

When We Meet God in Preaching through Our Bodies: A Ritualist Approach to the Divine Encounter in Preaching¹

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Abstract

This paper articulates a way of the hearer's bodily experience of God in preaching by understanding it as a ritual knowledge that gained through the hearers' bodily practices in preaching and worship. In the application of ritual theory, embodied cognition theory, and social memory theory, this essay suggests ritual knowledge can be described as an embodied, imaginative, and social knowledge. On the basis of this concept of ritual knowledge, this paper will discuss how the hearer's experience in preaching can be understood in terms of ritual knowledge. As a result, it argues that the divine encounter in preaching is not merely a result of a cerebral intellectual understanding of the preaching contents but an event that may occur when the lived bodies of the hearers meet the Spirit in words and actions.

Keywords: body; experience; worship; ritual theory; embodied cognition theory; social memory theory; ritual knowledge

1. Introduction

Most Christian churches share the belief that preaching is the word of God, describing it as the locus where the divine encounter may occur.² According to this belief, Protestant theologians, especially those in the Reformed tradition, have considered that the divine encounter in preaching is mediated through the interpretation of the scripture, which is regarded as the written word of God. Thus, the experience of the divine encounter in preaching has been described mainly as a cerebral intellectual hermeneutical experience.³ In the meantime, it has

¹ This paper is based on my paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Homiletics (December 2021, Boston, MA, USA), which has not published.

² Heinrich Bullinger, "The Second Helvetic Confession," in: The Book of Confession, pt. 1, Book of Confessions, Louisville 2002, 53–54; Paul VI, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum). Encyclical letter. November 18, 1965.

³ For example, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Divine Discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks, New York 1995.

been less paid attention to how the human body plays a role in the experience of God in and through preaching. Although homileticians who approach preaching in terms of performance have shown how the preacher's body works in the constitution of preaching as a performative Word-event,⁴ it has not discussed enough how the hearers' bodies contribute to constructing the experience of the divine encounter in preaching. In a wider context, although preaching has been regarded as a liturgical act in the context of worship, it has not been investigated much how the hearer's body constitutes the experience of the divine encounter in preaching in conjunction with ritual practices performed in the worship service. In response, this essay attempts to articulate the hearer's embodied experience of the divine encounter in preaching by understanding it as a ritual knowledge that is gained through the hearers' bodily practices in preaching and worship. After presenting the characteristics of ritual knowledge as embodied, imaginative, and social knowledge, this paper will discuss how the hearer's experience in preaching can be understood in light of these characteristics of ritual knowledge.

2. Ritual Knowledge as Embodied, Imaginative, and Social Knowledge

As a theoretical basis for this research, ritual knowledge indicates the knowledge gained through performing rituals. According to Theodore Jennings, it includes "know-how," which denotes the knowledge of how to perform a ritual correctly, and "know-what," which means that through ritual we come to know what we do, who we are, and how the world acts.⁵ In consideration of scholarly discussions, I suggest ritual knowledge has embodied, imaginative, and social features, which make it distinguished from textual knowledge that is gained through reading texts.

First, ritual knowledge is an embodied knowledge since it is gained through the body in action. Scholars of ritual studies argue that one acquires ritual knowledge through performing ritual practices, not through studying the literature about them. For instance, it is similar to the process in which the body comes to know how to ride a bicycle not by studying the manual of how to ride but by discovering the "fitting act" in action through repetitive practices.⁶ In this sense, Jennings argues that ritual knowledge is "gained by and through the body," because it is

⁴ Charles L. Bartow, *God's Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation*, Grand Rapids 1997; Richard F. Ward, *Speaking of the Holy: The Art of Communication in Preaching*, St. Louis 2001; Clayton J. Schmit, *Too Deep for Words: A Theology of Liturgical Expression*, Louisville 2002; Jana Childers, *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre*, Nashville 1998; Jana Childers and Clayton J. Schmit (ed.), *Performance in Preaching: Bringing the Sermon to Life*, Grand Rapids 2008.

⁵ Theodore Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, ed. Ronald L. Grimes. Upper Saddle River 1996, 326.330.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 330.

gained, transmitted, and received in bodily ritual action.⁷ Indeed, as Ronald Grimes says, "No body, no ritual," ritual is an embodied act.⁸ Therefore, one can say the knowledge gained from ritual practice is embodied knowledge that is gained through the body in action.⁹

These scholars explain further how embodied ritual knowledge works. First, they emphasize that ritual knowledge is transmitted through practicing ritual actions.¹⁰ For instance, when one learns how to bow in a ritual context, the actor comes to know how to do it by practicing the ritual action repeatedly. Although verbal or written instructions of how to do the action could help the actor know how to do it, the transmission of ritual knowledge occurs mainly through imitation of the other performer's ritual action. Through repetitive practices of the ritual action, the ritual knowledge embedded in a ritual action is inscribed in the body of the ritual performers, and the knowledge memorized through the body is retrieved in a similar ritual context almost unconsciously.¹¹

In addition, Grimes argues that ritual performance constructs an embodied symbolic meaning beyond knowing ritual itself or knowing how to do the ritual since ritual as an embodied act makes meaning by performatively activating symbols to communicate embodied knowledge.¹² This means that ritual is not simply a dramatic expression of symbols; ritual itself deploys symbols in action. Ritual bears meaning, and the meaning contained in rituals is animated in and through performing ritual actions.¹³ The ritual performer explores, discovers, or comes to know the meaning that ritual embodies, while for the observers the meaning is transmitted through the ritual expression of the symbol.¹⁴ For instance, when one receives baptism, the baptized person gains the knowledge that the ritual action itself conceives, which others cannot experience exactly the same as this baptized person experienced, while at the same time, the baptizand attains the ritual knowledge that she or he shares with the observers. The baptizand and the observers know that the practice of immersing participants in the water signifies a rite of Christian initiation. Yet, only the

⁷ Ibid., 329.331.

⁸ Ronald L. Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, New York 2014, 306.

⁹ Jennings (note 5), 329. 331.

¹⁰ Ibid., 325–326.

¹¹ Concerning embodiment of ritual knowledge, Ronald Grimes says, "Effective ritual knowledge lodges in the bone, in its very marrow." Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone: Re-inventing Rites of Passage*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 2000, 7. In a similar vein, Stephen Buckland says, "Through[...]habitual bodily practices, the experiences of previous generations are 'sedimented' in bodies." Stephen Buckland, "Ritual, Bodies and 'Cultural Memory'," in: *Liturgy and the Body*, ed. Louis-Marie Chauvet & François K. Lumbala, London and Maryknoll, 1995, 51.

¹² Grimes (note 8), 319.328.

¹³ Ibid., 319.

¹⁴ Jennings (note 5), 326.332–333.

baptizand can know the sense of being soaked in the water and of being raised from the water and can relate it to the death and resurrection with Christ, which the ritual symbolizes, by means of bodily senses. In this way, rituals transmit the embodied knowledge of symbols that can be gained through bodily participation.

Second, ritual knowledge has an imaginative character. Imagination is a way in which one understands the meaning of a symbol that ritual practices bring to light. Here, imagination does not mean merely fictive or fantastic thoughts, by which one creates in the mind an object that does not exist nor can be experienced in the lived world, but quasi-perceptual or constitutive, by which one makes sense by relating the images in the world to the object to be understood.¹⁵ In this sense, Mark Johnson claims that imagination is a way of reasoning by structuring experience, including mental experience and bodily experience.¹⁶ Johnson presents two types of imagination as the ways to structure the experience imaginatively: image schemata and metaphorical projections. First, image schemata are "a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience."¹⁷ For instance, when one perceives up-down orientation, the perception occurs by employing vertical schemata, which is a kind of image schemata. Although the vertical schemata are the abstract structure of verticality in space, it is acquired through repetitive bodily experiences, which is the concrete experience of the lived world. If one needs to stand up, the actor will perform the action by use of vertical schemata inscribed in the body.¹⁸

Secondly, metaphor is another kind of imaginative structuring experience. Johnson defines metaphor as a way to organize our more abstract understanding by using patterns that obtain through our bodily experience.¹⁹ In other words, we can project our concrete experience gained from physical activities metaphorically to the abstracts that we need to understand. For instance, we can use the precepts of up-down orientation to understand the statement, "Price is going up." Here, "up" does not mean the physical location in space but a metaphor of more expensive.²⁰ Metaphorical projection is also effective for theological understanding. When we

¹⁵ Amy Kind and Peter Kung, ed. *Knowledge Through Imagination*. New York 2016, 1.

¹⁶ Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, Chicago 1987, xiv-xv, 139–172.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xiv, 29, 79.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 75–76. Mark Johnson's explanation of image schemata is based on and echoes with Merleau-Ponty's notion of body schema. *Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landers, New York 2014, 244.253–311.

¹⁹ Johnson (note 16), xv.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xv.65–100.

say, "God in the highest," we understand it by use of the image of "up" that is acquired through our concrete bodily experience. Thus, when we try to understand the abstract notions of God, we can understand them by using image schemata metaphorically. In the same way, many theologians have paid attention to imagination as a way of theological understanding.²¹ For instance, Garrett Green claims that imagination is the locus of revelation, which means that imagination is not the source or content of the revelation but the form of revelation and the point of contact between divine revelation and human experience.²² That is, imagination is a way of understanding transcendent reality.

Imagination works in the construction of ritual knowledge. For instance, when one kneels down before the cross hung above the altar, it manifests a certain relationship between the performer and the one whom the cross designates. As the performer lowers his/her body by kneeling before the cross, which is the metaphorical action of subordination, s/he expresses the intention that s/he is subordinated to Christ whom cross indicates, recognizing that Christ is the being higher than the performer. Also, when people lift their hands up during the rite of *sursum corda*, the act of lifting hands indicates that they are in the presence of God who is present in the highest. In this way, ritual participants gain knowledge of God by imagination in ritual action.²³ Moreover, when one imagines something, one can retrieve not only cognitive experience but also sensory experience so that one's bodily senses work as they work in actual physical actions. For instance, when one hears a story of a person at the edge of a cliff from a preacher who tells about a life crisis, the hearer could feel as if he or she is doing it by retrieving her/his sensory experience of standing at a high and dangerous place through imagination. Likewise, one can evoke an emotional experience in imagination, which triggers bodily

²¹ Gordon D. Kaufmann, *Theological Imagination*, Louisville 1981; David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, New York 1981; Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*, Philadelphia 1982; Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology and Religious Imagination*. Grand Rapids, 1989; James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Grand Rapids 2013.

²² Green (note 21), 28–40.84. In the same vein, Charles Bartow argues that imagination is the locus of divine self-disclosure in relationship to preaching. Bartow (note 4), 37.

²³ Robert Fuller agrees with Mark Johnson's argument for bodily imagination and applies it to the religious imagination, as he says, "Our bodies[...]provide metaphorical patterns for understanding ourselves and the world we live in. This explains the ubiquity of body-based metaphors in religious thought." While he does not pay attention to rituals in relationship with bodily imagination, I think ritual is one of the best examples in which bodily imagination works in religious thought. Robert C. Fuller, *Spirituality in the Flesh: Bodily Sources of Religious Experience*, New York 2008, 139.156.

responses.²⁴ When one lifts her hands up during singing a gospel song, such as *In His Presence*, one can feel as if one is in God's presence, by imaginatively retrieving sensory experiences of being present before the person of upper status and relating it to the situation. Even though one has never met God physically, one might sense as if s/he is physically in the presence of God by projecting the images of God that s/he has learned from her or his faith journey, as well as one's experiences of meeting a person who has the attributes of God, which one has learned and experienced.

Often these bodily practices might trigger unexpected bodily signs, such as feeling heat, shivering, or tingling; more explicitly, dropping tears or trembling; in some extreme cases at charismatic congregations, falling down or falling into trance. Once one experiences such unexpected bodily signs, one might interpret his/her bodily experience as a sign of the spiritual experience.²⁵ In this way, when one comes to know the holy imaginatively through participating in ritual practices, the whole body of the performer engages in a meaning-making process, including bodily action, imagination, and affection triggered by bodily action. That is, when one experiences God through ritual, one's body, which is the sensible and real entity existing in the lived world, is involved in the event imaginatively. This is a reason why some people believe that they have experienced God really, not considering their experience mere illusion.

Finally, ritual knowledge is social knowledge. For some, it may sound too subjective that one gains the embodied knowledge through imagination in ritual practices. Admittedly, it has a subjective dimension. But, at the same time, ritual knowledge has a social dimension also because ritual is a communal social act. Indeed, the ritual knowledge that is gained through ritual participation is ambivalent. On the one hand, the ritual participant gains "personal ritual knowledge," which is subjective knowledge gained through personal bodily practices. On the other hand, s/he attains "common ritual knowledge," which is a social knowledge gained through collective ritual action. In the case of baptism, the bodily sense of being immersed is a personal ritual knowledge that the performer only experiences in the moment, which is not transferrable to other participants. Meanwhile, the performer gains also a common ritual knowledge of how to perform the baptism and what the baptism signifies, which is sharable with and can be affirmed by other participants. This ambivalent character

²⁴ Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and Human Brain*. New York 1994, 151–159; Julia F. Christensen and Khatereh Borhani, "Dance and the Imagination: Be a Butterfly!", in: *The Cambridge Handbook of the Imagination*, ed. Anna Abraham, New York 2020, 627–629.

²⁵ Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*, Princeton 1999, 78.

of ritual knowledge causes a dialectical relationship between personal ritual knowledge and common ritual knowledge. While personal ritual knowledge constitutes common ritual knowledge, it is not considered truthful knowledge until it is affirmed in terms of common ritual knowledge. While individual performer's experience constitutes the experience of the community, the way of individuals' perception through ritual is bound to the social framework of the ritual community.

Scholars of social memory theory explain the dialectical dynamics between personal knowledge and communal knowledge in terms of social memory.²⁶ When one participates in an event, one acquires knowledge of it. Simultaneously, it is recorded and stored in a form of memory that can be retrieved when needed. Paul Connerton describes this memory as a personal cognitive and habit memory.²⁷ It is personal memory in the sense it is a self-involved memory. Simultaneously, it includes cognitive memory and habit memory because the ritual participant attains the information gained through ritual practice and the logic of practice itself²⁸ perceived through the habitual performance of the practice. When one participates in a ritual, what the ritual participant experience is not only personal memory but also social memory since the ritual participant experiences the ritual event as both an individual and a member of the ritual community.²⁹ Here, the social memory that the ritual participant gains can be called common ritual knowledge, which is the community's common memory of the event rather than the collection of individual memories, as the community incorporates all of these memories.³⁰

Individual ritual participants' personal memory becomes incorporated into a social memory through an interpretive process. First, individual memory itself is a production of interpretation, which is not neutral nor thoroughly objective, like a mechanical recording of an event, because memory is not a replication of the past but a product of interpreting the past event. Thus, it is evident that the performer's subjective experience, perspective, and belief influence the construction of memory. Moreover, since the individual's experiences are partial because of the limit of perception, the individual's memory is selective, fragmented, and incomplete, sometimes partisan. Also, as the individual's experiences of the event are

²⁶ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. trans. Lewis A. Coser. Chicago 1992; Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge 1989, 37; Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*. Philadelphia 2003, 51–74.

²⁷ Connerton (note 26), 22–36.

²⁸ I use this term, "logic of practice," in the sense that Pierre Bourdieu explains, indicating pre-reflexive logic that is embedded in the practice itself, or logical principles underlying practice, calling as practical logic or practical sense. cf. *Pierre Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Stanford 1990, 86.80–97.

²⁹ Halbwachs (note 26), 53.

³⁰ Misztal (note 26), 51–52.

multiple, the interpretations of the event, and individual memories, are also plural. Therefore, when individual memories are incorporated into a social memory, individual memories are under interpretive negotiation.³¹

On the one hand, the community assesses individual memories. When the community reconstructs the event, the memories of individuals are to be assessed whether they are reliable, credible, or trustful. In this process, the community filters unacceptable memories and decides what to accept. If an individual's personal memory is incorrect or deceitful, belying the actual event or other participants' witness of the event, it would be most likely rejected. Yet, the acceptable memory does not mean only the factual memory, which is a remembrance of the event just as it happened. Rather, it is a truthful or meaningful memory that contains a truth or a meaning to the community. Even if a particular memory is a factual report of the event, if it is not meaningful, it may be forgotten. What assesses a memory as meaningful or not is the belief and identity of the community. If a memory belies the belief and identity of the community, it may be dismissed or become peripheral or non-orthodox.³² In this way, the community that bears a certain belief and identity functions as an interpretive frame or paradigm, which assesses the validity of individual memory as a constituent of social memory.³³ Social memory theorists call the interpretive frame or paradigm to construct social memory as the social framework.³⁴

On the other hand, even though the community integrates individual memories by the use of the social framework, individuals do not accept the communal interpretation of their experience automatically. Instead, individuals also assess the belief and interpretation of the community in light of their personal experience, while they interpret their personal memory in light of the social memory of the community, not merely through personal imagination.³⁵ When the performer discovers the point of contact between personal memory and social memory, the experience, or the interpretation of the experience, is affirmed. Thus, the

³¹ Barbara A. Misztal, "Memory and the Construction of Temporality, Meaning, and Attachment," in: *Polish Sociological Review*, 149, (2005), 31–48; idem (note 26), 67–73.

³² For example, the memories of women in the patriarchal society would not be preserved. Only if they are meaningful for the androcentric society, fitting the masculine values and beliefs, it may be preserved and transmitted. Likewise, it is observable that the memory of a certain event, in which the minorities in race or ethnicity are involved, becomes distorted in favor of a predominant group's benefit or belief.

³³ Halbwachs (note 26), 172.

³⁴ Ibid., 38–40; Connerton (note 26), 37.

³⁵ As Garrett Green says Christian imagination is the paradigmatic imagination that is construed through the biblical images of revelation, Christian ritual agents interpret their bodily experience through imagination by assessing their personal experience in light of the paradigmatic imagination of the faith community. Green (note 21), 61–80.

interpretive dynamic between the community and the individual performers in the construction of social memory can be described as interactive and intersubjective.³⁶

To sum up, the relationship between personal memory and social memory is dialectical. While personal memories constitute social memory, social memory interprets personal memory. While personal memory should be assessed by the community, social memory does not determine or control personal memory. The memory that ritual performers gain is the memory of the ritual community that integrates both personal memory and social memory, not either-or. Thus, the ritual knowledge as social memory is not constructed only through ritual practice itself but also through ongoing hermeneutical interactions between the ritual community and individual ritual performers, which are part of the broader society, that construct, perform, and interpret the ritual practice. Moreover, as social memory is not only what the community experiences collectively in the present but also a cumulative experience formed through the history of the community, what individual ritual performer comes to know is not purely an innovative but an old-but-new experience interpreted in light of the social memory transmitted through the common ritual, which has been formed by integrating individual ritual performer's memories.³⁷

In short, because the ritual community symbolizes a ritual practice in reflection of their social memory of the foundational event for the community in light of their belief and identity, the meaning of the ritual practice is not only constituted through the logic of practice itself but also the logic of the social-cultural memory that is embedded in the ritual practice, in which the social-cultural memory has been interpreted and constituted by the community of ritual agents.³⁸ From this perspective, ritual knowledge is neither subjective nor objective but intersubjective. It means that ritual knowledge can be truthful, meaningful, and reasonable for a community comprised of those who share the experience and the interpretation of it, namely the social memory.³⁹

These characteristics of ritual knowledge enable ritual participants to understand what they experience and learn through rituals as realistic, intersubjective, and rational knowledge rather than unrealistic, subjective, and irrational knowledge, because they have the evidence to affirm their knowledge, which is experienced and sedimented in one's physical body and shared with the community. That is, ritual knowledge is affirmed through the logic of practice, which the participants experienced in the body through a critical interpretive process in

³⁶ *Misztal* (note 26), 67–73.

³⁷ *Connerton* (note 26), 2–3.

³⁸ *Stephen Buckland* (note 11), 50–52.

³⁹ *Johnson*, *The Body in the Mind*, 173–193; *Misztal* (note 31), 46.

reflection of their bodily experience as well as social experience. Specifically, since ritual participants establish the rationality of their ritual experience through the logic of practice, which they gain through inductive reasoning of their experiences by imagination, ritual knowledge is experiential, imaginative, and inductive.⁴⁰ Such ritual knowledge may have ambiguity, as the logic of ritual practice may be often intrinsically ambiguous since "the meaning of a symbol is never completely determined in and through the actions into which it is put."⁴¹ It does not mean that ritual knowledge is fictional or irrational, but that it requires interpretation. In the consciousness of individual ritual performers, the interpretation of their ritual knowledge occurs in a hermeneutical conversation with the ritual community. As they discover the hermeneutical point of contact with the ritual community's social memory that bears their belief and identity, their ritual knowledge is verified as truthful and meaningful.

3. Rethinking the Experience of the Divine Encounter in Preaching as Ritual Knowledge

Understanding these characteristics of ritual knowledge may facilitate a deeper understanding of how hearers experience the divine encounter in preaching in and through their lived bodies. As Charles Rice notes, preaching is a liturgical art, where the sacramental event takes place in the context of worship, not merely as a part of worship nor simply a verbal exposition of the Bible.⁴² If we place the act of preaching in the context of worship, the homiletical performance by the hearers as well as by the preacher can be considered as a liturgical act, which can be called a ritual practice. In this sense, the theory of ritual knowledge can help to elucidate how homiletical performances work in the construction of the hermeneutical experience of the divine encounter in preaching. If one applies the characteristics of ritual knowledge as embodied, imaginative, and social knowledge to understand the hermeneutical dynamics in preaching, the experience of the divine encounter in preaching can be described as a kinaesthetic experience that is an embodied, imaginative and social knowledge.

First, it implies that our experience of the divine encounter in preaching is constructed and transmitted through performative bodily actions, not merely through understanding the preaching contents, which is mainly an exposition of the biblical text, cerebrally. In the preaching event in the context of worship, on the one hand, the preacher transmits the meaning of the Word not only through the verbal articulation of the sermon but also through performing it in and through the body, which incorporates facial expressions, gestures, and

⁴⁰ Bourdieu (note 28), 92.

⁴¹ Ibid., 264.

⁴² Charles L. Rice, *The Embodied Word: Preaching as Art and Liturgy*, Philadelphia 1991, 96.

body movements into an expressive system of meaning.⁴³ On the other hand, hearers understand the meaning of the Word not only through hearing the preaching words but also through receiving the words by performing bodily actions. Call-and-response is an explicit example of such a bodily acceptance of the preaching words.⁴⁴ As the ritual is a meaning-making and communicative action, these ritual actions are not a meaningless habit but a meaning-making act in which the hearers understand the meaning of the words in and through their bodies. Thus, the listeners' bodies function as a lived body that actively engages in the interpretive process in preaching, not remaining as an inert body or an empty vessel of the mind that receives the preached words passively.

Second, it means that we construct the experience of God in preaching through bodily imagination. As many homileticians have addressed, imagination is a key to understand the hermeneutical experience in preaching.⁴⁵ While they have discussed much literary imagination, inquiring how literary rhetorical devices, like parables, metaphors, and similes, work to enable the hearers-as-readers to understand the transcendent reality that the text indicates, they have rarely attended to how literary imagination interplays in the construction of the experience of the transcendentals with bodily metaphorical actions in preaching.⁴⁶ Like other ritual actions, bodily metaphorical actions in preaching make and transmit meanings. When a preacher raises her hand up and points at the sky with a finger, while she speaks "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places" (Jn 14:2), and when, in response to the preacher, a hearer stands up and raises his hands up, shouting "Amen," both the preacher and the hearer share the image of the heaven in the upside, where they will live with the Triune

⁴³ Childers (note 4), 115. Bartow (note 4), 64.

⁴⁴ Call-and-response is the liturgical practice performed in juxtaposition with preaching in African American churches and some churches in charismatic tradition. Evans Crawford describes that the congregation responds to the preaching by shouting "Help 'em, Lord!", "Amen!", and "Glory Hallelujah!", and that these are "the prayers of the human heart for help, guidance, and praise, enacted in the environment of worship and proclamation." Evans E. Crawford, *The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching*, Nashville 1995, 21.

⁴⁵ Charles Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination*, Philadelphia 1970; Thomas H. Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon*, Nashville 1990; Richard L. Eslinger, *Narrative and Imagination: Preaching the Worlds That Shapes Us*, Minneapolis 1995; Mary Catherine Hilbert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*, New York 1997; Paul Scott Wilson, *Imagination of the Heart: New Understanding in Preaching*, Nashville 1998; Joseph Sittler, "Imagining a Sermon," in *The Company of Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present*, ed. Richard Lischer, Grand Rapids 2002.

⁴⁶ For instance, when Jana Childers discusses imagination in relation to the actor's performance, she talks about literary imagination only, focusing on writing a sermon creatively by use of imagination. Childers (note 4), 108–111. Similarly, Charles Bartow argues that the rhetorical tropes, such as oxymoron, metaphor, and metonymy, serve as a way to speak about the divine encounter with the human being, and that "*actio divina* itself is rhetorical." Bartow (note 4), 9–24. 50. cf. Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, Louisville 2016, 224–253.

God. These action-driven imaginations might often trigger emotions and bodily responses more strongly, while the intellectual consent to the preaching contents may evoke an emotional response to the words.⁴⁷ In this way, verbal words and bodily actions interplay imaginatively to construct an embodied experience of God in preaching in the context of worship.

Third, our personal imaginative embodied experience in preaching is affirmed through the communal interpretation in light of the social memory of the Church, because it is social knowledge as well as personal knowledge. As described above, by participating in the preaching event actively in bodily actions, both the preacher and the hearers can gain personal imaginative embodied experience. Some might feel as if they are in the presence of God, as if the Holy Spirit speaks through the mouth of the preacher, or as if their hidden sins are revealed in public through the work of the Holy Spirit in the preaching event. Yet, at the same time, they might wonder if such personal experiences are truly from God. Here is the ambiguity. While the hearers-as-worshippers make sense of what they have experienced in and through preaching on the basis of the logic of practice, they cannot convince whether their experiences are legitimate and affirmable only with the logic of their personal experience. The assurance of the legitimacy of the experience comes when they discover that their personal experience conforms to the social memory of the Church.

For instance, imagine a person praying in *tongsung kido* as a way of receiving the preached words. When one prays with hands raised in reflection of what s/he heard from the preacher, which was spoken right before the prayer, s/he begins to speak in tongues, which is personal embodied ritual knowledge gained through incorporating the preaching words and the metaphorical bodily performance.⁴⁸ While the pray-er feels it a divine blessing, s/he would wonder if it is truly from God or whether it is her or his personal illusion or the truthful experience of the divine revelation. While s/he keeps praying in tongues, s/he seeks to understand it in reflection of what s/he has heard and learned from the Bible and the church. If s/he discovers the conformity between her or his personal bodily experience and the social memory of the community, including the biblical evidence for speaking in tongues and the

⁴⁷ Childers admits that imagination can trigger emotions, but she stays with literary imagination. As one can feel some sort of emotions when one watches bodily performances, like dance, or even when one observes rituals performed in a foreign language that she cannot understand, bodily performance can invite the audience to emotion-triggering-imagination. *Childers* (note 4), 109–110.

⁴⁸ Speaking in tongues is considered as an embodied sign of the divine presence in charismatic traditions, including Pentecostal churches, Holiness churches, Methodist shouters, some charismatic African American churches, and other charismatic churches across the globe. *Luke Powery*, *Spirit Speech: Lament and Celebration in Preaching*, Nashville 2009, 10–20; *Taves* (note 25), 78.

testimonies of other Christians, s/he could consider her or his experience truthful and affirmable.

In other words, individual bodies' experiences should match with the social body's experience. Theologically, this statement can be restated that the faith experience of individuals should not belie the witness of the faith community, or that the personal experience of the revelation must conform to the revelation that the Church has preserved and proclaimed.⁴⁹ In this process, worship functions as a hermeneutical matrix that constructs the ritual knowledge of the Word as it enables and facilitates an individual body's experience by evoking imagination in the consciousness of participants; and, at the same time, negotiate and verify the hermeneutical validity of the individual experiences in light of the social framework, such as doctrine, tradition, and biblical teachings.⁵⁰

In the meantime, approaching the experience of the divine encounter in preaching as ritual knowledge, which is an embodied, imaginative, and social knowledge, invites us to rethink the following points related to the nature of preaching. First, since preaching transmits meaning through performative bodily actions as well as through verbal articulation of the text, the communication of meaning in preaching is not unilateral, from preacher to listeners, but constructive or constitutive. In this sense, preaching is not merely the preacher's solo oral presentation of the text but a communal bodily performance, which the preacher and the hearers constitute together.⁵¹ Whereas the preacher expresses the meaning of the Word through oral and bodily performances, the hearers receive the proclaimed Word through the body in action.⁵²

Second, the ritualist approach to preaching calls attention to performative imagination in preaching. The homiletical imagination that enables us to attain the knowledge of God in preaching is performative imagination as well as literary imagination. As the metaphor of God is constructed in preaching not only through connecting the images in the texts but also

⁴⁹ As Halbwachs regarded religious doctrine as the collective memory of the Church, this paraphrasing makes sense. *Halbwachs* (note 26), 112. In this sense, the rule of the revelation's conformity, which Barth used for arguing that preaching is the Word of God insofar as it conforms to other forms of revelations, the Bible and Christ, can be applied to this issue. *Karl Barth, Homiletics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels, Louisville 1991, 47.

⁵⁰ In Louis-Marie Chauvet's words, worship can be described as "the symbolic order" or "the symbolic womb", in which the sacramental encounter occurs. *Louis-Marie Chauvet, The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont, Collegeville 2001, 13-17.

⁵¹ *Richard F. Ward, Speaking from the Heart: Preaching through Passion*, Nashville 1992, 77; *Stephen H. Webb, The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound*, Grand Rapids 2004.

⁵² Jana Childers noted that "words derive from the body as well as from cerebral processes." *Childers* (note 4), 116.

through associating them with the images in actions, the homiletical imagination becomes a performative imagination as well as a textual-literary imagination.

Third, the homiletical hermeneutic to understand the experience of the divine encounter in preaching is an intertextual performative hermeneutic rather than an intratextual intellectual hermeneutic. The embodied experience of the divine encounter in preaching is not given merely through understanding the biblical text or the sermon intellectually. Instead, it emerges in the event in which the preacher and the hearers enter the world of the Word where the world of the biblical text and the worlds of hearers and preacher meet together. This hermeneutical event occurs not only through the textual-literary interpretation of the biblical text but also through the embodied performative interpretation of it.

4. Conclusion

This approach shows the tension between the text and performance, between the individuals and the community, and between the body and the mind. My argument is that, when we interpret the preaching words in the context of worship, these tensions work not in a dichotomous way but in a dialectical way. That is, while the text that is not performed cannot be a lived word, the performance that is not based on the text can be meaningless or misunderstood. Whereas the individuals' experiences constitute the experience of the community, the community functions as an interpretive frame in the individuals' hermeneutical experiences. Thus, the body and the mind are not separated but connected in a form of the embodied mind, so that the embodied mind constructs the embodied experience of the divine presence in preaching. In this sense, the experience of the divine encounter is an event that occurs when the lived bodies of the hearers, which hear the preaching words and perform ritual practices, meet the Spirit in words and actions. Accordingly, preaching is not merely an intellectual cerebral activity but a holistic activity, in which the whole bodies of hearers and preachers involve.

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