fixed form of preaching. In the church’s development from informal community to ordered institution, the dynamism of the gospel coming from experiences of God in the Spirit as well as in Jesus Christ was gradually overwhelmed by the more tangible dimensions of Scripture and tradition as the authorship of the gospel. Scripture and a formalized tradition thus came to be more important for the ministry of the word. Christian utterance in all various forms and manifestations was brought under restraint and emphasis.

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was placed on an orderly process as the authorized channel for the Spirit in a liturgical style of worship. Consequently, a more formalized ministry of the word was developed through an individualized office of preaching in which individual clergy were legitimized in a hierarchic ecclesiastical arrangement that diminished the communal dynamics of spiritual gift and function by and for the whole body.\textsuperscript{112}

Gradually preaching practice began to change from manifestations of Christian utterances into a more stereotyped style, employing “more artificial rhetoric addressed to cultured audiences.”\textsuperscript{113} Partly through the influence of Augustine, the highly rhetorical Latin sermon developed into the “classical shape” of Christian preaching.\textsuperscript{114} A decline in preaching was observed in the widespread practice of reading a patristic homily at the mass in Western

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\textsuperscript{112} In his \textit{A Brief History of Preaching}, Brilioth remarks: “Parallel with the development of church order and the cult, there was also a similar development in preaching; the cessation of the charismatic gifts compelled greater attention to the outward forms. In the later ancient church the task of preaching was the bishop’s prerogative, as the possessor of the office of teaching; this task was not necessarily united with the office of presbyter, even though the presbyter could also be given the responsibility of preaching.”(19) Besides synagogue preaching and Greco-Roman rhetoric, the decline of the charismatic ministries, the widening gap between clergy and laity, an increase of church numbers, and the change from the use of house churches to church buildings also led to the development of formalized preaching. With regard to the process of institutionalization and clericalization of the churches, see David C. Norrington, \textit{To Preach or Not to Preach? The Church’s Urgent Question} (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1996), 24-33 and Bernard Cooke, \textit{Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology} (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 58-74.
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\textsuperscript{114} O. C. Edwards Jr., \textit{A History of Preaching} (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 102. Augustine’s \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} synthesized Latin Christian preaching into Ciceronian rhetorical discipline. Applying the rules of classical rhetoric to preaching, he related the purposes of preaching to the use of various styles of public discourse: teaching to the plain style, delighting to the middle style, and moving to the grand style. The concept of the Latin sermon would overlap the basic definition of a sermon given by Edwards: “A speech delivered in a Christian assembly for worship by an authorized person that applies some point of doctrine, usually drawn from a biblical passage, to the lives of the members of the congregation with the purpose of moving them by the use of narrative analogy and other rhetorical devices to accept that application and to act on the basis of it (3-4).”
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Christendom after the high days of Augustine in the West and Chrysostom in the East.\textsuperscript{115} Wilson remarks that in the Middle Ages the Bible increasingly became “the private text of a privileged few...Many preachers were often mere mouthpieces for mechanical translation from sermons by the church fathers in the common language of the people.”\textsuperscript{116} Although preaching was vitalized from time to time, largely through Dominican and Franciscan friars, it tended to degenerate to a mechanical level until the Reformation.\textsuperscript{117}

The Protestant Reformation spearheaded by Martin Luther and John Calvin, represents a season of renewal in the history of preaching. There were a number of factors behind this awakening: the decline and corruption of the papacy; the moral corruption in the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church; the religious mystical and pietistic movement in the late middle ages; the early reforming movement by John Wycliffe, John Huss, and the like; the growing appeal of the humanist movement to return to the sources (\textit{ad fonts}) in place since the Renaissance; and the growth of nationalist consciousness. The decisive factor for the Reformers, however, was the discovery of the gospel as God’s word. They discovered the living God in the interaction between listeners and the spoken words about God. Hughes Oliphant Old notes: “The classical Protestant Reformation produced a distinct school of preaching. It was a preaching of reform, to be sure, but it was also a reform of preaching.”\textsuperscript{118} Rediscovering the nature of Christian faith, the Reformers rediscovered the nature of the


\textsuperscript{116} Paul S. Wilson, \textit{A Concise History of Preaching} (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 67-68.

\textsuperscript{117} Holland, \textit{The Preaching Tradition}, 37-41.

church as God’s people and the whole body of the faithful of God.

It was in this context that Calvin emphasized the primacy and importance of God’s grace. Despite a still individualized understanding of the preaching office, his Spirit-centered understanding of preaching as a mark of the true church evokes the communal reality of preaching.

I. John Calvin the Preacher and Preaching in Calvin’s Understanding of Church

John Calvin (1509-1564) is mostly associated with the city of Geneva and his work of systematic theology, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. However, Calvin considered himself neither systematic theologian in the modern sense nor the “pope of Geneva.” Rather, he considered himself a pastor and a preacher. Through *Institutes*, Calvin sought to make the meaning of the Bible clear, rather than set up a colossal system of theology. His purpose was “to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the divine Word, in order that they may be able both to have easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling.”\(^{119}\) Calvin’s preaching and biblical commentaries are thus just as important as *Institutes*. While Calvin was undoubtedly a theologian, he became a theologian in order to fulfill his duties as a pastor and a preacher.

In 1536, Calvin began his preaching ministry in Geneva with expositions on the letters of Paul at the request of Guillaume Farel, who had initiated the reform movement in that city. In 1538 he was expelled from Geneva and called back in 1541. During his ministerial years in Geneva (1531-1538, 1541-1564) and even during his sojourn years in Geneva (1538-1541), Calvin preached God’s word continuously. Following the example of the church fathers he preached through almost all of the books of Scripture in order. On that first Sunday back in the pulpit of St. Peter’s, Calvin began to preach, starting exactly where

he left off three years earlier. Presumably, as his general pattern, he would preach an hour
long sermon twice on Sundays and once on two other days. Unfortunately there is little
record of Calvin preaching before 1549, but we still have 1,460 extant sermons and there are
about 1,000 further lost manuscripts. His sermons are a significant supplement to the
theology of Institutes and also function as a corrective to the traditional interpretation of
Calvin. According to Parker, the common pattern of Calvin’s sermons was prayer,
recapitulation of the previous sermon, two or more movements into the texts that went from
exegesis and exposition to application and exhortation to obedience, followed by a final
summary and a call to prayer. Calvin believed that the preacher’s primary task was to
expound the Scriptures as the voice of God. He usually explicated the Scriptures verse by
verse and applied them to the life and experience of the congregation as clearly and briefly as
he could. Without a manuscript, Calvin preached extemporaneously although he was always
carefully prepared. In a sense, his commentaries were the fruits of his preaching and his
sermons were his commentaries extended and applied. By a plain and clear method of
interpreting and preaching God’s word, Calvin sought “edification, the building up of the
believer in the knowledge and love of God.” His aim in preaching was “the transformation
of the entire community effected by the Holy Spirit operating through the Word.” Calvin’s
thorough confidence in the truths of the word, his unwearied zeal for preaching the word, and

121 John H. Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today,”
in John Calvin & the Church: A Prism of Reform, ed., Timothy George (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John
Knox Press, 1990), 207.
122 Ibid.
123 T. H. L. Parker, The Oracles of God: An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin (London,
124 Parker, Calvin’s Preaching, 17.
125 Ibid., 52.
his inspired vision of the formation of the new community through the word, made him the most influential preacher in the “wave of mighty reformatory preaching.”

Within the situation of the fragmented churches of the various Protestant groups, Calvin’s compelling concern, as a second generation reformer, was “the restoration of the Church to its primitive splendor.” Justifying separation from the Roman Catholic Church, he defended the validity of the Reformation as the restoration of the true church. For Calvin, above all, the gospel existed before the church and gave the church its being. Like the other reformers, he viewed the canonization of the New Testament by the church not as a determination, but as an acknowledgement of and a submission to the truth proclaimed by God. In his comments on Psalm 22:30-31, Calvin writes, “God begets and multiplies his Church only by means of his word...it is by the preaching of the grace of God alone that the Church is kept from perishing.” Calvin provided a solid foundation for the churches of the Reformation with the convinced vision of the true church based on the word. Ecclesiology was “a foundation for extending the values of God’s rule into every realm of human life.” Calvin made decisive contributions to the development of the Protestant understanding of the church following Luther’s understanding of the church based on the doctrine of justification by faith.

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129 Calvin, Commentary on the Psalms Vol. 1, 368-369.

130 George, John Calvin & the Church, 23.

131 As the pioneer of the Reformation, Luther’s intention was not to leave the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, his ecclesiology was a temporary measure to justify a temporary withdrawal from the Roman Catholic Church until it returned to the true gospel. However, Calvin, as a second generation reformer, undertook the task of developing a systematic and coherent ecclesiology on the basis of the Scriptures as well as on Luther’s fragmented thoughts of the church. In comparison to Luther’s ecclesiology as secondary to the gospel, Calvin viewed the doctrine of the church as part of the gospel. While Luther tended to spiritualize the nature of the church by concentrating on Christ as the center of the invisible church, Calvin tended to objectify the form of the church to distinguish more carefully between the true and false church. For both, however, the gospel of God’s justification of sinners by grace through faith was the decisive factor in marking the presence of the true
Grounding the church in God’s action, Calvin makes a distinction between the invisible and the visible church. In *Institutes*, he describes the church as the “mother of believers,” “the body of Christ,” “the community of all the elect,” and the “community of saints.”¹³² According to Calvin, the church is all God’s elect who are united to Christ as one body and only known to God. By accommodating God to the human fallen state, God gives us “the visible Church as mother of believers,” where believers are born, nurtured, and matured.¹³³ Since God saves sinners through the true visible church, there is no possibility of salvation outside of it. Apart from “her bosom one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation.”¹³⁴ Calvin also viewed the visible church as the school for believers’ gradual education towards full “manhood” in Christ.¹³⁵ By the maternal and educational functions of the visible church as God’s instituted means of grace, believers are assured of their membership in the invisible church. For Calvin, the primary image of the church was the body of Christ as a living organism centered on Christ. As the body of Christ, the church is a community that God provides as an agency for God’s saving activity in the world. Consequently, the discernment of the true visible church is a primary concern in his understanding of the church.

In *Institutes IV*, Calvin offers us the marks of the true church: “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to

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¹³³ Ibid., IV.1.4.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., IV.1.5.
Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists…. If it has the ministry of the Word and honours it, if it has the administration of the sacraments, it deserves without doubt to be held and considered a church.”

When God is present in the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments, the church “becomes visible to our eyes.” Through these essential marks of the church, Calvin claims the unity of the church based not on the apostolic succession alleged by the Roman Catholic Church, but on the apostolic truth of Christ. At the same time he criticized the radical reformers who sought to separate from the true visible church due to her imperfection. Even in his comment on 1 Timothy 3:15, Calvin claims that the preaching of the gospel is decisive in distinguishing the church:

Paul does not wish that any society, in which the truth of God does not hold a lofty and conspicuous place, shall be acknowledged to be a Church; now there is nothing of all this in Popery, but only ruin and desolation; and, therefore, the true mark of a Church is not found in it. But the mistake arises from this, that they do not consider, what was of the greatest importance, that the truth of God is maintained by the pure preaching of the gospel; and that the support of it does not depend on the faculties or understandings of men, but rests on what is far higher, that is, if it does not depart from the simple word of God.

Although church discipline is at times added to the marks of the visible church, the preaching of the word is always a decisive factor for Calvin in his understanding of the church. His understanding of preaching thus needs to be considered anew in light of his ecclesiological concerns about the true visible church. As we see Calvin’s emphasis on preaching in his understanding of the church, a communal feature is also found in his understanding of preaching. In Calvin’s picture of the church, preaching is closer to a communal ministry of

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136 Ibid., IV.1.9.

137 Ibid.

the whole church in the power of the Spirit than it is to an individual ministry of the preacher.

II. John Calvin’s Spirit-centered Understanding of Preaching

Pneumatology is central to Calvin’s theology, or, as Benjamin Warfield puts it, Calvin was “pre-eminently the theologian of the Holy Spirit.” 139 In Institutes, Calvin’s insistence on the Spirit’s work in the redemption wrought by Christ shows how believers “come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits” by the “secret energy” of the Spirit. 140 He assigned the power and efficacy of God’s action in Christ, which makes believers united to Christ, to the Spirit. 141 The Spirit is claimed as “the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.” 142 Calvin relies completely on the sovereign work of the Spirit for all aspects of Christian life, such as election, calling, conversion, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. God reveals God to God’s people through the ministry of the word, and the Spirit brings faith and grace to realize the gospel of redemption in Christ to all believers. Thus, in Calvin’s theological frame, the word and the Spirit work together to save and mature all believers.

Above all, Calvin appeals to the authority of the Bible as God’s word on the basis of

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139 Benjamin B. Warfield, Calvin and Augustine (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 484-485. Actually Calvin’s theology is thoroughly Trinitarian with strong emphasis upon God’s sovereignty over all creation, but Warfield considers Calvin’s greatest contribution to theology lies in the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in terms of the relation of Word and Spirit, the inner witness of the Holy Spirit in relation to the authority of the Scriptures, and the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian faith and life. According to Warfield, the Institutes is “just a treatise on the work of God the Holy Spirit in making God savingly known to sinful man, and bringing sinful man into holy communion with God (130).”

140 Calvin, Institutes, III.1.1.

141 Ibid., I.13.18.

142 Ibid., III.1.1.
the internal testimony of the Spirit in the human hearts, rather than any external evidences or authorities. He insistently associates the word and the Spirit; “Accordingly, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Word can do nothing…Therefore, as we cannot come to Christ unless we be drawn by the Spirit of God, so when we are drawn we are lifted up in mind and heart above our understanding.” In Calvin’s view, the Spirit brings about the certainty and authority of scriptural inspiration in that God bears direct witness to God in the hearts of believers through the Spirit’s work. The Spirit also occupies the central place in Calvin’s understanding of preaching the word. Calvin’s Spirit-centered understanding of preaching as a divine-human activity is deeply connected to its ecclesial nature, marking the church visible on earth. Furthermore, his Spirit-centered understanding of preaching can be demonstrated in light of God’s communicative, sacramental, and performative activity in the Spirit.

A. Calvin’s Communicative Understanding of Preaching

In Calvin’s view, preaching is above all the will and intention of God who desires to communicate with and to edify God’s people. Commenting on Isaiah 55:11, he writes, “The word goeth out of the mouth of God in such a manner that it likewise goeth out of the mouth of men; for God does not speak openly from heaven, but employs men as his instruments, that by their agency he may make known his will.” In Institutes, he declares that “among the many excellent gifts with which God has adorned the human race, it is a

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143 Ibid., III.2.33-34.

144 Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine,” 210-211.

singular privilege that he deigns to consecrate to himself the mouths and tongues of men in order that his voice may resound in them.”

According to Calvin, the preacher is God’s instrument for addressing the church. God’s word from a human preacher is God’s preferred way of accommodating to the church, just as Scripture itself is God’s accommodating act to meet human capacity. Calvin states, “On the one hand, he proves our obedience by a very good test when we hear his ministers speaking just as if he himself spoke. On the other, he also provides for our weakness in that he prefers to address us in human fashion through interpreters in order to draw us to himself, rather than to thunder at us and drive us away.”

As long as the church hears the living voice of God through a human preacher, preaching is also God’s word. Parker notes,

But it is clear that Calvin is using the term ‘the Word’ to refer primarily to any preaching, granted, of course, that it is in accord with Holy Scripture. Thus the proclamation of God’s Word by way of exposition and contemporary application is itself God’s Word in a twofold sense: first, because the same message that was revealed to the Biblical writers is delivered by the preaching Church, and that message is God’s message or Word; secondly, because the same Spirit of God who gave the message continues to ensure that that message shall accomplish in any generation what he had originally intended in giving it.

For Calvin, God’s Spirit alone guides the church to the biblical message of God and the preached word is God’s word through its conformity to Scripture through the Spirit’s work. In other words, the preacher’s word can become God’s word through God’s Spirit who makes it effective in communication. Calvin comments on Ezekiel 2:2 in relation to the work of the Spirit who joins to God’s word:

This work of the Spirit, then, is joined with the word of God. But a distinction is made, that we may know that the external word is of no avail by itself, unless animated by the power of the Spirit…We

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146 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.5.

147 Ibid.


hold, therefore, that when God speaks, he adds the efficacy of his Spirit, since his word without it would be fruitless; and yet the word is effectual, because the instrument ought to be united with the author of the action.  

Calvin believes that the right preaching of God’s word can be effective in the salvation and edification of hearers, because the preached word becomes effective in revealing God to the church through the association between Scripture and the Spirit. Since every authentic human response to God is a part of God’s own operation through the Spirit, Calvin’s emphasis on the working of the same Spirit in preaching as well as in the written word of God is in line with the church’s listening to and living out God’s word. Calvin’s reliance on the Spirit in the whole process is because preaching is a divine-human activity.

Overall, the correct interpretation of Scripture and its effective application to the context of the church rely on the Spirit. According to Calvin, the primary task of the preacher is to reveal the mind and intention of the author of Scripture. Those who are called to the office of preacher must first be taught by Scripture under the Spirit of God, the ultimate author of Scripture, in order that they might preach before the church. In his comments on 1 Timothy 4:13, Calvin writes, “How shall pastors teach others if they be not eager to learn? And if so great a man is advised to study to make progress from day to day, how much more do we need such an advice? Woe then to the slothfulness of those who do not peruse the oracles of the Holy Spirit by day and night, in order to learn from them how to discharge their office!” Furthermore, preachers need to apply the things received from Scripture by the Spirit to their lives. Calvin states in his comments on 1 Corinthians 9:27, “My life ought

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151 For Calvin, the author of Scripture is primarily God, but the human authors of the Scriptures are not excluded. He alludes almost interchangeably to the intention of God or human authors.

152 Calvin, *Commentary on the First Epistle to Timothy*, 91.
to be a kind of rule to others. Accordingly, I strive to conduct myself in such a manner, that my character and conduct may not be inconsistent with my doctrine, and that thus I may not, with great disgrace to myself, and a grievous occasion of offense to my brethren, neglect those things which I require from others.”

Calvin’s endeavours to find the natural meaning of the biblical text by reading Scripture in light of its original linguistic, cultural, historical and religious context, and to apply it to life, were based on the leadership and guidance of the Spirit. The sermon cannot be delivered effectively without the continuous working of the same Spirit who prepares preachers prior to the preaching event. In particular, his conviction of a communicative God who speaks to God’s people is reflected in his commitment to effective communication in preaching. “Lucid brevity” was, for Calvin, not only the pursuit of eloquence, but also God’s accommodating way of communicating with God’s people. Seeking “simplicity” or “what is easily understood,” he tried to discover “the natural and obvious meaning of a text as quickly as possible without undue regard for the opinions of other commentators.” Calvin retained a spiritual application of the biblical text in the context of the church without excessive abuse of allegorical exegesis through his fierce commitment to discerning the mind or intention of the author as well as to the literal sense of Scripture. For Calvin, the Spirit is needed to guide the reading, interpretation and application of the Bible. God inspires the preacher to apply the truths of Scripture to the church through the working of the Spirit in the

153 Calvin, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 263.


preacher’s study and life. In Calvin’s view, a simple style of speech that is familiar to the congregation is the best approach for achieving the divine-human communication for the edification of the church. In a sense, his plain conversational style of preaching without a manuscript, notes or outline, except the order of the Scripture passage itself, was a deliberate policy for the initiating participation of God in the preaching event. “The speaking may have been impromptu, but the decision to speak impromptu was not.”

Above all, the hearers of the preached word of God include both the members of the congregation and the preacher. Parker puts it thus:

For Calvin the message of Scripture is sovereign, sovereign over the congregation and sovereign over the preacher. His humility is shown by his submitting to this authority. A sign of Calvin’s awareness of this in his own preaching appears in his almost exclusive use of the first person plural and not the second, so that he does not address the congregation from some remote spiritual eminence but is ranked with them under the pre-eminence of the message of Scripture.

In Calvin’s metaphor of the Church as the school of Christ, all Christians act as both students and teachers under the instruction of God’s Spirit. Just as the preacher has a definite role in preparing and delivering a sermon, the congregation also comes to participate in the work of the Spirit in the preaching event. According to Calvin, listening to the sermon is not just a passive act. The work and discernment of the congregation in the Spirit are as necessary in the preaching event as work of the preacher in the same Spirit. Parker notes this in his study of Calvin’s preaching:

Calvin certainly expected the congregation to be active in the business of the Church’s preaching. For preaching is a corporate action of the whole Church; it is a specific act of the worshipping Church. In the same way, therefore, as each Christian participates in the activity which is the Lord’s Supper, taking and eating the Bread, receiving and drinking the Wine, so also in the audible Sacrament which is the sermon he actively hears and takes into himself the Word of God. It is true that the preacher gives and

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158 Parker, Calvin’s Preaching, 39.

159 Calvin, Institutes, IV.1.5.
the congregation receives; but the reception is not passive, but an active participation, a listening that is an act of faith.¹⁶⁰

Calvin’s demand that the congregation be active participants in receiving God’s word is found in his sermons and writings here and there. All Christians who come to the sermon to hear it should come to “God’s school with burning desire.”¹⁶¹ In his sermon on Deuteronomy, he writes,

>All Christians ought to think “Why do we come to the sermon?” “Why is there this order in the Church?” It is so that God may govern us and that we may have our Lord Jesus Christ as our Sovereign Teacher, so that we may be the flock that he leads. Now, that cannot be unless we all hear his voice, distinguishing it from the voice of strangers; so that we may not be carried here and there like reeds shaken by every wind, but may be stayed on the purity of Holy Scripture and our faith so grounded there that the devil will never shake it.¹⁶²

Calvin also stresses the necessity of humility in receiving the preached word: “When we come to hear the teaching that is declared to us in the name of God, we must be prepared in humility and fear to receive all that is said to us and to give heed to it and not to bring a spirit of gall, a spirit full of rebellion or arrogance or pride; but let us know that we have to do with our God, who wishes to test the obedience and subjection that we owe him, so often and whenever he calls us to him.”¹⁶³ Since our faith comes from the hearing of God’s word alone, Calvin asserts that God gives the grace for discerning the truth of the message in his sermon on Acts 5:33-35 and 38-39: “Therefore when we come here to listen to the Gospel, it is not sufficient to ask God whether He will give us understanding, but it is also necessary that He gives us deliberation and discretion to watch carefully for the purpose to apply the

¹⁶⁰ Parker, Calvin’s Preaching, 48.
¹⁶¹ Ibid., 49.
¹⁶² Calvin, Sermons in Corpus Reformatorum 25.647.17-29. Quoted in Parker, Calvin’s Preaching, 49.
¹⁶³ Calvin, Harmony of the Gospel: Sermon XXIV. Corpus Reformatorum 46.286.28-38. Quoted in Parker, Calvin’s Preaching, 50.
In his comments on John 15:27, Calvin confirms that the preached word will be to no avail unless the same Spirit, who works to make preaching the revealed Word of God, works in the mind of hearers to enable reception as well:

We now see in what way faith is by hearing (Romans 10:17), and yet it derives its certainty from the seal and earnest of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14). Those who do not sufficiently know the darkness of the human mind imagine that faith is formed naturally by hearing and preaching alone; and there are many fanatics who disdain the outward preaching, and talk in lofty terms about secret revelations and inspirations (ενθοσιασμός). But we see how Christ joins these two things together; and, therefore, though there is no faith till the Spirit of God seal our minds and hearts, still we must not go to seek visions or oracles in the clouds; but the word, which is near us, in our mouth and heart (Romans 10:8), must keep all our senses bound and fixed on itself.\textsuperscript{165}

In this way, the illuminating and sealing works of the Spirit are decisive in hearing of the preached word for the edification of believers. The communication in preaching is not completed until the truth of the preached word of God is understood and applied in the heart of God’s people. The Spirit’s working in the congregation as well as in the preacher is necessary for the effective communication of God. The hearing of the preached word was not regarded as a passive act of listening, but an active participation, marking the church visible on earth along with the administration of the sacraments. As an ecclesial event, preaching is the living God’s address to every member of the Church, including the preacher, in relationship with all present.

\textbf{B. Calvin’s Sacramental Understanding of Preaching}

Calvin’s basic trust in God’s communicative activity in the preacher and in the hearing church is enclosed in the sacramental nature of the preaching event. Preaching is not a mere act of preparation for the Eucharist. Rather, preaching is a sacrament of the saving

\footnote{\textsuperscript{164} Calvin, \textit{Supplementa Calviniana} 8,182.22-24, Quoted by Wilhelmus H. TH. Moehn, \textit{God Calls Us to His Service: The Relation between God and His Audience in Calvin’s Sermons on Acts} (Geneva: Librie Droz S. A., 2001), 200.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{165} Calvin, \textit{Commentary on the Gospel According to John} (Albany, NY: Books For The Ages, 1998), 526. Here Calvin does not directly speak of human agency, but highlights the hearing of the preached word through the Spirit’s work as well as the preaching of the word of God.}
presence of God through offering and presenting Christ. The church is invited to the mystery of divine grace through preaching, just as in the sacraments, by the mysterious power of the Spirit. Christ is revealed to us through the word and the sacraments. Calvin states this in Institutes: “Let it be regarded as a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace.”166 He borrows from Augustine the notion that a sacrament was “a visible word.”167 This trend of verbalizing the sacraments also led to sacramentalizing the word.168 God’s word and the sacraments are the instruments of divine grace to present the person and work of Christ. Dawn DeVries affirms Calvin’s sacramental understanding of preaching as follows: “The sacramental elements are the vehicles through which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the risen Christ is present to believers. In a similar way, preaching functions as a sacramental event in which Christ’s presence is manifested to believers through the spoken words of the sermon.”169 As John Leith notes, “Calvin thought of preaching as the primary means by which God’s presence becomes actual to us.”170 “Just as Christ is present at the Supper spiritually, that is, by the working of the Spirit, so he is present in the preaching spiritually - by the working of the Spirit.”171

In Calvin’s view, Christian faith rests on God’s word primarily through preaching but

166 Calvin, Institutes, IV.14.17.

167 Ibid., IV.14.6.

168 Parker, The Oracles of God, 53-56.


171 Parker, Calvin’s Preaching, 42.
also through the sacraments which are “joined to it as a sort of appendix.” The power and efficacy that the medieval church credited to the seven sacraments is ascribed to the preached word of God. Calvin writes metaphorically in the *Institutes* about God’s word as the foundation of faith and the sacraments, instituted by Christ himself, with baptism and the Lord’s Supper as its columns: “For as a building stands and rests upon its own foundation but is more surely established by columns placed underneath, so faith rests upon the Word of God as a foundation; but when the sacraments are added, it rests more firmly upon them as upon columns.”

God’s word in the Old and New Testaments is the same, because of the continuity of God’s covenants with God’s people. All of the differences between the two covenants relate “to the manner of dispensation rather than to the substance.” The Old Testament showed an image and a shadow in place of the substance, but the New Testament reveals it, Christ himself, as present. For Calvin, Christ is not only God’s Word by the very nature of being the content of God’s self-revelation, but also the primary word of God who retains the central position in the Scriptures. Therefore, the word on which Christian faith rests is the word about Christ, that is, the gospel. In *Institutes*, Calvin declares, “God breathes faith into us only by the instrument of his gospel, as Paul points out that ‘faith comes from hearing’ [Romans 10:17]. Likewise, the power to save rests with God [Romans 1:16]; but (as Paul again testifies) He displays and unfolds it in the preaching of the gospel.” Calvin usually uses “the word” and “the gospel” interchangeably. To his mind,

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172 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.3.
173 Ibid., IV.14.6.
174 Ibid., II.11.1.
175 Ibid., II.11.4.
176 Ibid., IV.1.5.
authentic preaching of God’s word proclaims the gospel, God’s saving grace in the person and the work of Christ. For Calvin, Christ “clothed with his gospel” is not only “the goal of our faith” but also the substantial content of the whole Scripture.\textsuperscript{177} In a sense, all Scripture preaches Christ. In his comments on \textit{John 5:39}, Calvin writes,

> Again, we are taught by this passage, that if we wish to obtain the knowledge of Christ, we must seek it from the Scriptures: for they who imagine whatever they choose concerning Christ will ultimately have nothing instead of him but a shadowy phantom. First, then, we ought to believe that Christ cannot be properly known in any other way than from the Scriptures; and if it be so, it follows that we ought to read the Scriptures with the express design of finding Christ in them. Whoever shall turn aside from this object, though he may weary himself throughout his whole life in learning, will never attain the knowledge of the truth; for what wisdom can we have without the wisdom of God?\textsuperscript{178}

Scripture must be read and meditated upon with a teachable spirit, but Calvin is very clear that the gospel communicates Christ to us primarily in the proclaimed word of preaching. In his comments on \textit{Acts 8:31}, Calvin declares the necessity of preaching the gospel through human speech:

> Frantic men require inspirations and revelations from heaven, and, in the mean season, they contemn the minister of God, by whose hand they ought to be governed. Other some, which trust too much to their own wit, will vouchsafe to hear no man, and they will read no commentaries. But God will not have us to despise those helps which he offereth unto us, and he suffereth not those to escape scot free which despise the same. And here we must remember, that the Scripture is not only given us, but that interpreters and teachers are also added, to be helps to us. For this cause the Lord sent rather Philip than an angel to the eunuch. For to what end served this circuit, that God calleth Philip by the voice of the angel, and sendeth not the angel himself forthwith, save only because he would accustom us to hear men? This is, assuredly, no small commendation of external preaching, that the voice of God soundeth in the mouth of men to our salvation, when angels hold their peace.\textsuperscript{179}

In the comments on Haggai 1:12, Calvin writes:

> Haggai confirms here the same truth - that the people received not what they heard from the mouth of mortal man, otherwise than if the majesty of God had openly appeared. For there was no ocular view of God given; but the message of the Prophet obtained as much power as though God had descended from heaven, and had given manifest tokens of his presence. We may then conclude from these words, that the glory of God so shines in his word, that we ought to be so much affected by it, whenever he speaks by his servants, as though he were nigh to us, face to face, as the Scripture says in another place.\textsuperscript{180}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{177} Ibid., III.2.6.
  \item \textsuperscript{178} Calvin, \textit{Commentary on the Gospel According to John}, 192.
  \item \textsuperscript{180} Calvin, \textit{Commentary on the Prophet Haggai}, 26.
\end{itemize}
Since the gospel, as God’s revelation to humanity, is communicating Christ in the
proclaimed word of God, a private reading or meditation on Scripture at home is not
sufficient. Since we are promised God’s presence with us when we gather in the name of
Christ, Calvin rejects any attempt to replace the communal hearing of God’s word with a
private reading of Scripture, much as he refuses the abuse of the private mass in the Roman
Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{181} Thus God’s word takes on a communal character as a public event.\textsuperscript{182} In
other words, by the willing of God, preaching itself becomes the present word of God to the
worshipping church that is gathered in the name of Christ, whenever He is truly preached in
the church. Christ gives His sacramental presence in the midst of His church through the
preaching of the word by His ministers, and speaks through their human mouths and words.
The Spirit empowers the preacher to preach before the church and Christ stands in the midst
of His church, addressing His people through the words of the preacher. If Christ does not
speak to His people in the preaching of His word, then the church will die. The preaching of
the word is, therefore, one of the marks of the church for Calvin.

Calvin’s Christological and sacramental understanding of preaching is condensed
well by DeVries: “The proclaimed word about Christ – the gospel – under the power of the
Holy Spirit renders the real presence of Christ in the event of proclamation. The Word offers
and presents Christ and with him all the benefits he has secured for the elect.”\textsuperscript{183} In this way,
the preached word as a sign of the presence of God in the preaching event builds the faith of
believers and then builds up the body of Christ in the world through the Spirit’s working.

\textsuperscript{181} B. A. Gerrish, \textit{Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin} (Minneapolis, MN:
Fortress Press, 1993), 82.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{183} DeVries, “Calvin’s Preaching,” 110.
Thus God’s people today can experience the living presence of God and grow in a personal knowledge and love of their Lord, Jesus Christ, when they gather to worship God and hear God’s word in the church.

C. Calvin’s Performative Understanding of Preaching

Calvin’s sacramental understanding of preaching is necessarily connected to the performative character of preaching. Above all, preaching itself performs the salvific grace of God to the hearing church, since preaching as God’s communicative act brings the presence of Christ and all benefits from His redemption into the worshipping church. This performative nature of preaching is primarily God’s performance, and secondly the ecclesial performance in the working of the Spirit. As Ronald Wallace affirms, Christ, who gives His sacramental presence in the midst of His church, imparts to people the grace which the word promises, establishing His reign over the hearts of His people through the preaching of the word by His ministers.\(^{184}\) In fact, the gospel as God’s self-performance accommodating divine reality to human capacity lies at the very heart of proclamation. Whenever the gospel is proclaimed, God’s performative action through the preached word either saves or condemns the hearer. “[A]s the word of God is efficacious for the salvation of believers, so it is abundantly efficacious for condemning the wicked.”\(^{185}\) Calvin comments on 2 Corinthians 2:15 as follows: “The Gospel is preached for salvation: this is what properly belongs to it; but believers alone are partakers of that salvation. In the meantime, its being an occasion of


\(^{185}\) Calvin, Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah, 434.
condemnation to unbelievers - that arises from their own fault.”¹⁸⁶ For Calvin, preaching is the instrument of Christ’s reign. It is not only the scepter of His Kingdom but also the sword to bring judgment amongst the nations.¹⁸⁷ Whenever the word is preached in the Spirit’s work, God is present to call some to God’s salvation and others to God’s condemnation. Christ rules the hearts of believers by the divine presence in the preaching of the gospel through the activity of the Spirit. Since God acts in preaching, it is “not about grace, but becomes an event, an act of grace.”¹⁸⁸ The Spirit joins the elect in intimate union with Christ through preaching and hearing in the church. Only God’s primary performance of graciousness toward the worshipping church in Christ enables believers to respond to the preached word with faith and obedience.

Therefore, the preached word is not simply doctrine about God for Calvin. Rather it is also something to be performed by the church in the Spirit’s power, who actualizes all the accomplishment of Christ into the world. In relation to the performative role of preaching as worship in Calvin’s understanding of preaching, Old says,

> God is glorified when his Word is heard by his people and they are transformed into his image. Through the preaching of the gospel God’s people are transformed into image of God. When God’s people hear the Word and receive it by faith, they are saved from their sins and born into a new and eternal life, and being born from above and renewed by the Holy Spirit, they now worship God in spirit and truth (John 1:12; 3:5; 4:23). God is glorified simply in the proclamation of the Word, to be sure, but the Word has power to bring about what it says, The Word bears fruit, and this fruit magnifies God’s glory.¹⁸⁹

The Spirit unites with the human instrument so that divine presence is actualized whenever God chooses to join God with the preached word, but the communication process in the

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preaching event is not complete until the message is understood and applied in the hearts of God’s people. The hearers of the preached word have the responsibility to hear and respond to it in faith and obedience. Parker notes the decisive role of the Spirit in terms of the responsibility of hearers in the preaching event as follows: “It is by God’s Spirit that the congregation desire to hear God’s Word preached to them, that they recognize it as God’s Word and distinguish it from all other words, and that they believe and become ‘doers’ of the Word.”

When God’s word is proclaimed through preaching, hearers cannot respond to it by faith unless the inward working of the Spirit in their hearts “to conceive, sustain, nourish, and establish faith” is performed. In Institutes, Calvin declares, “We have laid down as distinguishing marks of the church the preaching of the Word and the observance of the sacraments. These can never exist without bringing forth fruit and prospering by God’s blessing. I do not say that wherever the Word is preached there will be immediate fruit; but wherever it is received and has a fixed abode, it shows its effectiveness.”

Thus, Calvin includes the hearing of the preached word in the visible marks of the church. Furthermore, for Calvin the church is called not only listen to sermons, but also to ingest and live out the truth of God’s word in the Spirit’s working. According to Randall Zachman, Calvin’s work as preacher is not just applying the word to the lives of the members of his congregation and exhorting them to be transformed by the gospel they are hearing. “[S]uch general preaching to the whole congregation is just the first step of the

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190 Parker, Calvin’s Preaching, 51.
191 Calvin, InstitutesIV.14.9.
192 Ibid., IV.1.10.
193 Randall C. Zachman, John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of His Writings and Thought (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 65.
pastor’s application of Scripture; the real work begins when the pastor visits every member of the congregation in private in order to apply scriptural doctrine specifically to them.”

Thus, church discipline as pastoral and educational is an integral part of preaching the word for Calvin. This is because the preaching of the word remains abstract and ineffectual without discipline. His emphasis on the external organization of the church centering on church order, especially the offices of pastors and presbyters, is closely connected to his performative understanding of preaching.

Calvin’s doctrine of union with Christ is central to his performative understanding of preaching. The real presence of Christ in the preaching church and the union with Christ in the hearing church are both at the heart of Calvin’s concern for Christian life. Christian life for Calvin is “a participation in the life, death, righteousness, and on-going life of Jesus Christ” by faith, which is the principal work of the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. If the purpose of preaching in Calvin’s theology is “edification, the building up of the believer in the knowledge and love of God and thus the building up of the Church,” the Christian life of that building up is nothing more and nothing less than participation by union with Christ. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:9, Calvin states:

For this is the design of the gospel, that Christ may become ours, and that we may be engrafted into his body. Now when the Father gives him to us his possession, he also communicates himself to us in him; and hence arises a participation in every benefit. Paul’s argument, then, is this - “Since you have, by means of the gospel which you have received by faith, been called into the fellowship of Christ, you have no reason to dread the danger of death, having been made partakers of him (Hebrews 3:14) who rose a conqueror over death.”

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194 Ibid.


196 Parker, Calvin’s Preaching, 52.

197 Calvin, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 47-48.
For Calvin, the preaching of the gospel is not only offering Christ, but also lifting the church to Christ “to participate in Him and thus gain all the benefits he offers.”\(^{198}\) The edification of all in the church occurs through the participation of humanity in God as believers are made one with Christ by faith through the Spirit. Believers cannot live and grow in Christ without being engrafted into his body. In *Institutes*, he states, “Accordingly, ‘the communion of saints’ is added. This clause, though generally omitted by the ancients, ought not to be overlooked, for it very well expresses what the church is. It is as if one said that the saints are gathered into the society of Christ on the principle that whatever benefits God confers upon them, they should in turn share with one another.”\(^{199}\) The members of the church are charged with the responsibility of ecclesial edification according to the measure of their grace.\(^{200}\) In this way, Calvin’s approach to Christian life has a thoroughly communal emphasis. For Calvin, the Christian life of hearing and living out the preached word in the Spirit’s power is an ecclesial performance of faith to obey the present Lord in proclamation by “a fellowship of mutual service and helpfulness” in the body of Christ as “a living organism.”\(^{201}\) Therefore, “Christian faith for Calvin is personal and experiential, but it is not individualistic.”\(^{202}\) He envisions a holy community that fulfills God’s purpose in history. The community of Christ’s kingdom as an entirely new world is embodied by the hearing church, which receives Christ and participates in him with faith and obedience only when the Spirit

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\(^{199}\) Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.3.

\(^{200}\) Ibid., IV.1.12.


\(^{202}\) Davis, “Preaching and Presence,” 113.
performs the operation of faith in the preaching event. For Calvin, thus to “hear” is the same as to “believe.” In this way, Calvin’s emphasis on God’s realm here and now is laid on God’s proclaimed word in the hearts of believers who perform it with faith and obedience in the Spirit’s work. Preaching itself is not only a shared work of both God and God’s people in Christ by the Spirit, but also an ecclesial performance of the whole church in the Spirit actively at work in the preaching of the word. Through a balanced understanding of preaching not only as an ecclesial work of the preaching and hearing church, but also as the work of God, Calvin achieved church renewal and social improvement in Geneva through the ministry of God’s word.

III. John Calvin’s Preaching Practice for Ecclesial Participation in the Spirit’s Work

Calvin’s reformation of the church within the context of the sixteenth century was evidently a fruit of his preaching ministry. In a sense, Calvin’s understanding of preaching was deeply connected with the ecclesial nature of preaching of the New Testament Church when it too was vividly quickened in history. Just as the primitive church was his model of church reformation, the renewal of the ministry of God’s word can be also summarized as an endeavor for the recovery of the primacy and ecclesial feature of preaching. For Calvin, the preaching of the gospel was the primary ministry of the church, giving the church its being, nurturing and embodying it as the reign of God in the world, and was also the principal mark of the church making it visible on earth. By his Spirit-centered, communicative, sacramental, and performative understanding of preaching, Calvin witnessed that preaching was the work of God as well as of human beings in the work of the Spirit of the living God. In other words,

203 Calvin, Institutes, III.2.6.
his preaching ministry was not limited to pulpit works separated from Christian life. He was very concerned about the congregation living out the proclaimed word of God in the world. As the active working of the Spirit takes place in the preaching and receiving of the word, people are renewed and the body of Christ is made known in the world. Therefore, the performative act of a communicative God who is present in preaching always calls for the performative action of faith to hear and to live out the preached word in the Spirit of the living God.

In his actual practice as preacher and pastor, Calvin’s Spirit-centered understanding of preaching offers a significant corrective to the imperative preaching mode in his sermons that focus on Christian responsibility and obligation. His language of admonishing, exhorting, or encouraging people to live with faith and obedience in his mostly extempore preaching seems to be biased to human works instead of offering Christ as the gospel. More intrinsically, however, Calvin’s imperative mood of preaching needs to be understood as a sermonic language pointing towards the salvific benefits of the indwelling Christ, which the Spirit makes applicable to believers rather than toward human endeavor. For Calvin, the Christian life of faith and obedience is not human-made, but is a divinely given reality actualized by the Spirit in union with Christ. God’s word is not just the object of faith but also the “living root” that produces the obedience of faith. As people hear and understand

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205 Seeking a homiletic of “transformed imagination,” Van Seters suggests that Calvin’s third use of the law is “a way of making clear how the reality of our world needs to be seen, named and evaluated in light of the reign of God.” Calvin’s literal-historical interpretation of the Old Testament in sixteenth-century Geneva provided people with a fresh and prophetic vision of the new society by his preaching ministry. See Arthur Van Seters, “The Inescapable Contextual Factor in Preaching,” in TST Homiletic Colloquy (September 2009).

206 Calvin, Institutes, III.2. 3.
God’s word by the internal work of the Spirit, the received word of God becomes itself the power of faith to obey God’s will through trusting in the character of God.\textsuperscript{207} Even by our self-denial and devotion to God, it is the Spirit that actualizes our death to the old sinful self and our vivification unto God by in our union with Christ.\textsuperscript{208} From start to finish, preaching without the Spirit’s work was unthinkable for Calvin. Calvin’s own practices need to be examined in terms of his Spirit-centered understanding of preaching. All of Calvin’s commitment to preaching was nothing less than an offering of himself that the Spirit might use him for God’s purpose.\textsuperscript{209}

Calvin’s complete reliance upon the Spirit in preaching rehabilitates the ecclesial participation aspects of proclamation. Above all, preaching God’s word takes the central place as an element of worship. Within the entire worship experience, preaching was practiced in the context of ecclesial participation such as prayers, congregational songs, and the Lord’s Supper, in which the whole congregation would share.\textsuperscript{210} In Calvin’s improvisatory preaching as well, the congregation was gathered into the participation of worship.\textsuperscript{211}

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., III.3.2.

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., III.3.3-9.

\textsuperscript{209} Calvin’s preaching was continuous exposition of Holy Scripture verse by verse and book by book. His application of Scripture to the life and experience of the congregation was articulated in clear and familiar words. His sermons were delivered in an extemporaneous style. When he exhorted his congregation to make life changes he used first personal plural pronouns, thereby including himself. In addition, his sermons began and concluded with prayers for God’s presence. See Parker, \textit{Calvin’s Preaching}, 39-40, 139-142.

\textsuperscript{210} Calvin tried to replace the mass with a celebration of the Lord’s Supper with sermon and communion. His standard was the corporate worship of the early church. For a description of Calvin’s order of service, see William D. Maxwell, \textit{An Outline of Christian Worship: Its Development and Forms} (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 116.

\textsuperscript{211} Edwards Jr., \textit{A History of Preaching}, 319-320; Parker, \textit{Calvin’s Preaching}, 139-149; Steven J. Lawson, \textit{The Expository Genius of John Calvin} (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2007), 83-102.
Furthermore, Calvin rejects the late medieval idea of a single ministerial office in a hierarchical structure where bishops have authority over local priests as a higher clergy. Arguing for equality among pastors, he tried instead to renew the corporate and differentiated ministry of the early church. In Book IV of *Institutes*, and in reaction to the papacy, Calvin traces the practice of the ancient church in terms of ecclesiastical offices. He suggests the fourfold ministerial offices of the church as permanent offices: pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons.²¹² Though their respective ministries are different in different organizations, Calvin interprets both pastors and elders as corresponding to “presbyters” in the Bible. In his version of “Presbyterianism” and in search of a cooperative ministry of clergy and laity, each office is considered equally important and mutually responsible for the education and discipline of God’s word in the church.²¹³ Calvin’s own preaching practice as preacher and pastor has the potential to bear fruit in the present through replication of his shared ministry with laity in the education and discipline of God’s word in the church.

*Congrégations* of the Company of Pastors in Geneva, which were held every Friday, demonstrate in practice the concept of ecclesial participation in Calvin’s preaching.²¹⁴

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²¹³ Jungsook Lee, “How Collegial Can They Be?: Church Offices in the Korean Presbyterian Churches,” in *Theology Today* 66 (2009), 170-171. In comparison with Luther who lays more emphasis on “the basic responsibility and right of all the baptized to exercise the ministry of the word because of their share in the priesthood of Christ,” Calvin lays more emphasis upon the teaching function of the pastoral office in dealing with the ministry of the word. In Calvin’s writings the ordained minister appears primarily as “a teacher of the gospel way of life, a preacher of repentance.” See Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments*, 287-289, 299 n.16.

²¹⁴ Calvin’s weekly *congrégations* were modeled after Zwingli’s *Prophezei* in Zurich. *Prophezei* were established by Zwingli for daily regular gathering of pastors to study the Bible. The name was drawn from 1 Corinthians 14. “As replacement for the regular morning services, clergy, teachers, students, and interested laymen from the city were encouraged to attend. The hour (or more) of Bible study took place each morning except Friday (market day) and Sunday at 7 o’clock (8 o’clock in the winter) in the Choir of the Gross Münster
Congrégations, which means gatherings, were for training ministers and for conserving doctrinal purity and concord. The Company included all pastors called to service in city parishes and the villages surrounding Geneva. The gatherings included mutual critique of sermons and theology and were open to the public. The pastors took turns in presenting their expositions of the passage studied in lectio continua, followed by discussion. As moderator, Calvin presided over the congrégations, gave summaries, and led people in closing prayers.  

Erik A. de Boer provides a detailed picture of the Genevan congrégations from the experience of a former bishop, Pier Paolo Vergerio:

Every week, on Fridays, a conference is being held in the largest church, in which all their ministers and many from the people participate. Here one of them reads a passage from scripture and expounds it briefly. Another says on the matter what he deems is according to the Spirit. A third person gives his opinion and a fourth adds some things in his capacity to contribute to the issue. And not only the ministers do so, but everyone who has come to listen. In this way they follow what Paul found in the church of Corinth, and on which he said that when the brothers gathered, every one of them could say what the Spirit revealed to him; then he was silent, sat down and another began to speak (1 Cor. 14:29-30).

of Zurich. The study was opened by a Latin prayer after which someone (usually a student) would read up to a chapter of the Old Testament out of the Latin Vulgate. Then the Hebrew text would be read with comments and clarification. This would be followed by a reading of the Greek Septuagint (usually by Zwingli himself), also with relevant comments and explanation. The text would then be considered (in Latin) by the group as a whole. Following this thorough exploration the Prophèzei would shift to Swiss German. Another participant (usually Leo Jud or Caspar Megander) would offer a German version of the opening prayer, and the text under study would become the basis of a sermon, preached to the people who had gathered into the church to take part in this latter part of the Prophèzei. The service would then be concluded with a lengthy intercessory prayer (2-3).  

See Carl M. Leth, “Prophèzei: A Reformation Model for Interpretation of Scripture,” in Faculty Scholarship – Theology (2010), Paper 14. The Puritans also developed the communal practice of “prophesying exercises,” their appropriation of Zwingli’s Prophèzei and Calvin’s Congrégations. These conferences started merely as clerical exercises for mutual edification, but became the communal activity of the true church to hear, understand, and apply the word into the daily lives of people. After Queen Elizabeth banned the “prophesying exercises,” the exercise of Conferences continued to be a communal practice of the Puritans. See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 75-89; Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (Oxford and New York, 1990), 168-176; Patrick Collinson, John Craig, and Brett Usher eds., Conference and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church, 1582-1590 (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2003), xxvi-xxxii.


In this testimony, Calvin’s congrégations are depicted as being not only for pastors but also for church members. They “shaped lay understanding and so influenced the Reformation in the city”\(^{217}\) beyond training the ministers of the word.

The most evident ecclesial participation in Calvin’s ministry of the word was the teaching and discipline provided by presbyters. Calvin’s strong concern for the application of preaching was related to his emphasis on discipline. For Calvin, pastoral care of souls and preaching were “two parts of one activity, the effective application of the Word.”\(^{218}\) In his theological framework, church discipline ensures the efficacy of the word and sacrament in the congregation.\(^{219}\) To promote communal godliness in the city, he established the Geneva Consistory, which was composed of pastors and lay elders chosen from the people.\(^{220}\) They looked after the daily lives of believers in terms of the application of the teaching and preaching of the word. People who did not live according to the marks of Christians were not

\(^{217}\) Ibid., 670.


\(^{220}\) The Consistory of Geneva was established in 1542 as “a hearing court,” “a compulsory counseling service” and “an educational institution” for Christians. In contrast with the clerical discipline of the Roman Catholic Church and the civil magisterial discipline of Zwinglians, Calvin viewed “the church” in Matthew 18:17 as a shared body of both ministers and laity in charge of ecclesiastical discipline. As it became fully operational, the Consistory was composed of all pastors and twelve lay elders. In consultation with the pastors, each year the lay elders were chosen by municipal elections. The Consistory executed ecclesiastical discipline on the basis of the marks of Christians, such as confession of faith, example of life, and participation in sacraments. According to Kingdon, the lay members of the Consistory did not limit themselves to guarding community morality and also assumed teaching functions, complementary to those of the pastors and teachers. See Calvin, Institutes IV. 1.8.; Robert M. Kingdon, “Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory-Discipline in Geneva: The Institution and the Men Who Directed It,” in NAKG/ DRCH 70, no. 2 (1990), 158-172; Robert M. Kingdon, Adultery and Divorce in Calvin’s Geneva (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 4; Jungsook Lee, “The Geneva Consistory: The Convergence of Calvin’s Theology and Ministry,” in A Collection of Theological Treatise of Korean Christianity XVIII, ed. Korean Association of Christian Studies (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2000), 159-186.
considered true Christians until they clearly showed some change through Spirit-worked repentance. Church discipline consisted of admonishing offenders—firstly individual and private admonition, and then communal admonition by the assembly of elders—and, if necessary, excommunication. The action for excommunication should not be provided “by the elders by themselves alone but with the knowledge and approval of the church” in which “the multitude of people observe as witness and guardian so that nothing may done according to the whim of a few.”221 The process of excommunication and restoration by the Consistory, which included laity, in the application of the teaching and preaching of the word into the daily lives of Christians, was for Calvin in line with his Spirit-centered understanding of preaching. In reliance upon the Spirit’s work he tried to realize a transformed Christian life in Geneva by living out the preached word through such ecclesiastical ordinances and institutions.

Although Calvin’s influence on society went far beyond religion in the period immediately following the Reformation, his homiletic legacy did not blossom in the context of modernity.222 Calvin’s Spirit-centered, ecclesial approach to proclamation was

221 Calvin, Institutes, IV.12.7.

222 Modernity is an epochal shift generated by the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the discovery of the New World. Modernists believed that reason could uncover truth. They were looking for a worldview that was rational and scientific, and hence rejected the religious worldview which they considered irrational and filled acrimony. They also hoped for progress which would stem from humanity’s freedom from the superstitious beliefs and dogmatic formulas. The Renaissance in the 15th century laid the foundation for the modern mentality by elevating humankind to the center of the universe and pioneering the scientific method as the means of altering the environment for human benefit. The Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries radically disrupted the worldview of the middle ages and built up the modern project of utopia based on human autonomous reason. The development of modernity in the West brought a continual expansion of Western colonialism in the 19th and 20th century, spreading Western modernity to the rest of the world. The Reformation also contributed to the shaping of modernity. The Reformation thinkers restored a direct connection between human individuals and the biblical truth, drawing on primitive Christianity before the advent of a powerful clergy and a dogmatic theology. They insisted on the right and responsibility of human individuals to interpret Scripture according to their own consciences, and advanced a spiritual equality of all believers. In particular, Calvin’s theology of God’s sovereign grace to all of life and his view of liberties based on God’s word, made an important contribution to social improvement in in the Western world. See David W.
overwhelmed by concerns about the biblical content of the message or the rhetorical skills of individual preachers. In a modern setting with more focus on human individuals and human reason, homiletics increasingly settled into a species of rhetoric, professional pulpit oratory, or moral discourse.

CHAPTER 3
Michael Welker’s Postmodern Pneumatology for Christian Proclamation

The contemporary context of preaching is characterized by the decline of modernity and the “postmodern shift.” Reacting against a preaching tradition which uses the deductive method of modern rhetoric, the “New Homiletic” movement employs the postmodern critique of western modernity. With its increasingly anthropocentric and methodological emphasis in preaching, however, the development of contemporary homiletics seems to miss the balance between the divine and human agencies of proclamation. Emphasis upon the issue of how to preach, without a full consideration of the

223 The “postmodern shift” is still in process in our contemporary society and is mingled with the ongoing characteristics of modernity. The term “postmodern” was first used by artists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to denote a new style of art that was breaking free of an old order. Since the 1970s, it has become the popular word for a broader cultural phenomenon. Derrida attacks modernity as “logocentrism,” because it focuses on logic as the means of determining truth. Foucault claims that “knowledge” is always the result of the use of power because every interpretation of reality is an act of power. Defining the postmodern condition as the end of metanarratives, Lyotard uses the term modern to designate any science that legitimates itself with some grand narrative, such as the emancipation of all humanity and the accomplishment of absolute truth by the gradual evolution of knowledge. According to Lyotard, the grand narratives of scientific progress which have legitimated modern society and culture have lost their credibility since World War II. Middleton and Walsh succinctly argue that the realism of Western modernity is a metaphysic of violence, because “it necessarily excludes not just elements of reality that do not fit, but any person and group who see things differently.” With the optimistic confidence of progress based on human autonomy, the message of the modern anthropology was obvious: “We are all human, and we must overcome our differences and join forces in order to complete our mandate, the quest for certain, objective knowledge of the entire universe.” Actually, the modernization of the non-Western world was carried out through the totalizing process of colonization by imperialistic Eurocentrism. In a sense, it was no less than forcing the world to accommodate the modern civilization of the West as the universal value. To be sure, there seem to be as many understandings of postmodernity as there are postmodern thinkers. Some understand postmodernity as anti-modern, but others understand it as the revision of modernist premises. Thus, we need to view postmodernity in the context of the modern world that gave it birth and against which it is reacting in order to understand the postmodern situation. Deconstructive postmodernists reject all forms of modern certainty. They argue that there is no one meaning of the world and no transcendent center to reality, just as each reader reads a text differently. Constructive postmodernists claim to offer a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions. Post liberal and revisionary theologies represent constructive approaches to postmodernity. See Peggy Kamuf, ed., A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 31-58; Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, ed., Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 133; Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), and also see Ronald J. Allen, Barbara Shires Blaisdell, and Scott Black Johnson, Theology for Preaching: Authority, Truth and Knowledge of God in a Postmodern Ethos (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 18-21. J. Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh, Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 35, and Stanley J. Grenz, A Primer On Postmodernism (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 2-5.
essential role of the Spirit who works through and with human instruments, has tended to reduce the efficacy of God’s word, turning it into a matter of human mastery over methodologies. There is a deficiency in current homiletics, the lack of a proper pneumatology.\textsuperscript{224}

In the relative silence about the Spirit’s work in contemporary homiletic literature, a holistic argument about God’s ongoing work through the Spirit can be guided by the work of representative systemic theologians with a concentration on pneumatology. There has been a tendency on the part of homileticians to limit arguments about the work of the Spirit in preaching to the Spirit’s illumination for context-relevant interpretation of the texts or the Spirit’s empowerment for effective delivery of the message. But these constructive arguments about the Spirit by systemic theologians enable us to extend homiletic pneumatology to include the Spirit’s re-presentation of Christ in contemporary homiletics.

Among leading contemporary theologians of the Spirit, Jürgen Moltmann and Michael Welker in particular, represent the Reformed tradition. They try to update pneumatology for the changed contemporary situation in order to overcome the limitations of traditional metaphysical pneumatology. Moltmann’s holistic understanding of the Spirit of life has set the stage for Welker’s pneumatology.\textsuperscript{225} Unlike Moltmann, however, Welker

\textsuperscript{224} With the postmodern shift, a pluralistic situation in truth claims and moral absolutes has brought a need for a renewed pneumatology. Contemporary homiletics which has tended to be biased to the human agency of preaching can be more balanced in light of a pneumatological examination of God’s ongoing work in the Spirit within the preaching event. The dramatic expansion of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, and the participation of the Eastern Orthodox churches with their prioritizing of pneumatology over Christology in ecumenical dialogues, have further stimulated the renewed approach to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, that has seldom, in the past, received the attention given to other doctrines in Christian theology. As the Spirit’s work in the world through time and space has been recognized, the voices of women, liberationists, and the Green theologians from of the Third World have also been incorporated into contemporary pneumatology. \textit{See} Daniel L. Migliore, \textit{Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology Second Edition} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 223-235.

\textsuperscript{225} In the traditional metaphysical system of the West, God’s Spirit has been understood simply as a holy ubiquitous spirit. This metaphysical abstraction, however, has been considered to be based on incongruent
seeks to break from the existing systems or presuppositions by directing his attention to the actual complexity and diversity of life in which the Spirit is experienced. He relates the Spirit to “all of life, but life as actually exists in all of its complexity and diversity.”226 Thus, Welker calls his pneumatology a “realistic theology.” It is a theology that seeks a clearer knowledge of God by examining the diverse experiences and expectations of God for reciprocal interconnections and for differences in constantly new ways. In this way his work intersects nicely with the ideas about communal participation put forward in this thesis.

Paying attention to the primary testimonies of the biblical traditions and the secondary testimonies in our cultures, Welker’s realistic theology is above all constantly open to new ways of understanding the experienced and expected reality of God. Out of the complex and diverse actuality of life he tries to establish “the criteria of the coherence and clarity of this knowledge of God.”227 In his experiential pneumatology, God’s vitality and freedom are expressed not in metaphysical constructs, but in “a plurality of contexts and theories that cannot embrace the pluralistic reality and newly emergent issues. The World Council of Churches’ Seventh Assembly which was held in Canberra, Australia, in 1991 with the theme, “Come, Holy Spirit–Renew the Whole World,” has become a theological turning point for the formal recognition of the necessity for a new pneumatology. In this assembly, Moltmann tried to overcome the limitations of the traditional metaphysical pneumatology using the concept of life. In the preface to The Spirit of Life, he criticizes the dialectical theology of Barth that leads to the false alternative between divine revelation and human experience of the Spirit. For Moltmann, God’s revelation is to be found in human experience and the Spirit is present wherever there is life. In a sense, his holistic pneumatology is not fully removed from the established system of Western metaphysics in that it adheres to a Trinitarian conception of dogmatics. He has not been able to free himself from the characteristically christocentric tradition of the Western Church, consequently reducing the panentheistic and holistic feature of God’s Spirit into Christology. See Jürgen Moltmann, The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), x-xiii and Jeong Bae Lee, “Pneumatology and Modern Theology - Theological Basis of ’Lebenstheorie,’” in Theology & World Vol. 27, (Seoul: Methodist Theological College, 1993), 134.


structural patterns of life.” Welker’s pluralistic pneumatology is thus relevant both to the diversity of biblical experiences of the Spirit and to the post-modernized context in which society is organized and perceived polycentrically.

Welker’s doctrine of the Spirit as God’s “force field,” in which God’s power and presence in the entire world are publicly experienced through the faith community, can function as a theological corrective for the move in contemporary homiletics towards a focus on the human agency of preaching. His concept of God’s force field captures the dual participation of God and human beings in the preaching event, in which the preaching and receiving of God’s word take place as proclamation in the Spirit in order to bring forth God’s reign over all dimensions of life. Here the human agency is not simply that of the individual preacher, but belongs to the entire community.

I. The Need for a Spirit-centered and Ecclesial Homiletics

Developments in contemporary homiletics, with its methodological pluralism, reflect God’s ongoing work in the Spirit in response to a rapidly changing context. The conceptual methods of the old homiletic theory, and the narrative methods of the new homiletic theory that has superseded it, are simply the results of a search for effective ways of communicating the gospel in specific contexts. They are not stark alternatives, but complement each other. With a sense of balance, we need to ask how to improve the quality of preaching beyond the old and new homiletic theories, by calling on and depending on another factor, namely creativity in the Spirit. We need to integrate both approaches as methodological resources for homiletic creativity in the Spirit. It is through the Spirit’s power that both the old and new

228 Ibid.
homiletic theories can serve in the proclamation of the gospel, by getting people involved in God’s ongoing work through preaching. What is necessary then, is a “Spirit-centered homiletic” that aspires after and aims at a “demonstration of the Spirit and power.”

As well as pursuing a Spirit-centered homiletic, we also need to pay attention to a new development in postmodern homiletics – one that focuses on communal participation in preaching. In this development we observe a more listener-oriented understanding of preaching for the new hearing of God’s word. Developments in preaching in the postmodern context tend to echo the communal participatory nature of Christian preaching in New Testament times. The postliberal, revisionary, and conversational preaching methods of the New Homiletic movement thus go beyond the attempt to create individual experiences; they reflect also the notion of preaching as a formative engagement of all believers. These trends evoke a need for a new homiletic pneumatology to overcome the tradition in which the Spirit’s signs in preaching are rendered mostly through the individual agency of preachers.

The pneumatological discussions in contemporary homiletics need to deal with an ecclesial dimension that goes beyond the limited discussions of individual preachers or listeners. Homiletics as taught at theological seminaries still tends to focus on the preacher’s rhetorical methods and techniques, instead of extending them to an ecclesial dynamic in which the entire church exists as the body of Christ in the Spirit. In truth, the Spirit’s working in proclamation is a mandatory premise for the actualization of a renewal in preaching. This is because the power of actualizing the constructive suggestions of the contemporary homiletic movement lies not in the ecclesial structure or the arguments of the preacher, but in the Spirit, who played the essential role in the original forming of the church.

Christians are primarily called to gather to worship together in the Spirit. All are
commissioned to preach the gospel to the world. As noted in Chapter 1, the ethical emphasis of the New Testament for Christian life lies firstly in the Spirit who works in the entire church as a body. Although community and individual are inseparably interdependent, the emphasis on community for the formation of God’s people is evident throughout the Scriptures. Since the church as the body of Christ is the pneumatically-constituted community of a people called out of the world for God’s reign, preaching should be an intrinsically communal participatory process involving all believers in the Spirit’s power. An ecclesial homiletics to unite the preacher and listeners as a community of God’s sacrament, in order to bring God’s presence into the world, is a theological turn that is required for a properly biblical proclamation. This turn can be shaped only by an ecclesial pneumatology that is faithful to Christian experiences of a communal and dynamic participation of the whole church in the Spirit. We need to ground preaching in a pneumatic understanding of Christian community. Through a sound ecclesial pneumatology, the communal participatory nature of preaching already manifested in contemporary homiletic development can be fully enlivened in and through the entire church of all believers in which the Spirit dwells.

II. Michael Welker’s Doctrine of the Spirit as Grounding for Christian Preaching

Under postmodern influence, the contemporary world can no longer be explained by any totalizing unification of thought.\(^{229}\) Theology should not adhere to the stereotyped traditions of the past, but should accept the variety of new situations in the present and actively respond to them. In Welker’s doctrine of the Spirit, we find an ecclesial

\(^{229}\) Welker criticizes the three predominant forms of Western thought that hinder the perception of the experience of the Spirit: old European metaphysics, dialogical personalism, and social moralism. According to Welker, we cannot fit God’s reality into a totalized metaphysical system and the world cannot be explained solely in “the I-Thou correlation.” Also, the action of God’s Spirit should not be confused with secular progress dominated by the spirit of the Western world. See Welker, \textit{God the Spirit}, 40-49.
pneumatology of the experience of the Spirit’s powerful presence within a pluralistic postmodern context. As an alternative to abstractly schematized theologies, Welker’s realistic pneumatology takes into account the diverse testimonies to God’s Spirit recorded in the biblical traditions and also the different experiences of the Spirit in creaturely reality.

After a thorough treatment of biblical texts from the Old and New Testaments, Welker offers a postmodern ecclesiology which reveals the power of God’s Spirit in the formation of pluralistic communities. For him, God’s Spirit, with a self-giving, self-withdrawing and selfless nature, is the power that “recognizes, enlivens, and maintains the body of Christ in constantly new ways.”230 Through participation in this power, the church as the “communion of the sanctified,” concretizes and realizes the “public person” of God’s Spirit in new and diverse ways.231 The church is thus depicted as a pluralistic community of all believers, through which God’s Spirit becomes knowable as the public person corresponding to Christ.232 For Welker, the Spirit is not only a public person whose individual center of action remains Jesus Christ, but is also the “force field” of God for the formation and actualization of the pluralistic community of God’s Spirit in the world. Welker does not say a lot about preaching directly. He does say, however, that “[t]he Spirit is a force field that constitutes public force fields. In turn, people can enter these fields or be drawn into them as bearers and as borne, as constituting and as constituted.”233 In his concept of the Spirit as God’s force field and as the public person of Christ, we can find a meaningful grounding for preaching. The contemporary development of a communal, participatory

230 Ibid., 312.

231 Ibid., 310-311.

232 Ibid., 314.

233 Ibid., 242.
homiletics can be joined with an argument about the relation between the Spirit and preaching, rendering it not only to individual preachers or listeners, but to the whole church. The preaching event can thus be presented in a balanced way as a dual participation of the divine and human agencies in a public force field of proclamation, in which God’s power and presence are made known through the Spirit.

A. The Experiences of the Spirit in the Pluralistic Context

In today’s pluralistic context, we view self and others as relational beings and acknowledge each other as subjects. Welker describes the present time as a complex and crisis-ridden context that cannot be explained by any modern schemas and brings forth postmodernism as an alternative. He welcomes the reality of a post-modernization that affects all areas of life, and tries to connect it with pneumatology. The postmodern context arising from the self-endangerment of modern societies can be seen as a positive opportunity for the emergent action of the Spirit. Welker is convinced that the plentiful, diverse, complex, and dynamic realities of emergent experiences of God’s Spirit can be more readily understood in the postmodern context. In his view, modern societies are in pressing need of the emergent action of the Spirit who connects human beings and restores and strengthens communities.

Welker’s concerns about the actions of God’s Spirit in the pluralistic and complex reality of life, as well as in the Bible, have to do with human experiences. He considers pneumatology a “problem of experience.” Viewing the changed situation of the contemporary world positively, he attempts to explicate this pluralistic and complex reality

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234 Ibid., 29.

235 Ibid., 28-29.
in terms of the Spirit’s action. He presents the direction for past, present, and future experiences and expectations of God’s Spirit in today’s world by going back to the strong symbolic resources of the Bible.

To do this, he examines the diverse biblical testimonies to the work of God’s Spirit, going from the relatively unclear experiences of the Spirit’s power in the early traditions of the Bible, through the prophetic longings for the promised Spirit of justice and peace, and on to the messianic life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the Spirit’s outpouring. Welker thus enables us to recognize the increasing determinacy of the statements by which biblical traditions witness to the Spirit. Welker begins this process by scrutinizing the traces of the Spirit from the early and unclear testimonies about the activity of God’s Spirit in the Old Testament. According to these early traditions, God’s Spirit is the power to deliver Israel from situations of collective distress and chaos (Judg. 3:7-9; 6:33; 11:4-5; 1 Sam. 11:1-4 etc.). Using the concept of “emergence,” he explains that the Spirit’s presence in these situations is experienced in a way that is incomprehensible and indeterminate to human reason and sensation. Yet the emergence of God’s Spirit is not that of “a fully incomprehensible, numinous power.” Rather, “emergence” is the actions of the Spirit which overcome these numinous chaotic situations and produce a new unanimity and harmony.

God’s Spirit is thus experienced as the good Spirit in restoring the community of God’s people by such emergent actions. Welker emphasizes the societal horizon of sin and

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237 Welker, *God the Spirit*, 50. The concept of “emergence” is used to describe the reality in which the synergistic whole of things in different systems is more than the sum of its constituent parts. Welker characterizes such experiences of God’s Spirit in creaturely diversity as “emergent.” See Welker, *God the Spirit*, 28, n.58.
expands salvation out of sin into restoration of the community and the liberation of the weak, oppressed, and marginalized. Within concrete situations of real life, God’s Spirit comes to be known to the community as a Spirit of righteousness and mercy. This is largely by actions of deliverance out of distress and helplessness experienced by imperfect, finite, mortal persons upon whom the Spirit has come. These direct or indirect changes in public realities, contrast with the individualistic understanding of the Spirit of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

The universal intention of the Spirit in the earlier testimonies is more clearly perceived in the messianic tradition. In the messianic texts, the power and authority of the messianic bearer of God’s Spirit lies in His establishment of and His universal extension of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God as the functional elements of God’s law. The universal fulfillment of God’s law promised in the messianic tradition is characterized by the dynamic interconnection of justice, mercy and knowledge of God. The messianic tradition also notes that the bearer of the Spirit forgoes public relations strategies for acquiring moral and political attention and loyalty not only “from above,” but also “from below.” He is silent and offensively despised and rejected as publicly powerless (Isa. 42:2). People come to perceive the necessity of questioning and renewing the orders of this world by their

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238 Ibid., 109. According to Welker, in the oldest collections of laws there is a strict functional interconnection of ordinances concerning justice, cult, and mercy. The mercy laws especially aim at forging one’s own interest and rights for the benefit of weaker and disadvantaged person; female and male slaves (Exod. 21:2ff), strangers (Exod. 22:21; 23:9), widows and orphans (Exod. 22:22ff), the poor (Exod. 22:25ff; 23:6), and for fellow persons with neither influence nor power (Exod. 23:1 ff). Even in the dynamic course of development of the law in the Old Testament, “the law remains a functional interconnection of ordinances that serve the founding of justice, the routinization of mercy, and the cultivation of the public, universally accessible relation with God.” In the Isaiah traditions, above all, the promised bearer of the Spirit brings and establishes righteousness by protecting and cultivating the interconnection of justice and mercy. Moreover, the messianic promises offer the prospect of the universal spread of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God beyond Israel towards all the nations (Isa. 42:1-4, 6-8; 61:1-11). See Welker, God the Spirit, 109-113.

239 Ibid., 125.
recognition of the suffering bearer of God’s Spirit. \(^{240}\)

The community, which is formed by the pouring out of the Spirit “from heaven” and the extending of the Spirit’s action, is repeatedly promised and foreshadowed in the biblical traditions. The most representative text is the Joel promise (Joel 2:28-32). The Spirit’s pouring out on men and women, old and young, slave and free, promises a community of equality overcoming political, social, sexual, and racial discrimination. This, Welker believes, refers not to an abstract equality, but to the concrete, pluriform equality of “fleshliness” before God. \(^{241}\) In fleshliness, the Spirit gives life to the many-sided prophetic community:

> When the Spirit of God is poured out, the different persons and groups of people will open God’s presence with each other and for each other. With each other and for each other, they will make it possible to know the reality intended by God. They will enrich and strengthen each other through their differentiated prophetic knowledge. From various perspectives and trajectories of experience, they will direct each other’s attention to the agent responsible for their deliverance. But in this differentiated and pluriform community of testimony, not only is there a powerful continuation of the Spirit’s working toward righteousness. In this differentiated and pluriform community of testimony, God becomes present in a concentrated way. \(^{242}\)

In the Joel promise, everyone who participates in the pouring out of the Spirit can mediate the prophetic knowledge of God and help others see through the suffering of people in solidarity. Thus, “a specific group of people, a specific stratum, a specific tradition, or a specific culture can no longer claim for itself alone God’s presence, the reception of the Spirit, prophetic testimony, and true definitions of reality.” \(^{243}\) Rather, the Spirit’s presence is experienced in the complexity of diverse, concrete, mutually challenging and mutually

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\(^{240}\) Ibid., 133.

\(^{241}\) Ibid., 151.

\(^{242}\) Ibid.

\(^{243}\) Ibid., 155.
enriching attestations to the reality intended by God. In terms of God’s creative action, the Spirit is called ruah which is generally translated as “breath.” By recognizing that the Spirit’s creative activity is not automatic and not indeterminately ubiquitous, we can be relieved of “careless and thoughtless totalization.” The Spirit does not act on abstract eternal entities, but on living beings. Fleshliness and the action of God’s Spirit are not to be separated. Welker contends, “The unclear notion of a totally numinous ‘action of the Spirit,’ fully removed from the flesh, has stood in the way of understanding either creation or new creation.” God’s Spirit acts in and through the fleshliness of the creaturely reality. The renewal of creation by the Spirit does not remove fleshliness. On the contrary, the new creation by the Spirit brings a renewal of and change in fleshliness that characterizes creaturely life. Correspondingly, fleshly life characterized by sensitivity, vulnerability, and perishability is renewed by the Spirit into a life of diverse structural patterns of interdependence. Without this renewal, all fleshly creatures consistently act contrary to these structural patterns of reciprocity, leading “not only to devastation and destruction of other life, but also to endangerment and destruction of self.” Through the Spirit’s renewal, however, fleshly life is newly inserted into the

244 Ibid.
245 God gives fleshly creatures a share in God’s “breath.” See Welker, God the Spirit, 159.
246 Ibid., 161-163. He says, “This simultaneously intimate and complex relation of God to creatures that is wrought by the Spirit, this knowledge of all structural patterns of life into which any creature could possibly enter, must not be replaced with conceptions of a ‘universal causality’ and a ‘ubiquity’ that are not more precisely defined. God is not interested ‘in everything’ in an indeterminate way; God is interested in a very determinate way in all structural patterns of creaturely life.”
247 Ibid., 163.
248 Ibid., 164.
249 Ibid., 168.
community of creatures and placed “in the service” of the action of God’s Spirit.250 This renewal by the Spirit extends into a truly peaceful nature as described in a visionary manner in the Old Testament traditions. God’s Spirit replaces a stony heart with a fleshly heart (Ezek. 11:17ff; 36:26ff) and thus sets up renewed relations between human beings which are mutually strengthening. In this way, fleshly-finite life both attains and effects the joy and the peace that are given by the Spirit because it is enabled to attest to God’s action of new creation and because it is led beyond its own potential.251

The abundantly different testimonies to God’s Spirit in the Bible are concentrated and concretized in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the promised bearer of God’s messianic Spirit, chosen by God to deliver the world. He acts under human and earthly creaturely conditions, but his public installation as the Christ of God by the Spirit of God points to the fulfillment of the hopes and expectations of all times and people.252 In the end, the true identity of Jesus is publicized without any false concretions or abstractions, solely on the basis of the experience and knowledge of the cross and the resurrection of the Christ.253 The crucified and risen bearer of God’s Spirit gathers and builds up the communities of God’s people who are to participate in life, overcoming the power of sin and death. The coming reign of God is characterized by the binding of the Spirit to this concrete person, the silent, despised and suffering Jesus.

250 Ibid.

251 Ibid., 170-171.

252 Ibid., 195. The synoptic writers witness to his person in this universal relation through the account of Jesus’ birth, baptism, and temptation in the wilderness. Jesus is born as the embodiment of the messianic sphere of hope and expectation, is baptized in his solidarity with sinful human beings in need of repentance, purification, and the pouring out of the Spirit, and demonstrates his power in reaction to Satan by the very act of declining to seize power. See Welker, God the Spirit, 183-203.

253 Ibid.
The concentrated presence of Christ’s power in the diverse structural patterns of life and experiences is now the power of community with Christ, as described in the *Paraclete* material in the Gospel of John.\(^{254}\) Taking the place of the fleshly presence of Jesus in the world, the *Paraclete*, who is sent in Jesus’ name by God the Father, represents Jesus in her total selflessness:

Through the Paraclete, Jesus and Jesus’ word are made present in many experiential contexts in an authentic and concentrated manner. Unlike the fleshly-earthly Jesus, this advocate – and through this advocate, Jesus – can be with disciples “in eternity” (John 14: 16-17)...Through the Paraclete Jesus and Jesus’ word become and “remain” present in diverse structural patterns of life and experiences without giving up the concentration and authenticity of Jesus’ palpable proximity. In this way Jesus’ powerful, “heavenly” manner of experience can be present in an earthly way. Through the Spirit Jesus is not, to be sure, “ubiquitous” in an indeterminate, indifferent way. But through the Paraclete Jesus does indeed simultaneously enter in full authenticity into environments that are far removed from each other, and foreign to each other, in time and space.\(^{255}\)

The Spirit’s acts in making Christ present in diverse structural patterns of life and experiences enable people who receive the Spirit to bear witness to Christ. For Welker, however, the human witnesses to Christ cannot and should not aim at a “total vision,” a comprehensible theory, an intelligent “reconstruction” or anything similar.\(^{256}\) Rather, the Spirit leads human beings into all truth through “multi-presence” as “the Spirit of the community of testimonies.” In other words, the Spirit brings people to clearer knowledge of truth in the mutual giving and receiving of testimonies.\(^{257}\) The reason why the Spirit is called the “Comforter” is not only because the Spirit gives people steadfastness in their current situations, and in face of the relative openness of the future, but also because the Spirit gives

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\(^{254}\) Ibid., 222.

\(^{255}\) Ibid., 223-224.

\(^{256}\) Ibid., 224. With regard to the fragmentary quality of the human testimony, Welker says, “To bear witness means to place value on certainty and authenticity, but also on perspectival and fragmentary perception, and on a rendition in accord with such perception.”

\(^{257}\) Ibid., 225.
them strength in unfamiliar situations and acts for their benefit in those situations.\textsuperscript{258} The Spirit becomes manifest as “the Spirit of love” by enabling people to give strength and steadfastness to other people so that they might also develop themselves in the best possible way.\textsuperscript{259} Through this force field of reciprocity and love, the Spirit acts in a prevailing order of violence as the revealer of judgment on the powers of this world.\textsuperscript{260}

Welker’s understanding of emergent experiences of God’s Spirit, drawn from the Bible, rightly reflects on the emergent nature of proclamation as a divine-human event which takes place through the giving and receiving of preaching in the Spirit. For Welker, clear knowledge of the actions of God’s presence and power appears above all in the person of Christ through the Spirit’s universal spread of justice, mercy and the knowledge of God. Bearing in mind the communal emphasis of the actions of God’s Spirit in forming a differentiated unity, Welker interprets the Pentecost event in the book of Acts as the creation of “a force field.”

\textbf{B. The Spirit as God’s Force Field in the World}

Welker perceives God’s Spirit as the public power that strengthens and renews people with his key concept being that of “a force field” that enrolls humans in the Spirit’s activity.\textsuperscript{261} A force field manifests its power in the pushes and pulls of the particular objects within its ambience, while at the same time remaining autonomous in relation to those

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{258} Ibid., 226.
\item \textsuperscript{259} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{260} Ibid., 227.
\item \textsuperscript{261} Welker seeks to connect the political, economic, sexual and racial issues of liberation in Third World Theologies directly with the action of God’s Spirit in the world. See Welker, \textit{God the Spirit}, 16.
\end{itemize}
objects which are its secondary manifestations.\textsuperscript{262} Similarly, God remains transcendent, but the created world can experience God’s presence and power through the Spirit’s actions and participation in such manifestations. “The Spirit is a force field that constitutes public force fields. In turn, people can enter these fields or be drawn into them as bearers and as borne, as constituting and as constituted.”\textsuperscript{263}

Welker takes the image of a force field to describe the pouring out of the Spirit in the Pentecost event. Acts 2:1-47 is the most direct biblical description of the pouring out of God’s Spirit. Welker holds that the descent of the Spirit that occurred there can also be understood as God’s power. On the day of Pentecost there were evidently experiences of change among those upon whom the Spirit came. They began to speak in other languages, to form a strongly unified community of diverse persons and groups of people, and to give themselves to proclaiming God’s “deeds of power” to others. Welker contends that the pouring out of the Spirit or the force field of the Spirit at Pentecost was no once-and-for-all event.\textsuperscript{264} Rather, the Pentecost event is determinative for recognizing the actions of God’s Spirit in our times as well as in the New Testament era.\textsuperscript{265}

Above all, Welker pays attention to the speaking in foreign languages in order to illuminate the Pentecost event anew: “All of them were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability (Acts 2:4)”\textsuperscript{266} Here the decisive aspect is neither the fantastic story of spiritual experiences nor the incomprehensible

\textsuperscript{262} See Welker, \textit{God the Spirit}, 239 n.23.

\textsuperscript{263} Ibid., 242.

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid., 229.

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 227.
speaking in tongues. Instead, the occurrence of a totally unexpected comprehensibility and of an unbelievable, universal capacity to understand is what is truly miraculous in this story:

The Pentecost event is a “miracle of languages and of hearing.” It is the event of the essentially worldwide proclamation of “God’s deeds of power,” which is made possible by an unforeseeable universal understanding. The disintegration and dispersion of human beings, the Babylonian confusion of languages (Genesis 11), and the connected rupture of the world are removed. But in this removal cultural, national, and linguistic differences are not set aside, but retained. The entire, differentiated representative world of a given time in its differentiation not only is addressed, but also understands the proclamation of God’s action of deliverance carried out of human beings. At great length and with the help of a quotation from the Joel promise of the universal pouring out of the Spirit, the account of the Pentecost event emphasizes that the representative world in its differentiation into many people, into Jews and Gentiles, into men and women, young and old, female and male slaves, is an active witness of this event.267

For Welker, the truly significant meaning of the speaking in other languages lies in the gathering of a community of witnesses to God’s deeds, sharing an unusual commonality of experience and understanding, with no dissolution of their variety and complexity.268 Since God’s Spirit is not something numinous, he rightly pays attention to the formation of the universal community of the Spirit out of God’s deeds of power as communicated by diversely differentiated people upon whom the Spirit has come. In Welker’s view, all of the spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues, need to be assessed and criticized in terms of their communal significance. In this vein, speaking in tongues in need of interpretation is re-illuminated as “a process that includes different forms of involvement and that generates and binds essentially public attention” against abstract pluralism and reductionist relativism.269

267 Ibid., 230.

268 Ibid., 232-233. This case of “xenolalia” as comprehensible speaking in foreign languages is different from incomprehensible speaking in tongues (glossolalia) in 1 Corinthians 12-14, which are in need of translation for communal edification. According to Welker, the contemporary Pentecostal and Charismatic emphasis on incomprehensible “glossolalia,” not as a relatively subordinate gift to comprehensible prophetic speech, but as a central and decisive gift of the Spirit, results from a deficient understanding of what happened at Pentecost and unclear notions of what the Holy Spirit wills to bring into effect. See Welker, God the Spirit, 268.

269 Ibid., 269-270.
Welker emphasizes that in the Pentecost event the pouring out of the Spirit constitutes a new community of diverse persons and groups of people, which can be called “pluralistic” in a modern sense. The pouring out of the Spirit in the Pentecost event creates a force field in which God’s people can have a part both as givers and receivers in the community of God’s universal communication in the Spirit. According to Welker, this force field is insufficiently perceived when the pouring out of the Spirit is thought of in abstract terms, rather than as something concrete and real.\textsuperscript{270} With the pouring out of God’s Spirit, the fullness of the Spirit’s action is \textit{really} present and effective even though it is “accessible and comprehensible to the human person in only a limited way, perhaps even totally inaccessible and incomprehensible to her.”\textsuperscript{271} This presence and effect of the Spirit’s actions are not something indeterminate and numinous. The fullness of the Spirit’s action is mediated in and through the community of testimony of people who have been sanctified and justified by Jesus Christ and the Spirit.\textsuperscript{272} The constitution of this community and of this force field is thus bound up with the universal communication of God’s deeds of power in the Crucified and Resurrected One.\textsuperscript{273}

According to Welker, God’s Spirit brings about a new community using the communicative forms of faith, hope, love, and peace. This community neither excludes nor dominates others because of the heavenly diverse complexity of the force field, which is not

\textsuperscript{270} Welker critiques Barth for “a false abstraction grounded in the dialogical approach of Barth’s theology,” which reduces the experience of God’s Spirit into the renewal and repentance of the human person, and fails to comprehend the essential structure of the universal and public power that lies in the pouring out of the Spirit. \textit{See} Welker, \textit{God the Spirit}, 235-237.

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 237.

\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., 238.

\textsuperscript{273} Ibid.
at the disposal of human beings. It is through the gifts of grace that the Spirit realizes the heavenly diverse complexity that characterizes this force field. As part of this diversity, God’s Spirit gives human beings a share in the Spirit and enables them to be the members and bearers of this force field. The diverse charisms of the Spirit given to individuals enlist them to serve as respective elements of the force field, and thus to build up the community of the Spirit:

Individual persons with their particular endowments are thus enlisted to serve. They enter into force fields and help to constitute them: fields that in turn are elements of the force field of the Spirit. The one Spirit, the one Christ, the one God makes use of diverse gifts of grace, diverse deeds and services (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-6) and of their interplay in order to reveal and to attest to God’s presence. These gifts and deeds are given to individual persons in order for them to mediate to each other God revelation and attestation. To be sure, the Spirit enlists the services of individual persons, and in the understanding caused by the Spirit effects personal certainty. Yet the charisms are not private gifts, let alone gifts for private consumption. They all serve inclusion and participation in the knowledge of God mediated by the Spirit.

The Spirit’s gifts to build up the community as a force field reflect unity as well as diversity in that they are given to every believer from the one Spirit. The gifts are too diverse to confine to a list. They seem to have certain hierarchies in their values in that they are given for the common purpose of building up the community out of the one source. Thus Paul explains that all gifts bring diverse, reciprocal knowledge of the body of Christ and remain dependent on each other (1 Cor. 12:12 ff; Rom. 12:5-6; 10, 16; Eph. 4:2 ff). Moreover, Paul warns against constructing hierarchies that leads to divisions, indicating that God has given great honor to those members who find themselves disadvantaged.

The Spirit is God’s power to create faith. The Spirit presses faith “to engage in

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274 Ibid., 240.
275 Ibid., 241.
276 Ibid., 242.
277 Ibid.
proclamation in order to demonstrate and confirm faith as a force field, to activate it as an
element in the field of the Spirit, and to fill this overarching field.”278 Thus proclamation can
never be privately shaped, or individually attempted outside of the force fields generated by
the Spirit.279 Welker contends, “Like the other force fields generated by the Spirit, the public
force field of faith is not a closed system. It also does not have an absolute place in a fixed
hierarchy of gifts of grace. The charisms of the mediation of knowledge, of faith, and of
prophetic speech that are highlighted in 1 Corinthians 12 are (along with mercy and
martyrdom) relativized in 1 Corinthians 13 in comparison with the gift of love.”280 The
privileged position of love is conjoined to hope in the still imperfect knowledge of the force
field of faith. Hope is a form of experience and understanding in which faith is related to the
experience of the still unredeemed world.281 Hope as growing out of experience of patience
and love is also a universal force field directed toward the experience of God’s glory and the
universal demonstration of God’s righteousness.282 This force field is spread through the
communal experiences of joy and peace in faith by their God of hope. Even in their
frightening experiences of loveless-ness and hopelessness, people come to know that the
Spirit wills to form the universal community of hope and love and to renew the perishing
world for and through them.283 Welker notes that “the action of the Spirit is to be understood

278 Ibid., 244.
279 Ibid.
280 Ibid., 245.
281 Ibid.
282 Ibid.
283 Ibid., 246.
neither pluralistically in the sense of a dissociating pluralism nor individualistically in the
sense of an abstractly unifying individualism.”284 He says,

The action of the Spirit touches me in the unique and irrepeatable concretization of this “here and now.” At the same time, though, the action of the Spirit is bound in a diversely differentiated way into specific shared forms of life and experience. At the same time the action of the Spirit affects me as well as all believers, as well as the whole Christian church, as well as the whole community that streams together at Pentecost. It affects me as a member, as an element, as a representative and bearer of this community, but also as someone borne by this community.285

In this way, concrete individuality and world-overarching universality are held together in the chosen community of faith as the force field of the Spirit.

According to Welker, God’s Spirit not only brings human beings into a universal community, but also effects “conditions of the psyche and the community,” which are called “the fruit of the Spirit” by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23.286 These conditions of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” are defined by “free self-withdrawal and self-giving for the benefit of other creatures.”287 Free self-withdrawal to give others space for development finds its most complete expression in love.288 In the force field of the Spirit, love becomes a power beyond simple I-Thou relations. Love is a world-changing force field that defines not only person-to-person relations, but also complex relations of community and sociality and concretizes the force field of the Spirit in the most complete way.289

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284 Ibid., 247.
285 Ibid.
286 Ibid., 248.
287 Ibid., 248-249.
288 Ibid., 249.
289 Ibid., 250.
The force field of love leads to peace, by influencing judicial, moral, and political processes. Peace is the consequence of the relation between the self and the self’s surroundings formed in the community of love. It is a successful form of human life together. Peace is the fruit of love through free self-withdrawal for the benefit of others. The Spirit of love, peace, and righteousness presses us to fulfill the intention of the law to establish justice, mercy, and the knowledge of God through simultaneously universalizing and individualizing these intentions. The Spirit fulfills the promised righteousness and peace in love and forms the most completed force field in the world by love. Love in the power of the Spirit is the power of God’s self-demonstration. By this love God rules the world. This love in the Spirit is recognized and experienced in constantly new ways as the power to change people and the world. Through love, the Spirit establishes God’s righteousness and mercy and provides a demonstration of God’s presence among people and in the midst of world conditions dominated by the power of sin. People defined by the Spirit act in accord with God’s will in love for others and thus peace is created in the community by love in the power of God’s Spirit.

People under the domination of sin and the power of the law of the world are incapable of self-withdrawal, of love, and of experiencing peace without the action of the Spirit. God’s Spirit liberates life in the flesh from the power of sin: “The Spirit of God is a power that liberates from the condition of being surrendered to the-futile-attempt to assert

290 Ibid., 250-252.
291 Ibid., 256.
292 Ibid., 258-259.
293 Ibid., 260.
oneself at the expense of others and to preserve oneself by means of a ‘self-potentiation’ oriented to oneself. The Spirit is a power that leads life in the flesh, precisely as such, to the ‘resurrection of the flesh’ and to participation in ‘eternal life’ (Gal. 6:8).”

Through the action of God’s Spirit earthly life becomes a bearer and a mirror of God’s glory. God’s Spirit is distinguished from the spirit of the world neither by a tendency to flee from the world nor by hostility to the body and to life. Rather, God’s Spirit is recognized in the Spirit’s action to realize deliverance, transformation, liberation, and freedom of human life.

The action of God’s Spirit to realize God’s reign in the world through individual, ecclesial, and social transformation can be named as the force field of proclamation. God, preacher, and listeners interact in the preaching event in the force field of proclamation created by the Spirit. In the force field of proclamation, the whole church, as a pluralistic society of believers, constitutes the human agency of proclamation in a mutual giving and receiving of the manifestations of preaching.

C. The Pluralistic Community of the Spirit and the Public Person of the Spirit

Welker distinguishes between the spirit of the world and God’s Spirit in terms of the understanding of self. They are decisively different in that the former aims at self-actualization, while the latter aims at selflessness and self-withdrawal. Welker considers the most intellectually informed and culturally influential understanding of the spirit of the Western world to be based on the metaphysics of Aristotle and Hegel. According to

294 Ibid., 262.
295 Ibid., 263.
296 Ibid.
Aristotelian metaphysics, spirit is “the power that thinks itself insofar as it takes part in and receives a part in what is thought.” Most of the Western theological and philosophical speculative efforts directed toward “the identity of subject and object” are only poor caricatures of this dialectical Aristotelian understanding. Welker believes Hegel extended and completed the abstract Aristotelian self-relational understanding of the spirit. Hegel tried to understand spirit as a more concrete concept that produces and reproduces the self in the universal community of the world. He corrected the formality, abstraction and reflexive distance from reality of classical metaphysical pneumatology. The Hegelian pneumatology, however, also remains simplistic and barren in terms of the efforts to experience the presence of the Spirit in conditions of a finitude under the power of sin. Thus Welker claims that the Aristotelian and Hegelian philosophical conception of spirit falls short of God’s Spirit as reflected in the biblical traditions. Instead, he proposes a biblical conception of spirit based on a realistic theology of the Spirit. With this understanding of God’s selfless Spirit as found in the biblical traditions, Welker overcomes the Western conception of a self-referential spirit.

In contrast to the Western self-referential spirit, Welker describes the public person of God’s Spirit, the one who overcomes the world by the church as the communion of the sanctified. The communion of the sanctified extends beyond the visible churches of particular epochs to the universal community of the Spirit which is at work relativizing the spirit of the world. God’s Spirit calls people not only out of visible churches, but also out

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297 Ibid., 285.
298 Ibid., 289.
299 Ibid., 295.
300 Ibid., 308.
of many times and many countries into powerful communion with Christ. This community, which is a communion with the Crucified and Risen Christ, can be characterized as “heavenly” communion with Christ because it is not tied to specific earthly conditions and states of the world. Nevertheless, this powerful communion, which is constituted by God’s Spirit, is realized “under the conditions of the finite, perishable world and on, through and for fleshly, mortal creatures.” The great power that overcomes the world is exhibited in the community of people whose services are enlisted by the Spirit. In regard to the relation of the Spirit and the constitution of new community, Welker says,

The persons who arrive in the communion of the Holy Spirit and who are filled with the Spirit of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 2:16) not only perceive the revealed mystery of sacrifice and free self-withdrawal and the revitalization released by this free self-withdrawal. They become witnesses of this “life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45); they become sisters and brothers of Christ; they become members of Christ’s body; they stand in intimate communion with Christ; through word and deed they pass on Christ’s message, the expression of Christ’s will. The people who participate in this power of free self-withdrawal and of sacrifice for the benefit of others in order likewise to help others to know their loss, their deliverance, and their vocation as witnesses to this power of the Crucified One – these people are addressed as those who are “called to holiness.”

In their vocation of making the selfless person of the Crucified One present in diverse ways under the conditions of earthly finite life, the public person of God’s Spirit is concretized and realized to the extent that members of the communion have a share in the Spirit of Christ and thus are one with Christ.

Welker emphasizes that God’s Spirit takes on definite contours and becomes knowable in the communion of the sanctified, which is concentrated on the Crucified and Resurrected One and acquires a share in Christ’s self-withdrawal and presence. Because a

301 Ibid., 309.
302 Ibid.
303 Ibid., 310.
304 Ibid., 311.
center of action becomes a person by means of a “domain of resonance” in the webs of relationship, he contends that the personhood of the Spirit remains obscure where a person is thought and conceived only as an individual-human center of action.\textsuperscript{306} God’s Spirit is “Christ’s domain of resonance” and its “pluriform unity” is constituted by our participation in the Spirit.\textsuperscript{307} In Welker’s view, the Spirit is thus to be understood as a public person at work in the world-overcoming power of sacrifice and free self-withdrawal proceeding from the communion of the sanctified.\textsuperscript{308}

Following the Apostles’ Creed, Welker asserts that the public personhood of the Spirit is actualized in the communion of the sanctified through the forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the flesh, and enjoyment of eternal life. In his view, human beings under sin are helpless creatures who cannot free themselves from the situations of suffering and distress into which sin leads. Liberating these helpless human beings from the powers of sin and death is possible only through the Spirit’s power. For Welker, “forgiveness is the-only-possibility for preventing the consequences of sin from continuing to devour its victims.”\textsuperscript{309} Indications that the Spirit of the forgiveness of sins is at work are found in new beginnings, the production of new structural patterns of life, the stabilization and regrouping of the

\textsuperscript{305} Ibid., 312.

\textsuperscript{306} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 314. The concept of a “domain of resonance” refers to the idea that people are not constituted by an “individual center of actions” but by “diverse webs of relationships.” The presence of God’s Spirit as the public person corresponding to the individual Jesus Christ forms the domain of Christ’s resonance and thus comes to be felt in worldwide influence and effectiveness. Whereas the concept of a “force field” expresses the “spreading-out” nature of the Spirit’s action, this concept of a “domain of resonance” highlights the multiplicity and the breadth of the Spirit’s action. See Welker, \textit{God the Spirit}, 313 n. 51.

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid., 315.

\textsuperscript{309} Ibid., 317.
disintegrated persons and communities, the replacement of the old forms of power and domination, the unexpected and unforeseen appearance of the bearer of hope, and the prophetic recognition of evil and lying spirits. Welker says,

The people who are a part of the Spirit’s action of forgiving sins and who are affected by this action are not only bearers, but also are borne. They are not only mediators, but also receivers. They not only exercise an influence on their surroundings, but also are affected, strengthened, challenged, and changed by the action and reactions of others. In this experience of being surrounded and borne up, the persons who are renewed by the action of the Spirit and are borne up by the process are indeed themselves changed. They themselves are a part of this process, and they themselves collaborate in it.

In this process of mutual challenge and empowerment on the part of persons upon whom the Spirit comes, the Spirit’s action of forgiving sins, which leads to a new beginning, is defined “by the fact that here a public person and power is acting who in complete selflessness and self-withdrawal acts for the benefit of others.” For Welker, the universal spread of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God, which actually takes place in the power of the forgiveness of sins, cannot be brought about by only one time, one nation, one culture, one race, or one class of people. Since the forgiveness of sins is a process that aims at the rebirth and renewal of the whole creation, the Spirit’s action of forgiving sins and of renewing life is broad, universal, and uncontrollable. God’s Spirit acts for the liberation and renewal of persons of all times and of all relative worlds in diverse concrete contexts. Thus, the entrusted testimony of the concrete actions of the Spirit to the communion of the sanctified can also be executed in diverse and continually renewed ways. In this way, exalting and

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310 Ibid., 318.
311 Ibid., 319.
312 Ibid., 320-321.
313 Ibid., 321.
314 Ibid.
315 Ibid., 323-324.
illuminating all flesh in all its concrete frailty, God’s Spirit leads people liberated from the power of sin into the reality of the communion of the living and the dead.\textsuperscript{316}

According to Welker, the resurrection of the flesh is comprehended as the initiation of a “process of self-withdrawal that acts beyond the limits that one has experienced to one’s own action and beyond one’s own death” and becomes “a life-prompting entrance into other structural patterns of life.”\textsuperscript{317} Resurrection life cannot be dependent on situations and conditions of the world which are not contemporary with God’s presence because it is life enabled by God’s presence.\textsuperscript{318} The real fleshly life delivered and preserved in the communion of the sanctified is exalted and illumined by the Spirit to make God’s fullness and glory present and to serve the experience and knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{319} In Welker’s view, the biblical traditions that clarify this process highlight the futile understanding of resurrection within the limits of the self-centered Western spirit:

Regardless of the delivered, exalted, and illumined fleshliness, the resurrection wrought by the Spirit is a process that, through its “exaltation,” is of equal benefit before God to the universal communion of the living and the dead. From the living and from the dead, for the living and for the dead, the Spirit sets eternal life, life that has validity, in relief, thereby revealing, making present, and spreading God’s glory.\textsuperscript{320}

The enjoyment of eternal life, for Welker, means universal and eternal communion with Christ to participate in God’s glory and then to reflect it. It is not limited to earthly life but enables the experience of intimacy with God. Inasmuch as God’s children “identify and recognize themselves in their communion with the crucified and risen Christ,” eternal life is

\textsuperscript{316} Ibid., 325.

\textsuperscript{317} Ibid., 326.

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 328.

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid., 329-330.

\textsuperscript{320} Ibid., 330.
experienced in the Spirit as the public person of the individual Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{321} This life leads to the universal establishment of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God. God, who is present in the midst of creation through and in the Spirit does preserve, enliven, and renew creation so that it is enabled to be the bearer of God’s glory and righteousness.\textsuperscript{322} Thus the creation is also present and effective in God’s life through and in the Spirit. Welker says,

Resurrected flesh, eternal life is not formless. Through the Spirit this life orients our faith, our love, and our hope. It enlivens our act of striving after justice, mercy, and knowledge of God. The Spirit of God works enjoyment of the heightening of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God, enjoyment of the spread of righteousness and of clearer knowledge of God. The Spirit of God awakens enjoyment of the replacement of imperialistic structures by the rich world of the Joel promise. The Spirit of God awakens enjoyment of the restoration of structural patterns of life and understanding where people and cultures had written each other off. The Spirit works enjoyment of the fact that polarized divisions into “friends” and “enemies,” accustomed forms of indifference as well as disempowerment and hatred are replaced by reconciliation, mutual understanding, mutual love, and restoration and respect of dignity.\textsuperscript{323}

In this way, people who participate in God’s eternal life through and in the Spirit become the public force fields of faith, hope, and love in the midst of fleshliness and a world assailed and marked by the power of sin and death. According to Welker, these actions of God’s Spirit to create the force fields reveal the unbreakable interconnection between free self-withdrawal for the benefit of other creatures and the reflection of God’s glory.\textsuperscript{324}

In Welker’s understanding, the public person of God’s Spirit is actualized in the midst of creation through the pluralistic community of the Spirit. This public person is formed by the divine initiative of and human participation in the universal spread of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God for the reign of God. The action of God’s Spirit allows people to participate in the Spirit within the force fields of proclamation, so that they might engage

\textsuperscript{321} Ibid., 334.

\textsuperscript{322} Ibid., 339-340.

\textsuperscript{323} Ibid., 340-341.

\textsuperscript{324} Ibid., 341.
in preaching the word of God. The body of Christ actualizing Christ in the world is a reciprocal community of testimonies to the experiences and expectations of the Spirit as God’s presence and power in the world. The fullness of the Spirit’s actions for the reign of God in the world constitutes public force fields in which everyone participates in the public powers of proclamation through the Spirit’s gifts of preaching in mutual giving and receiving. The body of Christ as the public force field created by the Spirit as God’s force field is pluralistic in that the Spirit acts on every member of the whole Christian church in his or her unique concretion. Furthermore, it is not a closed system with a fixed hierarchy of charismatic gifts, but an open locus for the actions of the Spirit of Christ through charismatic gifts. The charismatic gifts of the Spirit are not simply individual, but are “forms of participation and of inclusion in public power.”325 The fullness of the Spirit’s actions is present and effective in and through the body of Christ, which is characterized by a mutual participation in the Spirit’s power, toward the fully realized reign of God at the end of history. Welker’s prospect for the eschatological fulfillment of the reign of God centers on the Spirit, who makes every believer of the whole Christian church a bearer and member of the universal force fields of the living God in the world.

The experience of this force field through mutual participation in the Spirit’s power is not limited to the visible church. Rather, it is spread into the world through the inclusion of other experiences and expectations of the Spirit. More fundamentally, the Christian life of hearing and living out the preached word in the Spirit’s power is also the ecclesial participation in the actions of the Spirit in and for the world. The true application of the preached word turns on believers’ dependence upon the Spirit who works for the reign of

325 Ibid., 242.
God in their daily lives within the world. Ultimately, human participation in proclamation is intrinsically communal, in that the Spirit’s power influences a multitude of different individuals in a wide range of contexts to mutually give and receive the gift of preaching.

The church is a primary ground in proclamation. However, it is not a closed organization, but an open fellowship in the Spirit. In light of the mission of the Spirit to build up the body of Christ and to transform all the spheres of human life into God’s reign, the understanding of preaching as event can be described as a communal participation of human beings in the Spirit’s power for proclamation.

### III. Directions for Christian Proclamation

Proclamation is a divine-human event in which God and human beings meet together through the word of God. God, preacher, and listeners are the three constituent participants of the preaching event. Though the key idea of “linguistic eventfulness” found in contemporary homiletic scholarship may be a plausible explanation for the divine mystery of preaching and hearing the word of God, more fundamentally, proclamation is just not possible without participation from God. With its increasingly anthropocentric emphasis, contemporary homiletics often seems to overlook the divine, and fails to reflect a balance between divine and human agency. Thus the emphasis on participation in contemporary homiletics needs to be extended to include a more balanced understanding, in which none of the three constituent participants are excluded.\(^{326}\) Welker’s pneumatology thus provides a direction for rebalancing divine and human agency in proclamation as the preaching event.

\(^{326}\) For examples of arguments for divine participation for proclamation, see Michael Pasquarello III, *Christian Preaching: A Trinitarian Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006) and Lucy Lind Hogan, *Graceful Speech: An Invitation to Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press,
Welker’s concept of the Spirit as God’s force field and as the public person of Christ is the key to claiming Christian preaching as communal participation in the Spirit. The Spirit is God’s force field actualizing God’s presence and power in the here and now. The Spirit’s actions for God’s reign in the world create new possibilities for justice, mercy, and knowledge of God through our “fleshly lives.” The Spirit is the relational domain bringing our diverse webs of relationships into a pluriform unity in relation to Jesus Christ. The Spirit continually generates multiple public force fields for God’s reign in the world through our diversified finitude. In this powerful ambience, we come together to create a new world, bearing and borne by the Spirit. The Spirit is Christ’s public person actualized and concretized by the communion of the sanctified.

The communion of the sanctified constituted by the power of the Spirit is a “communal participation” of the people influenced by the Spirit for God’s reign in the world. In terms of its shared experiences of the power of the Spirit, the communion of the sanctified is not limited to individual Christians or the visible churches, but is extended into a pluralistic community of the Spirit which not only welcomes, but also includes others in the communion of public testimony to Christ. Thus the borderlines between the individual, ecclesial, and social realms of change in this pluralistic community of the Spirit cannot be mechanically drawn.

God’s Spirit is publicly recognizable in drawing human beings into the formation of God’s new community and reality. More importantly, the divine side of participation in

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2006). Pasquarello attempts to change the subject of preaching from human speakers to the Triune God. He defines preaching as “speaking of God” (10). His understanding of preaching is that it is “a personally involved, participatory, and embodied form of graced activity that is the Triune God’s gift to the church (10).” Hogan proposes a Trinitarian understanding of preaching rooted in the conception of perichoresis that involves God, the preacher, and listeners in the preaching event. Hogan also claims that preaching is a graceful speech made possible “by ongoing grace of God, the Holy Spirit poured out into the world (6).”
proclamation can be more fully recognized in the process of communal participation in the Spirit by the whole church. In other words, the human side of participation in proclamation is preferably itself communal in its mutual giving and receiving of the emergent manifestations of preaching the word of God in the Spirit. While always in need of discernment, the work of the divine agency in the preaching event is manifested in this process of communal participation in the Spirit.

In the dual participation of God and human beings in the preaching event, the Spirit’s actions can be discerned firstly in the accomplished sermonic purposes and in the shared experiences of transformation in human life. This means more than what we usually mean when we talk about the move from hearing the word to ministering in the world as disciples. The preacher is enlisted to serve listeners with his or her gift in the Spirit. Listeners as individuals are also enlisted in a multiple force field of proclamation in order to build up the faith community. In the public force field of proclamation all of the gathered church, including others, such as non-believers, are enlisted to serve. They serve for and with each other for the emergence of proclamation by mutual giving and receiving of the Spirit’s graced gifts. These are not only the so-called “spiritual gifts,” but also the gifts inherent in their creaturely diversity. People whose services are enlisted by the Spirit thus take part in the enactment of the proclaimed word in the world.

Christian discernment is not a simple human reflection, but an interactive tuning in to what the Spirit is doing in and through preaching. During preaching, it is also an act of communal participation of the gathered church through its mutual giving and receiving of the Spirit’s graced gift of discernment. This communal discernment is therefore inevitably united
to Christian confession of Jesus Christ as the Lord, which God proclaims through preaching in the Spirit.

Developments in contemporary homiletics show an ongoing move to a full human participation in the preaching event. Diverse preaching methods, including narrative identification, imaginative connection, and interactive conversation, can be seen as God’s ongoing work in the Spirit that the preaching event might transform the whole person and all humanity, rather than simply as homiletic options for effective preaching. In what follows, I remark on desirable homiletic directions in relation to questions of “why, what, how, who” in terms of communal participation in proclamation.

A. The Building Up of the Body of Christ for the Reign of God

Christian preaching is not a human invention. It is a commission from the living God. We preach because the living God has spoken in word and deed. We preach because we have been commanded to preach the very word of God by the speaking God. Preaching itself is a function of the church constituted by the Spirit of the speaking God. Christian preaching is fundamentally grounded in that the speaking God calls the church to preach the word of God into the world.

In Welker’s pneumatic understanding of proclamation, the initiating actions of God’s Spirit in the coming reign of God allow people to participate in and to impart the Spirit in the force fields of proclamation. The primary action of the Spirit for the coming reign of God is the building up of the faith community as God’s people. The fullness of the Spirit’s actions for the reign of God in the world constitutes public force fields. Everyone participates in these public force fields through the Spirit’s gifts that point to Christ.
The pluralistic community of the Spirit exists to spread justice, mercy, and knowledge of God into diverse concrete contexts. It is an “open” locus for the actions of the Spirit to actualize Christ in the world. Preaching is a communal participation of the church in the Spirit’s power and presence to build up the pluralistic community of the Spirit for the reign of God in the world. In the mission of the Spirit to build up the body of Christ, varied sermonic purposes are accomplished. Through the people’s participation, the Spirit works to draw them into the public force fields as mediators and receivers of the collaborative event of proclamation which changes all realms of human life. In a giving and receiving of the manifestation of the Spirit, the preaching event adopts various forms of participation and inclusion in the public force fields of the Spirit.

B. The Experienced and Expected Triune God in Text and Context as Message

Welker offers us a fundamental direction for the what of Christian preaching. In the preaching event, what is to be proclaimed is not individual preachers, but Christ Jesus the Lord, as the catalyst of what God did, is doing, and will do (2 Cor. 4:5). The saving acts of the triune God center on the person and work of Jesus Christ as God’s answer to human problems and God’s supply to human needs. The various experiences of divine grace in the Spirit are nothing but the application of the accomplishments of Jesus Christ into diverse concreteness of people. The ultimate completion of divine grace converges on the “summing up of all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10), through the Spirit’s action to forgive sins, to overcome the power of death, and to enjoy eternal life. Regardless of the topic and the form of preaching, the essence of preaching is thus to bring the gospel of God, which sets up the divine Will accomplished in Jesus Christ and makes it real to believers through the Spirit.
Since the gospel itself is God’s response to the problems and the needs of human beings, preaching needs to demonstrate how this can be applied to different cultural contexts and how the crucified and risen Christ is the answer to the problems of human beings. The gospel to be proclaimed in preaching should be always not only as concrete as the realities of people but also as imaginative as the future of people in God’s reign. Accordingly, preaching needs to pay attention to the suffering and needs of people as well as the experiences of the gospel in daily life. Preaching also requires a faithful performance of the grand story of God’s action in history for salvation that is capable of interpreting the present experiences of believers.327

Paul Wilson proposes that the New Homiletic embrace a theological sense of reading the Bible for preaching called the “God sense.”328 The God sense of a biblical text is the dimensions of a text “that speak of God’s nature, acts, and relationship to humanity and creation, and that enable the Bible to be read as Scripture, the book of the church.”329 According to Wilson, the objective of preaching needs to shift from preaching the text as a fixed pericope to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that by recovering God at the center of the particular text it can be the essential instrument that opens the word of God for today.330 Although we generally preach the text “and” the gospel rather than the text “or” the gospel, this emphasis on the gospel over the text in terms of the what of preaching is the

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327 However, as we consider that one of the central tenets of postmodernism is Jean-François Lyotard’s “incredulity toward metanarratives,” Christian preaching in the postmodern context should be a confessional demonstration of Christian metanarrative without the violent totalization which is the main critique of metanarratives by postmodernists.

328 Paul S. Wilson, God Sense: Reading the Bible for Preaching (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001).

329 Ibid., 68.

330 Wilson, Preaching and Homiletical Theory, 38-39.
theological task of preaching, in that not every text is a bearer of the gospel.

Edward Farley argues that the prevailing paradigm of preaching, that builds a bridge from the content of the ancient text to the situation of the contemporary congregation, is imposing on preachers an impossible task.\(^{331}\) Since the Bible is not an aggregate of texts, but a form of witness to God’s salvific working in Jesus Christ through the Spirit, all texts need to be proclaimed in order for the mystery of God’s salvific action to be present as a transformative power in the world. This proclamation is achieved by entering the world of the gospel by way of the world of the Bible and the world of the interpretation of Christian faith.\(^{332}\) The world of the gospel as what-is-preached, for Farley, is not reducible simply to the event of Jesus Christ, but extends to the mysteries of God’s present activity in the world.\(^{333}\) He challenges preachers to decide between preaching as the preaching of the Bible and preaching as the preaching of the gospel, that is, between biblical passages as themselves God’s very words and the Bible as an ancient, oblique, and multidimensional attestation to the world of the gospel.\(^{334}\)

Farley’s provocative argument in terms of the what of preaching is valuable for correcting the linguistic methodological focus of the New Homiletic. It points to the preacher’s theological task of discerning God’s presence in and through both the text and the context. His relatively low doctrine of Scripture needs to be moderated, however, so as not to overlook God’s communicative supremacy and human finitude when reading the Scriptures.


\(^{332}\) Ibid., 79-82.

\(^{333}\) Ibid., 86-87.

\(^{334}\) Ibid., 98.
As far as one’s point of view of the Bible is itself a tool for communicating God’s mysterious presence and power, preachers need to acknowledge both viewpoints of the Bible, which each have their own strengths and drawbacks, and to appropriate both for a faithful witness to God’s presence and power for today. Preachers need to be humble in relation to how God uses the witness of the Scriptures and be open to the possibility that people in some other contexts may find the world of the gospel even when they cannot find it in a text.  

In this matter, David Lose suggests the homiletics of “confession” as a faithful way of boldly speaking of the crucified and risen Christ in a postmodern world. He critiques Campbell’s homiletics for prioritizing the text over experience and losing many ways that text and experience are interwoven in and through the Spirit. He critiques Rose’s homiletics as well, in that it jeopardizes the sermon’s ability to engender significant participation in a tradition; it sacrifices the function of preaching to proclaiming a living word to people directly; and it risks preaching becoming indistinguishable from any other talk. For Lose, confession offers an open space in which “a lively encounter between Word and hearer can take place through the power of the Holy Spirit.” He says, “If either the hearer is absorbed by the Word (as in Campbell) or there is no definite Word (as in Rose), the likelihood of such an encounter is diminished.” Taking both the postliberal “participatory” element and the conversational “distanciatory” elements of preaching

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335 Wilson, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory*, 51.


337 Ibid., 130-133.

338 Ibid., 141.

339 Ibid.
dialectically in order to confess the Christian faith in a postmodern context, Lose emphasizes the dynamic freedom of the speaking God through both text and context.

In this emphasis on God’s ongoing actions through the Spirit, the what of Christian preaching is guided into the communicative actions of God through the Scriptures, tradition, and context, rather than into any one of them. All of the Bible, traditions, and experiences of people are summoned to serve God’s ongoing actions for God’s reign. All are divine resources for God’s glory in the world. As the ultimate communicative agent in the context as well as in the text, God is establishing God’s reign as a dynamic reality of self-giving love and shared glory. The promising substance of the preaching message for the Spirit’s working force for proclamation is the confession of Jesus Christ as the Lord in that God’s reign in the world is crystallized in the incarnation, life, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Jesus Christ. Taking the Apostle’s Creed as a “big picture” of God’s action in history, Welker’s realistic and biblical pneumatology heralds the Spirit as the public person of Jesus Christ who is to be actualized in the communion of the sanctified through the forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the flesh, and enjoyment of eternal life. This focus on God’s ongoing actions in Jesus Christ through the Spirit calls for Christian preaching to deal with the experiences of God and God’s actions by ecclesiastical discernment of God’s Spirit.

The Spirit of the living God as the ultimate communicative agent acting today in our daily lives as well as in or through the biblical texts is a personal truth and force in Christian proclamation which brings all into God’s fullness and glory. As preaching proclaims the experiences of God and God’s actions in the service of the Spirit, God mediates God’s revelation in diverse human attestation to God’s presence so that God’s reign can be actualized in the world. This experienced and expected presence and power of God plays the
role of a hermeneutical lens to interpret the concrete contexts as well as the various texts used in preaching. Christian preaching is provided with the what-to-preach through the biblical texts and the concrete contexts of life, that is, God’s ongoing nonviolent, anti-totalizing and liberating actions which are determinately founded upon the events of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has fulfilled the eternal purpose of God the Father, whose achievements are being actualized by the Spirit through the life of the churches. In a pluralistic context, our preaching needs to embody and perform a Christian metanarrative through identifying with Christ and participating in all the achievements of Christ by faith. The Christian metanarrative as the story of the triune God who did act, does act, and will act out of self-giving love is the good news for the postmodern world and is that which our preaching must continue to confess, and which we must embody in our daily lives and practices.

C. Communal Participation in the Spirit as Method

The Spirit’s working force for proclamation is not only related to the substance of a message, but also to the preaching method of such a message. Diverse preaching methods have emerged out of the human endeavor to find a new hearing of God’s word in a changing context. In terms of the how of preaching, contemporary churches are situated in an “age of methodological pluralism.”\footnote{340} In Preaching at the Crossroads, Lose approaches contemporary preaching not as a “problem” to be solved, but a “mystery” to be embraced.\footnote{341} In a rapidly changing context we need not only to integrate a variety of homiletic fixes into


our preaching practices, but we also need to “call into question our fundamental practices by leaning into and listening carefully to the world in front of us.”  

Aiming at contextual preaching, Leonora Tisdale claims that preachers need to exegete the congregational culture as well as the biblical text. For congregational exegesis, she suggests the preacher examines local congregational symbols such as congregational stories, archival materials, demographics, architecture and visual arts, rituals, events and activities, and the difference between respected figures and those who live on the margins of congregational culture. By this Tisdale seeks a preaching “which not only aims toward greater ‘faithfulness’ to the gospel of Jesus Christ, but which also aims toward greater ‘fittingness’ (in content, form and style) for a particular congregational gathering of hearers.” Joseph Jeter and Ronald Allen take account of the variety of listeners in terms of the six categories of age, mental process, gender, culture, class, and theological orientation for a more comprehensive guide to congregational exegesis. Since human beings do not have fixed and specific modes of mental processing, periodic researches of local churches might be helpful in aligning homiletic practices with the Spirit’s working for proclamation. 

Proclamation takes place by the Spirit as the primary agent in performing the divine communication between the living God and the hearing church. Insofar as the pneumatic dimension is inseparable from all communication from God, the how of Christian preaching can be beneficially reexamined as communal participation in the Spirit’s force working for

342 Ibid., 6.
343 Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1997), 64-77.
344 Ibid., 33.
345 Joseph R. Jeter, Jr. and Ronald J. Allen, One Gospel, Many Ears: Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregation (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002).
proclamation. In this matter, the diverse preaching methods in the contemporary homiletic movement focus on the participation of listeners as individuals, faith communities, and those beyond. An evident feature of contemporary homiletics is its focus on the participation of all humanity through affective identification, imaginative connection, or interactive conversation. In particular, people’s actual and direct participation in the sermon opens new possibilities for the emergence of proclamation via the diverse manifestations of the created uniqueness of individuals. Although human participation in the preaching event is possible through diverse methods, it ought not to be dependent on the preacher’s rhetorical capability alone. Instead, a dynamic of reciprocity can contribute to the emergence of proclamation for people from diverse situations. The traditional three-point preaching plan for logical persuasion is also a useful method, since there are many people for whom this is still suitable. In reality, preaching methods need not exclude one another, but can work together for the full participation of humanity and more listeners. However, a future homiletic of communal participation in the Spirit could provide a more effective preaching method through actual and direct participation of diverse listeners in the sermon.

Since individual preachers tend to be limited in their own dispositions, interactive conversation among listeners is desirable for hearing afresh God’s word. The preaching practice which is more open to the multiple participation of diverse listeners will create a more ecclesial dynamic. Christian preaching can thus be reclaimed as communal participation in the Spirit’s working force for proclamation, because the individual, ecclesial, and social experiences of divine grace in the preaching event are impossible without mutual giving and receiving of the word of God through the Spirit’s manifestation. It can make a
difference in our understanding of preaching if the whole of God’s creation is welcome to contribute to the preaching event with their divinely-given uniqueness.

The Spirit’s work of making proclamation possible through communal participation is hinted at in various contemporary preaching methods for engaging diverse listeners in the sermon. Whether the preaching method is logical persuasion, affective identification, imaginative connection, or interactive conversation, the Spirit brings about a new world in the community through such participatory means.

Proclamation takes place through participatory preaching in harmony with the Spirit’s self-withdrawing nature, thereby embracing the concrete differences between people in a changing context. In a context of sensitivity to differences, contemporary churches have a privileged opportunity to recover relevant and powerful preaching through being open to diverse concreteness of people and by bringing diverse methods to engage them in the sermon. For a homiletic aimed at God’s people as a whole, the following appeal from Lose resonates with preachers who are looking for a homiletic home:

Most, if not all, mainline preachers earnestly wish and sometimes exhort our hearers not only to apply their faith to their lives but also to share that faith with others. But how can we expect our hearers to accept our invitation unless we also provide them the means and occasion by which to practice what we invite? It is precisely the gap between our experiences of Sunday and the rest of the week that makes it nearly impossible for most mainline churchgoers to imagine applying or sharing their faith. Even if they know the biblical narrative (literacy), they have little competency or confidence in connecting it meaningfully to the tasks of everyday life (fluency). Moreover, if our people have spent their entire lives watching others (the preacher) talk about faith but have never themselves had an opportunity to do so, where will they have developed the competence and confidence to do it themselves?  

Lose’s participatory homiletic for an interactive sermon reflects the close connection between preaching and mission in a digital pluralistic context. We need to consider a radical claim that in the communal participation in the Spirit, the faith community itself

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is the preacher.

D. The Faith Community as Preacher

As the contemporary church looks for effective preaching methods most adequate to its mission today, the fundamental task of attending God’s word in the world should not be entrusted to individual preachers alone. Instead of the preacher as a “lone ranger,” God’s people as a whole are called to share the responsibility of discerning God’s word for the world. Eunjoo Mary Kim proposes a new paradigm for preaching as a shared ministry going beyond clericalism. In light of the complex internal and external conditions which the contemporary church is facing, such as the push towards egalitarianism, membership decline, and globalization, she claims,

[T]he pulpit should no longer be the place of a monopoly on power, but must be a place representing God’s relational nature and shared power to the world…The new paradigm of preaching as a shared ministry will freely invite those who are willing to witness to God’s redemptive power in their lives and creatively work in collaboration to transform the church and the larger world into a place where people can foretaste God’s reign.

For Kim, preaching is “a communal effort between the pastor and the congregation to discern God’s grace in their lives together and bring it into a shared experience.”

Wesley Allen also proposes that the preacher is not “the one in the congregation whom God has called and empowered to proclaim the gospel, but as one conversation

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347 Although biblical illiteracy is prevailing in contemporary churches, it is also the case that a knowledge-based society of the information age in which everyone can read the Bible in their own language and then contribute to the preaching event is more than ever the context of contemporary preaching. The crisis may lie in the fact that the preacher still has an image of preacher as “a solitary figure hunched over desk preparing a sermon.” See Clifton F. Guthrie, Form Pew to Pulpit: A Beginner’s Guide to Preaching (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 25.


349 Ibid., 80.
partner among many in the congregation.” He claims,

In this postmodern understanding of the church, proclamation is not the sole responsibility or profession of the preacher. Indeed, the good news is proclaimed in a give-and-take fashion; everyone proclaims his or her knowledge, experience, and interpretation of God-in-Christ, and everyone listens as others proclaim. The result of this form of conversational proclamation is mutual turning, or conversion…in which conversation should be conducted in the gathering that is the body of Christ.

For Allen, a congregation is a matrix of ongoing conversations. His homiletic of all believers emphasizes the church itself as a faith community of proclamatory conversation.

Although there are differences in degree according to heritage, the trend within the contemporary churches is most commonly towards communal participation. In contemporary preaching practice, therefore, the preacher-hood of all believers may be claimed on the basis of the priesthood of all believers as in the Protestant heritage. Anabaptist, Quaker and Brethren Church traditions are relatively supportive of this claim. But the Reformed tradition tends to emphasize ordered offices as a precaution against false teaching or “fanaticism.”

The preacher-hood of all believers is attainable as part of the Christian life of discipleship, and as part of the charge to preach the gospel by word and deed in the world. With regard to the formal preaching office, however, we need to focus more on the faith community of mutual reciprocity in the Spirit rather than on individual believers. This is because, above all, Christians are sent every Sunday into the world not as isolated believers but as members of the faith community, the local body of Christ in the Spirit. The Christian mission of living out the proclaimed word in the world is not possible if people are separated from the force field of the Spirit. In other words, the Christian life of discipleship in the world is an extended “body” life of the faith community which the Spirit charges with God’s presence.

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350 Allen, The Homiletic of All Believers, xiii.

351 Ibid., 38-39.

352 Kay, Preaching and Theology, 16-19.
and power. The issue of communal participation in contemporary preaching is thus more about how the Spirit can use a faith community’s resources for proclamation, than it is about who can do the preaching at Christian gatherings. This should really be a case of both/and rather than either/or. This kind of radical claim for the preacher-hood of all believers might, however, turn into an exhausting waste of energy rather than a productive argument in some traditions.

In terms of a dual participation of God and human beings in the preaching event, contemporary churches need a radical claim for the priority of the preaching office of the faith community over the preaching office of individual preachers. Whether the preacher is alone or working in a team, a male or a female, ordained or a layperson, proclamation as the preaching event is not possible without a giving and receiving of the word of God in the Spirit’s working. However, this should not be at the expense of the differentiation of ordained preachers and congregations. Leadership is still needed. God still calls individuals to ordained ministry and sets them apart for a specific role. Moreover, the education program of the church has a formative role in all of this. The ordained preacher needs to become a teacher and facilitator who, through mutual giving and receiving, enables the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord in the concrete diversity of real life. The preaching act itself is not the aim of the preacher. The preaching office of the church is primarily grounded in the communal “partnership” of the entire church as a reciprocal community of confession bearing witnesses to Jesus Christ as the Lord.

The communal preaching office of the entire church takes priority over the individual preaching office bestowed on a preacher, and the latter comes through the former from the ultimate preacher, God. Since Barth reformulated the subject of a sermon as the word of
God, the triune God has been claimed as the ultimate agent of Christian preaching by the theologians of the Word of God. In contemporary developments for hearing God’s word in a changing context, the New Homiletic tends to accord that agency to language or narrative, and consequently individual preachers tend to be considered the decisive agents of the preaching event. The claim for multiple conversations between the preacher and congregation or between the church and the world in contemporary homiletic development has in fact gradually increased the communal participatory feature of contemporary preaching. But the preoccupation of contemporary Western society with individual subjectivity tends to limit the human agency of the preaching event to individual preachers. The individual office of preaching is not only for the edification of believers in their daily lives, but also for the building up of the preaching community in the service of the Spirit in the world. Thus the ideal of Christian gatherings in the New Testament was that all believers bring something of the living God, experienced and mediated in their lives, and shared through the word of teaching and revelation, spiritual songs or through speaking in tongues and their interpretations (1 Cor. 14:26). In this communion of believers sharing the divine self-giving grace, the preaching office cannot be separated from the communal agency of the body of Christ in the Spirit.

IV. Closing Remarks

Welker’s pluralistic pneumatology extends the argument about the Spirit to all realms of human life, redressing the traditional lack of emphasis on the Spirit’s work in all of

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354 Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 129.
creation. However, his postmodernist tendency to absolutize difference tends to limit the Spirit’s work to the unpredictable, the uncontrollable, the surprising, and the new.\(^{355}\) Though Welker melds the understanding of the Spirit with the creation of pluralistic communities, his tendency to absolutize difference seems to lead to the rejection of any conscious, organized, and controlled attempt to respond to the Spirit’s work as an attempt to “manage” the Spirit.\(^{356}\)

Without a pneumatology of human praxis in service of the Spirit’s work, his optimistic pneumatology, which emphasizes diversity, fleshliness, and transformative force against the hierarchy and social injustice, may perhaps open up the chaos of difference found in the working power of sin and death in the world. In total reliance upon the Spirit, we need to not only develop human praxis in service, but also to discern the Spirit in the church and the world. Difference and sameness are mutually constitutive of our perception of the world. Those foundational traditions upon which the churches are commonly based can be a conversational partner to complement Welker’s pneumatology of difference.\(^{357}\)

There might also be many other communities within the world with a cultural ethos that is different from Welker’s postmodern perspective. Welker’s focus on our creaturely diversity may also deflect attention from the incomprehensible otherness of the wholly other God, whose nature is qualitatively different from our own. Since the Spirit blows where she wills, the ongoing task of discerning the Spirit’s presence and work requires our humility and

\(\text{Anselm Kyongsuk Min, } The \text{ Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism } (\text{New York: T \& T Clark International, 2004}), 214. \text{ He critiques Welker; “If the Spirit is truly universal, there should be a way of finding her in our most ordinary and predictable experiences as well, especially in organized political attempts to introduce controlled but decisive liberating changes into repressive institutions and structures. One of the tasks of pneumatology would be precisely to disclose the pneumatological significance of the ordinary or reveal the pneumatological other in the same.”}}\)

\(\text{Ibid., } 215\)

\(\text{Macchia, “Discerning the Spirit in Life,”} 12.\)
openness to other experiences.

In terms of an understanding of Christian preaching from a more balanced stance of dual participation of its divine and human agency, it is God’s people, as a dynamic community of faith mutually giving and receiving the gift of preaching in the Spirit, who constitute the communal agency of the preaching event. This understanding of the faith community as preacher, taking priority over individual preachers whose authority to preach in Christian gatherings is bestowed by the congregation, is in line with the church’s task of missionary proclamation to the world. Proclamation emerges from the faith community’s communal participation in the Spirit’s work. And the church can be prepared to preach the gospel to the world through such participation in proclamation.

Christian preaching is seen as a divine-human activity when the Spirit is viewed as the creative and redemptive power of God at work in the world. The human agency of the preaching event is formed and actualized by the Spirit’s initiative according to the manifestation of the Spirit through the imparting of various charismata among the faith community. Put simply, without being received as the preached word of God through communal discernment in the Spirit, preaching cannot emerge as proclamation to bring about a new world. Thus the communal agency of preaching referable to the entire church has priority over the individual agency of preachers.

In Paul’s visionary recapitulation of all divinely inspired activities in the gathered church, proclamation takes place through a communal agency of the body of Christ in a mutual giving and receiving of the manifestations of the Spirit “for the common good.” In Calvin’s Spirit-centered understanding of preaching also, God’s communicative, sacramental, and performative activity for proclamation occurs only in the Spirit. Calvin’s
actual practices as preacher and pastor in the context of sixteenth century Geneva were
nothing other than an ecclesial dynamic of increased participation of the whole church in the
workings of the Spirit. In Welker’s postmodern pneumatology, the Spirit is manifested as the
locus of proclamation by means of his key concept of the Spirit as God’s force field and
Christ’s public person. God’s initiative and efficiency for proclamation are found in his
dynamic concept of the force field, while the human contribution to the preaching event is
found in his social concept of Christ’s public person.

Since the preaching event cannot take place outside of the public force fields
constituted by the Spirit, the Spirit works on human beings to take part in the preaching
event. The pneumatically-constituted church as the body of Christ mediates the fullness of
the Spirit’s action through every believer’s shared testimony and proclamation of God’s
deeds of power. Since no one person, group, or culture can identify God’s Spirit alone, the
authentic community of God’s Spirit is also characterized by every member’s self-
withdrawal to make room for each other according to God’s Spirit.

The claims of the faith community in the Spirit as preacher can not only help
individual preachers make room for more participation by more people, but also give the
congregation more responsibly to take part in the preaching event. Through sensitivity to
differences in the experiences of God’s Spirit, the community of faith as preacher can
respond creatively to the world today. The following descriptions of contemporary homiletic
development since the 1960s in North America provide many examples of means by which
more people can participate in the preaching practice.
CHAPTER 4
Preaching as Communal Participation in the Spirit since the 1960s

Since around 1960, the “New Homiletic” movement has worked for “a new hearing” of God’s word in the context of a preaching crisis where the preaching tradition was focused on conceptual methods and seemed ineffective. A common theme in the multiple approaches to preaching in the literature of the New Homiletic is a turn to listeners as active participants. As Beverly Zink-Sawyer claims, the turn toward listeners signifies “the realization on the part of preachers that the tasks of preaching and the text from which we preach are not our own but are shared gifts given to the whole people of God.”

Although contemporary homiletic developments allow for listener participation and the ecclesial dimension of preaching, an increasingly anthropocentric emphasis means the divine dimension is often overlooked. Luke Powery attempts to discern the manifestations of the Spirit in the individual, ecclesial, and social realms of the preaching event. His interest goes beyond the limited concerns of language, content, structure, and performance, to viewing contemporary homiletic development as part of the ongoing movement of the Spirit in fulfilling the shared purpose and task of both the divine and the human agency in preaching.

In what follows, I examine contemporary homiletics in terms of the Spirit’s work in human participation in the preaching event.

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I. The Spirit and Contemporary Homiletics

The role of the Spirit has always been crucial to preaching. Even in his familiar Greco-Roman rhetoric, the apostle Paul took account of the relation between preaching and the Spirit. Preaching is a demonstration of the Spirit’s power that goes beyond human words and wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4-5, 1 Thess. 1:5a). In *De Christiana Doctrina*, Augustine also mentions the relationship between the preacher and the Spirit. The Spirit is a speaking Spirit who teaches Christians what and how they should preach, not only in a specific crisis, but also in ordinary situations. For the Reformers, it was through the Spirit that the preached word became God’s word in the hearts of God’s people. Half a century ago John Knox wrote: “True preaching from start to finish is the work of the Spirit.” However, discussion of the Spirit’s role has been largely absent from contemporary homiletic literature.

In the 1988 Lyman Beecher Lectures, James Forbes labeled the neglect of the Spirit in homiletics as “Holy Spirit shyness.” According to Cheryl Johns, the neglect of the Spirit in homiletics has several causes, including the Christ-centered emphasis in Protestant homiletics, concerns about fanaticism, and the disregard of the sacramental nature of preaching due to a dichotomy between preaching and sacrament. In today’s homiletic

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360 Commenting on Matthew 10:19-20, Augustine relates the discussion to those suffering persecution: “If the Holy Spirit speaks even in those who for Christ’s sake are delivered to the persecutors, why not also in those who deliver Christ’s message to those who are willing to learn?” See Augustine, *De Christiana Doctrina* (Seoul: Bundo Press, 1989), 350.


literature we find only rare examples of a pneumatological approach to preaching. Gregory Heisler, however, does connect the doctrine of the Spirit to homiletics with regard to expository preaching. Taking a Spirit-led approach to preaching, he proposes a spiritual dynamic for individual preachers that goes from God’s calling to be a preacher to the delivery of the message into the hearts of listeners. Criticizing a concentration on “the mechanics of preaching” instead of on “the dynamics of preaching,” Heisler demonstrates the need for a spirit-driven methodology of expository preaching. Although his Spirit-led preaching model can be considered a renewal of Spirit-sensitive homiletics, it does not reflect the contemporary emphasis on the communal participatory nature of preaching. The sphere of preaching is still limited mostly to the preacher, includes the listener only partially, and is not expanded to include the entire church.

In Spirit Speech, Powery seeks to articulate the Spirit’s manifestations in sermonic moments through the experience of individual grace, the fostering of ecclesial unity, and the encouraging of social fellowship beyond the congregation. He identifies the four main categories of the Spirit’s work in the preaching as “revelation, grace, community, and ethics.” Powery persuasively identifies the Spirit’s presence in the expressions of lament and celebration in actual sermons from the African American experience. But like Heisler, he too does not emphasize communal participation as being part of the Spirit’s ongoing

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365 Heisler, Spirit-led Preaching, 12.

366 Powery, Spirit Speech, 31.
movement. Instead, he directs individual preachers to pay attention to sermonic languages and forms. It is my argument that we need a more ecclesial approach, one that includes a degree of communal participation appropriate for a postmodern context. In a context where a pneumatological approach is rare, inclusive arguments about the role of the Spirit in preaching need to be extended to the Spirit’s re-presentation of Christ in bringing new life. Moreover, the experiences of God’s grace through Christ’s presence in the Spirit bringing new life to individuals, churches, and to the world can be categorized into individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation.

A. Spirit and Word

Many have emphasized the Spirit’s work in preaching the word. In the words of St. Irenaeus, Word and Spirit are God’s two “hands.” The relation between God and humanity is exemplified in God’s personal interaction with the whole of creation by and through the Word and the Spirit. Killian McDonnell claims the Spirit as the “total horizon” in which the rules for speaking about God and Christ are determined. Yet the relationship between the Spirit and preaching has often been overshadowed by an emphasis upon the word of God as the what of preaching. Emphasis in the New Homiletic upon the issue of how to preach has also tended to turn the preaching of the word into a matter of human mastery over methodologies, without a full consideration of the essential role of the Spirit who works through human instruments for the purpose of proclamation.

The Reformation brought a threefold meaning of God’s word as the preached word,

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367 The Word is also called the Son and the Spirit the Wisdom of God in the theology of Irenaeus. See Irenaeus: Adversus Haereses IV: Preface: 4; IV:20:1; V:1:3; V:6:1; V:28:4, and Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching which sums up the earlier larger work, Adversus Haereses, Section 5-8.

Scripture, and God’s revelation, and as a result, general consideration of the Spirit’s role in preaching in relation to God’s word tends to include a threefold account of “the revealed, written, and preached Word of God.” It was Karl Barth who articulated this threefold account of God’s word, with emphasis upon “revelation” as miracle, i.e. the knowledge of God from and through God. According to Barth, God reveals God’s self to us by becoming the speaking subject who initiates proclamation and enables us to engage in such proclamation by the Spirit who miraculously gives us words.

In this threefold account of God’s word, Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word is the very word of God’s self-revelation. In the unfolding process of revelation, God’s word understood as “the active agent in creation (Gen. 1:3-29; Isa. 48:13; Ps. 33:6-9), the vehicle of God’s covenant with Israel (Exod. 34:27; Deut. 30:14-20), and the guiding force behind history (Isa. 44:26-28; Jer. 1:9-10)” in the Old Testament is developed in the New Testament into “the confession of Jesus himself as God’s Word incarnate in human flesh (John 1:14; Heb. 1:2).” As God’s Spirit was a presupposition for God creating the universe by God’s word (Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 33:6, 104:30) and for what God said to God’s people via the prophets (Ezek. 11:5, 37:4, 9; Micah 3:8; 2 Pet. 1:21), the Spirit was also inseparable in the person and work of Jesus Christ as the Messiah of God. The Synoptic writers clearly connect Jesus’ birth, baptism, temptation in the wilderness, and healings and exorcisms with the Spirit’s

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369 For instance, these three aspects of God’s word are combined and used alternatively in the First Helvetic Confession written by Heinrich Bullinger in 1536. See Arthur C. Cochrane ed., Reformed Confessions of the Sixteen Century (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 97-111.

370 Wilson, Preaching and Homiletical Theory, 59-61.


power and presence. His life and ministry are characterized by his total dependence upon the Spirit. Ultimately the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ which terminate all things discordant with God’s reign in the eschatological sense and bring all things in accord with God’s reign to completion, are present and effective to God’s people through faith in the power and presence of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{373} Since his redeeming action through crucifixion and resurrection became real to believers in the Spirit’s power and presence, Jesus told his disciples before his crucifixion and resurrection: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13-14, NRSV). As Arthro Azurdia III remarks, the predominant work of the Spirit is to reveal Jesus Christ, in whom God the Father is embodied, as the sum and substance of the divine revelation.\textsuperscript{374} The Incarnate Word of God is revealed to believers through the Spirit’s revelatory ministry. The revelatory work of God’s Spirit is to offer Jesus Christ as God’s Word in the here and now.

Scripture, as the written word of God inspired by God, is also illuminated in the human heart by the Spirit to reveal Jesus Christ through the preaching event. Since no understanding of Jesus Christ is possible without the Spirit, Scripture is dependent upon the illuminating operation of the Spirit for proclamation. The Spirit’s illuminating work is not limited to exegesis and interpretation of the Scriptures, but leads preachers to preach Jesus Christ to people in a specific time and space through those works.

\textsuperscript{373} The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus marks the “turning of the ages” by which God decisively judged the present age and brings it to an end. This eschatological framework of both “already” and “not yet” of God’s salvation and judgment is crucial to any proper understanding of Pauline theology. See, for instance, Herman N. Ridderbos, \textit{Paul: An Outline of His Theology} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975).

\textsuperscript{374} Azurdia, \textit{Spirit Empowered Preaching}, 50.
The function of the preached word of God is also to reveal Jesus Christ through the proclaiming work of the Spirit. The Spirit is present in the preaching event to make human speech effective as God’s proclaiming word. Proclamation has been treated as a synonym for preaching, but the contemporary scholars of homiletics have tended distinguish proclamation from preaching ever since C. H. Dodd pointed out a sharp distinction between preaching and teaching in the New Testament. According to Dodd, the primitive preaching of the early Christian church is the “kerygma” or “Gospel,” a narrative of what God has done in Christ, to be distinguished from didache, which refers to the ethical teaching of the church.375 Concerning a kerygmatic turn in contemporary homiletics, Fred Craddock recommends preachers move to a more inductive form of preaching for proclamation. The sermon is not just an exposition of the text but a “proclamation of that which the text proclaimed.”376 Eugene Lowry distinguishes proclamation from preaching in terms of the sermonic task and its accomplishment. Preaching as a task is a human offering intended to evoke an event, and proclamation is its corresponding achievement. He does not explicitly state how human words are proclaimed and received as God’s word, but his concept of proclaiming the word as the realized goal of preaching connects the divine act through human preaching to “proclamation.”377 He relates proclamation to the Spirit’s work: “My claim was (and is) that we cannot control the result of our sermons. We do our best, of course, but know that with God’s Word, we are at best working provisionally. The Spirit works with certainty. Our task


376 Fred B. Craddock, As One Without Authority (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 98.

is to try to maximize the possibility of proclamation happening.”

Paul Wilson calls for a recovery of proclamation in preaching today, and presents preaching as a dual art of teaching and proclamation. He distinguishes preaching as teaching which “gives information about God for listeners to make sense of their experience of God” from preaching as proclamation that offers the “actual bestowal of God’s grace.” Wilson claims, “A different kind of activity of the Spirit from what is involved in teaching accompanies proclamation. It continues to be guided by the Spirit, yet in proclamation the Spirit takes over. The Spirit gives testimony to who Christ is and utters his words.” Preaching as teaching that provides information about God for listeners under the Spirit’s guidance is in service of the higher goal of proclamation of the gospel in which the Spirit takes over in doing the gospel, that is, in proclamation. The Spirit’s guiding work in preaching as teaching might overlap with the Spirit’s illuminating work in the teaching moment in preaching, as well as in the preacher’s preparation and study for the sermon. For Wilson the proclamation moment in preaching is rendered more decisively as the proclaiming work of the Spirit in offering Christ to people. In his framework, the initiative and ultimate work of the Spirit in terms of the preached word of God is to make human preaching operative as divine proclamation in a specific time and space.

In contemporary homiletics, this emphasis upon proclamation in preaching points to the proclaiming force of the Spirit in preaching. Since proclamation is made possible through the Spirit’s work, it occurs not only during a worship service but also in the everyday

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378 Ibid., 88.
379 Paul S. Wilson, Setting Words on Fire: Putting God at the Center of the Sermon (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), xi.
380 Ibid., 93.
conversation of Christians.\textsuperscript{381} As Karl Barth notes, proclamation can happen “through Russian communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog.”\textsuperscript{382} Proclamation is intrinsically a dual activity of God speaking and humans receiving. Since God is active in human preaching and in people hearing through the Spirit’s revealing, illuminating, and proclaiming word of God, preaching becomes the revelatory event of proclamation that is ultimately fulfilled in Christians living out the proclaimed word of God in the world.

\section*{B. Spirit and Preacher}

The Spirit’s work in preachers, from the time of individual conversion and calling to formal preaching in Christian gatherings, gives more scope for understanding the Spirit’s work in preaching. Contemporary homiletics directs more attention to rhetoric and poetics than to the divine role in preaching. A full consideration of the Spirit’s work in preachers in the preaching process is rare in contemporary homiletic literature, since the person of the preacher is seldom discussed. The Spirit’s anointing on the preacher is often described solely in terms of the sermon’s delivery.

First of all, the Spirit’s work on preachers is primarily the shaping of the preacher for proclamation. As Heisler remarks, God’s Spirit does not only mold and make the preacher long before the preacher molds and makes a sermon, but also continues to mold and make the preacher long after the sermon delivered.\textsuperscript{383} Preaching is not so much about human preachers preparing a sermon, but about God preparing them as vessels to preach.\textsuperscript{384}

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  \item \textsuperscript{381} Gerhard O. Forde, \textit{Theology is for Proclamation} (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{382} Karl Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics, Vol.1.1, The Doctrine of the Word of God} (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1975), 55.
  \item \textsuperscript{383} Heisler, \textit{Spirit-led Preaching}, 68.
\end{itemize}
Salvation as a work of the Spirit through the proclaimed word of God is the Spirit’s preparation for the shaping of human preachers before their public preaching. Frank Pollard remarks, “An unsaved preacher is an armless person teaching the art of pitching a baseball. It is a bankrupt person teaching economics and investments. It is an alcoholic lecturing on abstinence. It is a guide showing people things he has never seen, taking them to places he has never been.” Conversion to faith in Christ is the initial experience of the Spirit within preachers before the call to preach. Baptism in the Spirit into the body of Christ is the public turning point in which all believers, including preachers, are received into the household of God and charged to confess the faith of Christ crucified, to proclaim his resurrection, and to share in his eternal priesthood. According to Barbara Brown Taylor, the chief difference between the ministry of the baptized and the ministry of the ordained is that the latter consent to be visible so that people look at them as they struggle with their baptismal vows. Both the baptized and the ordained are commonly called to proclaim God’s gospel. For Taylor, “preaching is not something an ordained minister does for fifteen minutes on Sundays,” but “something the whole community participates in, not only through their response to a particular sermon but also through identifying with the preacher.” A preacher’s ministry of God’s word is “a prototype, copied from Christ’s own, that offers the

384 Ibid., 5.
386 Heisler, Spirit-led Preaching, 69.
388 Ibid.
389 Ibid., 33-34.
whole people of God a pattern for seeking and responding to the Lord’s presence in our midst." Thus Taylor views the ordained preacher as “a living word about God’s word before the preacher ever says a word." According to her, the preacher’s devotional life to God and neighbor is decisive in sermon preparation, because the Spirit inspires preachers to incubate the sermon through their active and receptive attentiveness to God. Through the indwelling Spirit of God, in other words, preachers must know Christ in order to preach Christ, and preachers’ lives must be transformed in God’s grace by the good news in order to proclaim that news to people.

Michael Pasquarello seeks to provide a grammar of the “preaching life” that integrates the person and work of preachers. “The most important element of sermon preparation is the theological, spiritual, and moral formation of preacher through the Spirit’s empowerments.” Pasquarello argues the recovery of the preaching life is a most pressing need in a situation where homiletic practice is reduced to culturally-defined effectiveness of skills and techniques. He remarks, “Through the working of divine grace and human receptivity, it is possible for the interpreter of Scripture to become a living interpretation of Scripture.” Preaching calls for the shaping of “truthful preachers” to speak faithfully in the Spirit with the mind of Christ, rather than to focus on being “effective communicators.”

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390 Ibid., 33.


392 Ibid., 228-229.

393 Michael Pasquarello III, We Speak Because We Have First Been Spoken: A Grammar of the Preaching Life (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 3–4.

394 Ibid., 58.

395 Ibid., 63.
Consequently, for Pasquarello, good preaching is “the fruit of attentiveness to the Word through God’s grace by which we are transformed to know and speak the truth in love.”

He writes, “Because God is the primary speaker and actor, witnessing to the gospel is inseparable from the transformation of a preacher to be a truthful witness of the gospel, by becoming a ‘partaker of the divine nature’ through faith in Christ and the gracious empowerments of the Spirit that unites us to God through love (2 Pet. 1:4).” In the Spirit’s dynamic formation of preachers, training and educating preachers to develop their preparation and delivery of sermons is not excluded. Rather, homiletic discipline needs to guide preachers to seek the illumination and anointing of the Spirit in their preparation and delivery of sermons. The arguments about the Spirit’s shaping of preachers reflect a need for a corrective orientation in contemporary homiletics away from the human-centered mechanics of sermon development.

In sermon preparation, the Spirit illuminates the hearts of preachers with the revelation of Christ in the here and now through their reading, studying, and meditating on the written word of God. Since we believe that what the Spirit is saying to us now is in accordance with what has been said in the Scriptures, preaching that is faithful to the Bible is important for us. What God the Spirit said to people a long time ago in the Scriptures is also true for the churches now. It is not reasonable “to believe that the Spirit was active in the writing and preserving of the canon and then abandoned the church that had to interpret these texts as a living voice to guide believers.”

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396 Ibid., 126.
397 Ibid., 141.
textual interpretation, the preacher’s reliance upon the Spirit is the key to getting the biblical message from text to listeners through those methods. In the complexity of textual interpretation, preachers still need to be illuminated by the Spirit in order to preach Jesus Christ.

The understanding of preaching as performance restricted to the preaching moment is challenged by Wilson. He extends performance in preaching to the process of sermon development, with divine performance going beyond human performance in the preaching moment. For Wilson, the preacher’s performance in the pulpit proceeds out of the gracious performance of the Spirit working in the sermon preparation process. He says,

The preacher is in a sense the initial audience of God’s performance and brings forward to the congregation what has been revealed through the week. If the Holy Spirit has not performing the text in and through the preacher’s daily meditations and labors, the preacher has no Word to perform on Sunday; only if the word on Sunday is the Word can the Holy Spirit be claimed to deliver that message as God’s speech to the gathered community.399

Jana Childers depicts the creative process of preachers as an interplay of human creativity and the Spirit’s work, which is more like a charged force-field rather than a vacant lot. A charged force-field is an emergent ambience that has the potential to enable the Spirit to work for the preaching event. By imaginative juxtaposition, preachers provide the Spirit with the arena for the revealing and illuminating work. She says,

For contemporary preachers attending to their own creative processes, there are few tasks more challenging than making space...“Space” in terms of time is not easy for a preacher to create. However, where time is not available, tensiveness may be. Where mountains are too far to access, juxtaposition may be rather close at hand. The creative preacher can create space anywhere and often with the fairly small blocks of time available by performing pieces of the Biblical text and juxtaposing character, voice, context and rhetorical situation one against the other.400


Viewing preaching as a creative event, Childers suggests a “lively homiletic” whose purpose is to open people to God’s movement. In a comparison between preaching and theatre, she identifies three stages in the preacher’s creative process: listening to the voice of the text, embodying the sermon’s action, and connecting with the congregation in the transformative experience of the Spirit. The preacher giving his or her body and voice to the text and the congregation’s participation in the preaching performance are both operative in this organic understanding of the creative process of preaching.

Throughout the course of the sermon development and delivery, preaching is an emergent experience of the homo performans (human performance) encountering the actio divina (God’s act) in the Spirit. Wilson goes further by extending a limited understanding of the preaching performance in the small moment of the now to both its past preparation and its future consequences in the Spirit. Relying on the Spirit’s empowering work in performing the sermon, preachers give it as an “offering” to God, by giving themselves over to the preaching performance.

In the preaching moment, the Spirit’s empowering work on the preacher’s physical movements, voice and language is referred to as an “anointing.” The Spirit’s anointing work empowers the preacher to deliver the gospel with power and confidence. The right words in the right order, properly expressed in the preacher’s body and voice, are the anointed preaching of the Spirit. Although there are many descriptions for sermon delivery anointed

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402 Ibid., 52-56.

403 Wilson, “Preaching, Performance, and the Life and Death of ‘Now’,” 41.

404 Ibid., 47.
by the Spirit, e.g. intensity, energy, passion, eloquence or enthusiasm, these words reflect the lively characteristics of the preacher’s uniqueness in tune with Divine creativity for God’s sacred communication with the created world.

Using the metaphors of light and fire, John Jones deals with the Spirit’s illuminating and anointing work in preaching. The Spirit who alone can give light on the word and the world and lead us both from the word to the world and from the world to the word also enables preachers to deliver the insight of the illuminating Spirit with the intensity of celestial fire and the power of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{405} Jones remarks, “We know that the power here spoken of does not depend upon a great accession of human genius. But it comes with the breaking down of the barrier of self-sufficiency. It comes with abandonment; a complete letting go. The preacher then experiences a flowing through him, with the attendant reception by the congregation, of new and remarkable currents of power.”\textsuperscript{406}

In a similar vein, James Forbes defines preaching as “bearing witness to the resurrecting power of God, which extends itself into the regions of death, so that the new life in Christ breaks forth in all dimensions of the created order.”\textsuperscript{407} For Forbes, preaching under the Spirit’s anointing is yielding the preaching to the anointing Spirit without knowing what to say in the midst of death.\textsuperscript{408} Since preachers have no power in themselves to compass the great aim of preaching without the Spirit’s anointing, Azurdia calls this as the “occupational vulnerability” of preaching.\textsuperscript{409} John Stapleton suggests four ingredients of the Spirit’s

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\item \textsuperscript{405} John I. Jones, \textit{The Holy Spirit and Christian Preaching}, 40-49.
\item \textsuperscript{406} Ibid., 73.
\item \textsuperscript{407} James A. Forbes, \textit{The Holy Spirit and Preaching}, 56.
\item \textsuperscript{408} Ibid., 61-65.
\item \textsuperscript{409} Azurdia, \textit{Spirit Empowered Preaching}, 113-117.
\end{itemize}
rhetoric for preaching which demonstrate the Spirit and power: “the dynamics of the gospel, its passionate expression by the preacher, artistry of form, and caring for others as represented by the congregation of listeners.”\textsuperscript{410} The preacher’s passionate expression, when anointed by the Spirit, occurs as his or her “inner dance” arising from discovery of the gospel and the energy it activates.\textsuperscript{411} Stapleton defines passionate expression as referring to “the gospel as manifested in the quality of the preacher’s sound and movement - in the temple of the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{412} The voices and movements conveying sermonic language expressed in the anointing Spirit are as rich and colorful in variation as the preachers themselves.\textsuperscript{413}

In terms of the indeterminacy of the actual delivery of sermon, Heilser emphasizes the preacher’s openness and sensitivity to the Spirit’s extemporaneous leadership. He writes as follows:

\begin{quote}
Whether they preach using notes or without notes, Spirit-led preachers agree on one thing: they trust the Holy Spirit to empower their delivery of the message. In many ways preaching is an act of faith that calls us to trust God as we follow through on his divine call on our lives to speak his truth. As preachers, we believe and trust that the Spirit of God who has called us will stand beside us and help us execute our divine mandate as we deliver the message he has birthed in our hearts and minds. We depend on the Holy Spirit to fill us, to control us, to stand beside us, and to preach through us.\textsuperscript{414}
\end{quote}

Openness and sensitivity to the Spirit’s movement during the preaching moment enables preachers to discern and engage extemporaneously with what listeners or the context gives them. Through prayerful dependence on the Spirit, the preacher’s creativity echoes divine creativity in the context in which preaching is performed. Viewing preaching as

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\textsuperscript{411} Ibid., 46.
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\textsuperscript{412} Ibid., 57.
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\textsuperscript{413} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{414} Heisler, \textit{Spirit-led Preaching}, 105-106.
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“improvisational theater,” rather than as “theater,” Joseph Webb proposes an improvisation model of preaching for a digital media age. This model requires “a willingness to put one’s preaching in God’s hands, seeking the Spirit’s permeation of the process” and “letting one’s preaching arise from the pages of the Bible, at the same time connecting with imagination and creativity to people in the present.”415 The most powerful communication of the gospel takes place, for Webb, in the improvisational mode of preaching in which the Spirit and the human spirit of the preacher are at work together.416

Ruthanna Hooke considers the preacher’s true self given for others as a necessary component of good preaching. Since authenticity is not only something within us, but also established relationally, she claims a “quality of presence” of the preacher to more fully bring the whole self to the preaching moment.417 Hooke writes,

It is true that God is speaking through the preacher’s words, but only to the degree that she takes the risk of exposing herself in her full humanity, vulnerable and open to those who listen. This sense of a shared humanity alleviates the feeling of disconnection from hearers and invites the congregation to be fully present also. When a preacher can be present as the person she truly is, this gives permission to those who are listening to do the same. This mutuality can remove some of the fear and isolation a preacher feels - he is not alone, for his congregation is with him in the adventure of preaching.418

Hooke highlights the acting practice of improvisation with the preacher seeing and responding to what the preaching moment and listeners are offering. Improvisation does not mean unprepared sermons. Rather, it is “choosing to stand up and preach whatever the Spirit tells us to say in that moment,” by being more fully present and responsive to the preaching

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416 Ibid., 127-134.


418 Ibid., 30.
moment and its demands.\textsuperscript{419} Her emphasis upon preaching as an embodied activity opens us to “emergent” preaching out of the preacher’s authenticity in tune with the Spirit’s movement in the preaching event.

The empowering presence of the Spirit is not limited to the preacher’s performance, but is extended to the congregation’s participation in the preaching performance. Thus, Barbara Bates distinguishes preaching as oral communication from its literary form of “sermon” by three qualities: immediacy, interdependency, and indeterminacy.\textsuperscript{420} Preacher and hearers are present to each other in worship. Preachers need active listeners just as listeners need to have words spoken for them in worship. Preaching delivery cannot be completed before it is heard and its hearing and application are decided in various ways by those present.\textsuperscript{421} According to Bate, the goal of preaching can be accomplished by listeners “through the participation of their senses, their capacity for imaginative connection and identification, and their decision to act on what they experience in worship.”\textsuperscript{422} Since the Spirit’s anointing work on the congregants enables their fuller participation in the preaching performance, the Spirit’s anointing work on listeners’ participation in the preaching performance also empowers them to embody the preached word in the world.

C. Spirit and Listeners

The significant turn to listeners in contemporary preaching is easily traced on the human side through rapid changes in culture and communication styles. However, it also

\textsuperscript{419} Ibid., 115-116.


\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., 352.

\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 353.
needs to be examined from the divine side. According to Ronald Allen, homileticians have been talking about a “turn to the listener” since the 1960s. There are five main areas in which this turn can be found: (1) in laity feeding forward into sermons; (2) in communication theory; (3) in philosophy of language, literary criticism, and rhetoric; (4) in congregational studies; and (5) in empirical studies involving listeners.

Although Allen provides us with the chronological history of these approaches in contemporary preaching, rapid changes in the circumstances surrounding preaching form the common foundation. Within a traditional emphasis upon the content of sermons and a “Barthian attack” upon rhetoric, the increasing gap between the pulpit and the changing contexts of the pews has resulted in the failure of preaching to come home to listeners. In 1969, David Randolph first named the “New Homiletic” as a new preaching that had come to birth in the travail of those days. He claimed the emergence and importance of a new type of preaching in the midst of social upheavals. A fresh understanding of dynamic preaching

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425 Thomas G. Long, “And How Shall They Hear?: the Listener in Contemporary Preaching,” in Listening to the Word: Studies in Honor of Fred B. Craddock, eds., Gail R. O’Day & Thomas G. Long (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 172-176. Reul Howe listed the major complaints made by congregations about preaching in the 1960s: (1) sermons often contain too many complex ideas; (2) sermons have too much analysis and too few answers; (3) sermons are too formal and too impersonal; (4) sermons use too much theological jargon; (5) sermons are too propositional without enough illustrations; (6) too many sermons simply reach a dead end and give no guidance. Clyde Reid also summarized the major criticisms at the time: (1) preachers tend to use complex, archaic language that the average person does not understand; (2) most sermons are boring; (3) most preaching is irrelevant; (4) preaching is not courageous; (5) preaching does not communicate; (6) preaching doesn’t lead to change in persons; (7) preaching has been overemphasized. See Reuel L. Howe, Partners in Preaching: Clergy and Laity in Dialogue (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967), 26-32; and Clyde Reid, The Empty Pulpit: A Study in Preaching as Communication (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967), 25-33.


427 Ibid., 2-7.
thus emerged in a rapidly changing context, or, as Randolph put it, “The genius of preaching, as it is here understood, is its *eventfulness*. What is crucial for homiletics is not so much what the sermon ‘is’ as what the sermon ‘does.’”

His eventful understanding of preaching was based on the philosophy of language of the “New Hermeneutic,” which was itself rooted in a performative understanding of language as the medium of divine manifestation. In a sense, the New Homiletic movement which has dominated contemporary homiletic in North America in recent decades is a series of endeavors for “a new hearing” of God’s word in the midst of a preaching crisis.

### 1. Spirit and Individual Listeners

Charles Rice brings contemporary human experience to bear on biblical interpretation for a new hearing of God’s word. He points to contemporary literature, such as popular novels, plays, and movies, as avenues for interpreting the gospel. For Rice, recovery of biblical storytelling in dialogue with culture is decisive in the renewal of preaching because God’s revelation in the Bible is conveyed through the literary medium of story. The primary task of the preacher is considered to be bridging the world of the Bible and the world of contemporary human experience. In such a task, the preacher is understood as a translator who presents the gospel in the idiom of a broader contemporary secular culture.

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428. Ibid., vii.


433. Ibid., xi.
Craddock’s claims of a language crisis and his argument for the listener’s involvement in the preaching event tend to focus on listeners as individuals. Although he evokes the communal character of preaching, his emphasis on the transformative experience for listeners overlooks the dimension of listeners as community.\footnote{434} For Craddock, the sermon begins with the personal experience of listeners who finally arrive at their own particular conclusions, thereby completing the sermon themselves.\footnote{435} In this inductive approach to preaching, the listener is not just the destination of the sermon, but is a partner who travels together with the preacher towards an eagerly anticipated destination by participating in the sermonic movement and meaning.\footnote{436} Instead of presenting propositional truths, inductive preaching leads the listener to have the same experience of the gospel as the preacher, and allows the listener to draw his or her own conclusion to the sermon.

Lowry develops Rice’s storytelling model and Craddock’s inductive movement into his version of the “plotted” sermon. In \textit{The Homiletical Plot}, originally published in 1980, he argues for a sermonic narrative structure with a movement from problem to solution.\footnote{437} “A sermon is not a logical assemblage; a sermon is an event-in-time which follows the logic born of the communication interaction between preacher and congregation.”\footnote{438} Lowry’s plotted narrative method creates an experiential event for listeners in which they follow the narrative movement in the sermon along with the preacher. Lowry’s sermonic method to

\footnote{434} Fred B. Craddock, \textit{As One Without Authority}, 27, 36, 51.  
\footnote{435} Ibid., 53-54.  
\footnote{438} Ibid., 8.
move through a plotted sequence from conflict to resolution, from ambiguity to the closure born of the gospel, nevertheless had a decidedly individualistic bias.\footnote{Ibid., 118.}

Thomas Troeger advocates the importance of image in preaching. He challenges preachers to start the sermon on earth rather than in heaven, and with the particulars that they see and hear and touch, rather than with sweeping generalities, in order for listeners to step securely from image to image, story to story and thus climb up into the truth of their lives.\footnote{Thomas H. Troeger, \textit{Creating Fresh Images for Preaching: New Rungs for Jacob’s Ladder} (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1982), 30.} For Troeger, the listener’s multi-layered reality can be touched more fully through concrete imagery, through “embarrassing and demanding corporeality,” rather than through abstract thought. In \textit{Imaging a Sermon}, Troeger emphasizes “the importance of imagination in preaching effectively to an age whose consciousness is shaped by the mass media.”\footnote{Thomas H. Troeger, \textit{Imaging a Sermon} (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 14.}

Viewing preaching as an act of “imaginative theology” rather than rhetorical excellence, Troeger notes that imaginative theology “uses the powers of observation to become receptive to the Holy Spirit, who works upon our consciousness through patterns of association and juxtaposition. Imaginative theology in the pulpit utilizes those patterns to evoke similar reflections in the listeners.”\footnote{Ibid., 26.}

Since imagination brings the transcendent dimensions of experience to the human heart through God’s grace in the Spirit’s working, Troeger challenges preachers to follow the pull of the Spirit to return to the Source, to the living God.\footnote{Ibid., 137-138.} In his imaginative preaching,
the preacher is a weaver of images and the sermon is a movement of images. As the preacher develops, concretizes, and analogizes the biblical image in relation to lived experience, human imagination is evoked in a preaching process so that individual listeners can participate in the reality of faith in a more holistic way.

2. Spirit and Listeners as Community

Against these relatively individualistic approaches, David Buttrick and Henry Mitchell do offer a communal element in the homiletic turn to listeners. African American Preaching has developed out of the oppressed condition of African American people and their understanding of who God is and how God works out God’s purpose in their lives. It is an understanding based on a particular reading of the Bible that comes from their own experiences. Heeding the consciousness of the African American congregation, Mitchell argues for a holistic homiletic that is intuitive and emotional, yet also includes the cognitive dimension that typifies the European American homiletic tradition. According to Mitchell, preaching must appeal to emotions and intuitions as well as to rationality in order to engage the whole person in a transforming experience of the word. The intuitive consciousness of listeners—where their gut-level faith and trust in God are retained—needs to be stimulated with a total experience of the gospel message in preaching. The gospel message to the intuitive consciousness should be followed by

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444 Henry H. Mitchell’s holistic homiletic is developed from his first homiletic work, Black Preaching (1970) and the publication of his Beecher lectures at Yale, The Recovery of Preaching (1977) and finally formulated in his homiletics textbook, Celebration and Experience in Preaching (1990).


446 Ibid., 145-146.
emotional *celebration.* The heritage of Black preaching, the core beliefs of Black people, based on their common experiences of suffering and oppression, and their celebratory way of preaching, do have a communal focus.

David Buttrick’s homiletic focuses on how language forms and preaching shapes congregational consciousness. Preaching builds “a faith-world in human consciousness.” Against the concern for individual personal experience found in the New Homiletic, Buttrick focuses on how a community of listeners can be moved along with the sermon. He writes, “Virtually everything in scripture is written to a faith-community, usually in the style of communal address. Therefore, biblical texts must be set in communal consciousness to be understood...So, by analogy, we are arguing that biblical texts address a shared, communal faith-consciousness and *must* be so interpreted: the Bible is communal language for communities.” In continuity with exegetical and homiletic methods, Buttrick claims to determine the sermonic “moves” that form the congregation in its shared consciousness and to develop a sermonic “structure” to flow with such congregational consciousness. Although the notion of “communal consciousness” in preaching might be itself questionable, his claims do evoke a sense of a community of listeners living in relationship.

In spite of different emphases, the New Homileticians are thus commonly concerned with what happens to listeners and how they participate in preaching. In line with the varied claims of the movement, Lucy Rose proposes a “conversational” homiletic in terms of which

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447 Ibid.


449 Ibid., 276-277.
preaching is the work of the whole church.\footnote{Before the publication of Rose’s \textit{Sharing the Word}, McClure proposed collaborative preaching as conversation based on the “roundtable” model, with listeners encouraged to participate in the shaping of the sermonic message through a weekly sermon planning discussion group. O. Wesley Allen also proposes a “conversational” homiletic which extends the works of Rose and McClure in seeing the preacher as one voice among many in a congregational conversation over long periods of time rather than in one sermon. Both are also concerned more about the building up of the faith community rather than the world outside the church. See John McClure, \textit{The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet} (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 48-58 and O. Wesley Allen Jr., \textit{The Homiletic of All Believers: A Conversational Approach} (Louisville, KY: Westminster and John Knox Press, 2005), 3-16.} She calls the New Homiletic movement “transformational,” in light of the “commonly held belief that a sermon should be an experience that transforms” listeners.\footnote{Lucy A. Rose, \textit{Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church} (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 59.} In moving from the preaching tradition of “persuasion,” Rose believes the new approaches aim at an experiential event in which transformation takes place. However, she points out that the movement places great emphasis on the preacher’s responsibility for such a transformative event through its overwhelming attention to sermonic language and form.\footnote{Ibid., 60.} Instead, Rose highlights the \textit{limitations} of language, and sees the preacher and congregation as equal partners on a journey. She puts it thus: “In conversational preaching, this sermonic conversational preaching is grounded in solidarity - a shared identity as the believing people of God, a shared priesthood before God and within community, and shared tasks of discerning and proclaiming God’s Word.”\footnote{Ibid., 95.} For Rose, preaching is about the church building itself up by gathering the community of faith around the word and refocusing its central conversations.\footnote{Ibid., 98-99.} Preaching is about tentative “interpretations, proposals, and wagers” offered in conversation with others to foster central
conversations of the faith community for its building up.\textsuperscript{455} In Rose’s conversational homiletic, the turn to listeners found in the New Homiletic is certainly extended to the communal dimension.

Following Hans Frei’s postliberal theology, Charles Campbell suggests a postliberal, cultural-linguistic approach to preaching to balance the New Homiletic’s emphasis upon individual listeners.\textsuperscript{456} He believes the theory and practice of the New Homiletic remains dependent on the modern, liberal theological framework of postulating the individual self and human reason or experience as the criteria of meaning.\textsuperscript{457} The shift from cognitive-propositional preaching to experiential preaching relates more to individual transformation than it does to the formation/transformation of the church. He says,

Rather than asking how texts connect with predetermined individual needs or how they connect with “general human experience” or how they are relevant to American society, preachers should quite consciously ask what the Spirit is saying to the church through the church’s Scripture. The focus is not simply on what a text “means” but on how a particular passage of Scripture functions to “build up” the people of God in and for the world.\textsuperscript{458}

For Campbell, the crucial function of preaching is not to offer cognitive-propositional information, nor to create private, affective experiential events for individual listeners, but rather is to acculturate them to Christian faith through the biblical narrative in order that an alternative community of God’s people might be formed in the world.\textsuperscript{459}

\textsuperscript{455} Ibid., 100-107.

\textsuperscript{456} Frei overcomes the dichotomy between theology and historical criticism with a “non-referential” literary reading of the Bible. The biblical narrative as “realistic narrative” is not referential at the level of meaning, but “history-like.” Narrative for Frei means the overall story, the history-like quality of the Bible. See Hans W. Frei, \textit{The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); and Charles L. Campbell, \textit{Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei’s Postliberal Theology} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 15-16, 55-56.

\textsuperscript{457} Campbell, \textit{Preaching Jesus}, 122-145.

\textsuperscript{458} Ibid., 230.

\textsuperscript{459} Ibid., 231-237.
Ronald Allen’s revisionary homiletic, with its distinctive emphasis on “preaching by mutual critical correlation,” also offers “conversation” as a model for contemporary preaching. He notes that he joins “a growing cloud of witnesses in thinking that preaching is directed less to individual Christians and more to Christian community.”\textsuperscript{460} According to Allen, preaching is a theological interpretation of life through the mutual critical correlation of Christian tradition with contemporary experience.\textsuperscript{461} This correlation is “mutual” because past tradition and present experience inform each other. And it is “critical” because both are in service to criticize the other for new understandings and more faithful Christian living. Christian tradition and scripture are correlated with contemporary experience so that the faith community can revise its understanding of the former from the perspective of the latter. Allen includes God as a leading partner in the preaching conversation, along with the gospel, the Bible, Christian tradition, the congregation, the wider Christian community, the world, and the preacher. He says, “God, \textit{through the Holy Spirit}, is active in all phases of the life of the sermon.”\textsuperscript{462} In the presence and leading of the Spirit, the preacher can seek to make a Christian witness “that is intellectually and morally credible to the contemporary world.”\textsuperscript{463} Allen’s stance is called “revisionary” in that preachers are open to revising their understanding of both Christian tradition and the contemporary world.

Rose’s conversational homiletic, Campbell’s postliberal homiletic and Allen’s

\textsuperscript{460} Ronald J. Allen, \textit{Interpreting the Gospel: An Introduction to Preaching} (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1998), xii.

\textsuperscript{461} Ibid., 65-88.

\textsuperscript{462} Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{463} Ibid., 73-74.
revisionary homiletic all emphasize the conversational quality of preaching. In contrast to a postliberal homiletic that aims to build up the congregation as a “countercultural” community to the world, a revisionary homiletic wants the congregation to be a “public” church that enters into the life of the larger world through a better interpretation of and response to the gospel. In contrast to Rose’s conversational homiletic, which is influenced by feminist challenges to hierarchical ways of knowing and concern for marginalized voices, a revisionary homiletic lays greater emphasis on the preacher’s voice in the life of the church through multiple conversations. Notwithstanding these differences, along with Rose and Campbell, Allen shares the common goal of ecclesial formation that goes beyond individual transformation in terms of what the sermon accomplishes in the preaching event.

3. Individual and Ecclesial Experiences of Divine Grace in the Preaching Event

The arguments for individual transformative experience through preaching, and for the communal dimension of preaching that have emerged from the New Homiletic do not commonly provide a more holistic understanding of preaching that fully accounts for the decisive role of the Spirit. In Spirit Speech, Powery goes beyond discussing sermonic language, content and structure, in order to trace the manifestations of the Spirit in terms of individual grace, ecclesial unity, and wider social fellowship. He identifies the four main categories of the Spirit’s work in the preaching event as “revelation, grace, community, and ethics.” Revelation in preaching can be understood as God’s activity in offering Jesus Christ as the Word of God in the here and now through the Spirit’s work in the preacher.

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464 For differences between the postliberal church and the revisionary church, see Ronald J. Allen, Barbara S. Blaisdell, and Scott B. Johnston, Theology for Preaching, 143-145.

465 Powery, Spirit Speech, 31.
Grace in preaching can be understood as Jesus Christ experienced as God’s word here and now through the Spirit’s work in listeners. According to Powery, “the Holy Spirit is the One who makes God known through human experience of the Spirit and a Christian experience then is only possible within the framework of the Spirit of the triune God.” Powery limits the notion of grace as the manifestation of the Spirit to individual experience, but this can be extended to involve the ecclesial and social experiences of divine grace also. In terms of what God does in sermonic moments, our experiences of divine grace through preaching manifest the Spirit’s work for individuals, the church, and the world.

In the development of contemporary homiletics since the 1960s, the individual experience of divine grace which Powery outlines as the Spirit’s manifestation of “creation, forgiving, transforming, or sacramental grace” has replaced the traditional emphasis on human reason with its emphasis on individual listeners. Drawing on Paul’s response to the division and conflicts among the Corinthians, Powery claims that the fostering of ecclesial unity is one of the Spirit’s manifestations in the preaching event. He remarks,

It is the Spirit through preaching who creates a gospel community. The formation of a Christian community is primarily the work of the Spirit...The Spirit creates the Christian community through the word of cross, hopefully leading God’s people to recognize that their Christian identity is a gift from God...The Spirit focuses the church on Christ crucified, the one Messiah, resulting in a unified way for the congregation; the Spirit unites the church in Christ. For Powery, therefore, the communal experience of divine grace for the building up of the church is a primary manifestation of the Spirit in the preaching event. This is also commonly claimed as the sermonic purpose and task by those conversational, postliberal, and revisionary homileticians who go beyond the New Homiletic’s orientation towards the

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466 Ibid., 38.

467 Ibid., 58-60.
individual experience of transformation.

**D. Spirit and World**

The Spirit’s manifestation through the “social” experience of divine grace in the preaching event also needs to be examined in contemporary developments in homiletics. Fundamentally the Spirit’s work in preaching cannot be limited to individual transformation or ecclesial formation, since the Spirit also aims to reach the world through preaching, in order to bring about God’s redemptive reign of peace and justice on earth. With regard to what the sermon does in the preaching event, therefore, Powery includes the broader societal realm: “The Spirit encourages social engagement and service in the world, and any sign of this emphasis within sermons may be discerned to be a manifestation of the Spirit.” In a Trinitarian understanding of the “mutual indwelling of the divine Persons,” he envisions Christian preaching as an invitation to the whole of God’s creation to an experience of divine fellowship through the Spirit. Powery remarks, “Through preaching, the Spirit shapes and spurs social ethics in the world. The Spirit’s work is holistic through preaching and cannot be limited to individual grace or ecclesial unity because God is concerned with the whole life. Preaching empowered by the Spirit aims to minister to the world, not just the church.” The embodied life of the sermon in and for the world by listeners, both as individuals and as a faith community that includes the preacher, is the Spirit’s embodiment of the reign of God in the world. Sermons, which are firstly embodied through the preacher’s voice and body, are secondly lived out in the lives of those who listen. The faith community, which is equipped

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468 Ibid., 77.

469 Ibid., 78-79.

470 Ibid., 86.
in the Spirit with the *charismata* for ministry to the world, lives out the sermon in and for the world. Here ethical concerns about the oppressed, marginalized, and silenced others in the world are a primary characteristic of contemporary homiletic development within a postmodern context of radical difference in which everyone is “other” and no one is “same.”

1. The Wholly Other God and Social ‘Others’

In *Other-wise Preaching*, John McClure argues that contemporary preaching has been exiting the houses of its supposed authority—tradition, scripture, reason, and experience. Within a postmodern culture in which all authorities are “under erasure,” “other-wise homiletics” or an “ethical, other-directed deconstruction of homiletics” opens up the possibility for “anointed” preaching to bring about encounter with the Holy Other, the living God. God’s word in preaching, for McClure, is “emergent communal and public” in that it arrives through the ongoing give-and-take of open communal and public conversation about the gospel’s meaning in today’s world. Since the Spirit of God as “Wholly Other” is working in and through all things with a self-giving, self-withdrawing, and selfless love toward others, his other-wise preaching methods, which make room for social others so that they can be gathered into the reign of God, can be a meaningful sign of the Spirit’s force working for social change.

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473 Ibid., 4-7.

Based on the intertwined postmodern notions of deconstruction and otherness, McClure develops an “ethical” concern to reorient preaching toward the “other” and to situate it as a “compassionate act of radical responsibility” in the nature of proclamation. For this, he claims to deconstruct the Bible as scripture. Deconstructing tradition allows for the re-appropriation and transformation of Christian memory, by bringing about the “countermemory” of all those whom the hegemonic tradition has excluded or harmed. In this ethical and deconstructive way of approaching the Bible and the tradition, preachers relinquish a humanist notion of universal experience and move toward an eventual encounter with multiple experiences of actual human others in preaching. In the preacher’s face-to-face “proximity” with the others, according to McClure, the “glory of the Infinite” is revealed to preacher and listeners. Instead of “a movement backward toward common human experience or ecclesial experience or a postliberal biblicism,” the word-liberating possibility of the profoundly ethical movement toward otherness requires of preachers “a sustained, embodied movement toward the experience of others at every level of homiletics.”

McClure also claims to deconstruct logocentric ways of knowing and living in the modern world. In his scrutiny of contemporary homiletic development, he observes many

475 McClure, Other-wise Preaching, 7. It is from Derrida that deconstruction as a method of textual criticism is adopted with the purpose of uncovering binary operations within human discourse in which one term is privileged and depends on the exclusion of the other term for its identity. McClure’s “other-wise homiletic” is grounded in the work of French philosopher, Levinas. See the Preface of Other-wise Preaching.

476 Levinas’ notion of “proximity” indicates an immediate contact with others. By opening preaching to “proximity,” McClure claims, preachers can perceive “the infinite and irreducible difference” of others and then experience “a more profound ethical obligation toward others.” See McClure, Other-wise Preaching, 63.

477 Ibid., 65-66.

478 Derrida has made the logos, which literally means “word” or “language,” but often signifies an ultimate principle of “truth” or “reason” in philosophy, into a fundamental site for his deconstruction. See McClure, Other-wise Preaching, 67-69; and Grenz, A Primer on Postmodernism, 138-150.
homiletics since the New Homiletic have attempted to overcome preaching’s logocentric epistemologies in which the split between reason and faith was deep and wide. He writes,

In the New Homiletic, Buttrick’s phenomenological homiletic, and Allen’s process homiletic, the fact-value dichotomy that had relegated preaching to a purely “expressive” function in society is addressed in three distinct ways. The New Homileticians sought retrenchment in a broad form of ontological reason similar to that of comparative religionists. Buttrick attempted to establish a dialectic between manifestation and Christian proclamation in which a collective, storied Christian consciousness “brings out” from a deep experiential background potentially theological and ethical meanings of “being saved in the world.” Allen seeks common ground between reason and faith at the level of pure experiential knowledge of God of love and justice….As I have suggested, other-wise homileticians continue to worry about the oppressive dangers of ontologies, philosophies of consciousness, and radical empiricism. I have critiqued the lack of consistent ethical reflection within ontological reason, the subtle dangers of uncritically considered forms of Christian consciousness in phenomenological reason, and the potential for new forms of universalism, dialectics, and hierarchism latent within the “functional” foundationalism of process rationality.

McClure’s orientation to otherness through the “critical and communicative reason of other-wise homiletics” is ultimately aimed at a world in which all can live in ways that honor the integrity of others. His “other-wise homiletics” shows clearly the rhetorical turn from an emphasis on pathos in the New Homiletic to ethos in a postmodern homiletics. Along with his own “collaborative preaching,” McClure takes examples of “other-wise preaching” from the liberation preaching of Justo and Catherine González, the ethical preaching of Christine M. Smith and the emerging testimonial models of preaching. However, the orientation of homiletics to “otherness” tends to reduce preaching to a human enterprise and does not adequately include the initiative of the divine “Other” in making effective the ethic of preaching. It is in the Spirit that the whole of God’s creation—including the oppressed, marginalized and silenced others—is incorporated into God’s reign through preaching.

2. The Liberating God and the Oppressed

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479 See McClure, Other-wise Preaching, 71-94.

480 Ibid., 94-95.
Understanding God as the One liberating people from oppression, Justo and Catherine González’ liberation homiletic encourages preachers to incorporate the experiences and interpretations of the oppressed into their preparation and delivery of sermons. To effect the liberation given by the gospel, a kind of “double identity” of preachers, who think of themselves as belonging to both the powerful and the oppressed, enables them to be constantly open to dialogue with the world.481 In the “hermeneutic circle” from a “theological naïveté” to a “new hermeneutic,” maintaining an “ideological and exegetical suspicion” of the existing experiences and interpretations “from below” is considered the primary task of the liberation preachers.482 González and González write: “The word of the gospel today, as in the times of Jesus, as ever, comes to us most clearly in the painful groans of the oppressed. We must listen to those groans. We must join the struggle to the point where we too must groan. Or we may choose the other alternative, which is not to hear the gospel at all.”483 Liberation preachers bring the oppressed others who are absent as well as present in their congregation into their sermons to effect the mission of the church to liberate people from the oppressive “Enemy” into the fulfillment of God’s reign in which Christ is the “Victor.”484 Although they seek the social incorporation of the oppressed into God’s reign through their liberation preaching, with their focus on God’s liberating actions in both the Bible and the world, González and González do not fully involve the divine agency in the act of proclamation. Yet in the


482 Ibid., 31 ff.

483 Ibid., 68.

484 Ibid., 94-113.
Spirit’s initiating and effectuating work of proclamation, the pulpit itself can be transformed “from an instrument of repression into a witness for liberation.”

3. The God of All and the Marginalized: Silenced Women

The traditional view of God has sometimes been that of a coercive and controlling monarch who justifies patriarchal values. This view can be supplemented to articulate the fullness of the Triune God as the God for and of all creation. From a feminist perspective, Christine Smith envisions preaching as an act of “weaving” that makes connections with the world to bring about new realities of justice and human wholeness: “Justice and human wholeness are embodied in our proclamation both in content and style. The spirit of our Creator moves us to make deeper and broader connections with all creation. Preaching must help us make these connections.” In Smith’s feminist vision, authority becomes “a collective quality of connection and sharing, an experience of solidarity” in which all people are encouraged to proclaim faith truths and to work toward integrating the voices of all silenced people into the content of the preached words. She claims the goal of preaching is “the creation of mutuality and solidarity” dependent upon “the equal worth of all.” Through preaching it is possible to appreciate the giftedness of all truths and all people in “the sharing of everyday human struggles and experiences.”


487 Ibid., 48-56.

488 Ibid., 57-58

489 Ibid.
Smith’s feminist liberation homiletic reconfigures the preaching practice by “weaving” the strands of women’s experiences into the sermonic construction. In this act of weaving, the traditional God language, Christology, and biblical hermeneutics are revised from the perspective of the lives and experiences of women. Smith’s feminist homiletic is oriented more towards the larger social context than just the biblical text and the faith community. Viewing feminist preaching as a “public act of theological naming” of reality, she writes:

Rather than beginning with scripture and tradition, feminist preachers find the impetus of their preaching emerging from the larger social context of our individual and collective lives...The feminist preacher will attend to the particular issues, social systems, pervasive cultural values and ethics that structure the larger social and cultural world. Text, tradition, and faith community are important, but a hermeneutics of social context claims the agenda and commitments of the feminist preacher.490

In the Spirit’s gracious work, the feminist preacher is enlisted to participate in social dynamics through active resistance to evil in the world.

Since Smith’s contribution, a feminist perspective has characterized the work of several homileticians. From a Roman Catholic perspective, Mary Catherine Hilkert suggests preaching is “the art of naming grace found in the depth of human experiences.”491 Since revelation is located in the depths of human experience, the suffering of this world offers “a unique experience of the mystery of God at the limits” of human experience and “a privileged hearing the word of God.”492 The proclamation of the gospel is, for Hilkert, “a gift given to the baptized, limited neither to males nor to the


491 Mary Catherine Hilkert, Naming Grace: Preaching and Sacramental Imagination (New York: Continuum, 1997), 44, 52.

492 Ibid., 48-49, 52.
L. Susan Bond proposes a “salvage Christology” for a constructive homiletic that draws on contemporary feminist Christologies. From the primitive Christus Victor Christology, she forges a “metaphorical social” approach to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the key symbolic and narrative core of the faith community:

In this metaphorical social approach, Jesus/Christ is the symbol of God’s purposes manifested through the church as a sign of life in the world. The conquest is not the individual soul, not the Christian world against the non-Christian world, nor the struggle for self-identity. The conquest is the subtle, persuasive ultimacy of love over power. Conquest and victory are redefined through the transformative rhetoric of folly to suggest that real victory is the kenosis of domination. The rhetoric of folly is the Pauline strategy of reversal, where real power appears to be weakness, where real victory looks like defeat, and where the sovereign appears to be a nobody. The church is the community whose vocation is to “conquer” the kingdom of death through practicing the stewardship of life.

For Bond, the purpose of preaching is that Christians might follow Jesus’ way of salvaging the lost and expending indiscriminate hospitality to the world in order to embody God’s basileia purposes for creation. Along with her Christological concerns, however, her homiletic focus on social change through the vocational mission of the faith community seems to transform her world-oriented homiletic into a more church-centered homiletic. Furthermore, there is no consideration given to the Spirit’s work in the social experience of divine grace through preaching.

Donovan Turner and Mary Lin Hudson propose a “voiced homiletic,” using “voice” as metaphor for feminist liberation thought in which the marginalized and silenced are encouraged to lift up their voices for the sharing of the word of God. Turner and Hudson

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493 Ibid., 146.


495 Bond, Trouble with Jesus, 181-182.
claim, “the Holy Spirit still speaks, gives voice to ongoing revelation in the lives of many who have been silenced, often in the name of the very God who is thus represented.” They expand the voice metaphor beyond the specific task of finding the preaching voice of women’s experiences to all humanity. The preaching voice as embodied expression of divine grace through the voices of the marginalized and silenced others is viewed as emerging through the Spirit from the dynamic relation between God and humanity.

In light of testimony as “a narration of events and a confession of belief,” Anna Florence opens up an ethical space in preaching for women’s voices from the outside. Drawing on a long history of preaching by marginalized Christians, and in particular, a women’s preaching tradition, she adopts testimony as a homiletic model for our postmodern context. According to her, preaching is not “a right or a privilege reserved for those who locate themselves at the power center” but “the slow work of standing in one’s own life and in the Word of God and saying what one sees and believes.” Since testimony is “the distinctively Christian way of speaking and knowing,” for Florence, preaching is also “testimony: a proclamation of what we have seen and believed. It is claim and confession rather than absolute and certitude.”

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496 Donovan Turner and Mary Lin Hudson, Saved from Silence: Finding Women’s Voice in Preaching (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 55.

497 Their “voiced homiletic” offers a corrective to Smith’s anthropocentric world-oriented homiletic by maintaining the Spirit’s ongoing work to give voice to the oppressed, marginalized, and silenced others through the preaching event. In my argument, I claim the Spirit as God’s force field in which the divine and the human participate for God’s redemptive reign through proclamation rather than following Turner and Hudson’s claim for the preaching voice as the agency of divine power and presence.


499 Ibid., xxiii, 4.

500 Ibid., 64-65.
When we choose testimony, we throw certainty to the wind and trust to the Spirit; we have to! We trust that God will initiate encounters with human beings. We trust that we will have the courage and sensitivity and restlessness to interpret these encounters. We trust that we will find the words to testify to what we have seen and believed about it. And we trust that the community of faith and, ultimately, God will judge our witness as well as our own engagement with it. What we give up…is control.  

Testimonial authority is not limited to a selected few, but is open and available to anyone willing to speak of their experience of God either through the biblical text or in life, in the trust that God’s Spirit initiates, leads, and gives the words. Since testimony is the “mother tongue” of the church, Florence’s testimonial preaching from lived experience allows the traditionally silenced others in marginal social locations to testify to the divine grace of God. Testimonial preaching moves the subject of preaching away from the ordained preaching office towards God’s work of liberation at the margins of society. Preaching as testimony happens not in the power center but in the resistant margins, that is, every place where “people are hungry for freedom and someone is given a Word of freedom to speak.” Florence moves the homiletic focus away from “how to preach” towards the work of “becoming a preacher.” She writes, “The work of becoming the preacher is living and preaching text and life, not as a response to fear but as testimony to God’s freedom.”

In this way, Florence reserves room for the divine agency in that the spoken word of women’s marginalized homiletic testimonies is given as a free and gracious gift of the human encounter and communion with God. However, Florence’s testimonial homiletic does not give full attention to the role of the Spirit. Moreover, her more text-centered homiletics

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501 Ibid., 65.
502 Ibid., 67-69.
503 Ibid., 74-77.
504 Ibid., 100.
505 Ibid., 110.
seems less suitable for those in marginal social locations than it is for those who live at the power center.

4. Spirit-centered Homiletics for Christian Ethics

Thomas Long envisions the world as “the arena where God’s Spirit is even now working, making the impossible possible, creating faith where there is nothing else to believe in, creating love where there is nothing lovable, creating hope where there is nothing to hope for.”

The Spirit’s embodying force of God’s reign in and for the world is at work in the preaching event. The Spirit leads all creation to the *shalom* of God’s love and justice for God’s glory as its final purpose in the social realm. However, most postmodern models of other-wise preaching, with their ethical emphasis upon “otherness,” lack a balance between divine and human agency in preaching. Although they may claim God’s place in the preaching event at a theoretical level, at a practical level their anthropocentric methodologies diminish the Spirit’s work of social incorporation through the preaching event. In terms of a Spirit-centered homiletics for Christian ethics, Arthur Van Seters claims that Christian ethics in preaching is not “the moralism of telling people to change their lives by their own efforts,” but the offering of the divine grace in which people live out “discipleship by the energy of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

Wilson also offers a corrective critique of the postmodern ethical emphasis upon otherness in homiletics. He claims,

> The key homiletic problem is that ethics puts human behavior front and center, while, for what I am calling proclamation, God needs to be front and center. What God has done and is doing in Jesus Christ

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and through the Holy Spirit is of greatest significance, and what we do as human beings is necessarily seen in light of that...What we do by way of ethics is an appropriate response to the gospel, an essential response, an empowered response. Here I want to claim that only linked with the gospel can ethics be proclamation.\textsuperscript{508}

In spite of the inescapable necessity of the divine agency in proclamation, relatively rare descriptions of the Spirit in postmodern homiletics might be due to the impossibility of human control on the Spirit’s work. To be clear, there is a depth to the Spirit’s work in proclamation that goes well beyond our capacities to discern. So we need to be humble and open to other experiences and expectations of God in and even beyond the faith community. A Spirit-centered homiletics that seeks for the Spirit’s full agency in proclamation can make more space for otherness to participate in preaching for God’s redemptive reign in the world. The postmodern ethical emphasis can bring forth greater social incorporation in our complete reliance upon the Spirit’s presence and power in the interplay of a giving and receiving of the manifestations of the graced gifts of preaching. The Spirit’s work through proclamation is the promise of individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation into the redemptive reign of God. Without the Spirit’s presence and power, preaching cannot be the experiential event of divine grace to individuals, churches, and the wider social world.

II. Contemporary Homiletics and Communal Participation in the Spirit

God, preacher, and listeners are the constituent participants of preaching. In terms of these participants, a homiletics can be God-oriented, preacher-oriented, listener-oriented, or world-oriented. Traditional homiletics tends to be preacher-oriented. A \textit{kerygmatic} homiletic based on a Neo-Orthodox theological understanding of preaching tends to be God-oriented

\textsuperscript{508} Wilson, Preaching and Homiletical Theory, 137-138.
homiletic. Overall, the development of the New Homiletic tends to be listener-oriented. McClure’s ethical other-wise homiletic can be seen as a world-oriented homiletic that goes beyond the boundary of the faith community. Since theological approaches to preaching in contemporary homiletic development tend to be focused on the faith community rather than on God, their various emphases tend to miss the dual participatory nature of both God and human beings in the preaching event.

In any orientation in homiletic theory, preaching is not possible without engaging listeners in the process through thinking, feeling, imagining, and doing. Contemporary homiletics has developed diverse methodologies for preaching practice in its characteristic orientation to listeners. Although the New Homiletic respects listeners by inviting them on a journey of discovery, the preacher still attempts to control the range of possible interpretations. While the New Homiletic retains a positivistic view of truth that is grasped by the preacher and then recreated in listeners, a more “thoroughly postmodern approach” views “foundationalist rationality as in ruins,” and claims truth to be a non-foundational confession created by an ongoing process requiring participation and conversation. The “thoroughly postmodern approach” is not limited to a “postliberal paradigm” as Hogan and Reid point out, but extends to Rose’s conversational preaching and Allen’s revisionary

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509 Rose calls the Neo-Orthodox, God-oriented approach to preaching “kerygmatic” homiletics. In this *kerygmatic* approach, preaching is viewed as the proclamation of divine revelation from God’s side rather than the human side. This understanding of preaching as eventful discourse and the *kerygma* as the essential content of Christian preaching moved homiletics toward the New Homiletic. In a sense, contemporary homiletics is not only appropriation of, but also a reaction to the Neo-Orthodox understanding of preaching. The New Homiletic lays more emphasis upon listeners as active participants in the preaching event, going beyond the Neo-Orthodox focus on *kerygma* as the sermonic content. See Rose, *Sharing the Word*, 37-48.

510 According to Troeger and Everding, “there are many ways of knowing and these different ways will play a decisive role in how a sermon is received.” See Thomas H. Troeger and H. Edward Everding Jr., *So That All Might Know: Preaching That Engages the Whole Congregation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon press, 2008) 3-4.

511 Hogan and Reid, *Graceful Speech*, 129-133.
preaching. This category also includes the “other-wise” preaching that emphasizes ethical participation from below. Active and direct participation of listeners through interactive conversation in preaching as an ethical development in contemporary homiletics is going beyond the reception of God’s word through listeners’ intellectual or affective engagement with the preacher’s sermonic language and movement. It extends to giving voice to God’s word through mutual engagement and confessional conversation between the preacher and the congregation as the faith community in and for the world.512

Despite the claims for a more communal and dynamic participatory homiletics in a postmodern world, here the decisive deficiency lies in an undervaluation of the transcendent dimension in preaching. After integrating the various concerns of contemporary homiletic development, we still need to understand preaching in a postmodern context as the dual participation of God and human beings in the revealing, illuminating, anointing, proclaiming, and embodying force of the Spirit. The shared purpose of the divine and human agency in preaching makes possible an argument for “preaching as communal participation in the Spirit” for individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation. The diverse preaching methods used to engage people in the preaching event can be evaluated in terms of the initiating and effectuating work of the Spirit for proclamation.

Within the developments of biblical revelation and human history, God’s Spirit has clearly moved toward God’s reign, that all might have their own part in order for God to be a God of all. The revealing, illuminating, anointing, proclaiming, and embodying force of the Spirit brings forth proclamation through all kinds of human methods and resources. God’s

512 The communal participatory turn in preaching is a common direction among many contemporary homileticians seeking a renewal of preaching. For instance, see McClure, The Round-table Pulpit; Rose, Sharing the Word; O. Wesley Allen Jr., The Homiletic of All Believers; Doug Pagitt, Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).
Spirit not only draws all human methods and resources into this working force, but also drives these instruments charged with the Spirit’s power into individual, ecclesial, and social realms for proclamation. Since it is in and by the Spirit that God involves all in preaching for proclamation, the Spirit is not only the instrumental agency, but also the locative agency of divine grace for individuals, the faith community, and the world. In and by the Spirit we have come to God and received divine grace. It is in and by the Spirit that we who are many are one body to mutually give and receive the manifestations of each other’s gifts from the Spirit for the building up of the body of Christ in and for the world. Welker’s doctrine of the Spirit as God’s force field that manifests selfless power for the benefits of others is very promising for the understanding of preaching as a mystical dual participation of divine and human agency. The Spirit creates the multiple force fields of proclamation in which God’s people can have a part as both givers and receivers of the graced gifts of preaching.

In terms of this dual participation of the divine and human in the multiple force fields of proclamation, we can observe the three modes of preaching as communal participation in the Spirit of the shared sermonic purpose: (1) preaching for individual transformation; (2) preaching for ecclesial formation; (3) preaching for social incorporation.

A. Preaching as Communal Participation in the Spirit for Individual Transformation

In contemporary homiletic development, the first mode of preaching is communal participation in the Spirit for individual transformation. In spite of their different emphases, the New Homileticians are commonly concerned with what happens to listeners and how they participate in the preaching event. They share an understanding of the purpose of preaching as an evocation of experience. The New Homiletic attends more to the emotive constituents of a sermon than to the logical persuasion of traditional homiletics. In reaction to
the God-oriented homiletics of Neo-Orthodoxy, the New Homiletic emerged from a human-centered rhetorical approach to preaching in a changing context.

1. Artful and Communicative Methods

The strongly rhetorical approach to preaching in the New Homiletic is related to a rediscovery of preaching as an art-form and as a communication act. In his reaction to Neo-Orthodoxy, R.E.C. Browne states, “Preaching is also a special way of using words in order to create a special effect upon those who listen and to light up the world for them.”

His starting point is that “what a preacher believes about the mode of divine revelation determines the mode of his preaching.” His exploration of human experiences stresses the role of the preacher beyond the theological understanding of preaching in Neo-Orthodoxy. In a communicative approach to preaching, Reuel Howe favors dialogical preaching, diagnosing that “the weakness of preaching stems from its wordiness and monological character.” Howe starts from the assertion that preaching is to be communicated and a two-way dialogue must take place between God and humanity, the Bible and life, and the pulpit and the pew. His emphasis on the layman’s role in this dialogical ministry of preaching can be considered “a revolutionary move” among preachers under the more authoritarian influence of Neo-Orthodoxy.

Taking a philosophical viewpoint, Clement Welsh argues that the function of preachers is not to communicate, but to enable the listener

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514 Ibid., 7.

515 Reuel Howe, *Partners in Preaching*, 5.

516 J. Randall Nichols was also in harmony with this move by suggesting that preaching is invitation and healing. *See* J. Randall Nichols, *Building the Word: The Dynamics of Communication and Preaching* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980).
to communicate with his or her universe.\textsuperscript{517} Preaching must change in order to communicate effectively, because people are changed by media just as the media itself changes.\textsuperscript{518}

Richard Jensen calls this radical new age of communication the “post-literate age,” in that we have moved from a “literate culture,” dominated by print and thinking in ideas, to an “oral-aural culture,” in which people hear and see through electronic media. The polymorphic massages of the new age call for “a paradigm shift in our concept of preaching,” although the coming of a new communications age does not replace the age that preceded it.\textsuperscript{519} Narrative, image, metaphor, and experience have changed the playing field of a homiletic theory that was previously focused more on rational arguments, propositional ideas, and logical understanding. The series of human efforts to find new methods of Christian preaching is characterized by a new rhetorical approach, in which the listener can be engaged in the sermon by way of a more artful and communicative method.

2. Inductive and Narrative Methods

The move from the “Old” to the “New” homiletics is generally characterized by the recovery of narrative to the extent that the New Homiletic is also called a narrative homiletic.\textsuperscript{520} Narrative is central in the New Homiletic because of its role in shaping and determining identity and its power to convince and to move.\textsuperscript{521} In some ways the preaching


\textsuperscript{519} Ibid., 49, 58.


\textsuperscript{521} There is no agreed definition of “narrative” in homiletics since the term has been elusively and broadly used in many different fields. Narrative is considered to be a mode of human consciousness in that it
crisis in the Old Homiletic was due to changes in the congregation in a rapidly changing context, with the narrative move of the New Homiletic reflecting those changes. Clearly the media has called for more participatory ways of preaching that go beyond traditional propositional preaching. Encouraging contemporary preachers to be more sensitive to listeners, more attentive to the whole person, and more creative through imagination in preaching, the New Homiletic creates an experiential event for listeners. Much of the power of narrative is its ability to facilitate listeners in engaging and participating in the preaching process within the Spirit’s force field for proclamation.

The Spirit’s force field for proclamation is actualized by the power of narrative in engaging the listener. Above all, narrative activates human memories and evokes human experiences. Recognizing the similarities of experience, listeners participate in preaching more actively through their identification with the events and the characters in stories,

shapes and informs our knowledge of ourselves as temporal and social beings, and of the world. It is also considered as communication in that narrative functions as a means for human conscious awareness of self and the world. According to Yamane, narratives contain “events or experiences which are selected for consideration” (183); “those events or experiences are temporally ordered, often presented with a beginning, middle, and end” (183); and “the events or experiences are subjected to moral ordering.” (183) Based on these three basic elements constituting a narrative, Yamane believes “narrative are a primary linguistic vehicle through which people grasp the meaning of lived experience by configuring and reconfiguring past experiences in ongoing stories which have certain plots or directions and which guide the interpretation of those experiences.” (183) Narratives make us into a community by enabling the sharing of our experiences, understanding, and meaning with each other. See David Yamane, “Narrative and Religious Experience,” in Sociology of Religion 61, no. 2 (2000), 171-189. In Creative Styles of Preaching, Elliot introduces the four types of narrative preaching as sermons shaped intentionally by the form of a narrative text of the Bible; sermons with a plot that follows the structure of a short story or movie; sermons shaped not only by the genre of story, but also by the preacher’s imagination to name grace in human experience; and sermons shaping a congregation by the intersection of stories from the Bible, the congregation, and the preacher. For Lowry, narrative preaching focuses on the plot shape a sermon may take whether or not story is involved, whereas story preaching is concerned with content of the entire sermon consisting in one story. Campbell views narrative preaching as “preaching grounded in the story of Jesus and shaped by a narrative logic.” Elliot adds Campbell’s corrective suggestions for narrative homiletics by putting more emphasis on narrative function and character rather than on narrative form and plot. Though there are many names to designate narrative development in homiletics such as “inductive preaching,” “story sermon,” “narrative preaching,” “phenomenological move preaching,” “conversational preaching,” and “post-liberal preaching,” the fundamental framework of all these preaching forms is narrative. See Elliot, Creative Styles of Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 1-8.
because unlike propositional preaching, stories consist of concrete events and experiences. Also, the narrative form of preaching engages listeners in preaching through ordering the events and experiences into a story with plot that moves from genuine problems of human experiences to resolution through the gospel.

Craddock’s work, *As One Without Authority*, is generally considered a turning point in contemporary homiletic development. Since there is no authoritative claim about where the Spirit is, any coercion or enforcement of the word can occur only in the absence of the Spirit. The preacher must be “as one without authority.” Craddock’s inductive approach to preaching invites listeners to think their own thoughts, to experience their own feelings, and to make their own decisions. In favor of using a variety of sermonic forms, his inductive preaching facilitates the participation of listeners through narrative ingredients of the sermon that correspond to the ways that people ordinarily experience life. The inductive method begins with the particulars of human experience and moves to the often surprising conclusions of the gospel. It enables listeners to participate actively in the movement of preaching as partners and to travel together an eagerly anticipated destination. The preacher’s identification with listeners and the creative use of analogy are fundamental to this inductive movement.  

Listeners identify with the particular experiences that are analogues to their own experiences. Thus, Craddock emphasizes on the use of “the primary function of language: letting be what is through evocative images rather than conceptual structures.”

Since Craddock, Lowry has developed time-oriented preaching as “a narrative art form with plot.” He suggests an alternative to the inductive process of the liberal tradition as

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522 Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 49.

523 Ibid., 63.
well as to the deductive process of the Neo-Orthodox tradition. Lowry focuses more on the process of narrativity or the sermonic form rather than the narrative content or language. He proposes five basic sequential stages to a typical sermonic process: 1) upsetting the equilibrium, 2) analyzing the discrepancy, 3) disclosing the clue to resolution, 4) experiencing the gospel, and 5) anticipating the consequences. In order for the gospel to be experienced as an event-in-time, Lowry suggests seeing a sermon as ordering experience rather than ordering ideas. Whereas the preacher who chooses to order ideas into “timeless truths” tends to stop the clock, letting the sermon simply stand in space, the preacher who chooses to order experience tends to stay in touch with listeners who hear in time. Lowry views the sermon as narrative time because the most powerful vehicle for doing time in the pulpit is narrative. Narrative time draws on story time and the various times of the people and melts them together into a new event-in-time.

In *How to Preach Parable*, Lowry suggests four options for the shaping of narrative preaching forms: 1) running the story, 2) delaying the story, 3) suspending the story, and 4)

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524 Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 26. The opening ambiguity based on the human situations is essential to upsetting the equilibrium of listeners as the first step in a preached sermon. The second diagnostic stage of asking *why* is decisive to the content of the gospel because the gospel is proclaimed as God’s solution to human problems. This stage must be prepared by the ambiguity explicit in the analysis of the discrepancy for the clue to resolution to be existentially real and for the gospel to be experienced. The clue to resolution involves a “principle of reversal” that comes as surprise which turns things upside down. Lowry believes the principle of reversal has its roots in the gospel itself in that “there is something about the gospel which is upside down to the world’s way of viewing truth.” (70) The final phase of sermonic closure articulates the possible consequences of “a new situation being created by the gospel - a new freedom to make choices we could never before make (87).” In his later work, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery*, Lowry revises the five basic sequential stages of the homiletic plot into four in a loop with more varied possibilities of experiencing the gospel. *See* Lowry, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997).


526 Ibid., 63.
alternating the story. For Lowry, all preaching utilizing the sermonic process of moving from opening disequilibrium to closing denouement is a narrative sermon, whether or not it involves the movement of any particular story. The power of narrative lies in the narrative form rather than in any other dimensions of narrative. A transforming, revelatory, experiential event for listeners in preaching is created by the form of a narrative plot. Concerning with the experience evoked by the plotted sermon form, Lowry considers plot and movement in the sermon the most important factors for effective communication. The homiletic plot catches listeners in the depths of the problematic realities of the world and brings them to the resolution that the gospel proposes. His plotted sermon enables listeners to be active and responsible participants in the preaching event because the unresolved tension pulls listeners along until the final resolution of a discrepancy. Narrative plots can be also shaped and performed within the mystery of the Spirit’s force for proclamation, on whose edge the preacher dances. It is because “God’s Spirit may be better able to break into the context of the preacher’s expectant wonderment—even confusion—than into the position of known certainties.” Insofar as proclamation is “the hoped-for goal” achieved by the preaching ministry which is “an offering intended to evoke an event that cannot be coerced into being,” it rests predominantly in the hands of the Spirit.

3. Imaginative Connective Methods


528 Ibid., 25.

529 Lowry, The Sermon, 100.

530 Ibid., 37.
Narratives are the vehicle that generates human experiences through images and metaphor. Since human experience is too diverse, complex, and mysterious to be packaged in abstract concepts, the old conceptual methods of traditional preaching tend not to reach contemporary congregations at their spiritual and mental depth. Narrative methods with concrete, imagistic language may engage contemporary listeners to participate in preaching attentively because they are figurative, sensate, concrete, and metaphorical. They are grounded in the bodily experience of the five senses and draw on images from the natural world rather than on abstract words. Although all language is metaphorical in a sense, the metaphors offered by narrative in preaching work in the depths of listeners by evoking concrete images to convey sensory experiences and allow listeners to engage in a process of viewing the world in a new way.\(^{531}\)

Thomas Troeger advocates “imaginative preaching” that employs images from the oral and visual culture of television, movies, and computers. Troeger formulates seven principles for connecting preaching with listeners through imagination: alert the eye to keener sight, feel the bodily weight of truth, listen to the music of speech, draw parables from life, dream of new worlds, understand the church’s resistance to imagination, and return to the Source, that is, the living God.\(^{532}\)

In his practical suggestions, he challenges preachers to train their imaginations through becoming attentive to what they see, feel, and hear. In order for listeners in a media-saturated culture to see the images offered in the Scriptures and in preaching as an

\(^{531}\) According to the Romantic view of metaphor, language itself is vitally metaphorical because the human mind accesses to reality by the linguistic means of metaphor working through the human faculty of imagination. See Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1972), 55.

alternative, there is need for “immediacy, vividness, and a fast-paced plot” which television has conditioned listeners to expect.\textsuperscript{533} Preachers need to employ “logosomatic language,” which proceeds from reality and works in and through human bodily existence, by physicalizing the images and movements present in the text.\textsuperscript{534} Since the rhythm, pitch, volume, and infection of speech are a kind of music which makes imagination dance, Troeger also challenges preachers to develop their sensitivity to aural communication by training the ear to listen.\textsuperscript{535} A preacher’s sensitivity to the richness of common human experience enables listeners to attain to a shared awareness of experience through analogies in a sermonic event. Troeger’s imaginative preaching engages listeners in the preaching event by enabling them to imagine what the living God is doing in our time.

Craddock, Lowry, and Troeger all represent the narrative power of the New Homiletic, enabling listeners to identify with the preacher in the sermonic process. Their homiletic methodologies for individual transformation through the preaching event rely upon the preacher’s ability to connect with listeners. As the preacher creates affective identification with listeners through narrative methodologies, individual transformation is accomplished in the Spirit’s work. Since the homiletic effectiveness of their inductive, narrative-plotted, and imaginative methods depends upon the preachers’ rhetorical work for

\textsuperscript{533} Ibid., 40.

\textsuperscript{534} Ibid., 55-58.

\textsuperscript{535} Ibid., 67-73. The imaginative ways of translating the images and content of the Scripture for listeners in a multimedia culture are characterized by multiple forms of communication. In his other work, \textit{The Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture}, the ultimate goal of new preaching strategies for audio- visually oriented people is “to use the full range of the gifts of human communication as a medium for the alchemy of grace (21).” For his specific strategies, see Troeger, \textit{Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture} (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 22-116.
identification with listeners, these New Homiletic methodologies are inclined more to personal experiences of divine grace in the individual realm.

B. Preaching as Communal Participation in the Spirit for Ecclesial Formation

The New Homiletic has offered precious and useful suggestions for the individual listener’s transformative experience. However, it is also true that the New Homiletic is not a panacea to the crisis in preaching in all churches. Craddock’s inductive methodology functions best in a Christian culture where listeners are well informed of their Christian heritage, but the present culture is increasingly illiterate in Christian faith. Lowry’s plotted narrative methodology is inappropriate not only in developing a narrative sermon based on a non-narrative biblical text, but also in presenting a variety of characteristics of the gospel which are “too rich, complex, and varied to be proclaimed through a single sermon form.” Troeger’s imaginative sermon is more applicable to certain kinds of texts with a lot of data that appeal to the human senses rather than to some others. His imaginative methodology can result in a fruitless relativism of meaning without a sharp homiletic point, because there are bound to be various different impressions of an image within the congregation’s consciousness.

In reaction to the New Homiletic’s individualistic tendency and rhetorical approach to human experience, there are homileticians who now concentrate on the communal dimension of preaching. They do not limit the power of narrative to the world of individual listeners, but extend it to the congregational realm in which listeners are placed. Thomas Long points out

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the communal dimension of preaching comes from the fact that preachers are themselves from the people of the Triune God:

Preachers come to the pulpit from somewhere, and unless we can name that place, we risk misunderstanding who we are and what we are supposed to be doing in the pulpit. When we who preach open the sanctuary door on Sunday morning and find a congregation waiting there for us, it is easy to forget that we come from these people, not to them from the outside. We are not visitors from clergy-land, strangers from unknown land, ambassadors from seminary-land, or even, as much as we may cherish the thought, prophets from a wilderness land. We are members of the body of Christ, commissioned to preach by the people to whom we are about to speak.538

It is his point that the task of preachers is not just to preach the gospel to the congregation, but also to perceive the gospel within the congregation, and then to affirm, to celebrate, to raise, and to guide it as a gift from the Triune God. In a theology of preaching as “bearing witness to the people of God,” Long claims that the sermon needs to follow the function of the biblical text from which it is made.539 A word from the Lord through the sermon is shared as a gift of preaching “in the midst of the church’s life and in the middle of the church’s ongoing conversation” where the Spirit is at work for its edification.540 He says, “homiletics must now give more major attention to that which has been only a minor motif in the past: ecclesiology. The doctrine of the church, as the speech community of God, will provide the framework for any truly pertinent homiletic.”541 Richard Lischer also claims, “It is time for homiletics to make its turn to the church.”542 According to Lischer, the New Testament’s preaching was for the formation of a people of faith, but contemporary preaching has

538 Ibid., 11.


541 Ibid., 188.

replaced it with the persuasion of individuals. Lischer suggests an alternative understanding of sermonic purpose and task: *from event to formation; from illustration to narrative; from translation to performance.* While the desired outcome of the New Homiletic is to recreate the experience of preachers in listeners, the sermonic purpose and task for the homileticians who return to theology in reaction against the New Homiletic is “Christian formation” as a discursive understanding of truth in the community’s ongoing interpretive conversation. Conversation as theological method and content enables the preacher to facilitate the congregation’s engagement in the sermon. It assists in ecclesial formation in the Spirit’s working force for proclamation.

1. **Conversational Methods through Narrative Character and Function**

   Postliberal homiletics provides a representative example of the second mode of preaching as communal participation in the Spirit’s force fields of proclamation. As a postliberal, Campbell critiques the individual experiential emphasis of the New Homiletic as a residual substance of a modern, liberal framework. He asserts that preaching as “a performance of Scripture, an embodiment of God’s reign after the pattern of Jesus” is basically the practice of “building up” the community of faith as “a collective disciple of Jesus Christ in and for the world.” Criticizing the turn to narrative of the New Homiletic as narrow and misguided, he argues that “Christians are interested in narrative only because

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543 Ibid., 88-92. Lischer claims preaching is not just to create an existential experience of individuals but to form a people of faith as a contrast-society; sermonic use of story is not just for making contact with the listener through familiar experiences in narrative form, but for giving an identity and mission to God’s people through the story of God’s faithfulness to God’s people; preaching is not one person’s persuasive address through a translation of an ancient text but its ceaseless performance through Christian community as the ultimate performer.

544 Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation*, 129-131.

545 Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 216, 257.
Jesus is what he does and undergoes, not because of anything magical about narrative form per se.”

His corrective direction for the New Homiletic is a shift “from narrative plot to the central character rendered by the Gospel narratives.” Campbell places the performative eventful character of preaching in the community’s ongoing conversational formation rather than in private, individual experiences. Then he suggests the typological interpretation as an act of imagination that provides “a critical link between the story of Jesus, the building up of the church, and the practice of preaching” as an alternative to the individualistic translation model of narrative homiletics. For Campbell, formative conversation by this figural interpretation is not the product of homiletic technique or methods, but part of a communal journey into the language and practices of Christian communities.

Thus Campbell encourages preachers to improvise the Scriptures in new ways for new contexts so that the community may learn to use its language rightly. Whereas the trend of experiential relationalism in the New Homiletic makes God too dependent on immediate human experience, Campbell’s emphasis on narrative function that directs the congregation to Christ rather than to narrative structure, restores God’s centrality to preaching. But in treating the Spirit’s work as that of connecting the textual Christ and the church, he allows no means for “critical conversation” through which the congregation can appropriate the gospel narratives for new congregational identity and ecclesial formation.

546 Ibid., 171.

547 Ibid., 250-257.

548 Ibid., 257.


550 Lose, Confessing Jesus Christ, 125.
2. Conversational Methods through Sermonic Roundtable

In contrast to the text-prioritized formative conversation of a postliberal homiletic, Rose argues for a conversational homiletic with preaching as an ongoing shared conversation in a roundtable church. For her, the relationship between the preacher and the congregation implied in the New Homiletic is predominantly a one-way affair, because the congregation is still, by and large, a recipient, while the preacher creates the transformative experience. Based on a feminist ecclesiology and mistrust of historically-conditioned language, Rose views the preacher and the congregation as partners and co-creators of the sermon. Thus preaching is a tentative interpretation of a biblical text and of God’s activity, a proposal to create space for genuine conversation, to invite counterproposals and to foster mutuality. It is a “wager” of the preacher that seeks the correction and confirmation of other’s wagers, through use of confessional, poetic, and evocative language.\(^{551}\) Since the preacher and the congregation are not separate entities, but a community of faith, preaching is about the building up of the church as a priesthood of all believers by gathering worshippers regularly around the word and nurturing the essential conversations of God’s people.

The communal, heuristic, and nonhierarchical features of conversational preaching are symbolized by an ongoing conversation around the roundtable “to invite everyone to participate in the life-giving conversations that make up the ongoing stories of God’s people.”\(^ {552}\) Rose’s corrective direction for the New Homiletic is a move from “preacher-centered participation” to “a more community-centered participation” that listens to the

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\(^{551}\) Rose, *Sharing the Word*, 89-118.

\(^{552}\) Ibid., 5.
marginal voices of women, the poor, the disfranchised, and the silenced. But as an actual practice, she does not provide any homiletic methodologies for her conversational preaching: “While conversational preaching seeks to gather up and name existing practices, it is not a technique or method that can be added to other techniques and methods. It is at heart a connected way of being that issues in connected ways of speaking. At this point, I do not know exactly its how-tos; I only recognize, or think I recognize, its broad brushstrokes and basic convictions.”

In her basic convictions about a relationship of connectedness and mutuality between the preacher and the congregation, homiletic principles are preliminarily identified as communal, nonhierarchical, inclusive, and scriptural, going beyond just the sermon form or content. Rose’s formative conversation is pursued through the preacher’s invitation to the congregation to an ongoing conversation that is open to the multiple voices of all believers. This is a consequence of the community’s venture to share understanding and experience of the divine through the sermon, rather than to receive a product of the preacher’s persuasive or narrative capability. The congregation actively participates in the preaching process. The preacher’s role in making truth claims is excluded in Rose’s model, however, with conversation acting as the formative force. The Spirit’s work in proclamation is not to nullify but to enlist the diverse members of the body of Christ for the building up of the church. The preacher’s role of leadership is essential as a gift of the Spirit for ecclesial formation, not least in making truth claims in preaching.

553 Ibid., 97.
554 Ibid., 121.
555 Ibid., ix, 112.
3. Conversational Methods through Mutual Critical Correlation

Allen’s revisionist model is another example of preaching as communal participation for ecclesial formation in the Spirit. He uses “conversation” as a broad metaphor for the preaching itself. According to Allen, preaching is a “conversation in which preacher and people search together to interpret our common life from the perspective of the gospel.”

Revisionary preaching by “mutual critical correlation” brings together the Bible, Christian history and tradition, the contemporary experiences of the congregation and the preacher, the wider world, and God, into multiple conversations for ecclesial formation. It also retains the preacher’s special role as an interpreter of the gospel.

Ecclesial formation is pursued by Allen through a conversational dynamic that moves to mutual critical correlation between the Christian tradition and contemporary experience. The preacher facilitates the congregation’s discerning of God’s presence and purposes through the sermon, entering into formative conversation with them. Revisionary conversational preaching revises the community’s understanding of the Christian tradition and contemporary experience in light of God’s unconditional love for all and God’s will for justice for all. The past (the biblical text or Christian tradition) and present (contemporary situation) can mutually inform each other. This is critical because both criticize each other in the interests of Christian witness and faithful living in the world. According to Allen, revisionary preaching by mutual critical correlation has a set of “three criteria (appropriateness to the gospel, intelligibility, moral plausibility) by which preachers can reflect critically on the contribution to a conversation” for ecclesial formation.

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557 Ibid., 69. For Allen, formative conversation emerges not through any specific methodologies, but through multiple conversations in preaching. Such conversations include “many different forms of content, such
ecclesial formation, the preaching conversation needs to be consistent with the gospel revealed to the church through Jesus Christ. Its message needs to be clear enough for people to understand, logically consistent within itself, and believable. Finally the preacher needs to help the congregation envision how the gospel can create a new world in which all persons and elements of nature experience love and justice.  

Allen’s view of preaching as theological interpretation of life and the world through multiple conversations by mutual critical correlation takes seriously the diversity of ecclesial contexts. However, it can become so captivated by human culture that the “scandal” and “foolishness” of the gospel are rationalized into a successful sermon acceptable to contemporary mores. Above all, Allen’s homiletic methodology for formative conversation lays great emphasis on the preacher’s leading role. In taking his twenty-seven steps for the preaching conversation, one thing must remain in focus for the preacher: “Be faithful to God and open to the possibilities.” In comparison with the examples of Rose and Campbell that tend to yield the ontological truth claim in preaching, Allen’s revisionary approach calls the preacher to help the congregation discern the trustworthiness of the Christian tradition and the implications of new possibilities for ecclesial formation.  

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558 Ibid., 82-88.  
559 Ibid., 118. See also Allen, Interpreting the Gospel, 120-176, for the twenty-seven steps to help identify essential elements in the preaching conversation.  
560 Ibid., 71. The Spirit is a partner with the preacher. Allen remarks, “To be sure, the preacher can ignore, misconstrue, or reject the prompting of the Spirit. However, if the preacher distorts or turns away from the lure of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit then works with the preacher, the sermon, and the congregation in order to make the most of the possibilities that result from the choices of the preacher and the congregation. The Holy Spirit never gives up on a preacher, a message, or a church.”
C. Preaching as Communal Participation in the Spirit for Social Incorporation

The New Homiletic has continued to evolve in its emphasis on communal and social experiences of divine grace. Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid offer a summary of contemporary homiletic development in terms of the rhetorical means of logos, pathos, and ethos. In their view, the New Homileticians have mostly emphasized pathos to create an affective experience for listeners in response to a previous generation’s overemphasis on logos. Newer postmodern approaches to preaching tend to emphasize ethos in forming a faith community over the preceding homiletic emphasis on logos and pathos.\textsuperscript{561} Although the New Homiletic respects listeners by inviting them on a journey of discovery, the preacher still attempts to control the range of possible interpretations through a pattern of creating experience in listeners. Whereas the New Homiletic retains a positivistic view of truth, the “thoroughly postmodern approach” to preaching considers foundationalist rationality to be “in ruins,” and claims truth is a non-foundational confession created by an ongoing process of participation and conversation.\textsuperscript{562}

In particular, active and direct participation by listeners in the sermon is gradually being claimed as an appropriate ethical development in contemporary homiletics. By way of interactive conversation, participation extends to the reception of God’s word through the listeners’ intellectual, affective or imaginative engagement. This obviously involves the preacher’s sermonic language and movement which gives voice to the word of God through mutual engagement and confessional conversation between the preacher and the congregation. Clearly contemporary homiletics continues to evolve into an ecclesial practice

\textsuperscript{561} Hogan and Reid, \textit{Connecting with the Congregation}, 41-42.

\textsuperscript{562} Ibid., 129-133.
of greater participation by all members. A communal and social experience of divine grace is facilitated through such preaching. Some advance beyond the New Homiletic’s rhetorical approach to preaching in order to heed the oppressed, marginalized, and silenced others. In the postmodern context of radical difference, they pursue interaction with others by welcoming difference. In terms of the Spirit’s mission to reach the world, their world-oriented preaching can be seen as another mode of preaching as communal participation in God’s force fields of proclamation.

1. The Ethics of Preaching

The Christian ethics of preaching is generally treated as a matter of preaching sermons on moral and social issues, or “prophetic” preaching that calls people to God’s vision for justice and peace in our world.563 In a radical sense, however, preaching itself is an ethical and social act. Arthur Van Seters makes an important move in reclaiming the purpose and task of preaching in broader terms by claiming that the preaching act is practiced by “socialized beings to a social entity in a specific, social context and always at a social moment.”564 In his later book, Preaching and Ethics, Van Seters explores the relationship between preaching and ethics to help the church live out its discipleship in faithfulness to the gospel. He sets out the heuristic image of an interconnected ethical web, with each strand revolving around Jesus Christ as the web’s common center, and preaching as the church’s obedient ethical behavior to Jesus Christ in the world. The preacher is for Van Seters a


proclaimer of ethics, the sermon is ethical communication, and the congregation is ethical
community: “Preacher, preaching, and congregation do not vie for importance; they need one
another for the ethics of preaching to come alive.”  

Taking a different approach, Campbell examines preaching as an ethical act of non-
violent resistance to the powers and principalities that cause death and brokenness in the
world. Preaching is “a significant act of moral obedience to the way of Jesus; it is an act of
discipleship.”  
Campbell adopts the term “resistance” to develop his ethic of preaching as
nonviolent resistance to the dominant system which is “characterized by power exercised
over others, by control of others, by ranking as the primary principle of social organization,
by hierarchies of dominant and subordinate, winners and losers, insiders and outsiders,
honored and shamed.”  

The purpose of preaching in the face of the principalities and powers is not to offer ethical principles or norms of decision-making, but to empower the faith community as a concrete, embodied people of nonviolent resistance. Arguing for preaching as the communal practice of shaping Christian community, Campbell proposes a twofold movement of exposing the powers and envisioning the new creation for proclamation.  

Furthermore, preaching as a practice of nonviolent resistance to the powers needs to be connected to the church’s mission to the world. However, Campbell’s focus is still more upon ecclesial formation than social incorporation. His concept of preaching as resistance to the powers may also limit social experiences of God’s grace through the preaching practice as part of a response to the powers. In a postmodern context, we need to

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565 Van Seters, Preaching and Ethics, 133.
566 Campbell, The Word Before the Powers, 80.
567 Ibid., 26.
568 Ibid., 105-127.
attend more to God’s initiative in the preaching practice, which brings about a new world beyond the boundary of the faith community.

2. Interactive Conversation

McClure’s ethical other-wise preaching is a representative example of the third mode of preaching as communal participation. It encompasses the existing models of ethical commitment to the oppressed, marginalized, and silenced others in terms of sermonic purposes and tasks.\(^{569}\) Other-wise preaching prioritizes an ethical openness to and responsibility for others. According to McClure, a postmodern practice of preaching takes other-inspired and other-directed homiletics beyond the limits of linguistic and cultural homiletics. He aims to create a new style of preaching for proclamation through ongoing face-to-face interactions. McClure does not provide a specific method for achieving this, however. Nevertheless, his other-wise preaching opens a wide variety of possibilities for incorporative interaction through actual and direct participation of the otherness within and beyond the faith community. Many creative styles of proclamation corresponding to God’s infinite freedom and people’s diverse differences may be opened through other-wise preaching in which people can share their understandings, lived experiences and expectations of God in both text and life. The same working force of the Spirit, in which proclamation happens through the preacher’s evocative and imaginative ways of engaging listeners in the preaching process, can be actualized for social incorporation through multifarious face-to-face interactions.

In terms of formal preaching, McClure’s sermonic method can be characterized by the ongoing mutual open-ended conversation about the gospel’s meaning in today’s world.

\(^{569}\) McClure, *Other-wise Preaching*, 133.
Yet in this conversation, he seems to miss the essential role of preachers as teachers of Christianity who make truth claims. But his face-to-face interaction in which “something dangerous in the said is erased in its saying (witness, martyrria)” can nevertheless equip and prepare people as preachers of the gospel in the world. McClure’s homiletic bringing otherness into the preaching process directs us more towards the social experiences of divine grace than towards ecclesial formation through proclamation. It reasserts “the profound connection between preaching and a way of life.” McClure says,

> Preaching will become an ego-martyring sign to another, and the preacher will become a sign of this giving of signs, a cipher of proximity and non-indifference to the other. When this occurs, preaching simply says, “Here I am,” here is a witness of the glory of the Infinite with no stable theme, with no fixed evidence, nonetheless commanded by the glory of the Infinite to become this sign of that which is other-wise.

Since the living God is already at work through all things and all people for the “glory of the Infinite,” preaching is for him “a radical act of compassionate responsibility” to and for others in which all are welcomed and differences are celebrated. In this inter-human witness to the living God as the wholly Other, the mission of the Spirit to create a new world is continually fulfilled, not only through the sermonic moment, but also through our Christian life. The Spirit works within face-to-face interactions to enable participants to live out the proclaimed word in their daily lives. Social incorporation through ongoing face-to-face interactions occurs more through the embodying performance of the preached word in the world than in formal preaching.

The public emergent event of proclamation thus cannot be limited to formal

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570 Ibid., 131.
571 Ibid., 150.
572 Ibid., 152.
573 Ibid., 7.
preaching. The social experience of divine grace that incorporates all creatures into God’s *shalom* calls for ongoing open-ended interactions for proclamation. Since these incorporative interactions are understood only in terms of human methodology, however, this method tends to dismiss the divine agency from preaching. Also, the distinct role of the theologically-trained preacher to serve the Spirit’s working for proclamation should not be overlooked in favor of the voices of the marginalized, silenced, and oppressed others.

III. *Perichoretic Preaching for Communal Participation in the Spirit*

    Developments in contemporary homiletics offer multiple methodologies for preachers to communicate the gospel in diverse contexts. However, God’s mysterious power and presence through the Spirit in preaching would seem to be a missing element in many of these. As Braxton remarks, “homiletics is as much about *submission* to divine *mystery* as it is about *mastery* of human method.”

    The emerging emphasis upon the silenced and marginalized others in the church, as well as in the world beyond, calls the whole people of God to respond not only to the differences between the members of the body of Christ, but also to the diverse needs and problems of the world. The force field of the Spirit draws the whole people of God to have a share in the Spirit and to be members and bearers of such force fields.

    In a pluralistic postmodern context, a more integrated understanding of the Spirit’s work is needed to complement the recent emphases upon listeners, community, and otherness. The gracious ministry of the Spirit for the purpose of individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation through preaching is the ongoing movement of

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God in the world toward the reign of God.

Under the ongoing movement of the Spirit, we need multiple preaching forms, corresponding to the infinite freedom of God’s Spirit and our own creaturely diversity. Every homiletic theory has its own usefulness for the experience of divine grace through the preaching event. However, contemporary homiletic development clearly leads us to a more communal participatory homiletics. Given that the Spirit works for proclamation through the communal participation of every member, we need a more radical structure of proclamation, enabling everyone’s contribution to the manifestation of preaching in Christian gatherings.

Michael J. Quicke remarks, “[N]o aspect of worship and Christian life should be understood as less than trinitarian.”\(^{575}\) The Triune God can thus serve as a model for the preaching practice for proclamation. Quicke continues: “The perichoretic life of God, so often seen as unknowable and distant, is, by the power of the Holy Spirit, brought to us and thus becomes our life.”\(^{576}\) The human agency corresponding to the divine agency of proclamation in Trinitarian discussions can be modeled as communal in terms of a perichoretic understanding of God in relationship to Christian preaching. In the Spirit’s working force for proclamation, the various contemporary participatory methods of

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\(^{576}\) Johns, “Holy Spirit and Preaching,” in *The New Interpreter’s Handbook of Preaching*, 461. The Greek word *perichoresis* was first coined to express the intimate communion of the two natures in the one person of Jesus and later explored to explain the three persons in one God by the Greek Fathers. For a summary of the doctrinal development of *perichoresis*, see Michael G. Lawler, “Perichoresis: New Theological Wine in an Old Theological Wineskin,” in *Horizons* 22, no. 1 (1995), 49-50. With regard to its extended notion, feminist theologian Catherine M. LaCugna, along with others, employs *perichoresis* to include human beings with the image of “dancing together” that the Greek word *perichoresis* signifies. In the same vein, Patricia Wilson-Kastner writes, “as in a dance the diversity and the unity coexist; the unity of the dance is an active common life created by the dancers, whose very being as dancers is established through their full participation in the unity of the dance. In the universe the divine *perichoresis* summons everyone to join it in Trinitarian eternal harmony.” See Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco, CA: Harper/Collins, 1991), 53-73; and Patricia Wilson-Kastner, *Faith, Feminism & the Christ* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 127.
preaching work communally in a giving and receiving of the word of God for individual, ecclesial, and social transformation.

Joseph R. Jeter, Jr. and Ronald J. Allen’s attempt to sketch methods of preaching according to different ways in which people receive and process data can provide a useful track for proclamation in our postmodern context. Since each human person is a dynamic and complex being, the authors advocate “perichoretic preaching” in which a variety of people can be invited into a dialogue leading to the sermon. This might prove a desirable direction for communal participation in the Spirit in a postmodern context. God might thus have already provided the body of Christ with sufficient resources for individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation. The heart of matter might simply be that preaching has previously been more dependent upon limited individual preachers than upon all members of the body of Christ.

All the above methodologies of contemporary homiletics need to be examined in terms of the Spirit’s touch as God’s power and presence in preaching. Effective methods of preaching should involve free self-withdrawal for the benefit of others, effected by the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit’s work for personal transformation, ecclesial formation and social incorporation through preaching is manifested through diverse methods of preaching to facilitate the participation of individuals, communities, and others in the preaching event.

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577 Joseph R. Jeter, Jr. and Ronald J. Allen, One Gospel, Many Ears: Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregation (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 121.
CHAPTER 5

Preaching as Communal Participation in a Changing Context

In keeping with the need for the discussion to be practical, this chapter will explore the potential of Madangguk, a contemporary form of Korean theatre, for enhancing or effecting communal participation in the preaching event. Through its employment of various art forms with the purpose of sublimating Han and embodying Shinmyung in the populace, Madangguk reveals a uniquely Korean spirit of communal participation. I will then take the practices of sharing, testimony, and open prophecy found in the Korean Church as concrete examples of communal participatory preaching that can be adapted for the wider contemporary church.\(^{578}\)

In Korean Preaching, Jung Young Lee claims, “When Koreanness is lacking in preaching, it is no longer Korean preaching. Thus, authentic preaching, which is alive and real to the Korean church, must include the heritage of Korean history and culture. Only against the backdrop of this heritage can we discern and evaluate the distinctive characteristics of Korean preaching.”\(^{579}\) In search of “Korean-ness” he relies on traditional Korean religions such as Shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, which flourished in Korea for centuries before the arrival of Christianity. Lee tends to limit his cultural argument

\(^{578}\) As a Korean preacher, I introduce the Korean preaching practice of communal participation based on an inherited culture of “Korean-ness” as a signpost for a homiletic journey toward a preaching of communal participation in the Spirit. In fact, the Korean Church has been significantly influenced by negative elements of Western Christianity such as pragmatic evangelicalism, consumerism, narcissism, the loss of the communal nature of the church and so on. See Michael Scott Horton, Made in America: The Shaping of Modern American Evangelicalism (Seoul: Compass House Publishers, 1996). Since Korean society is one of the most Westernized societies in Asia, it too is characterized by the decline of modernity and a postmodern shift. The recent rapid changes in Korean society represented by globalization, localization, urbanization, digitalization, and so on, reflect the characteristics of the postmodern shift especially among younger generations. Contemporary Korean preaching is as much challenged by this rapidly changing context of the congregation as the Western world.

of “Korean-ness” to the phenomenological practices of traditional religions. He conceives of proclamation for Korean American congregations without examining the Korean spirit that might make them distinctive as Korean. Within the time-compressed development of modernity and the emergence of postmodernity, Koreans have experienced a need for the recovery of “Korean-ness” for Korean identity. Here I suggest examining a Korean spirit that constitute “Korean-ness” in preaching, as evidenced in contemporary Korean Madangguk, which is firmly based on indigenous elements of Korean culture. This is a preliminary study of the implications of madangguk performance for contemporary preaching, and one that will require ongoing study beyond this thesis.

I. Potential of Contemporary Korean Madangguk for Christian Preaching

Madangguk is a contemporary “Koreanesque” theatre which has been restored through the revivalist movement of Korean indigenous arts against a wave of Westernization. In its search for genuine “Korean-ness” for the reconstruction of Korean society, this cultural movement has revitalized a Korean spirit with the cultural distinctiveness of communality and participation in performance. Madang means an “open space or field” for the community to gather together, where the issues of everyday life can be addressed in public. At the same time it has a meaning of “time or situation related to specific occasion” or “a

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580 This cultural movement is preferably called the movement of Madang-Kut as a developed and extended conception of Madangguk, because it is not just a public performance but a communal practice for social change through Korean traditional performance arts. Originally Kut was the communal rituals of ancient Korea that symbolized its cultural unity and common identity. Kut, as Korean shamanic ritual performance, integrates theatrical arts with religious experiences by a spontaneous participation of those who are present. In a broader sense, however, Kut means the communal festivity for the entire community beyond a limited concept of shamanic ritual. See Jintaeck Lim, The Creation of Minjung Performance: Toward Madang-Kut Beyond Madangguk (Seoul: Changjaegwabipyungsa, 1990); and Namhee Lee, “Between Indeterminancy and Radical Critique: Madangguk, Ritual, and Protest,” in Intellectuals and Social Movement, Part 1, 11, no. 3 (Winter 2003).
unit of time in traditional performances.” Madangguk is a situational theatre in an open field with a series of various performance forms. These evoke connotations of communal gathering and embodied participation.\textsuperscript{581} Madangguk is the only contemporary heir to Korean traditional theatre arts.\textsuperscript{582} The performance is held indoors or outdoors. It is performed on stage or in madang space. Its distinctiveness lies mostly in its communally-based spirit. It represents a new style of theatre through creative revitalization of Korea’s unique traditional culture. This interactive dimension is even more important than its specific mode of performance.\textsuperscript{583} What might be called the communal participatory spirit of Korean people was embodied in the formation and development of madangguk as a cultural movement of social protest during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in South Korea. As part of the creation of Korean democracy in opposition to the repressive military dictatorships of those times, a reinvention of madangguk as traditional folk art recovered the subjectivity of the common people of Korea out of the crisis of their historical subjection within a “failed history” of modernization as Westernization.\textsuperscript{584} Madangnori as “folk plays (nori) performed


\textsuperscript{582} According to Lee, madangguk most closely represents the lives of Korean people: the stories are their most representative ones, dealing with topics that they want to share the most, expressed in a way that only they express them, through media that exist only in Korea and as a part of its cultural festivities. Whether the topics are about social issues, difficulties in people’s lives, or based on famous Korean traditional tales, the theme of madangguk has always been very uniquely Korean. The stories are also expressed in a traditionally Korean way stemming from the traditional theatre’s principles that have been handed down for generations and even their smallest stylistic details are exceptionally and ultimately Korean. See Y. M. Lee, The Performance Principle and Characteristic of Madangguk Theatre (Seoul: Sigonsa, 2001), 15-17; and “Korean Traditional Theatre and Madangguk Theatre,” in Korea Journal 37, no. 3 (1997), 57-60.

\textsuperscript{583} Jintaeck Lim and Huiwan Chae, key figures in contemporary formation of madangguk, describe madangguk as “a concept of value with ideological system which is difficult to understand with the explanation of the term alone. It is a new ideology of art created in the process of exploring what the real spirit of theatre is.” Thus, we need to understand madangguk in terms of its ideological spirit together rather than its performance form alone. See Lim, The Creation of Minjung Performance, 70.
on madang” has been consolidated into a more popular and commercial performance. However, madangguk has also been recognized as the primary and most representative example of “Korean-ness” in contemporary Korean society. Madangguk has its own unique theatrical style and principles which are a “synthesis and amalgamation of dramaturgical and aesthetic elements of the traditional folk theatre.”

There are many arguments about what constitutes “Korean-ness” in terms of preaching, since contemporary Korean preaching since missionary days has been greatly westernized. But for the sake of brevity I focus on the homiletic potential of the performance form and principles of madangguk in that they reflect a Korean mentality of communal participation. The aim is to sketch a model that can help contemporary Korean preaching become more communal and participatory as part of the Spirit’s work for proclamation.

Madangguk, as a situational theatre performed in a public open space, is a performance event designed for communal gatherings and various festivities in the

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584 Namhee Lee, The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 5-6, 11, and especially Part II-5. Korean common people are called “Minjung” as the people who “are politically repressed, economically exploited, and culturally marginalized” throughout the nation’s industrialization and westernization. See Wan-Sang Han, Intellectuals and the Understanding of Reality (Seoul: Chungnyunsa, 1986), 30.

585 N. Lee, The Making of Minjung, 187. Korean traditional theatrical performances were broadly staged in the ancient tribal nations according to Korean historical documents. Traditional theatre still in existence today includes the folk dramas enjoyed by the common people which can be divided broadly into mask dance drama and puppet drama. Concerning traditional theatre, Y. M. Lee offers the following description: “These performances always began with street parades (kil nori), led by a group of traditional musical instrumentalists, to advertise the upcoming festivities and performances, and to garner a bigger audience. Then the audience enjoyed another short performance for purification of the performance area before the main program. The main program changed slightly with every new performance or new year, but the basic format was maintained and became familiar to the audience. The audience felt itself to be a part of the performance and actively participated in it, even dictating the flow of the program. Afterward, the audience and performers all come together to dance and enjoy the ending play (twit p’uri). The festivities that occurred before and after the main program, such as the street parades (beginning play) and the ending play, were more central than the main program in the village shamanistic rituals with their shared sense of community...the feeling of community created by shared emotional experience, often resulting in shinmyông (state of ecstasy, rapture), is the driving force behind.” See Lee, “Korean Traditional Theatre and Madangguk Theatre,” 43-44.
community.\(^{586}\) For a proper understanding of contemporary *madangguk*, J. Kim draws attention to the spirit of *madangguk* performance over its performance form.\(^{587}\) He claims the spirit of “sharing” is the existential feature of *madangguk*. This is the mentality that makes *madangguk* a communal theatre in that the audience is not merely a consumer of performance work, but is itself raised into a role of performance subjectivity.\(^{588}\)

Above all, the audience at a *madangguk* comes together for a shared purpose other than that of just attending a performance. Thus, *madangguk* becomes a special event, a place of meaning for the audience through a certain camaraderie and cooperative attitude.\(^{589}\) The audience at a *madangguk* is expected to respond spontaneously to the performers as participants in the performance, thereby making it communal. J. Lim, who firstly tried to define the concept of contemporary *madangguk*, remarks that the most important principle of *madangguk* performance is the production of a sense of communal bond between performers and audience.\(^{590}\) In contrast to conventional theatre, in which a stage demarcates the theatrical arena, there is no definite distinction between performer and audience because of the spatial construction of the *madang*. *Madangguk* performances are held mainly on open field surrounded by spectators. Anywhere can be a space for *madangguk*, so long as people can gather together there. Based on the conviction life itself is art, *madangguk* is not

\(^{586}\) J. Lim, *The Creation of Minjung Performance*, 17-21. According to Lim, the future of *Madangguk* must turn to *Madang-Kut* as the communal festivity for the entire community, in order to reconstruct a communal life based on the spirit of “playfulness” and “inclusiveness” implied by the *madang*. By transforming theatre (*guk*) into the communal festivity (*kut*) the performers and the spectators could create the four essential characteristics of *madangguk*, that are “a collective enthusiastic joy, a truthful portrayal of reality, a practical method of social change, and an establishment of healthy image of people.” (69-87)


\(^{588}\) Ibid., 352-356.


confined to a particular space separate from everyday life. It occupies a communal space in which all differentiation and heterogeneity cease to exist. Actors and audience share a space at the same level, uniting them as one.591

Particularly through its playfulness, madangguk becomes a medium for people to express themselves in a way they might not be able to do anywhere else, by shouting, dancing, singing, and joining in performance activities together with others.592 Chae, a key figure in the formation of contemporary madangguk, points out that madangguk aims to recover a communal life through common sharing of nori (folk play of a wide variety of singing and dancing) and to recover the meaning of nori as life-based art.593 During a madangguk performance, based upon these spirits of madang and nori, people experience transformation from Han, that is, from a “state of collective depression” into Shinmyong, or a “state of collective ecstatic joy.” It is a process in which they are spontaneously transformed from spectators into active group performers.594 Madangguk culminates with victory over the evil elements after all participants, as joint producers of a festive performance, have struggled together to achieve a sense of communal solidarity characterized by collective shinmyong.595 Thus, madangguk is an effective medium for the Korean democratization movement in that it awakens the critical consciousness and communal participatory spirit of the Korean people within the framework of folk theatre.


593 N. Lee, “Between Indeterminacy and Radical Critique,” 569.

594 Concerning “Han” and “Shinmyong” in madangguk, see Dong-Il Lee’s article, “Performance Study of Contemporary Madang Theatre in South Korea: The Clash, Deconstruction, and Reconstruction through Transformation from Han to Shinmyong,” in Theatre Education Study 2 (1998).

Madanguk’s spirit of “criticism” is related to its characteristic content. Since the content is not fixed, the form of madangguk has varied in the history of Korean theatre. However, the plays are commonly based on an experimental consciousness that seeks a new form of theatric performance, unlike other conventional forms which tend to alienate common people. Within a growing crisis of lost national identity in Korean society, due to an unrestricted influx of western culture, indigenous popular culture has provided an alternative to the established theatre which had become centered on translated works. Furthermore, the characteristic of traditional folk art as a communal ritual of social subversion has made madangguk a weapon for criticizing social absurdity and injustice through art in a situation where direct criticism against the regime was suppressed. Madangguk as a cultural movement is thus not only a challenge to the already eclectic art style and content aimed at the social elite alone, but is also a political movement traditionally aimed specifically against the despotic rule of state. During the process of Korean democratization between the 1960s and the 1980s, madangguk spread from progressive intellectuals and university students to all levels of Korean society as part of a cultural-political movement for social change. Since the emergence of a relatively democratic government in the 1990s, madangguk’s spirit of criticism is preserved in many informal community theatre groups, dealing with issues pertinent to these communities, whether these relate to work place, school, factory, or farm.

The spirit of criticism is concretized in the manifestation of the Korean common

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598 Concerning the examples of madangguk dealing with a variety of social issues, see K. Kim, “The Role of Madangguk in Contemporary Korea’s Popular Culture Movement,” Appendix.
people’s subjectivity in both madangguk performance and production. Madangguk is usually a collective production for performance concerned with real issues of life. Moreover, through its repeated performance and accumulated participation of the audience, madangguk is continually developed for the next performance with new content and forms until the issue is resolved by the transformative process of social consciousness through performance.

Because of this ability to enhance the masses’ critical consciousness, madangguk performance is often used as an educational tool. “Nonprofessionals articulate their life experiences, beliefs, and sentiments by preparing impromptu, creative dramas, and these become simple madangguk plays.” Although professional madangguk groups are now starting to reinterpret Korean classic folktales from the viewpoint of the populace, madangguk still claims the true subjectivity of the social beings who are on the margins of the dominant system. Even though now occupying a different context—economic polarization, globalization, and multiculturalism—from its origins in a period of struggle for political democracy, madangguk’s spirit of criticism remains crucial.

In an intense spirit of criticism, madangguk can make people confront reality by disclosing social hypocrisy and falsehood; their sense of reality in situational truthfulness is extended into collective shinmyong to overcome social conflicts. Madangguk’s playful performance helps people express their own exhilaration and hold it in common. Its ambience of collective shinmyong induces people to take part in social change; and it can

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599 Concerning the methodology of madangguk’s collective production, see Young Mee Lee, Madangguk-Realism-Minjokguk: The Flow and Issues of Korean Contemporary Theatre Theories (Seoul: Hyundae-meahaksa, 1997), 134-140. Madangguk’s issues and process of communal production are carried on in J. Lim, The Creation of Minjung Performance, 29-35, 88-112 and 113-125.

then work as a channel for a communal vision by its continually repeated performances.\(^{601}\)

_Madangguk’s_ spirit of “harmony” is related to the characteristics of its performance form. _Madangguk_ has emerged as a unique theatre style because of the way it has combined elements from Korean traditional culture in a critical accommodation with Western culture.\(^{602}\) In its richness as folk theatre for social change, _madangguk_ makes itself open to a variety of performance styles. It has acquired a unique expression of the Korean spirit from Korean indigenous culture and on this ground has made its own artistic and social expression through a fusion of traditional theatrical form and Western progressive theatrical form, e.g. avant-garde theatre and the Brechtian “epic theatre.”\(^{603}\)

_Madangguk_ is mostly based on the theatrical structure of traditional mask dance drama, although it also has various components from the other traditional folk arts, like _Talchum_ (mask dance) and puppet drama, and Western dramas. J. Lim claims that _madangguk_ needs to not only mobilize all kinds of traditional culture and contemporary expressive media into its performance, but also to remain open to contemporary media for effective communication.\(^{604}\) _Madangguk_’s spirit of harmony in accepting and utilizing all

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\(^{601}\) J. Lim, _The Creation of Minjung Performance_, 85-87.

\(^{602}\) J. Kim, _A Study of Madangguk’s Spirits,”_ 347-349.


\(^{604}\) J. Lim, _The Creation of Minjung Performance_, 84. In Lim’s view, communicative media for _madangguk_ performance can be incessantly made in minjung’s playful spirit to overcome reality without limitation. For instance, songs and dance in which people join, comic chat and witty talk, skit, farce, and Jabsaek-nori, which is a traditional play in a genre of percussion music associated with rural peasants, folk song and music, singing the rewritten lyrics of popular songs, role-play, _Pansori_, which is a traditional genre of musical storytelling, film, disk or cassette, print or painting, journal or memorandum, _Pungmul_ (a traditional genre of percussion music and dance performed by the farmers), rhythmic gymnastics, and production of _Tal_ (mask) through typifying of characters, can all be the source of _madangguk_ performance.
kinds of theatrical tools, whether they are indigenous or not, is an important drive in it
coming a transformative performance by the common people in a contemporary context.\textsuperscript{605}

The primary reason for \textit{madangguk}’s popularity thus rests more in its various forms
for the audience’s participation than its content. Kim remarks thus on the characteristics of
\textit{madangguk}’s performance form:

In fact, the audience is also an indispensable element to the whole drama because it is performed through
an incessant, direct communication between player and audience. Through shared dialogue among the
audience and actors, and through audience participation in various stages of the whole drama in a very
special atmosphere, the meanings and symbols of the play are dramatically transmitted from actors to
audience. \textit{Madanguk}, thus, allows a direct contact between actors and audience, and provides a space in
which both share in the experience of creating a new world. In this manner, a counterculture can be built
using their own cultural codes and symbols.\textsuperscript{606}

Above all, \textit{madangguk}’s theatrical allowance of audience participation in performance is
echoed in the uniqueness of its narrative structure. It adopts the structural aspect of the
traditional mask dance theatre. Instead of a central plot, traditional mask dance theatre was
made up of independent episodes loosely connected by a common theme, such as satire of
unfrocked Buddhist monks, corrupt \textit{yangban} of the aristocratic class, and ruthless officers. It
was mainly performed by local farmers as a part of village festivals, with many variations
according to regions. Then, after the development of commercial society around the end of
the eighteenth century, a town style was evolved by itinerant folk entertainers with more
emphasis on entertainment.

Aesthetically, Korean mask dance theatre is not only different from, but is also
antithetical to the Aristotelian theatrical principle in its plot, character, thought, diction,
melody, and spectacle. Its plot is little more than an outline of the performance, which is in
turn a synopsis of the story performed without scripts. Its characters are exaggerated and

\textsuperscript{605} J. Kim, “A Study of \textit{Madangguk}’s Spirits,” 350.

\textsuperscript{606} K. Kim, “The Role of \textit{Madangguk} in Contemporary Korea’s Popular Culture Movement,” 8.
stereotyped by masks through a long period of performance repetition, rather than
realistically elaborated. Its thought is oriented not to comprehension or morality, but to social
criticism through satire and humor. Its diction, melody, and spectacle are not the least
important accessories, but the prime movers which are indivisible from plot as the leading
elements for performance rather than simple “ornaments.”

In comparison to the traditional mask dance, however, madangguk has a coherent
narrative structure much like Western theatre, while at the same time maintaining
independence in connecting the episodic stories of each scene in a theatrical unfolding which
is similar to the traditional mask dance. It prefers a weaving structure connecting different
episodes to a linear narrative structure with suspense accentuated toward the climax. The
theatrical tension of madangguk performance is constructed instead with the repetitive and
cumulative interactions between actors and audience, centering on familiar and important
issues of real life. In constructing this theatrical tension, the “openness” of space and time as
the principles of madangguk performance are very important. At a madangguk performance,
various time periods and spatial areas appear and disappear continuously in a simple pattern,
so that the spectators can easily respond to the actions of the performers with collectivity and
spontaneity. Madangguk does not persuade the spectators through cause and effect

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607 Concerning the historical development and the anti-Aristotelian structure of Korean traditional
mask dance theatre, see Lee, “Korean Traditional Theatre and Madangguk Theatre,” 42-44 and Meewon Lee,

608 J. Kim, “A Study of Madangguk’s Spirits,” 351; Lee, The Performance Principle and
Characteristic of Madangguk Theatre, 118-124.

609 The abrupt shifts in time and space mainly through the performers’ actions create a discontinuity in
a much smaller unit in madangguk. In contrast to the discontinuity of scenes in postmodern drama, the
discontinuity of madangguk is discerned by the overall situation from a macroscopic perspective rather than by
an analytical, rational perspective. This discontinuity in the smallest units of time and space makes madangguk
a more poetic and rhythmic performance which is realized through the voluntary participation of the audience in
the performance. See Lee, “Korean Traditional Theatre and Madangguk Theatre,” 52-53; The Performance
Principle and Characteristic of Madangguk Theatre, 284-286.
relationships in a detailed explanation of the story. Rather, the flow between episodes and
details is composed of aural and visual metaphors through dance, songs, mime, masks,
typical movements, and playful diction, involving the audience in the performance alongside
the actors. In other words, the audience is expected to understand the direction of the story
and to subjectively participate in the performance with a proper knowledge of its purpose.
The performers provide the spectators with the hiatuses through playful diction or non-verbal
theatrical methods centering on body movement and action so that they can enthusiastically
respond to and complete the performance together. The ability of the performers to induce
the responses of the spectators and to move them toward the completion of the performance
necessarily depends on the improvisational performance of the actors, which is in turn based
upon the creativity flowing from repeated experiences of performances and responses to the
audience’s reactions. Consequently, the performers and the audience ride the flow of the
performance together in a poetic rhythm to the extent that they achieve shinmyong as a very
special artistic characteristic of madangguk.  

The most important element of madangguk performance is the creation of a
“madang” ambience, in which people can take part in the performance as the subjects for its
completion. For a “frame” of life energy to drive shinmyong, madangguk performance
produces a theatrical space and time of “madang,” in which the spectators do not take on a
passive attitude and the performers do not restrict their creation to themselves.  As Lee
states: “Unlike a proscenium stage where everyone in the audience has the same directional

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611 Huiwan Chae, “Shinmyong (Unique Sentiment of Excitement of Korean Culture) as Aesthetic
Experience and Dramatic, Productive Time and Space of Korean Performing Arts: Omniscient Shinmyongpan
as Aesthetic Time and Space and Sabangchigi,” in International Conference on Asia-Pacific Music & Dance
(2010), 284.
view and where a fixed stage set and a number of props are used” for the creation of theatrical illusions, “madangguk audiences view the event sitting in a complete circle, all facing the center” as background characters in the scene with an equivalence of the actual performance space-time and the theatrical space-time.612 Once a madang ambience is established in an open relationship with the audience, performance reality and theatrical reality often dissolve as the scene progresses, and characters are then free to shift in time and space including in relation to the actual situations or social issues. Through this volatility and multi-dimensionality of time and space, based on the audience’s initiative and group spirit, the performers and the audience work together to develop and lead the performance along a mutually interesting and exciting path.613

Since the audience’s communal spirit and spontaneity stem from its homogeneity derived from shared culture, life experiences, emotions, expectations and beliefs, the deciding factor in making madangguk performance effective is “interaction” between the performers and the audience.614 Lee remarks,

The performers purposely allow the audience space to participate and wait for it to influence the performance. The audience anticipates this and participates aggressively, waiting for the performers to incorporate their involvement into the performance and create something new. In other words, the performers and the audience act as if they are in an active conversation, assimilating each other’s response into the story and building on it to satisfy the occasion. This group conversation between performers and audience stems from the knowledge of event and characters based on their homogeneity. On the other hand, it enables the audience to add their rich life experience and realistic point of view to the development of the story, thus increasing its fullness, reality and meaningfulness…A madangguk performance cannot be considered successful without an increase in the audience’s group spirit and self-initiative, and a qualitative and quantitative growth in their understanding and agreement.615

In developing “interaction” between the performers and the audience, madangguk

613 Ibid., 53.
614 Ibid., 54.
615 Ibid., 54-55.
performance contains the idea that the performer trifles with theatrical characters in a playful spirit as a representative of the spectators. In other words, the spectators in madangguk come not to hear the particulars of the story. They come to see how a well-known story comes to life. The idea of madangguk performance is not to move the audience towards a new realization, but to share a basic awareness with the audience and enjoy the performance through expressing their shared awareness as a form of art. The performers are normally divided from theatrical characters throughout the performance. Keeping a distance from the characters that are humorously and exaggeratedly typified to reflect social issues, the performers communicate directly with the audience while demonstrating that they are nothing more than the performers. Through this attitude they aim to produce a more open madang, to the extent that the madang becomes a space and time of transformation in which participants experience “oneness” or group shinmyong.

The madangguk performance employs impromptu patterned conversation as well as carnivalesque diction by satire, humor, wit, jest, ridicule, and puns. Vulgar and popular language is preferred, in order to develop a sense of oneness with the audience by disclosing a concealed human nature. The tone and texture of such diction and conversation produces a unique poetic response in the audience; it highlights the ugly and the vulgar rather than beauty or sublimity, the sorrows of the lower class rather than heroic tragedy, and satirical, humorous beauty rather than tragic beauty. The play is not structured around verbal texts, but performance texts with a lot of body movements or dance for the embodied participation of the audience, such as chuimsae (shouts of encouragement like “Good!” and “Yippee!” in

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Korean) and okkae chum—an actual stylized body movements. Madangguk’s faith and pride in the masses, including the audience, places great importance on them as the subject of social change. Their embodied participation is extended into collective participation through collective shinmyong, in which the performers and the audience become as one through performing artistry. This is a special artistic experience that characterizes the aesthetic consciousness of Korean people; its whole process including pre-performance, performance, and post-performance events is consolidated for the creation of a new world. It overcomes social conflicts for the community as much as rituals and feasts do. Through the direct meeting between individuals, physical movements, multidimensionality and shifts from a macroscopic viewpoint, the playful spirit provides possibilities for ways the performing arts can survive in the age of mass media.618

Like the madangguk’s performance context for communal festivity, Christian gatherings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ are the normal context for Christian preaching. The multidimensional features of time and space are also applied to the preaching reality in Christian worship and fellowship. Christians gather together every Sunday, that is, on little Easter which is the eighth day when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, around the Lord’s Table which visualizes the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. All kinds of absurd life experiences and diverse readings of biblical texts need to be shared through the preaching of God’s word. Just as the audience is expected to take part in the creation of a new world by the collective shinmyung actualized through carnivalesque performance of madangguk, actual and direct interactions of the whole church in the life-enhancing Spirit prompt people as the body of Christ to enact the preached Word in their daily lives. In particular, Christian

preaching needs to rediscover communal participation within a cultural context that is now dominated by the visual media. Contemporary churches need to seek preaching practices that include more interaction from all God’s people. Madangguk has the creative potential to model a preaching of communal participation in the Spirit. Preaching itself is not a stereotyped solo performance, but an ecclesial performing art which makes all God’s people the subject for God’s reign in the world rather than the object. Instead of following North American homiletics, Korean preachers can contribute to contemporary Christian preaching by eagerly seeking Koreanesque preaching. In this, a Korean mentality of communal participation can be manifested in the preaching practice by the Spirit that utilizes a rich variety of the full humanity of all people. As contemporary churches consider how to engage the variety of gifts that the Spirit gives to the whole congregation for proclamation, the appropriation of madangguk performance to the preaching practice may expand our range of preaching methods to make proclamation possible.

II. The Practices of Sharing, Testimony, and Open Prophecy in Korean Churches

Korean churches have a tendency to be hesitant about appropriating the cultural legacy that was revitalized by madangguk performance because of its religious background of shamanism. In spite of a Westernized preaching reality, however, Korean churches do have actual practices that reflect the Korean spirit of communal participation, making possible increased interaction of the whole church in relation to the ministry of God’s word. While smaller congregations make it possible to engage a variety of people in the preaching practice, the most important element in such interactions lies not in number, but in the function of the congregation. I will thus provide some examples of actual and direct
interactional practices among Korean mega-churches. I choose the three practices of sharing, testimony, and open prophecy from three local churches, representing the reformed, congregational, and charismatic traditions respectively. At the same time I explore some dimensions of those practices as homiletic bases for Koreanesque preaching as communal participation in the Spirit. The following descriptions have particular potential for drawing insight from the madangguk performative tradition. In the first instance they are best understood as Christian confessions of Jesus Christ as the Lord, in which the Spirit enables us to discern the preached word of God in our challenging context of mutual relativity and other-wise sensitivities. This analysis functions as a stepping stone for an ongoing study of Koreanesque preaching incorporating facets of madangguk performance. The participatory principles and methods of madangguk performance can be used to inspire homiletic creativity in the contemporary church in the life-giving ambience of the Spirit.

A. Local Lectionary and Life Experience

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619 Wooridle Church, Hanmaum Church, and Beloved Church represent the reformed, congregational, and charismatic traditions respectively. Wooridle Church was founded by a woman pastor, Reverend Yang-Jae Kim in 2004 in Seoul with emphasis on sharing meditation on the word and confession of sins. Hanmaum Church was founded in 1990 in Chuncheon by Reverend Seong-Ro Kim, a gym teacher of a middle school. After many trials and failures the church experienced a spiritual revival in 2001. Beloved Church, which is rejected by mainline denominations, was founded in 1995 in Ulsan by Reverend Seong-Woo Byun. Since planting the same church in Seoul in 2005 with the three main ministries of a soteriological-focused message, intercessory prayer, and open prophecy, it has rapidly grown into a multi-site megachurch. The following descriptions are based on visits to these three churches and interviews I conducted with their leaders. See the internet sites of each church for more information, Wooridle Church, http://home.woori.cc/; Hanmaum Church, http://www.hmuchurch.com/; Beloved Church, http://www.belovedchurch.net/ and http://www.gfctv.org/.

620 In his confessional homiletics, David Lose describes Christian preaching in a postmodern world as an act of “confessing Jesus Christ.” Lose believes postmodernity clarifies the essential nature of Christian faith: “Christian claims can rest upon no ultimate foundation…Rather, Christianity exists solely by confession, the conviction and assertion of revealed truth apart from any appeal to another criterion; we live, that is, always by faith alone (62).” See Lose, Confessing Jesus Christ: Preaching in a Postmodern World (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003). Since everyone can contribute to the preaching event by bringing his or her uniqueness and concreteness into preaching, sufficient resources for proclamation are already present in the gathered church. The primary problem in homiletic methodology is that it remains a task for individual preachers in terms of how to preach more effectively, rather than how to emerge as proclamation in mutual contribution to one another’s lives.
Many Korean Christians use different kinds of monthly meditation books for individual devotions, and many Korean churches also use them as congregational lectionaries for sermons and small group meetings. Although John McClure suggests the use of the lectionary in sermon preparation for collaborative preaching, the daily-based local lectionary is more applicable to Korean churches than the weekly-based common lectionary. Korean congregations usually have a daily early Morning Prayer meeting that includes a sermon, and a small group meeting every week. In addition, there are many periodical publications for meditation on the word of God, which have their roots in Korean congregations as part of the “Quiet Time (Q.T.)” movement. This daily meditation on the Scriptures was a product of discipleship training in campus mission groups, but expanded into local churches since the 1980s.

The practice of sharing, which is called “Q.T. Nanum,” is a communal practice of applying God’s word to the real lives of believers. Wooridle Church is representative of such a practice. Individual devotional times or short sermons at early Morning Prayer meetings are focused on daily meditation of the arranged biblical passages, according to the individual lectionary. Daily short sermons and the church’s own booklet, produced for meditation, offer tools to help readers dig deeper into the passages with prayer. In terms of application of the word to real life, Wooridle Church focuses mostly on confession of personal sins in family life. People are encouraged to share their life experiences at small group meetings, in order to

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621 McClure, *The Round-table Pulpit*, 9. Some Korean mainline churches use a common lectionary (the *Revised Common Lectionary*, 1992) for the weekly sermon as a way to decide the biblical passages for formal preaching. This practice means the congregation can be prepared in advance through their reading and meditation. For the best participatory preaching, Korean churches need to use a daily-based lectionary so that congregational members can contribute more to the preaching ministry. Similar to *Lectio Selecta* we can develop a lectionary for daily worship like the Roman Catholic lectionary, but the way of *Lectio Continua* may be more useful for congregational participation in the preaching practice. See Chang-Bok Chung, ed., *Christian Year and Lectionary* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1996).
become a confessional community of faith. In the working force of the Spirit for proclamation, people confess their sins, failures, and weaknesses in light of the meditated-upon and preached word of God. Their confession of sins has a doxological nature, because it is premised upon a God who is worthy of praise and worship, thanks to God’s forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. Wooridle Church’s practice of meditation produces effective sermons, because the preacher brings the wisdom gleaned from the daily lives of believers into corporate worship.

The practice of testimony in Chuncheon Hanmaum Church comes from Reverend Kim’s application of his teaching experiences to Christian ministry. From his observation that students learn more easily from their teachable colleagues, he allows his congregation members to give testimonies after his sermon, sharing their transformative experiences of life through the preached word of God. In particular, Kim keeps preaching on the same topic until the congregation gets it and applies it to their real lives. His preaching message centers mainly on the gospel message of resurrection and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Through the written testimonies of the congregation, Kim evaluates how much they understand the message and apply it to their lives. He also chooses the topic for the next preaching based on their testimonies. Hanmaum Church frequently has testimony time in corporate worship as a part, of or as a substitute for formal preaching. The congregation confesses what they have learned, become aware of, and repented of, through each other’s testimonies in their own

622 The Hebrew for confession of sins is “נשאא” which basically means “to throw,” or “the open hand to God” is translated into “praise” and “confess.” Thus it has a double meaning of praise and confession of sins. In the Septuagint “נשאא” is translated into “ἐξομολογέω” rather than into “ομολογέω.” In the New Testament, it is mainly used in the middle voice, “ἐξομολογοῦμαι,” which has also a double meaning of praise (Matt. 11:25; Luke 12:21) and confession of sins (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Jam. 5:16; 1 Tim. 6:12). For a doxological confession of sins in terms of the practice of sharing in Wooridle Church, see Seung-Min Rhee’s unpublished MA thesis in Christian Education at Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary: “A Educational Ministry Seeking for a Faith Community of Repentance through Confession of Sins: a Christian Educational Evaluation of Confessing Sins in Wooridle Church” (2013), 104-105.
written testimonies. Above all, this practice of testimony in Hanmaeum Church has a focus
on role of the gospel in their real lives as a Christian confession of Jesus Christ as the
Lord. Their testimonies are confessions of overcoming all kinds of human predicaments,
such as addiction, fear, suicide, divorce, a sense of inferiority and demon-possession, through
the divine grace that flows through the proclaimed word of God.

The practice of open prophecy in Beloved Church has no relation to local lectionaries
or life experiences. Rather, it is related to an ambience of the life-enhancing Spirit, who is at
work through preaching and worship. Open prophecy is a practice where trained believers
with the gift of prophecy minister to people with the inspiring words of God during corporate
worship. Before and after or even during preaching, two or three believers trained with the
gift of prophecy give somebody in the congregation specific words of encouragement and
assurance. In Korean Churches, the ministry of prophecy prevails among charismatic
individuals or in prayer houses outside of the local churches. Reverend Byun accepts this
practice into corporate worship as a public ministry of his church. Through the ministry of
open prophecy, the congregation comes into a greater expectation not only for preaching but
also for a Christian life in living out the preached word of God with total
reliance upon the work of the Spirit. Above all, the practice of open prophecy is a
ministerial feature in corporate worship to build up not only those individual believers who
receive the prophesied words by faith, but also to build up a faith community that confesses
Jesus Christ as the Lord through such words. In spite of a lot of adverse criticism from

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623 Hanmaeum Church’s practice of testimony is now a sensation in Korean churches through TV
broadcasts of CBS and C channel.

624 Beloved Church has hundreds of believers capable of ministering with the gift of prophecy. It has
also a school of prophetic evangelism to train people with the gift of prophecy.
mainline denominations in Korea, Beloved Church’s practice of open prophecy challenges us to extend the ministry of God’s word, which has tended to be limited to the clericalized practice of preaching, into a more dynamic and communal practice that anyone can take part in through manifestation of the spiritual gifts.

B. Small Churches in the Church

John McClure advocates use of the sermon roundtable: the collaborative process of sermon brainstorming in which lay people are involved. After a thorough study of the biblical material for the sermon, the preacher represents the church and a particular denominational tradition at the sermon roundtable. As the official host of the sermon roundtable, the preacher opens a conversation with a group of no more than ten lay people who change regularly, at least every four months. He suggests the co-host serves as a facilitator at meetings who guides group process without participating in discussion. The preacher provides insights into the biblical text and initiates the conversation by asking questions and providing give their own insights. Although McClure does not suggest that preaching itself is an actual dialogical process, collaborative preaching can be dialogical in content as a result of the preparation at the weekly sermon roundtable.

In Korean churches, the weekly small group meetings can also function as a sermon roundtable for participatory preaching if the church leadership provides a system and the tools to expand “sharing” at these meetings. Without exception, Korean churches have small

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626 McClure suggests sermon roundtables meet for an hour and a half, once a week: feedback/ feedforward (ten minutes), engaging the biblical text (twenty minutes) and engaging one another (sixty minutes). After sermon roundtable, the preacher takes twenty to thirty minutes on his or her own to review what topics were discussed, what questions were asked and answered/not answered, what feelings were explored, what commitments were stated and shared/challenged, and what instructions were given on how to do something, and so on. See McClure, *The Round-table Pulpit*, 69-72.
group ministries for healthy congregational life. Although small groups have many different names such as “cell church, home church, pasture gathering, or district meeting,” they function as small churches within the church. Small churches within the local church enable people to be more actively involved in worship and fellowship. Also many people can be raised as lay leaders through small churches in the church. Many members of the congregation have grown spiritually as a result of the teaching and nurturing of their weekly small group meetings. Actually, regular small group dynamics in Korean churches consist of a series of processes of worship by the laity. These processes consist of the sharing of life experiences and understanding of the word of God, intercessory prayers for one another, and worship and praise. These weekly meetings by the laity have been one of the most important factors in the growth of Korean churches.

Small churches in Wooridle Church are above all the practice whereby the members share the meditated and applied words to their daily lives. The leaders report regularly to the church and their testimonies are shared with the whole congregation in corporate worship. Reverend Kim also joins in a round trip to small churches to confess her weaknesses and open her life in light of the word of God. Her preaching is full of her self-confessional sharing and application-focused testimonial stories. Every Sunday there are congregational testimonies in corporate worship and written testimonies in the church bulletin.627

In Hanmaeum Church, small churches focus on a deepening of the message proclaimed in corporate worship through iteration for the application of the word to real life. By means of worship, prayer, preaching the gospel, and fellowship, people prepare their own testimonies for corporate worship and submit them to the pastor through cyber-space.

Reverend Kim centers on the *kerygmatic* teachings in his preaching and opens the pulpit to congregational testimonies. Usually he invites several members to share their testimonies with the congregation. In comparison with the other two examples, small churches in Beloved Church look to be closer to the general practice of small group ministry. Reverend Byun gives *kerygmatic* teachings and people review his teachings in the small churches. However, a life-enhancing ambience of the Spirit through the ministry of prophecy in corporate worship makes possible a group dynamic for sharing testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit, such as the proclaimed message, prophecy, and healing. Beloved Church seldom uses the time of corporate worship for sharing those testimonies. Instead, many testimonial confessions of what God has done through the Holy Spirit are shared through cyber-space.

In general, Korean churches share the profound resources from these weekly small group meetings with the whole congregation in limited ways, such as in a written journal and an oral testimony at Sunday evening worship or at Friday night prayer meetings. Some churches use cyber-space to expand the sharing of weekly small group meetings or sermon feedback. The sharing through cyber-space has gradually become a trend of communication in Korean churches. Small group meetings in Korean churches therefore have the potential to facilitate congregational participation in the preaching ministry.

**C. Preacher as Teacher and Gwangdae (Clown) for the Practice of Testimony**

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628 Tae-Kyung Lee, “Rev. Seong-Ro Kim and Hanmaeum Church,” in *Christian Today News* 2013. 03.27, Los Angeles, CA.

629 Daewoong Lee, “The Story of Great Faith Church,” in *Christian Today News*, 2008. 08.12. While there is little documentation of the cell group ministry in Beloved Church, although its cyber café implies the existence of this dynamics. See Beloved Church’s other website at [http://cafe.daum.net/Bigchurch](http://cafe.daum.net/Bigchurch).
The image of the preacher affects the preaching practice insofar as it can highlight or minimize certain tasks of preaching. Thomas Long offers four dominant images for preachers: herald, pastor, storyteller, and witness.\(^{630}\) Recently, in *Slow of Speech and Unclean Lips*, homileticians presented diverse contemporary images of preaching identity such as messenger of hope, lover, God’s mystery steward, ridiculous person, fisher, host and guest, one out of one’s mind, and one entrusted.\(^{631}\) Whether the ecclesial practice of faith is primarily to share the meditated and applied word of God (Wooridle Church), the preached and applied message of the gospel (Hanmaeum Church) or the inspired word of prophecy (Beloved Church), it is a sharing practice of “testimony” to confess or witness and speak of what they understand and experience of God. Many Korean churches are now opening the pulpit to the congregation in the name of “testimony,” because of the dynamic strength of the Korean congregational lay leadership and also the burden of preaching on pastors. When we use communal local lectionaries and open the pulpit to the congregants for the sharing practice of testimonies that have been validated by weekly small groups, preaching as a communal participation in the Spirit by means of actual and direct interactions becomes possible in the changing context of the contemporary church.

While trying to share the responsibility for proclamation between the congregation and the ordained preacher, the image of preacher as “teacher” above all calls for mutual service according to the Spirit’s calling and gift for the building up of the body of Christ in and for the world.\(^{632}\) The homiletic identity of preacher as teacher has roots that go back as

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\(^{632}\) Contemporary homiletic development, with its emphasis upon listener participation in the sermon, tends to diminish the teaching role of ordained pastors as well as the role of divine agency in the preaching
far as synagogue preaching, where preachers gave an “exposition” and “application” of the
scriptural texts for the lives of listeners. In a context of biblical illiteracy and relational
authority, the contemporary pulpit calls for the “teacher” image of preacher as well.
Ordained preachers clearly have a place in the body of Christ in a context of mutual relativity
and sensitivity to differences, to help the congregation fulfill their responsibilities for
proclamation. In tune with the identity of the community, they have a job to preach the
scriptural texts for the integration of various voices, understandings and experiences.
Sometimes ordained preachers may need to guide and correct the congregation, so that their
sharing practice of testimony can be effective for the building up of the faith community.

Reverend Kim, a woman preacher of Wooridle Church, is closer to the pastor or
storyteller than the “teacher” image of preacher. Her honest sharing of her vulnerability with
the congregation encourages them to share their lives with the church. The preaching practice
in Hanmaeum Church and Beloved Church more clearly reflects the “teacher” image of
preacher. In particular, Reverend Kim in Hanmaeum Church has a typical role in facilitating
congregational participation in his preaching through the practice of testimony. In reaction to
his passionate and simple preaching, many members write their own powerful experiences of
the proclaimed message for sharing during testimony. After every shared testimony he also
invites the whole congregation to pray aloud together in a practice called Tongsung Gido.\textsuperscript{633}

\textsuperscript{633} “Tongsung (Uttering Voice) Gido (Prayer)” is a dominant prayer form in Korean churches. It is a
prayer of total surrender to God in which anything and everything can be expressed. \textit{See} Myung Sil Kim,
In public worship he plays the role not only of a “teacher” of the gospel message, but also as a “facilitator” of congregational participation. This facilitating role of preachers for participation of the congregation can be identified with the role of “Gwangdae” in madangguk performance.634

The “Gwangdae” in madangguk performance is a typical narrator and performer. The Gwangdae plays the roles of actor, singer, dancer, jester, trickster, acrobatic, puppeteer, shaman, and ringmaster, in order that the audience might participate in the performance. In Telling the Truth, Frederick Buechner sees preaching the gospel as telling the truth in love for people as a means of overcoming human tragedy by divine comedy.635 Among many images of preacher, McClure’s image of “host and guest” is similar to the “Gwangdae” image of preachers. According to McClure, the preacher is first a host to welcome strangers into the preaching ministry and then a guest who is hosted by others for the emergent word of God in preaching. In collaborative preaching, the preacher as the host of a conversation at the sermon roundtable, conveys other voices from the roundtable in the preaching moment. McClure tries to extend this ongoing give-and-take of open communal and public

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634 Gwangdae, which is the same term for clown, is the name of a Korean traditional performing arts troupe. Originally it means “mask” or “the people who perform wearing masks,” but the meaning is extended to indicate “all kinds of performing artists.” See Keumsil Kim Yoon and Bruce Williams, Two Lenses on the Korean Ethos: Key Cultural Concepts and Their Appearance in Cinema (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2015), 118-123.

635 Frederick Buechner, Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy & Fairy Tale (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1977). He puts forward an image of preacher that is like a Gwangdae: “Let the preacher tell the truth…let him preach this overwhelming of tragedy by comedy, of darkness by light, of the ordinary by the extraordinary, as the tale that is too good not to be true because to dismiss it as untrue is to dismiss along with it that catch of the breath, that beat and lifting of the heart near to or even accompanied by tears, which I believe is the deepest intuition of truth that we have” (98).
conversation to sermonic moments as well. Charles Campbell’s “ridiculous person” is also close to the “Gwangdae” image of preachers. According to Campbell, preachers need to be “holy fools as dramatic examples of faithfulness and virtue” for ecclesial enactment of the preached gospel into the world. Campbell’s “extreme homiletics” focuses on forming preachers to interact more with the congregation for the public performance of the gospel.

The role of preachers in contemporary churches to bring the congregations into participation in the ministry of God’s word through the sharing of testimony can be seen to converge in the Gwangdae image of preachers. The Gwangdae endeavors to create a madang ambience through all kinds of performing arts in which the audience can take part, in order to facilitate group shinmyung. In the experience of group shinmyung, people become a performing community for social change and embody their participation in the performance in a movement to overcome social conflicts. The Gwangdae image of the preacher is applied to the whole church as the preaching community for God’s Kingdom in the world, because the church is called to be God’s sacred clown to enact “the foolishness of preaching the gospel” into the world. Therefore the dual image of the preacher as teacher and Gwangdae can be helpful for effecting congregational participation, so that the whole church can testify to the Triune God in a concrete context.

D. The Whole Church as Witness to the Triune God

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636 Although Rose does not provide concrete methods, her image of the preacher as a “cohort” with the congregation is also close to the “Gwangdae” image, because her sermonic conversation can be applied to all processes of preaching beyond the sermonic form or content. See Rose, Sharing the Word.


638 Campbell, “Preacher as Ridiculous Person,” 89-108. In terms of formal preaching, Webb’s improvisational preaching without notes might be a practical direction for interactive dynamic with openness to everyone. See Webb, Preaching for the Contemporary Service.
Every Sunday the church proclaims the gospel, and the church is sent as the preacher of the gospel into the world. Preaching is basically a communal event to cultivate the faith of the community, rather than the individual work of a preacher. A preacher is already of the church and the gospel to be proclaimed is not only from the church but also for the church. As Forsyth says, “the one great preacher in history is the Church, and the first business of the individual preacher is to enable the Church to preach.”

We need to correct the imbalance of responsibility for the preaching ministry, which is biased to the ordained preacher, toward the whole church. The loss of the various, vivid voices of the congregation is related to the contemporary crisis in preaching. We need to seek a way to allow voiceless congregations to lift up their voices for proclamation.

The examples of Wooridle Church, Hanmaeum Church, and Beloved Church hold in common an active and direct participation of the congregation in the ministry of the word of God. The congregations in these churches take part in the preaching ministry through the respective practices of sharing, testimony, and open prophecy. Although they have differences in focus, their doxological, testimonial, and ministerial confessions of what God did, does, and will do in Jesus Christ through the Spirit, are all about testifying to the Triune God. The whole church as the body of Christ bearing witness to the living God in the world is clearly observed in the small churches within these three local churches. Unbelievers come to a Christian faith through small churches and all members of small churches are encouraged to take part in the ministry of the word of God in the life-enhancing ambience of the Spirit.

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The pastor should train the lay leaders of small groups so that they might play a role as hosts at sermon roundtable. The weekly lay leader meeting in Korean churches might be a time to train them. The pastor can share his or her own questions, understanding and insights on the weekly scriptural passages according to the local or common lectionary. Because lay people already have their own experiences and understanding of the same weekly scriptural passages in the meditation book, controlling time will be the most important tactic in the sharing practice of confession. The lay leaders discern the witness of small group members as valuable for the whole congregational worship. The pastor coordinates the doxological, testimonial, and ministerial confessions of lay people in order to fit them in with his or her own sermonic points and then shares the sermon plan with the lay people, who have been prepared through the weekly small group meetings. When the preacher invites them into the very preaching moment, controlling time becomes important.

III. Interactive Sermon Form for Communal Participation in the Spirit

As David Buttrick puts it, we might need “a lay homiletic” in the contemporary world for the liberation of the marginalized voices of the congregations. How can we liberate congregations to bear witness to the Triune God in the contemporary world? We need detailed tactics for actual and direct congregational participation in the preaching ministry. Yet out of the attempts by Korean churches to enliven the spirit of communal participation, I bear witness to the possibility of interactive sermon forms which may overcome a major shortcoming in the traditional sermon.

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In terms of our weekly practice of interactive sermons, we need a radical structure for proclamation in the gathered church. This goes beyond sermon construction on the preacher’s desk, so that the Spirit might enable people to contribute to preaching according to their own uniqueness and changing context. In order for preaching in a particular time and place to be proclamation, it needs to be a response out of people’s experience, addressing God from the reality of human problems and need. Proclamation can best take place in the simple ongoing movement from human life in all its brokenness to the gospel of God in both text and context.641

The gospel is what God did, is doing, and will do. For Christians, it is found most clearly in Jesus Christ through the Spirit, and can be summarized in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has addressed all human problems in the death of Jesus Christ and enabled all human needs to be met in the resurrection.642 As life experiences are brought to preaching, proclamation can emerge from sharing the world of the gospel as a response to those troubles or graces in life experiences. In this mutual endeavor of the church, with reliance upon the Spirit’s work for proclamation, a variety of hermeneutic and homiletic methods aiding the preacher’s voice can be helpful tools for the congregation’s

641 Life experiences, including our textual reading experiences, are divided into “trouble” and “grace” in Paul Wilson’s homiletic theory of the Four Pages. Emphasizing God and gospel as the purpose of preaching, Wilson’s Four Pages generally have four moves in a sermon that are analogous with movie-making. Page One: trouble in the biblical text, Page Two: trouble in our world, Page Three: God’s action in the biblical text, Page Four: God’s action in our world. Not a sermonic method or model, it is instead a homiletic grammar designed to “permit variety” and “enhance creativity” in sermon structure. See Paul Scott Wilson, The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999); Broken Words: Reflections on the Craft of Preaching (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 137; and The Preaching Practice: Revised Edition (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 160-183.

642 Besides the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his incarnation, ascension, and second coming also constitute the primary message of God for preaching. For a comprehensive homiletic development of the gospel message centering on Christ’s work, see Stephen Seamands, Give Them Christ: Preaching His Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Return (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012).
voice as well. Here a more simplified and modified version of Paul Wilson’s preaching practice of the “Four Pages” can be adopted for proclamation.

Since our reading experiences of the text cannot be separated from our life experiences, in a sense, our trouble and grace experiences are always bearing the gospel message for the here and now. Through our troubles the gathered church needs to proclaim the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in terms of what God has accomplished and how the Spirit is applying this to such troubles. Through the grace we as a people have received, the gathered church moves to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the world, in terms of what God has provided and how the Spirit is making all things new through such grace. In the ecclesial dynamic of seeking God’s word in order to move from our trouble and grace experiences to the gospel the Spirit takes the initiative in proclamation through our communal participation in the Spirit’s working force.643

Above all, Christian confession and its communal discernment in an ongoing simple movement from the human experiences of trouble and grace to the world of the gospel calls the preacher to be a teacher of the apostolic gospel for the faith community, going beyond a role of facilitator simply inviting people to speak of God.644 The ordained pastor, as a leading

643 Paul Wilson’s nine genres of proclamation from preaching practice in history are useful guidelines for the Spirit’s working force for proclamation. These are “condemnation, lament, stern exhortation” as trouble genres and “testimony, prayer, nurturing exhortation, proclamationary statements, doxology, and celebration as grace genres. See Wilson, Setting Words on Fire, 112-223.

644 The rule of faith in the pre-Christendom era is a good example of the apostolic gospel making possible a constructive Christian response to a pluralistic world with as much diversity as postmodernity. In Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, Irenaeus introduces the content of apostolic faith, in terms of which common confession is based on the doctrinal unity of the church, and through which the Scriptures are interpreted: “This is then the order of the rule of our faith, and the foundation of the building, and the stability of our conversation: God the Father, not made, not material, invisible; one God, the creator of all things: this is the first point of our faith. The second point is: The Word of God, the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, who was manifested to the prophets according to the form of their prophesying and according to the method of the dispensation of the Father: through whom all things were made; who also at the end of the times, to complete and gather up all things, was made man among men, visible and tangible, in order to abolish death and show forth life and produce a community of union between God and man. And the third point is: The Holy Spirit,
“resident theologian” of the congregation, is responsible for helping the local body of Christ understand the text and context in light of the gospel, so that it might perform its role as a concrete and contextualized part of the reign of God in the world. Paul Wilson argues for a more theocentric homiletics through the recovery of Christian preaching as “a dual art of teaching and proclamation.” Whereas “teaching gives information about God for listeners to make sense of their experience of God,” proclamation offers God to listeners so that they can encounter God’s true self in the Spirit as “a person who loves them and empowers them to be disciples.” Without the teaching ministry of a Christian faith, Christian confession bearing witness to God cannot fully arrive at proclamation. For the ongoing movement from our experiences to the gospel, the faith community needs a fuller understanding of the gospel through the teaching ministry.

Furthermore, during the sermon, the preacher as a “Gwangdae” of the gospel needs to keep reminding the congregation of the focal point of sermonic space and time. The church gathers together at the Lord’s Table and proclaims the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which has terminated all things discordant with God’s reign in the eschatological sense. The day of resurrection of Jesus Christ has brought all things that accord with God’s reign to completion. First, the preacher needs to be in the pulpit as a vulnerable one who experiences God’s absence and other human predicaments in the world. The preacher dares to preach the gospel whereby the crucified and risen Jesus Christ is confessed as the Lord over the world here and now. This is an impossible task for the preacher alone without the shared workings through whom the prophets prophesied, and the fathers learned the things of God, and the righteous were led forth into the way of righteousness; and who in the end of the times was poured out in a new way upon mankind in all the earth, renewing man unto God.” See Iain M. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus’s Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation* (Hants, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 3.

645 Wilson, *Setting Words on Fire*, xi.
of the living God among the whole congregation. Preachers, as the performing artists of the gospel, or “Gwangdae,” perform the divine drama of God’s redemption as both accomplished and still being finished, in order to facilitate congregational participation. To the extent the congregation can share their voices, understandings, and experiences with one another during the sermon, the Spirit’s working force for proclamation can be more operative. Thus the interactive sermon needs to be approached as a homiletic for the entire church to share the gospel in mutual confession. It is not a unilateral move from interpretation to application made by the individual preacher. It is a creative worshipful homiletics attending to the Holy Spirit. It is an apostolic missional homiletics, which aims to build up the faith community as the preacher of the gospel for and in the world.

In order for the congregation to participate in the sermon, the preacher needs to enliven the “madang” spirit of playfulness and inclusiveness in the preaching performance. Like the “call and response” in Black preaching, many participatory and interactive methods of the preaching performance can be created through repeated and accumulated experiences which playfully move from inclusive human experiences of trouble and grace to the confession of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as the Lord. In a context of worship, the preacher can induce congregational participation in the sermon by sharing his or her own experiences of the present worship; reminding the congregation of the communal grounding of Christian worship, based on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and by setting up a theatrical time and space for the preaching performance by changing the narrative tense from the past to the present.

From my perspective, Sunday after Sunday the preacher needs to confess the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as the Lord in order for proclamation to emerge through
interactive sermon forms. In many cases, proclamation can also emerge from a variety of congregational prayers or songs for the reception of the proclaimed word of God, as well as from the sermon itself. Everyone knows and is expected to know the destination of the sermon. However, the key is to make room for interactive conversation in order to fit in that confession of Jesus Christ as the Lord.

The “Four Pages” works very well for congregational participation in interactive conversation during the sermon as well as for the preacher’s practice of preaching. In The Four Pages of the Sermon, Wilson provides the most comprehensive guideline for the sermonic movement for proclamation from trouble to grace both in the Bible and in our world. The preacher can share the sermonic questions with the congregation during the week: what is the explicit or implied human problem and what is the explicit or implied divine answer in the scriptural texts in relation to contemporary life? During the sermon the preacher can also help the congregation connect Pages One (trouble in the biblical text) and Three (grace in the biblical text) to Pages Two (trouble in our world) and Four (grace in our world) by a lively performance of the text. In many cases, the preacher’s sharing of their vulnerable impotence, rather than their biblical and theological interpretation, creates greater space for congregational participation in the sermon.

Within the interactive conversation between preacher and congregation, the trouble and grace in both text and context are shared for the confession of Jesus Christ as the Lord here and now. Usually from the trouble of human predicaments the sermon moves towards the proclamation of the crucified Jesus Christ as God’s saving action in history. And from the grace of divine provision the sermon moves towards the proclamation of the risen Jesus Christ as God’s completing action for the coming Kingdom of God. This is because the very
Christ Jesus is living in the believers as the Lord in the power of the Spirit, working through their repentance, faith, obedience, and love into the world.

However, the proclamation of the crucified Jesus Christ can be a destination for the sermonic move of sharing grace through interactive conversation. Congregational interaction through the sharing of grace is at its best within a larger act of praise and thanksgiving that all things discordant with God’s reign are terminated in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The proclamation of the risen Jesus Christ can also be a destination for the sermonic move of sharing trouble through interactive conversation. Congregational interaction through sharing trouble is at its best in light of the faith that God has brought all things in accord with God’s reign to completion through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the Trinitarian foundations of the confession that Jesus Christ is the Lord in the here and now, the preacher can extend the sermonic claim about God’s actions beyond individual transformation to the ecclesial and social realms. This pneumatological sermonic moment may then become a powerful instrument in the Spirit’s work for proclamation, for through it, the Spirit makes real the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the lives of believers. The key to this interactive sermon form lies in the way the preacher makes the sermonic claim out of multiple interactions with the congregation.

A. George Moore’s Interactive Sermon by “Congregational Reflection (CR)”

George Moore’s method of “Congregational Reflection (CR)” is another sermon form for interactive conversation with the congregation. It is a process that “mines” the rich, lived experience and spirituality of people in the pews and deepens a sense of community as people share their life stories and insights. This encounter is a time of engaging members of
the congregation in a dialogue which is open to new directions and encourages many answers
to any given question. This time of engagement may replace the traditional sermon or it may
be used occasionally. The frequency of use will be determined by the minster’s relationship
with the congregation and by congregational culture. Congregational Reflection maintains all
of the elements associated with the sermon. The difference is simply in the presentation. The
minister continues to function as the “resident theologian” and makes connections between
the responses offered and our Christian tradition. Moore provides a detailed interactive tool
or “Opening Template” for the preacher which is used to help people feel safe in the new
interaction with their minister.

Congregational Reflection (CR) invites people to do something new that will not
immediately feel comfortable. It is thus important to use the template when introducing CR
to a new group of people. The questions in the template must be kept simple so people will
feel safe and comfortable in answering them. For instance, he uses the call of the disciples,
Mark 1:16-20, and focuses on the motif of change. Answering the call of Jesus meant major
change in the lives of the fishermen and is explored in the following:

Making eye contact, waiting and smiling. Move to where you are going to engage the congregation. Do
not use the pulpit, since the whole idea of CR is to create intimacy and vulnerability that is first modelled
by the minister. I prefer to stand on the floor, just in front of the first row of pews. Pause, scan the
congregation slowly, making eye contact and using a little smile or a small nod of the head as you
acknowledge 3 or 4 people in the crowd. Pause briefly again and then ask the two enrolling questions.
(1) ‘How many of you like change?’ As you ask this question, raise one of your hands quite high, letting
people know that this is an appropriate response. Saying ‘Thank you,’ when people have raised their
hands. Saying ‘Thank you’ is crucial if you want people to continue to interact with you. You may
comment very briefly at this point: ‘Yes, you are the ones who stand in line for the latest Apple product.’
(2) ‘How many of you don’t like change?’ This time, raise the other hand as an indication of an
appropriate response. A possible comment is, ‘Yes. In these times of rapid change it would be nice if
some things just stayed the same.’ Neither question will embarrass people because it is easy to
acknowledge that these are common differences experienced in any group of people. Next, go to the text
informing people that big changes were coming to Galilee and those changes began with a walk by the
lake. There are now 2 ways to ask the next question. The unfinished sentence; As Jesus walks by the Sea
of Galilee he meets up with a group of... Pause, smile, nod slightly as a sign of encouragement and wait
for people to respond with the word ‘fishermen.’ People know what to do, they just need time to realize
that you are actually waiting for an answer. Fishermen. Yes. Thank you. Now, work with this response,
filling in details of how ordinary the day was, as the fishers went about their daily routine, etc. This is
where you make the story real and easy to imagine. The other way to deliver the question is to ask for
information that has just been given. As Jesus walks by the lake he meets a group of fishermen. Who does he meet? Proceed as above and continue to tell the story of the call. The fishers leave their work immediately. When do they leave? Immediately! Thank you. They follow Jesus immediately. Can anyone see a problem here? This will bring responses concerning the short-sightedness of the fishers’ actions. They don’t go home first. What about their wives and families, the customers that rely on them? What about old Zebedee left sitting in the boat when his sons leave to follow Jesus? What about the hired men who worked with the fishers? After people have supplied some concerns, you may fill in a few more that you have noticed. Do this in a way that affirms what people have just offered as responses. This is just adding to a list the people have begun. The next step could be telling a story about call, whether a person heard that call and followed immediately or put it off for a period of time until it became too strong to resist or ignore. As permission to tell the story. May I tell you a story? Smile and nod slightly so people know how to respond. Thank you. Then begin the story. Another option is to refer to a recent news item of some matter of social concern.646

Moore formulates the questions based on Paul Wilson’s Four Pages sermon, using the categories of trouble and grace. He recommends ending the sermon on grace. Moore’s “Congregational Reflection” method for interactive conversation between the preacher and the congregation might be a good starter for contemporary preachers seeking an interactive sermon form. It can also be a place from which Korean preachers might develop participatory preaching.

**B. Doug Pagitt’s Interactive Sermon by “Progressional Dialogue”**

There are various possibilities for interactive conversation to overcome the “pulpit monologue.” One example is Doug Pagitt’s interactive sermon by “progressional dialogue.” His idea of a return to homiletic dialogue is not two people sharing the pulpit, but interactive preaching that involves the congregation directly in the sermon. Pagitt criticizes traditional preaching as “speaching,” because the ordained preacher monopolizes the conversation in a sort of one-way speech.647 Instead, he argues for “progressional dialogue,” in which the congregation plays a part in the development and delivery of the message through the

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646 George Moore, “The Opening Template,” email correspondence.

647 Pagitt created this term, “speaching,” in order to “discuss the ways in which preaching has degraded into speech making.” See Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 11-12, 48.
intentional interplay of multiple viewpoints. The two most obvious components of Pagitt’s *progressional dialogue* are the sermon preparation through in-depth conversation with a group of the church members and open discussion during the sermon.\(^{648}\)

In Pagitt’s church, Solomon’s Porch, a weekly Bible discussion group open to everyone gathers to talk about the part of the Bible. According to Pagitt, between eight and twenty people gather and preview the section of the Bible that the community will look at the following Sunday.\(^{649}\) To begin the Bible discussion they always share their full names, not only for breaking ice but also for a people-centered discussion. Everyone shares an answer to a lighthearted question to get people used to talking in the group and to hearing their own voices. They read the section aloud with each person reading as much as they want before letting someone else take over. They also try to read from a few different translations for a deeper understanding. They talk about the issues raised, any confusing elements and what the passage tells them about their roles in God’s story in order to allow the Bible to come alive. Together they set the form and content for what will happen in the coming Sunday worship gathering. They explore the questions and issues so that the same passage will be clearer to regular people when it is presented for Sunday worship. With John 14:25-26 in mind they end the formal discussion by praying that the Spirit will keep in their minds things said that accord with the ways and teachings of Jesus. This Bible discussion group is Pagitt’s primary preparation for the following Sunday’s sermon.\(^{650}\)

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\(^{648}\) Ibid., 24.


\(^{650}\) Ibid., 88.
Pagitt’s Sunday sermons are usually followed by a time of open discussion with comments, interpretations, and significant thoughts from the congregation. In this open discussion, the preacher is required to be “the one who sets the general parameters for the conversation.”651 The preacher holds the idea as “a legitimate possibility” for the conversation and then invites “others to comment, ask questions, offer clarifications, and so on.”652 With an attitude of authentic transparency and open vulnerability, provisional statements, like “It seems to me” or “This is my take on it” or “From the perspective I have,” are used to encourage open conversation.653 Pagitt sits on a stool instead of standing up in a pulpit. The congregants sit on sofas arranged in a circle. As the interactive conversation progresses by Pagitt’s invitation, the congregation is engaged in the sermon. The sermon as a collective voice of the body is shared together in an improvisational way to draw any necessary life changes out of such conversation. In this way, Pagitt looks for an interactive sermon form that engages the congregation in a conversational process of sermon co-creation by progressive dialogue.

Pagitt’s open invitation for the congregation’s participation in not only its preparation, but also the sermon itself, may make the sermon more interactive. It seems to me, however, that his practice of progressive dialogue preaching is at the opposite extreme from traditional monologue preaching.654 It is not reasonable to label all traditional preaching...

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654 Pagitt’s approach to the sermon is representative of preaching in the movement known as the Emerging Church, which seeks to engage postmodern cultures in a new generation of churches. See John S. Bohannon, *Preaching & the Emerging Church-An Examination of Four Founding Leaders: Mark Driscoll, Don Kimball, Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt* (Seattle, WA: Create Space, 2010), 14-18, 20-59.
as “speaching,” because dialogue in the sermon can and should happen even through the single preaching voice of the called, gifted, and trained preacher. The preacher’s voice, faithful to the gospel, can and should make interactive conversation more fruitful for proclamation. Since every sermon should be more dialogical than monological, all preachers should listen attentively to listeners during the sermon. Pagitt’s progressive dialogue through open discussion during the sermon may not be the best option for the faith community’s task for proclamation. In a culture of participation, inclusion, dialogue and conversation, we need, rather, a leading role for the preacher in enabling the sort of interactive conversation that contributes to the preaching event. In other words, for proclamation, interactive sermons need also to be governed by the biblical content and the gospel-centered sermonic direction which converge in Christian confession of Jesus Christ as the Lord.

C. Description of Interactive Sermon Sample in My Own Church

Every week all members of my own church are required to meditate on a biblical chapter divided into several passages according to the local lectionary, in the manner of *lectio continua*. During the weekday gatherings, we generally deal with the same chapter and passages for a deeper understanding of the text. Instead of giving short sermons, the preacher can also lead the practice of *lectio divina* with the daily passage for meditation. Furthermore, every household in the church is encouraged to have family worship, where

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655 The following is an example of my own attempt to seek a form of *Koreanesque* preaching as communal participation in the Spirit of God. The Spirit enacts the divine drama of salvation through interactive human participation into the sermon. Concerning a human participation in the gospel as the ongoing “theodrama” which consists of the communicative saving acts of the triune God, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 1-33.

656 *Lectio Divina* means “divine reading.” It is a prayerful way of reading the Scriptures which has four steps: reading; meditating; praying; contemplating. See Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 22-29.
they share their meditation on the word of God. During Friday evening meetings, every
person who is called to pastor their family gathers and shares their life experiences in the
light of the meditated passages. Here preachers share not only their own meditations and life
experiences, but also raise any possible questions they may have had during the week while
meditating on the word of God. In order for this sort of open conversation to allow questions
from the participants, the preacher not only conducts his or her own meditation on the word
of God but also takes the same general hermeneutical steps that are required in traditional
preaching.

For more interactive conversations during the sermon, the preacher can provide the
congregation with his or her own prepared sermon manuscript before the Sunday sermon. I
usually make an outline of the sermon giving the main sermonic point and the direction
towards proclamation found in the passage in light of the gospel. Sometime during family
worship everyone is requested to write down their own weekly testimony which consists of
four sections, “My Verse, My Understanding, My Life Story, and My Prayer.” This can be
incorporated when sharing during the Sunday sermon. Generally people find the narrative
texts easier for interactive conversation since they can relate to the biblical stories. But
interactive sermons are not restricted to the narrative genre of the Bible. Within the big
picture of God’s redemptive story through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, all books of the
Bible can function as texts for interactive sermon.

The Sunday worship gathering is the context for the interactive sermon. The preacher
needs to understand interactive sermon as an act of worship. We seek a highly participatory
and interactive service designed for all ages. We arrange chairs in a semi-circle around the
Lord’s Table. The Sunday service is designed with lively singing, *Tongsung Gido* (a public
collective prayer), responsive reading of the chapter of the Bible with the congregation, and communion. During the service the preacher takes part in the whole process as a worshipper. As the preacher who is called to serve so that the congregation might experience God’s proclamation, I constantly seek God’s inspired message about how the crucified and risen Christ can be confessed as the Lord through the text, and about the context to be engaged in during preaching. During the sermon, which we call “the Sharing Time of the Word,” I use all the materials prepared for preaching to facilitate the engagement of the congregation. Not only the written testimonies of the people, the conversation during the Friday evening meeting, and my own experiences in my family worship, but also my sermon outline and my own experiences in the current worship can be used to facilitate interactive conversation. The preacher can then allow people to share their reflections, understandings, and experiences with the whole congregation.

For this sharing, I invite the congregation to create together the ambience of participation in God’s proclamation for the here and now. I open the interactive conversation by introducing a wide variety of biblical characters in the text, thus offering multiple possibilities of identification with the text. Since God’s proclamation for the here and now is a response to the offering of the church, every participant is encouraged to share something from the text or their life experiences. Alternatively, the preacher can bring up materials for interaction from the church as a whole. Here the preacher chooses something to quote from out of such materials, in order that the sermon might move to proclamation in a more dialogical way.

Usually I let three or four people share their reflections on the text or their life experiences and after each sharing I comment or offer encouragement in order that the whole
congregation might be prepared for the sermonic move to proclamation. My primary focus in interactive conversation lies more on the congregation listening to one another for an awareness of our situation, rather than on moving together toward proclamation. The congregational movement to proclamation in an interactive sermon depends on awareness of the contextual needs and problems of the community. While teaching a lay homiletic of communal participation, I take responsibility for leading people to the place of proclamation whereby the crucified and risen Jesus Christ is confessed as the Lord. Relying on the Spirit’s work for proclamation, I conclude the sermon with the proclamatory message in a traditional pulpit style. After the sermon, I lead the whole church to respond to the proclaimed message in a communal prayer which is continued to the Communion.

Here follows an example of my practice of the interactive sermon. After introducing the biblical characters the risen Christ met in John 20, I opened the conversation with the questions: “Where are you in this resurrection story? Who can you identify yourself with among the characters? Who is closer to you among their stories of sorrow, fright, and doubt?” From the congregation a woman shared her testimony by relating the passage to the film, *August Rush*, and her life experience as a crying child surrounded by people turning to see her mother when the child heard the quietest sound from her: “…Like how this mother kept track of the twelve years and eight months and nineteen days since she lost her son, our God is waiting for us to come to him and keeping count of not only the days but the minutes and seconds too…I hope all of us today turn back to the Lord who met with everyone in different conditions in the chapter with a sincere heart.” After receiving her testimony, I asked the congregation a question, “Have all of you turned back to the Lord?” and also encouraged everyone to draw close to the Lord. Another man shared his re-understanding of
the gospel through his written testimony: “…Through the Friday meeting and the week’s passage, I was aware of that our new selves received from God in the resurrected Christ must be completed by the Lord. I really thank God. So I put down my own efforts to change myself in order to follow the word of God’s promise.” In response to this sharing, I took the opportunity to teach the truth of resurrection and Christian life and to move toward proclamation: “God is stronger than the power of death all the time. Throughout human history, God had promised the Messiah and God himself became a mortal human and overcame the power of death through the crucifixion and resurrection so that everyone can believe that the Messiah is our God and our Lord…Now the risen Lord desires to live through us for our complete salvation. Like the women in the chapter, our love towards the Lord is a way for the risen Christ to meet us and to live within us. The exclamation of Thomas in the chapter is the confession of everyone who turns back to Jesus Chris with genuine love: “You are ‘My Lord and My God!’”657

In reality, such a practice of interactive sermons may not be easy for many churches because people might not be able to commit their energy and time to their church life. Also, there may be preachers who find interactive sermons difficult and uncomfortable to practice. As contemporary churches enter into a postmodern culture of participation and interactivity, however, we are called to attend to interactive sermon and participatory preaching, through which the church can make more room for the Spirit’s work for proclamation. Although the interactive and participatory methods would differ according to the situation of the local congregations and preachers, here I suggest several steps for implementation of the interactive sermon.

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657 This example is an excerpt from the audio recording of the Sunday worship service on April 24, 2011 in the Living Life Community Church that I have ministered to since 2005.
First, the community needs a unified focus on the word for individual and or communal meditation, whether following the local lectionary or the revised common lectionary. It is better for the interactive sermon if the preacher and the congregation share their meditations with one another through cyber-space.

Second, the preacher needs a weekday group meeting with the congregation. In this meeting, preacher and participants can share any thoughts, feelings or ask any questions about the weekly passages for sermon development, whether in a bible study, a group discussion or lectio divina.

Third, the community needs to develop ways of writing testimonies so that the sharing of the church members during the interactive sermon can be done efficiently. Through testimonies people can share what they learned from the text, how they were changed through the text, and/or what they are still struggling with in the text.

Fourth, preachers need to use an outline of the sermon that focuses on one point about the Triune God, for interactive conversation. In order to develop the outline for interactive conversation, the preacher needs to follow the same sermon preparation process with the general hermeneutical steps that most preachers practice.

Fifth, preachers need to develop their skills of improvisation or extemporaneous speaking. In order to make themselves familiar with improvising, and the sermon based on the sharing of others, preachers need more preparation so that they have more than enough to say. Also, preachers need to be patient with silence in order to let the listeners into the sermon.

Sixth, creative improvisation for the interactive sermon is based on the interplay, the give and take, between the preacher and the listeners. For creative improvisation it is crucial
that everyone, including the preacher, be themselves and to share their own places of understanding and life experiences. Since God created everyone in God’s own image, all have the potential to contribute to God’s manifestation through an interactive sermon in the Spirit’s enabling ministry for proclamation here and now.

Seventh, the preacher needs to lead the entire church from interactive conservations to the place of proclamation, where the crucified and risen Jesus Christ is confessed as the Lord. Although God can be proclaimed as the good news through interactive conversation, the one clear move from interactive conversations to proclamation of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as the Lord for the here and now can make the interactive sermon a more proclaimatory event. In order for this proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Lord to come alive for the here and now, preachers need to keep enlivening their confession by attentively offering themselves to God through every worship service. Also they need to keep digging into the theologically profound meaning of Christian proclamation of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as the Lord.

IV. Summary

This chapter has introduced contemporary Korean madangguk into homiletical arguments for developing an interactive sermon form which enables the congregation to contribute more to proclamation in the contemporary church. In hope for an ongoing study of Koreanesque preaching, I have explored the potential and implications of madangguk performance. The Korean spirit of communal participation exhibited in the performance form and principles of madangguk is not explored in any depth in relation to Korean preaching. I have merely provided as examples the practices of sharing, testimony, and open prophecy in
Korean churches as reflecting a Korean spirit of communal participation that can revitalize the preaching practice.

For Christian proclamation as communal participation in the Spirit, I claim that more participation by more people in the sermon can create more space for the Spirit’s working force for proclamation. The communal participatory characteristics of contemporary Korean madangguk performance and production can provide many possible methods of participatory preaching for the contemporary church. I have suggested that the practices of sharing, testimony, and open prophecy in large Korean churches can be developed into a *Koreanesque* preaching practice characterized by communal participation.

Because I envision a greater place for the interactive sermon, I have introduced a range of possible interactive forms, ranging from George Moore’s “Congregational Reflection” as a good starter, to Doug Pagitt’s “progressional dialogue” which lies at the opposite extreme to traditional preaching. My own interactive sermon form is more variable, and is influenced by many factors that relate to the embodiment of the Korean spirit of communal participation.

The Spirit’s movement for individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation through the preaching ministry can be described as the enactment of God’s divine drama of salvation through proclamation. Thus my preaching practice seeks a simple move from real life issues to the confession of Jesus Christ as the Lord, through which the Spirit uses the multifarious input of the whole church. We need to approach proclamation within its larger frame of pre-proclamation (life experiences including our diverse reading experiences of the text)/proclamation/post-proclamation (the Christian life of discipleship in the world) rather than as a specific sermonic form. Proclamation thus becomes the ecclesial
reenactment of God’s ongoing “theo-drama” of salvation for the reign of God in the world through preaching.

As in a madangguk setting, by dealing with real issues of life from the typified viewpoint of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as the Lord, we give more space for proclamation at the sermonic moment by means of interactive participation. This is because the Spirit can use more human resources for the preaching event. God’s action through preaching is thus the Spirit’s ongoing enactment of God’s divine drama of salvation. It is an open process of sharing troubles and graces with the congregation. The world of the gospel as the response to these shared trouble and grace experiences has the dramatic forms in which the crucified and risen Jesus Christ can be confessed as the Lord for the here and now. The central gospel message of crucifixion and resurrection is explored as the divine solution to human problems and needs within an improvisational form of theatre that reenacts God’s divine drama of salvation.

In this regard, the concrete differences of people in their experiences of troubles and graces can function as multifarious materials for the sermonic movement toward the gospel. Within this gospel-ended move for proclamation by the interactive participation of the entire church into the sermon, the crucified and risen Jesus Christ is confessed as the Lord for the here and now.

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658 In Setting Words on Fire, Paul S. Wilson says, “At the heart of the gospel are two dramas held together as one, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They function as poles in Christian thoughts, the one pointing to the depth of human disobedience, sin, injustice, and alienation from God and neighbor, and the other pointing to God’s willingness to save us at all costs.” Wilson, Setting Words on the Fire, 67.
CONCLUSION

Throughout this study I have proposed the concept of preaching as communal participation of the faith community in the revealing, illuminating, anointing, proclaiming, and embodying force of the Spirit. My intention has been to emphasize certain theological and practical perspectives on proclamation as the preaching event in which God, preacher, and congregation interact in order to bring new life into the individual, ecclesial, and social realms of life. In the apostle Paul’s vision of the body of Christ, preaching is a Christian utterance of mutual giving and receiving of the graced gifts of the Spirit. Calvin’s Spirit-centered understanding of preaching evokes the communal nature of preaching as a divine-human activity in and through the Spirit. Most significantly, Welker has helped in claiming preaching as a dual participation of God and human beings, through his key concepts of the Spirit as God’s force field and the public person of the Spirit. The Spirit is the locative agency of the preaching event. God’s ongoing work in the Spirit mediates the divine and human agencies through preaching. I have suggested perichoretic preaching as communal participation in the Spirit for the contemporary church within a postmodern context. Given that we are created differently, God’s word is not received in the same way by everyone. From a practical perspective I have introduced contemporary Korean madangguk to revitalize the Korean spirit of communal participation found in the performing arts. Out of the communal participatory characteristics of madangguk performance and production, I suggest not only the possibility for Koreanesque preaching, but also for interactive and participatory preaching in the wider contemporary church in a rapidly changing context.
Within a rapidly changing context a range of homiletic foci and methodologies will appear and disappear in the future. It is obvious, however, that our experiences of individual transformation, ecclesial formation, and social incorporation through proclamation are the fruits of divine grace which are borne and grown in the Holy Spirit of God who is our homiletic home. Our preaching can accomplish its tasks and achieve its purposes only in the working force of this same Spirit. How glorious it is that God wants to use our meager resources of preaching for God’s Kingdom and glory! As St. Augustine says in his Confessions, “for thou has made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee” (Confessions I.1.1).” Our heart of love toward God is the channel of God’s proclamation for the world. Whenever we do not have a “home” with God, God is still pursuing us to find “home.”

My wife and I have moved a lot during our married life—from our first apartment to houses, from our native city to foreign cities, and from compact to larger spaces. Our commitment to the covenantal love in the grace of God is still developing our “home” story in spite of many changes in our circumstances. The preaching and receiving of the word of God, and our giving ourselves to God’s will constantly, make possible proclamation until God’s Kingdom comes with power into this world as it is in heaven. And in every moment of our giving ourselves to God, we have the heavenly Father’s embrace and kiss and listen to God’s joyful voice of love, “Welcome home!”

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