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## Introduction and Appendix A: Arts and Preaching

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# Introduction

*Concepts create idols, only [aesthetic] wonder understands.*

—GREGORY OF NYSSA<sup>1</sup>

In our highly sensory and interactive age, how might preaching draw upon various arts to expand the aesthetic experience and mode of preaching? With this emerging question, this arts and preaching project started. Those in the pews today are strongly aesthetically oriented, visually and aurally aware, body-focused, and holistic-artistically educated about the Bible and life itself. This multi-intelligent epistemological situation of the people, well-noted by Howard Gardner,<sup>2</sup> invites a significant paradigmatic shift in preaching education and practice. How should we respond?

My critical and practical response is the (re)discovery of intersectionality between arts and preaching at the pulpit so that preaching can reinvent itself as a more holistic-aesthetic encounter of the Word of Christ. This solutionist proposal of mine may not sound really new. One may find other similar works that emerged in the past decades. What distinguishes my work from previous ones on the subject of arts and preaching is its intra-dynamic hermeneutical approach to existing illustrative and integrative approaches. For instance, when it comes to the homiletic correlation between the art of painting and preaching, the preacher may refer to Picasso's cubist work as a simple verbal illustration in the sermon (illustration approach) or even actually show a piece of the cubist art on the digital screen as a more integral part of the sermon (integral approach). By contrast, my intra-dynamic approach goes further by attempting to create an actual cubist sermon (the topic of Chapter 2). In the cubist sermon, Picasso's name or work would

1. Quoted in Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society*, 151; originally appearing in Gregory of Nyssa, *Op. Hom.* 44.377 B.

2. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.

not necessarily appear or be used as an illustration or integral prop, for the sermon itself is cubistic intra-dynamically. Another example is Chapter 3 on architecture and preaching. In the chapter I show that preaching can be experienced as highly architectural on its own even without a single mention of a famous architecture or without showing a short film clip about aesthetic architecture.

I hope that this artistic intra-dynamic approach will challenge our heavily text-driven, barely aesthetic homiletic education and preaching practice today. For that purpose, Chapter 1, as the theoretic foundation of the entire book, lays out the urgency and significance of aesthetic education and practice of preaching in the twenty-first century. The eventual goal of this fresh artistic-holistic preaching is to meet two particular needs of the church: 1) the dynamic spiritual formation of the preacher, and 2) the holistic-artistic and multi-sensory exposition and experience of the Holy Scripture both by the preacher and the congregation.

I had an opportunity to share a research paper on this topic at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Homiletics 2015, entitled, "Homiletical Aesthetics: A Paradigmatic Proposal for a Holistic Pedagogy of Preaching" that was consequently published in *Theology Today* (2017); the paper has now become chapter 1 of the book. Based on the proposed pedagogy, in the spring of 2016 I taught an advanced preaching course at Wake Forest University School of Divinity entitled *Creativity, Arts, and Preaching*, and in the fall of 2019, *Arts and Christian Speaking* at George Fox University (an undergraduate Christian ministry major course), to both of which students responded enthusiastically.

Whether I presented the paper to other preaching professors or taught students with this aesthetic orientation, I received the same inquiry: Do we have a textbook or textbook-like manual for this kind of preaching education and practice that can help implement the holistic-artistic approach? I do not think their inquiry is simply about wanting to read another textbook, but rather, on a deeper level, reflects today's urgent demand both for a holistic-artistic preaching education at the seminary and for the resulting practice of preaching in the church's pulpit. Indeed, this urgency felt both at the seminary and in local churches is what has prompted this book project.

I undertook the project in three stages. The first task was to rediscover the aesthetic-artistic quality of the Holy Scripture. As Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar point out, the aesthetic nature of God's word is one of the most important hermeneutical traits of the whole Scripture, without which biblical interpretation is incomplete.<sup>3</sup> Going further, Rahner contends, the-

3. See Rahner, "Theology and the Arts," 17–29; and Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, esp. chapter 1, 117–27.

ology as a whole is not complete unless we explore the divine revelation aesthetically. Building on their ideas, I revisited the Holy Scripture from an aesthetic-artistic point of view and was able to see so much (hidden) artistic treasure in it that awaits the preacher's keen attention.

The second stage was to study and explore various modern art forms on their own terms. One of the critical mistakes that we theologians and homileticians, as well as preachers, make when exploring the arts is to use theological markers and rulers as primary barometers of art analysis. By doing so, the arts suddenly become secondary subjects in the service of theology. This analytical practice is significantly misguided. In order for the arts to become an equal interdisciplinary dialogical partner to theology and preaching, the arts must be approached on their own terms. For this purpose, along with a relevant literature review, I visited sites to perform extended research on various artworks firsthand—particularly, such artistic domains as painting, music, architecture, dance, film, design, fashion, installation, and the like.

The third and concluding stage was to develop a firm aesthetic preaching practice through the interdisciplinary homiletic collaboration between the arts and homiletic theories. Here, I made use of the results from the above first and second stages of my research. For this final multi-faceted phase, a literature review on rhetoric and homiletic theories—both ancient and modern—and field research were crucial. As my research moved on, concrete book chapters emerged on topics such as Chapter 2, Picasso & Preaching (Cubism); Chapter 3, Utzon & Preaching (Architecture); Chapter 4, Chanel & Preaching (Fashion); Chapter 5, A Cinemate Homiletic (Film); Chapter 6, Preaching to Episodic ears (Drama); and Chapter 7, Beyoncé Mass: Womanist Preaching, Reloaded (Music).

As mentioned, Chapter 1 explores the homiletic theoretical foundation for the entire book. In the chapter I propose a paradigmatic change in homiletical pedagogy. In North America today, most homiletical training at the seminary is either text-driven or know-how-driven (or, at times, topic-driven). Thus, the homiletical training focuses on 1) how to exposit a text for a key topic, 2) how to structure a sermon, 3) how to deliver a message, and 4) how to analyze the text-driven sermon. While admitting the usefulness of this current textual or know-how pedagogy, I suggest the addition of a holistic-aesthetic component of preaching, which I will later call *numen*-participatory education or a numinous pedagogy of preaching. Readers, who are more interested in the actual practice of artistic preaching, may want to skip this theoretic part and start reading Chapter 2 or any other chapters on different art forms (no order is necessary). In

those chapters, readers will witness the detailed practical application of the foundational theory.

Chapter 2 proposes a cubist homiletic based on the Picasso-originated art movement known as cubism. To that end, I explore the twofold question: What does cubist preaching look like, and why do we need it today? It is a critical inquiry into a theology and methodology of cubist preaching and its contextual rationale. In particular, I adopt cubism's artistic-philosophical routine of transcendental deconstruction and multi-perspectival reconstruction as the key hermeneutical and literary methodology for cubist preaching. This cubist way of preaching ultimately aims for the listener to encounter the Sacred in what I call an ubi-ductive way—a neologism made by conjoining the two terms, *ubiquitous* and *-ductive*, beyond what is possible through conventional inductive and deductive preaching.

Chapter 3 concentrates on architecture and preaching. I acknowledge architecture as communication. Architecture conveys human stories, feelings, philosophies, and cultural histories, and interacts with viewers, occupants, artists, and surrounding communities through them. I also recognize architecture, whether religious or not, as spiritual. Embodying and manifesting spatial spirituality, it invokes in the mind of the appreciator awe, wonder, and the contact with the transcendent. All this is possible because architecture is an art form carrying “ultimate concern(s)” of human life to borrow Paul Tillich's language.<sup>4</sup> Recognizing this communicative, spiritual, and existential nature of architecture exemplified in Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House, the chapter demonstrates architectural preaching. A key argument is that preaching can serve biblical texts efficiently, in particular architectural ones (e.g., Rev. 21), by approaching them through an architectural hermeneutic and creatively presenting them to the listeners.

Chapter 4 develops fashionista preaching. Preaching, like its relation to architecture, practiced based on the Christian Scripture, has a lot in common with fashion. The Latin root of the English word *fashion*, *factio*, or the French root, *façon*, presents multiple basic meanings, such as physical makeup, certain shape, appearance, habitual practice, particular style of life or behavior, and more. Further, in a functional sense fashion is a useful tool for one's protection (either physical or psychological), image-making, social protest, ceremonial or ritual symbolism, and even spiritual encounter with the Divine (e.g., the white robe put on for baptism). In the Christian Scripture, God appears as the original “fashion designer” in both basic and functional senses. For instance, in the book of Exodus, God specifically enumerates for certain individuals gifted in tailoring how Aaron's garments

4. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 76.

should be made, from the turban to the tassels (Exod 28:3). Early on in Genesis fashion serves as a symbolism of God's care and love for fallen humanity as God makes "garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them" (Gen 3:21). Particularly, in relation to preaching practice, it can be said that fashion serves as an effective outward demonstration of religious prophecy in the lives of several prominent prophets, including Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Hosea, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and even Jesus. In the Transfiguration scene of Jesus, fashion (i.e., white garments) symbolizes the ongoing fulfillment or recovery of God's image in humanity. Thus, it is no wonder that in 1 Corinthians 15:53–54 the resurrected body is declared to be a piece of clothing that envelops one's current mortality in life. Given the significance of fashion symbolism in God's work and in preaching by prophets, this chapter devises fashionista preaching that may make good use of fashion-related texts and appeal to the fashion-obsessed world of our time. A quick glimpse into the life and works of Coco Chanel, one of the most innovative and brilliant fashion designers of the twentieth century, will grant us a good sense of today's fashion trends and philosophies.

Chapter 5 experiments with the interdisciplinary transaction between film, a prominent medium of American pop culture, and Christian preaching, a powerful communicative medium of the Church (or the single most eminent proclamatory apparatus in Protestantism). The chapter begins with the awareness that films showing in the cinema complex are as much aesthetic, spiritual, and revelatory as Christian preaching that communicates scriptural revelation through aesthetic verbal performance at the sacred pulpit. Furthermore, preaching, the chapter realizes, is as much a time-proven art of storytelling as any good film. All these commonalities between the two communicational mediums, notwithstanding their obvious differences in terms of primary target audiences, content, technology use, etc., make possible pop-cultural and spiritual interaction between them. Based on that intersectionality articulated, the chapter presents a generic form of a cinemate homiletic. The chapter both introduces a homiletic-cinematic theory and demonstrates an actual practice of it at the end.

Chapter 6 is a critical attempt to develop a dramaturgical methodology for preaching to the episodic people of the twenty-first century. The chapter begins with the British philosopher Galen Strawson's contention that post-modern people today do not regard themselves as living out their lives in a diachronic or narrative sense, but rather in an episodic-existential sense. This episodic-existential way of perceiving one's life, as Thomas G. Long recognizes, has recently posed a significant challenge to the current preaching practice that is mostly composed and delivered in the narrative sense. This chapter provides a considerate response to that episodic-existential

challenge. Specifically, I propose a dramaturgical episodic plot (form) of preaching, in close concert with Paul Tillich's existential theology, as a creative alternative to the conventional narrative way(s) of preaching.

Chapter 7 narrates my participatory observation and analysis of the Beyoncé Mass held at the Garrison Theater at Scripps College, California, on January 26th, 2020. The Mass was a Protestant worship service, which was highly Beyoncé music-driven (no overtly Christian music was used throughout), yet with explicit Christian theological references. As an evaluative analytic tool, I adopt womanist hermeneutical and homiletical ideas from Katie G. Cannon, M. Shawn Copeland, and Kimberly P. Johnson. Through the detailed description of the Mass, the chapter presents unique liturgical qualities and practices, including the aesthetical aspect, of the Mass, as well as those of the womanist preacher who delivered a powerful liberative message. Chapter 7 is different from other chapters in that it does not develop a particular artistic form of preaching. Instead, the chapter explores how the new artistic liturgical environment (including, but not limited to, Beyoncé music) reinvents the womanist preacher's image and the sermon's content.

After reading this book, readers may want to take a close look at other similar works on the market: to name only a few, Thomas H. Troeger's *Imagining the Sermon* (1990) and his journal article "A Musical Homiletic: Drawing on the Sonic Dimensions of the Word and Spirit" (*Yale Journal of Music and Religion*, 2015); Charles L. Rice, *The Embodied Word: Preaching as Art and Liturgy*; Jana Childers' *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre* (1998); Timothy C. Cargal's *Hearing a Film, Seeing a Sermon: Preaching and Popular Movies* (2007); John S. McClure, *Mashup Religion: Pop Music and Theological Invention* (esp., Appendix 1, "The Multitrack Sermon: A Homiletical Case Study," 2011); Paul Scot Wilson's *Preaching as Poetry: Beauty, Goodness, and Truth in Every Sermon* (2014); Otis Moss III's *Blue Note Preaching in a Post-Soul World* (2015); and most recently, Alyce M. McKenzie's *Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Preaching for Visual Listeners* (2018). All these utilize the artistic integrative approach in one way or another for their unique homiletic inventions. Borrowing their wisdom in the fullest sense, in this book I promote the homiletic adoption of several art forms that were not previously considered homiletic-artistic collaborative possibilities.

That said, my work is not totally new or unique. I must confess that my work is a further development of many predecessors who have taught and guided me in multiple ways. I am only adding one more effort on top of their excellent contributions so far. It is my hope to see many other innovative homiletic-artistic developments in the future (e.g., innovations through

previously unexplored art forms). As far as I can tell, in the classrooms I have taught I have already seen numerous unprecedented potentials of further developments from students. Their unmatched artistic creativity and sincerity in preaching the word of Christ truly inspires me daily to proceed a step further in my homiletic-aesthetic endeavor for the twenty-first-century church, outlined in this book. Heartfelt thanks go to all my students.



# Appendix A

## *A Sample Syllabus on Arts, Creativity, and Preaching*

### Course Introduction

This interdisciplinary course is designed to instruct students to be creative in their hermeneutical approach to the sacred text, develop multisensory skills of imagination, and utilize various art forms in their Christian speaking communication. Such art forms as music, painting, poem, theater, film, dancing, architecture, fashion, etc. come in as dialogical-performative partners. The course thus aims for a holistic aesthetical education and practice of Christian message-making (preaching).

**PREREQUISITE COURSES:** Introduction to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, Introduction to the New Testament, and Introduction to Preaching.

### Course Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course students will be able to:

- Analyze various art forms theologically
- Connect art forms and Christian messages, theologically, spiritually, and communicatively
- Read biblical texts in aesthetic ways
- Perform artistic Christian speaking (including preaching)

- Adopt various types of artistic expressions as Christian proclamation

## Required Texts

- Bauer, Michael J. *Arts Ministry: Nurturing the Creative Life of God's People*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.
- Blackwood, Rick. *The Power of Multisensory Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Detweiler, Craig, and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Florence, Anna Catrer. *Preaching as Testimony*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007.
- ———. *Rehearing Scripture: Discovering God's Word in Community*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018.
- Jones, Kirk Byron. *The Jazz of Preaching: How to Preach with Great Freedom and Joy*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2004.
- Lowry, Eugene. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
- Yang, Sunggu. *Arts and Preaching: An Aesthetic Homiletic for the Twenty-first Century*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021.
- Articles and book chapters posted on online class board.

## Course Requirements

**A. READING REFLECTIONS (15%):** Students are required to post reading reflection on online class board for each designated session throughout the semester, for 15 total sessions. One or two chapters (or more) of three books will be assigned per session for reflection. Students will receive 15 points at the end of the semester when they have completed this 15-session assignment. No late submissions will be accepted. Whenever a session's reflection is missed, 1 point will be deducted from 15.

- Length: Must be 500 words or less (must be more than 400 words).
- Due: By 11:59 PM the day before each class period; No late submissions accepted.

- For each set of assigned reading(s), students are to post on the course site the following:
  - ◆ Explain at least one key idea presented in the assigned reading. (What do you think the author meant by that idea?)
  - ◆ How do you personally respond to that idea?
  - ◆ Pose one genuine question that arises for you from the readings.

**B. THREE-MIN. FREE ARTISTIC SPEECH (15%):** Each student will be required to conduct one three-to-five-minute, semi-impromptu artistic speech or performance on a subject of one's own interest. Instructions are as follows:

- Choose a subject or theme and prepare a three-to-five-minute, non-scripted speech on it. Any and all kinds of subjects and art forms can be chosen and utilized (e.g., sing your original song composed on an unforgettable trip with the guitar, tell us about your hometown using LEGO blocks, talk about your favorite city in the world, talk about your cooking with real food displayed, or bring five to six pairs of your shoes to tell us about your hidden self). ANYTHING ARTISTIC works.
- Make sure that the presentation runs *more than* three minutes (and less than five minutes in any condition) for quality's sake.
- Consider utilizing an art form un/familiar to you; for instance, painting, music, architecture, dance, theater, spoken word, poetry, sign language, film, YouTube, tattoo, fashion, cooking, LEGO, carpentry, embroidering/knitting, etc.
- A brief class discussion will follow after each student's presentation/performance.

**C. FIVE-MIN. ARTISTIC BIBLICAL TALK (15%):** Midway through the semester, each student will be required to deliver a five-minute Artistic Biblical Talk. Students will choose a date associated with a biblical book (e.g., The Acts) and perform a talk of introducing the book on the date. You are NOT going to produce a full essay for this talk. You may have an outline in your hand only, from which you will speak extemporaneously. Submit the outline to the instructor after your presentation. Make sure to utilize an art form to make your speech more holistic and aesthetic. For instance, you may want to use a scientific graphic image of the universe when you

introduce the book of Genesis. Or you may want to produce a one-minute apocalyptic film when you introduce the book of Revelation. A brief class discussion will follow each student's presentation/performance. Make sure to include in the outline at least five to seven of the following items:

- The (presumed) author of the book
- The overall theme of the book
- The historical background of the book
- Anything you like about the book
- Anything you have a hard time understanding
- Any theological controversies around the book
- Any questions you may have about the book
- What commentaries say about the book: See *The Anchor Bible Commentary*, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, and *The NIV Bible Commentary*; many more are available in the library.

**D. COMPREHENSIVE THEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ART REPORT (20%):** Each student will produce and present a fifteen-minute Critical Theological & Cultural Analysis of Art Report following an example from the professor. This report will help the student “master” at least one art form in a theological and cultural analytic sense. Post the .docx or PDF file on the class board the day before your presentation date (by 11:59 PM). The student will write at least a 1,700–2,000-word report including following:

- Introduction: Why is studying this art form important? What is your personal experience of this art form?
- Body 1: Cultural and historical description of the art form (explain the art form in detail)
- Body 2: Theological analysis of the art form; what theological significances do you find in that art form?
- Body 3: How can we use this art form in relation to Christian speech?
- Conclusion: Your final thoughts on this art form and related Christian speech

**E. MAJOR ARTISTIC SPEECH I (TOPICAL SERMON, 20%)** (no essay or typed manuscript required to be submitted): This is a ten-minute artistic speech on a topic of your choice. Unlike the three-minute Free Speech, this speech should be explicitly Christian. However, you can choose your own topic. You

could incorporate biblical texts into your speech, but that is not required. You could deliver a theological or spiritual spoken word (see the examples linked below to visualize the process). Your speech should be artistic, utilizing any art form familiar (or unfamiliar) to you, such as painting, music, architecture, dance, theater, spoken word, poetry, sign language, film, YouTube, tattoo, fashion, cooking, LEGO, carpentry, embroidering/knitting, etc. These are only two examples (others will be shown in the classroom):

Example 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IAhDGYlpqY>

Example 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGUX5oLSA9o>

Potential topics you may want to use:

Being a Christian

Bible studies and commentaries

Big Questions

Challenges and difficulties

Christ manifested in the flesh

Christian life - beginning

Christian life - development

Christian life - results

Christian quotes

Christianity today

Christmas

Church life

Comfort

Consequences

Daily life

Depression

Disciple life

Doubt

Easter

Egotism

Faith

Family life

Forgiveness and guilt

Fruit of the Holy Spirit

God and me

God's promises

Grace

Happiness and joy

Hope

Humility

Life after death

Loneliness

Longing for something more

Obedience to the faith

Our calling

Our words

Overcoming sin

Peace and rest

Pentecost

People in the Bible

Pillars of the Church

Plans and future

Prayer

Pride

Relationship with Jesus

Relationship with others

Relationships and sexuality

Representing Christianity

Revival

Righteousness

Salvation and sanctification

Self-image

Temptation and sin

Thankfulness

The Bible

The body of Christ

The cross

The end times

The problem of evil

The world around us

Tough topics  
 Transformation  
 What does the Bible say?  
 What is a Christian?  
 Who is God?

**F. MAJOR ARTISTIC SPEECH II (BIBLICAL SERMON, 20%)** (no essay or typed manuscript required to be submitted): This assignment is an artistic speech prepared and delivered in the format of biblical preaching. A major difference in this assignment from Major Artistic Speech I is Speech II's use of a biblical text as the main foundation of the speech. Thus, for this assignment, you must formulate your message based on the assigned text, which requires your comprehensive study of the text. In the speech, you will explain what the text means and why/how the meaning of the text is important to us today in the twenty-first century. Again, your speech should be artistic, thus feel free to utilize any art form familiar (or unfamiliar) to you, such as painting, music, architecture, dance, theater, spoken word, poetry, sign language, film, YouTube, tattoo, fashion, cooking, LEGO, carpentry, embroidering/knitting, etc. Here is an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y044NzWjpoA&t=1018s>

- The speech should be thirteen to fifteen minutes long
- A text and a date will be assigned in the class

## Grading

<i>Reading Reflection Posts</i>	15 points
<i>Free Artistic Talk</i>	10 points
<i>Artistic Biblical Talk</i>	15 points
<i>Critical Theological &amp; Cultural Analysis of Art Report</i>	20 points
<i>Major Artistic Speech I: Topical Sermon</i>	20 points
<i>Major Artistic Speech II: Biblical Preaching</i>	20 points

TOTAL: 100 POINTS

Feedback for the course takes a variety of forms, including group discussions following sermons and presentations, narrative feedback from the professor, and/or grades. Students may also meet with the professor during office hours to talk about their progress in the course. In any event, feedback is offered steadily throughout the semester to minimize surprises after the course.

#### GRADING SCALE

A = Exceptional work (93-100)

A- = (90-92)

B = Superior work (83-87)

B+ = (88-89)

B- = (80-82)

C = Satisfactory work (73-77)

C+ = (78-79)

C- = (70-72)

D = Unsatisfactory work (63-67)

D+ = (68-69)

D- = (60-62)

F = Failing work (0-59)