
MOTIVE AND MOVEMENT: AFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE WORK OF PREACHING

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Abstract

This article explores the growing awareness of the significance of emotion in human experience as it relates to leadership practices in Christian communities of faith. Effective leaders are persons who constructively embrace and utilize emotions—personally, in interpersonal relationships, and within organizations. Additionally, the article reflects on the heritage of affective rhetoric in the Christian tradition that is demonstrated in Paul’s writings and by Augustine’s own work and practice of preaching. The paper claims that affective preaching is a distinctive, significant, and beneficial practice for congregational leaders.

Introduction

Some years ago, while I was a senior minister, I was asked to write a book chapter on preaching autobiographically.¹ In that chapter, I recounted the story of Jim, who firmly but lovingly challenged my unwillingness to show more emotion in my preaching. “Why don’t you show more passion when you preach?” he asked. “Just remember,” he continued, “your most effective times in the pulpit are when you emotionally connect with the congregation.”² Jim’s words launched a challenge to explore my own emotion and my own story, which has sent me on a journey of learning how emotional dynamics are intricately connected to leadership and preaching.

So I find no small amount of irony to present a paper on preaching and leadership at a conference where the

¹ Carson E. Reed, “The Promise and Premise of Autobiography for Preaching” in *Preaching Autobiography: Connecting the World of the Preacher and the World of the Text*, eds. David Fleer and Dave Bland (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 2000), 97–123.

² Reed, 100.

stated theme is emotion.³ As the senior minister for a congregation that was formed in 1958 just a few blocks north of here, I am standing at the epicenter of eight years of my life as a pastor. Hospital rooms, gravesides, rehabilitation centers, homes, condos, pubs, schools, places of business, and sanctuaries surround us. These concrete places are where people and relationships and life are present.

Lectures and sermons echo here. Pastoral visits and midnight crises return to my memory in these city blocks. The liturgy of biscuits and morning cups of coffee in the name of strategic planning occurred just across the street. And I have heard confession and born witness to the power of the gospel in both the brokenness and the possibility of life in a pub just around the corner. The value and need for vibrant pastoral leadership oozes from the streets and sidewalks of this place. And for you? I expect you, too, know of places where the ebb and flow of experience and emotion frame the needful work of leadership in a faith community.

I share some of my own experience because all too often emotion has been neglected in conversations about pastoral leadership. Pastoral leaders need to develop deeper levels of emotional intelligence in the practice of leadership. Furthermore, emotional intelligence should be deployed not only in interpersonal relationships or staff or leadership meetings, but in the weekly sermon. I argue that preaching is an act of pastoral leadership that requires the preacher to artfully engage in persuasion and the use of emotion for the sake of congregational mission.

Beginnings

The importance of emotion to preaching and to leadership finds its anchor in the age old question: What does it mean to be human? Such a question can easily take us into many realms. From Descartes's famous line, "I

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think, therefore I am,” until only recently, the dominant way to understand the essence of human existence has been to view human beings as thinking, rational beings. Indeed, merely whispering the word *emotion* can easily set off a firestorm of discussion and debate in meeting rooms and leadership gatherings. However, an anthropology that ignores human emotion hardly accounts for the breadth of human experience. Rather than a cognitive construct of rationality, I wish to understand human experience as better reflected by reason and emotion, by beliefs and desires. James K. A. Smith transcends the traditional dichotomy between reason and emotion. He states: “The point is to emphasize that the way we inhabit the world is not primarily as thinkers, or even believers, but as more affective, embodied creatures who make our way in the world more by feeling our way around it.”⁴ Smith proposes humans are primarily lovers—leading with minds and hearts. Certainly this is not a new idea. Martin Heidegger framed a holistic way of thinking about the human being.⁵ Following Heidegger, Smith understands human beings not simply as thinkers but rather as actors who are engaged and involved with others and the world.⁶ The non-cognitive reality of human experience suggests that preaching and leadership must take into account the role that emotion plays in our attitudes and practices.

Leadership and Emotion

Considering the non-cognitive reality of human experience helps us develop a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be human. Such a thicker, more robust vision of humankind finds correlation in leadership theory. A growing body of research indicates that leadership is not a cold or a rational process; rather, effective leadership requires an attentiveness to the varied dynamics of emotion

⁴ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009), 47.

⁵ Smith, 48–50.

⁶ See Smith, 75–88, for his construal of practice.

in human relations.⁷ In other words, effective leadership requires affective sensitivity. The leading work of John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey in emotional intelligence demonstrates this awareness.⁸ Mayer and Salovey identified a form of social wisdom they termed *emotional intelligence*. It reflects the ability to be aware of one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others. This awareness shapes words and behaviors in social interactions. Rather than seeing emotions as separate and lower neurological events, Mayer and Salovey's work suggests that emotion and reason function together in decision making with emotion taking a leading role. Indeed, they assert that emotion directs reason to the problems to be solved and to the puzzles in life to be sorted through.

Exploring emotion systemically brings additional dimensions to the discussion. Claire Ashton-James and Neal Ashkanasy have developed a framework to interpret emotive activity within organizations that illustrates the way that emotion shapes organizations.⁹ Termed Affective Events Theory, Ashton-James and Ashkanasy posit that events within and without the organization generate affective movements. Those events prompt emotional responses from persons within the organization. Effective leaders pay attention to the constantly shifting cultural dynamics within the organization and the larger contexts that impact workers, clients, and the working environment. Indeed, an organization's mood and affect are more likely

⁷ In 2008, Sage Publications published a five-volume series on the psychology of emotions. Ed. Antony S. R. Manstead, *Psychology of Emotions*, 5 vols., (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008). See also Reinhard Pekrun and Michael Frese, "Emotions in Work and Achievement," *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (7) (1992): 153–200; Claire E. Ashton-James and Neal M. Ashkanasy, "Affective Events Theory: A Strategic Perspective" in *Emotions, Ethics and Decision-Making*, eds. Wilfred J. Zerbe, Charmine E. J. Härtel, and Neal M. Askanasy (Bingley, UK: JAI Press, 2008).

⁸ John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey, "Emotional Intelligence," *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality* (9) (1990): 185–211 and "The Intelligence of Emotional Intelligence," *Intelligence* 17(4) (1993): 433–42.

⁹ Ashton-James and Ashkanasy, 1–34.

to be affected by momentary and daily factors than by long-held beliefs and well-established attitudes.¹⁰ Thus, leaders keep a constant watch on the mood and demeanor of persons who make up their organization.

Additionally, effective leaders learn to differentiate or distinguish between the emotions, being mindful that different emotions impact the organization's life in different ways. As Ashton-James and Ashkanasy note, different emotions produce distinctly different results in a group. Ashton-James and Ashkanasy review five leading emotions—anger, sadness, disgust, fear/anxiety, and joy/happiness. To demonstrate the differences that different emotions foster, consider the following example. Anger, sadness, and joy/happiness appear to foster increased risk-taking—though perhaps in radically different ways. Disgust, fear, and anxiety encourage more risk-averse responses.¹¹ For example, the proactive work of John Kotter's change theory begins with establishing a sense of urgency.¹² Urgency, or intentional injection of anxiety, creates the dynamics for movement more effectively than happiness or contentment.

Another dimension for emotionally aware leaders includes the awareness of history. Emotions become strengthened by our particular history or past. Those historical memories can come alive. As James and Ashkanasy state: "Memories for social stimuli are associated with a particular affect value (positive or negative). As such, when in a positive or negative affective state, and especially when experiencing a particular

¹⁰ Ashton-James and Ashkanasy, 9.

¹¹ Ashton-James and Ashkanasy, 13. Paul Ekman offers an extensive review of emotion. He notes various families of emotion, what biological contributions are made to each emotion, whether an emotion has a distinctive state, and an argument for refined definition for what he terms *basic emotion*. See "An Argument for Basic Emotion," in *Psychology of Emotions*, 5 vols., (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008), 1:95–123.

¹² John Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 20–22; see also 35–49 for a full discussion of establishing a sense of urgency.

emotion, access to memories, ideas, thoughts, and biases that are associated with this affective state are cognitively primed such that access to these knowledge stores is facilitated.”¹³ Ministerial leaders should be aware that current emotional states can easily unlock the door to decades-old memories. Those old feelings and events connected to those feelings can suddenly be as fresh and raw as they were in some distant past. And in their freshness, those emotions can either hinder or accentuate change processes and movement within the community.

Another way in which emotions impact groups is through decision-making. Emotions, as they shape moods, impact the capacity of decision-makers to make informed decisions that frame congregational life and witness. The conceptual work of strategic thinking and higher levels of decision-making invoke greater risk and induce emotions at a higher level than the mundane decisions that occur daily. Thus, more emotional will is involved in the decision-making work of leaders.¹⁴ In congregational life, the higher the risk is for the church’s future, the greater the emotion that will be attached to the process of decision-making. As in other organizations and communities, congregational leaders will find that emotional maturity and a reliance on emotional strength are a necessary resource for congregational vitality.

In developing their Affective Events Theory, Ashton-James and Ashkanasy present a cognitive process that is useful for our conversation about congregations and leadership.¹⁵ Their process is not unlike Richard Osmer’s fourfold movement articulated in his *Practical Theology: An*

¹³ Ashton-James and Ashkanasy, 16.

¹⁴ Ashton-James and Ashkanasy, 17.

¹⁵ Ashton-James and Ashkanasy, 17–21. They note a process that begins with the recognition of environmental events that call for adaptation for the organization, which then leads to an interpretation of those events. Next, a process to identify the possible meaning of what change might mean for the organization and evaluating the options identified occurs. Finally, a course of action is identified.

*Introduction.*¹⁶ A series of questions guide congregational leaders: What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? How might we respond?

Ashton-James and Ashkanasy enhance this process by noting that the affective state of leaders can impact the way such questions are handled. Persons with negative affect will tend to see things negatively. Likewise, persons with positive affect will tend to see things positively. Possessing an awareness of one's emotional state will facilitate leaders as they develop questions and assess the answers they receive. Furthermore, in developing a response or an action within a congregation, Ashton-James and Ashkanasy suggest that leaders with negative affect will likely pay much closer attention to the implementation of the plan. They want to make sure that every step is properly taken. However, leaders with positive affect tend to not pay attention to detail. They have an innate confidence that all will be well.

Throughout the strategic planning or theological reflection within congregations, pastoral leaders will discover a breadth of emotion infused throughout attitudes and decision-making processes.¹⁷ This emotion does not reside merely within individuals or groups of individuals. Emotion also exists within the leader. Thus, effective leaders seek to be aware of not only the emotions of others, but also of their own emotions and the ways that their own emotions are in play throughout the decision-making process.

The emotional life of leaders plays a significant role in leadership through the manner in which emotion functions in human relationships. The deep value of this insight is evidenced in one best-selling book on leadership that finds its way into many academic conversations. Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee's *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* frames

¹⁶ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

¹⁷ Ashton-James and Ashkanasy, 26.

this relational quality well.¹⁸ And in so doing, Goleman and his colleagues declare: “The emotional task of the leader is *primal*—that is, first in two senses: It is both the original and the most important act of leadership.”¹⁹ Accordingly, effective leaders seek to connect meaningfully to followers’ emotions in a positive way. Doing so creates resonance. When disconnects occur and an emotional match is not made, then dissonance occurs. The primal nature of emotion becomes the foundation of self-understanding for the leader and in the quest to understand the other through resonance.

Seeking resonance with followers suggests the deep value of fostering trust and an affective commitment to change and adaptation within organizations. Within leadership literature, the term *charismatic leadership* has surfaced as a way to distinguish this understanding from pure rational forms of leadership.²⁰ “[U]nlike the ‘traditional’ leadership theories, which emphasized rational processes, charismatic leadership theory focuses on emotions and values, acknowledges the importance of symbolic behavior and the role of the leader in making events meaningful for followers.”²¹ Admittedly, the term *charismatic leadership* is surrounded by questions within communities of faith. Charisma functions best, not as a manipulative tool, but as a resource to foster something

¹⁸ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002); see comments by Ronald H. Humphrey, “The Right Way to Lead with Emotional Labor,” in *Affect and Emotion: New Directions in Management Theory and Research* (Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2008), 2.

¹⁹ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 5.

²⁰ R. J. House, W. D. Spangler, and J. Woycke, “Personality and Charisma in the US Presidency: A Psychological Theory of Leader Effectiveness,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 36(3) (1991): 364–396; Björn Michaelis, Ralf Stegmaier, and Karlheinz Sonntag, “Affective Commitment to Change and Innovation Implementation Behavior: The Role of Charismatic Leadership and Employees’ Trust in Top Management,” *Journal of Change Management* 9(4) (2009): 399–407.

²¹ Michaelis, Stegmaier, and Sonntag, 401.

that underlies a community's willingness to consider change. That something is trust. Indeed, as Michaelis, Stegmaier, and Sonntag demonstrate in their research, when trust is fostered by the leaders' openness, sensitivity, and vulnerability, then the community is more open to innovation and change.²²

However, a question remains. How do leaders develop their capacity as emotionally savvy leaders? For an initial answer, one could turn again to a term introduced earlier, *emotional intelligence* (EQ). Although Daniel Goleman launched emotional intelligence into popular parlance, it finds its way into literature with the pioneering work of Salovey and Mayer.²³ They defined emotional intelligence "as the subset of social intelligence that involves the *ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.*"²⁴ Emotional intelligence offers a helpful framework to understand and navigate the complexity of negotiating relationships and authentic living. Salovey and Mayer suggest three moves: First is the appraisal and expression of emotion for one's self and in others. Second is the regulation of emotion of one's self and with others. Third is the intuitive practice of utilizing emotion toward a greater good. Persons with high EQ seek to develop skills in each area—beginning with the awareness of one's own emotional self.

Because these factors lend themselves to certain habits, Salovey and Mayer introduce empathy as a leadership practice. Empathy requires the leader to access his or her own emotions and to meaningfully connect with another person. Learning to understand how another person thinks, feels, and perceives the world becomes a significant part of effective leadership.

²² Michaelis, Stegmaier, and Sonntag, 411.

²³ Mayer and Salovey, "Emotional Intelligence," 185–211; see also Mayer and Salovey, "What Is Emotional Intelligence?" 3–31.

²⁴ Mayer and Salovey, "Emotional Intelligence," 189.

Embracing an empathic disposition presents a particular challenge for effective leaders. Namely, a leader must come to know one's self. Thus, Salovey and Mayer conclude: "People who have developed skills related to emotional intelligence understand and express their own emotions, recognize emotions in others, regulate affect, and use moods and emotions to motivate adaptive behaviors. Is this just another definition of a healthy, self-actualized individual?"²⁵ Perhaps, but for pastoral leaders in communities of faith, another dimension should be explored.

Within the Christian tradition, to know one's self suggests knowing God and knowing others.²⁶ Personhood is bound up in relationship.²⁷ I am who I am because of the others in my life. At the center of this reality is the presence of God. Identity and personhood form in relationship. To experience and identify one's own emotion and to handle one's own emotion responsibly is part and parcel of what it means to live in community with others and with God. Thus, for pastoral leaders in communities of faith, the Christian tradition serves a more useful, germane framework. Furthermore, to know one's own emotions and manage those emotions suggests to pastors the value of being attentive to God and one's life with God, along with the attending to formative practices that foster a life with God. Likewise, recognizing the emotions of others and developing the ability to empathize suggests a deep commitment to practice virtues. In other words, when God and faith are drawn into the conversation, understanding

²⁵ Mayer and Salovey, "Emotional Intelligence," 200.

²⁶ "'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:36-40, NRSV).

²⁷ Consider Christian Smith's work, *What Is a Person?: Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

others and practicing empathy is simply another way of talking about spiritual formation. Within a faith tradition, to be emotionally aware is to be spiritually vitalized and aware.

Likewise, ministerial leaders need to recognize the systemic dimensions of emotion and its impact throughout the faith community. Neal Ashkanasy and Peter Jordan's "A Multilevel view of Leadership and Emotion" provides a helpful overview.²⁸ Ashkanasy and Jordan offer a model of five levels, or perhaps five dimensions where emotion is in play. Leaders seek to identify the interconnection of each dimension, yet each dimension is specific and needs its own distinctive attention by the leader. Emotion is in play (1) within a person, (2) between persons, (3) in interpersonal communication, (4) among groups and teams, and (5) within the organization as a whole. However, the interconnectedness of emotion throughout all interpersonal dimensions reflects again the systemic nature of emotion.²⁹

Each dimension carries a particular challenge for leaders. In interactions between seven persons on a committee, the leader may choose to draw out anxiety or fear as a catalyst for change. Yet in a pastoral context with one person who experienced a deep loss, the same leader may opt for a reflective listening mode, fostering an atmosphere of trust. Though emotions are in play in both cases, the dynamics are distinct and the leader's actions are framed by the end in mind.

Preaching and Leadership

With the exception of William Hull's book on *Strategic Preaching*, little work has been done in contemporary literature to bring leadership and preaching in conversation together.³⁰ However, in Hull's review of the literature, he

²⁸ Neal M. Ashkanasy and Peter J. Jordan, "A Multilevel View of Leadership and Emotion," in *Affect and Emotion: New Directions in Management Theory and Research*, ed. Ronald H. Humphrey (Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2008), 19–41.

²⁹ Ashkanasy and Jordan, 33.

³⁰ William E. Hull, *Strategic Preaching: The Role of the Pulpit in Pastoral Leadership* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006). Hull reviews the homiletic literature,

finds few writers who have focused on leadership dimensions in the homiletic task. One such example is the work of Richard Lischer on Martin Luther King, Jr., titled *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Word that Moved America*.³¹ Rightfully, Hull notes that even the famous Baylor list of the twelve most effective preachers was chosen by a group of homileticians for their craft—not for their capacity to lead congregations.³²

Yet it seems that the obvious connection between preaching and leadership remains. Earl Palmer presents such a claim in an essay titled “The Pulpit as Primary Setting for Defining Reality.”³³ My own experience of preaching as a minister in congregations would affirm the weekly reality of a sermon’s possibility to define and shape the narrative of the congregation. In what way does preaching define reality and frame what is really important? What makes preaching distinct from a lecture and suggests that preaching is an act of leadership?

To begin to answer these questions, I want to suggest that there is a biblical tradition for preaching as affective pastoral leadership. Beginning with a look at the apostle Paul, I will introduce the way that persuasion or emotional appeal functioned as an integral part of Paul’s pastoral ministry. Following this, I will illustrate that tradition by looking at a fourth-century Christian preacher—Augustine.

cites the paucity of resources that focus on strategic or mission-focused preaching, and offers some rationale for the current state of homiletic texts.

³¹ Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Word that Moved America* (New York: Oxford, 1995).

³² Hull, 6. See “Baylor Names the 12 Most Effective Preachers,” Baylor Media Communications, <http://www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=1036>, accessed February 17, 2014.

³³ The essay is in a collection of essays edited by Eric O. Jacobsen in *The Three Tasks of Leadership: Worldly Wisdom for Pastoral Leaders* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 68–73. Palmer’s title references Max De Pree’s wisdom that a leader’s task is to define reality, *Leadership Is an Art* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1987), 11.

Paul

Indeed, Paul's missionary work among first-century congregations as evidenced by his letters within the New Testament is replete with emotional appeal. Paul's pastoral instincts to facilitate the transformation of Christian communities led him to make rhetorical moves to connect and to persuade others. As Steven Kraftchick states as he reviewed Paul's Galatian letter: "He was involved in embodied argument and had to make appeals not only to the mind, but also to the heart. Only if and when he achieved an address to the whole person could a successful outcome be achieved with his letter."³⁴ So when one considers Paul's ministry, it is not surprising to find that Paul's pastoral work reflects a holistic engagement of the person and of the communities of faith that he served.

Rather than write off Paul's rhetorical flourishes as some sort of ancient, uncritical pastoral action, I would assert that making emotional appeals in the ancient world served as an act of pastoral leadership as reflected in the larger philosophic tradition. Thomas Olbricht provides an introduction to the practice of rhetoric by Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and others. He notes the pervasive use of emotional appeal, or *pathos*, and how *pathos* seeks to situate the listener in a place where the listener can really hear or engage in the message that is being presented.³⁵

Paul's ministerial leadership reflects the value of understanding the multiple facets of what it means to be a pastor. Indeed, as Hull suggests, the intersection of preaching and leadership demonstrates integration of pastoral leadership, offers an appropriate urgency to fundamental questions of life, and anchors preaching with the congregation's mission in the world.³⁶ Paul's leadership draws from many sources, but at its heart was nothing less

³⁴ Steven Kraftchick, "Pathos in Paul," in *Paul and Pathos*, eds. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 44.

³⁵ Thomas H. Olbricht, "*Pathos* as Proof in Greco-Roman Rhetoric," in *Paul and Pathos*, 1–22.

³⁶ Hull, 12–13.

than participating “in God’s work of transforming the community of faith until it is ‘blameless’ at the coming of Christ.”³⁷ With pastoral skill and rhetorical sensitivity, contemporary pastors may find that the weekly sermon is a significant place in the congregation’s life where the pastor offers leadership and shapes the formative life of the congregation that is rooted in the Word. One early Christian leader—Augustine—demonstrates this quite effectively.

Augustine

Paul R. Kolbet, in his recent work on Augustine, offers a new look at the way in which preaching served pastoral leadership in the early church.³⁸ Following the work of A. D. Nock, Abraham Malherbe, and others, Kolbet explores the concept of psychagogy and its role in pagan rhetoric and among Christian communities. Moving beyond rational forms of pedagogy or dialectic, psychagogy acknowledged that human experience cannot be adequately accounted for through rational means alone. Psychagogy might be described as the intentional rhetorical moves made in public speech so as to aid the philosopher (leader) in practicing therapy within a community. Thus, Roos Meijering would describe psychagogy as “bringing into ecstasy the audience by the magic of the speech, carrying it away to the fictitious world that one has created, or to the emotional state that will make it take the decision one hopes for.”³⁹

Of course, critics of emotionally laden speech were present in the early centuries of the Christian Church. Yet the reality of the human condition pressed Christian leaders to develop pastoral methods that were adequate for the leadership task. To influence and to persuade were critical activities; however, they were not taken on lightly or

³⁷ James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 20.

³⁸ Paul R. Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 2010).

³⁹ Roos Meijering, *Literary and Rhetorical Theories in Greek Scholia* (Groningen, Netherlands: Egbert Forsten, 1987), 8. As quoted by Kolbet, 8.

without some real understanding of the context. As Kolbet states: “These traditions. . . stress that for therapeutic speech to be effective, it must be based on knowledge and persuade by adapting itself in specific ways both to the psychic state of the recipient and to the particular occasion.”⁴⁰ In present contexts, it might be helpful to remember that for ancient people, reason and emotion were not polarities. Thus, persuasive speech given toward truthful ends was valued. Working out of the deep, culturally embedded values of rhetoric, the congregational leader used speech—the well-articulated word—to practice psychagogy or philosophical therapy.

Kolbet’s work pursues Augustine’s practice of psychagogy through his preaching, demonstrating the pastoral work of shaping the lives of persons and congregations through public proclamation. The most significant place where Augustine reflects on the work of preaching as pastoral leadership is in *On Christian Doctrine*. As in the various philosophical and pagan traditions of his day, Augustine argues that human beings need guidance and direction in their lives. However, the guidance that is needed is guidance shaped by more than just any wisdom.

The disordered human condition is not a situation that knowledge alone can remedy. Human beings inevitably possess disordered loves that are hardened by human habits. The cure is not merely shedding light on this darkness. Rather, within Christian communities, Augustine sees the work of the preacher as one who offers the Wisdom of God as evidenced in Jesus Christ. Thus, Augustine offers the well-known three-fold declaration from Cicero about preaching: “...he who is eloquent should speak in such a way that he teaches, delights, and moves. Then [Cicero] adds, ‘To teach is a necessity, to please is a sweetness, to persuade is a victory.’”⁴¹

Yet what was a victory for Augustine? Though Augustine was keen to engage the particular emotional state

⁴⁰ Kolbet, 8.

⁴¹ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 4.12.27.

of his congregation and willing to use various emotional appeals to persuade, larger forces were in play for this early Christian leader. For Augustine, the role of Scripture created an alternative narrative from the disordered narratives that humans and congregations pursue. The narrational world of Scripture with its own emotive depth and experience serves as a place of encounter for the congregation. For Augustine, preaching becomes the way of connecting the world of Scripture to the experience of the congregation. Indeed, preaching brings the reimagined world of Scripture into the disordered world of the congregation to bear against the false narratives present in the congregation. As Kolbet says, “Scripture, therefore, provides ‘constructive’ guidance in addition to its critical perspective as the soul of the reader gradually becomes rightly ordered in love of God and neighbor. The skills one develops to read Scripture properly are the very ones needed to act morally.”⁴²

Augustine is not proposing a simple fideism—a nonthinking, flat acceptance of Scripture. Rather, for Augustine, Scripture reflects a narrative that has already been made subject to God’s ordering and thus is given to the Church as a resource for the ongoing transformative work.⁴³ Augustine’s practice of the psychagogic tradition is to bring the congregation into engagement with the world of Scripture. Thus, the preacher is involved in the transformative process “by re-directing each hearer’s attention away from competing authorities toward a sacred text divinely arranged in such a way that the very exercise of interpretation that is required for understanding it involves the reform of the mind and the retraining of desire.”⁴⁴ In that engagement, the hearer’s affections are turned toward the true curate of souls. For Augustine, the real victory in pastoral leadership is in creating the space for God’s redemptive work.

⁴² Kolbet, 150.

⁴³ Kolbet, 151.

⁴⁴ Kolbet, 161.

The capacity of the preacher to engage the congregation's affections and seek to persuade rested in an important theological reality. For Augustine, it was not the preacher but rather Christ who was the teacher. As preacher, Augustine understood that he was receiving instruction along with the congregation.⁴⁵ This humble recognition meant that what the preacher received was personally received. And both preacher and congregation were not merely informed, but were invited to be transformed by God's work. So pastoral leadership called upon the preacher to use whatever use of eloquence was necessary.

But if those who hear are to be moved rather than taught, so that they may not be sluggish in putting what they know into practice and so that they may fully accept those things which they acknowledge to be true, there is need for greater powers of speaking. Here entreaties and reproofs, exhortations and rebukes, and whatever other devices are necessary to move minds must be used. And almost all men who make use of eloquence do not cease to do all of those things which I have mentioned.⁴⁶

Augustine is not without his limitations for leaders in the twenty-first century. For example, his conversations about affect, movement, and emotions are typically guided by a priority given to reason. Nonetheless, Augustine consistently assumed a holistic framework for reason and positive affect. "In contrast to modern views of emotion, Augustine does not contrast those emotions he knew as *affectus* and *affectiones* with reason. With respect to affections, there is no dichotomy between the heart and the head."⁴⁷ For Augustine, psychagogy was an appropriate exercise of pastoral leadership that was practiced in participating with God's transformative work within the community. So how does community transformation take place? In the next

⁴⁵ Kolbet, 176.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 4.4.6–7.

⁴⁷ Anastasia Scrutton, "Emotion in Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas: A Way Forward in the Im/passibility Debate?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 (2005): 171.

section, we will pursue some ways in which affective leadership might inform contemporary preaching practices.

Affective Leadership and Preaching

The connection of emotional awareness to leadership and preaching finds a bridge in the work of theologian Pat Keifert.⁴⁸ Keifert's extensive work on congregations emphasizes the congregation as the place for theological inquiry. The community of faith, not the academy, is the primary location for engagement with Scripture, faith, and public life communities of faith. In making that argument, Keifert reclaims the role of rhetoric in congregational life while acknowledging the varied abuses of rhetoric and its lack of place within modern discourse and public deliberation.⁴⁹ The foundational feature of rhetoric, from its framing in Aristotelian categories, in Paul and early Christianity, to current conversations, lies in its primary concern for the congregation. It is deeply contextual. Or, as Thomas Long would declare: "Preachers cannot avoid rhetorical concerns. There is a scandalous fleshiness to preaching, and while sermons may be 'pure' theology all the way through Saturday night, on Sunday morning they are inescapably embodied and thus, rhetorical."⁵⁰

Pastoral leaders are embedded within a living community. As such, the ministerial leader lives and works within a reality that is infused with emotion. The attentive pastor embraces his or her emotion, practices an awareness of the systemic nature of emotional dynamics, and seeks greater facility in managing both negative and positive

⁴⁸ Patrick Keifert, ed., *Testing the Spirits: How Theology Informs the Study of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009). Keifert's two opening essays, "The Return of the Congregation to Theological Education," 13–26, and "The Bible and Theological Education: A Report and Reflections on a Journey," 27–47, develop the case for the use of rhetoric for congregational vitality.

⁴⁹ Keifert, 22–23.

⁵⁰ Thomas G. Long, "And How Shall They Hear? The Listener in Contemporary Preaching," in *Listening to the Word: Studies in Honor of Fred Craddock*, eds. Gail R. O'Day and Thomas G. Long (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1993), 178.

affect within the community. Such leadership fosters transformation in the community. As Robert and Janet Denhardt suggest, “Good leadership, like art, touches us. It stimulates not just our minds, but our emotions, and makes us come alive.”⁵¹ Artful leadership not merely touches the emotional system, it incarnationally shapes the well-being and the mission of a congregation.

For effective pastoral leaders, rhetoric functions as the bridge between preaching and leadership. To this point, Kiefert declares that rhetoric “is about structuring the pursuit of truth and the ordering of public discourse within the interplay of three characters: the character of the speaker (ethos), the character of the speech (logos), and the character of the audience (pathos).”⁵² After referencing Aristotle, Kiefert notes the contemporary tendency to prize objectivity and pure reason. However, these failed attempts to use reason based on objective facts still leave human beings with a broken world and plenty of opportunity for violence. So Kiefert suggests a more lively approach, an approach he terms *rhetorical rationality*, which understands that all discourse takes place within a particular setting, is aimed at a particular audience, and is delivered by particular speakers who use assumed warrants and backing for their claims within a moral field. It is about character; in fact, we might say that it is from the moral embeddedness of all discourse in implicit values or human interests of particular times and places that much of the intellectual project of modernity has sought to escape.⁵³

Like the ancient practice of psychagogy, ministerial leaders engage in rhetorical rationality to create the space where persons, communities, and truth find one another. And like Paul and Augustine, the preacher lives in the tension between the flourish of emotional appeal and the mysterious work of God, yielding his or her ethos to the

⁵¹ Robert B. Denhardt and Janet V. Denhardt, *The Dance of Leadership: The Art of Leading in Business, Government, and Society* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2006), 8.

⁵² Kiefert, 23.

⁵³ Kiefert, 39–40.

particular demands of the living Word rather than to the expectations of the audience. Such work requires the adept practice of empathy grounded in a clear self-awareness. When the minister is cognizant of his or her own emotions, when empathy attentiveness is in play, and when rhetorical rationality shapes public discourse, transformation and mission emerge. Ministerial leaders are ideally situated to practice rhetorical engagement for the sake of their faith communities and for public conversation. The weekly sermon is uniquely situated in congregational life where the pastoral leader has the opportunity to shape the congregational narrative. The art of reweaving the congregation's emotions and story in a way that envisions God's preferred future in light of the gospel is a profound act of affective pastoral leadership.

As my friend intuitively knew years ago, it begins with the pastor's own self-awareness. Have I protected the space for my own examination by God? And then the pastor, with all humility, must ask, In what way do I engage the various emotional fields that exist so that the truth of God's call is heard anew and afresh? From moments of pastoral care and visitation, from strategic planning and board meetings, and from the pulpit, the ministerial leader practices the art of rhetorical rationality for the sake of the kingdom. The vitality and the need for vibrant pastoral leadership oozes from the streets and sidewalks. Affective leadership will frame the work of emotionally competent and courageous pastors who walk those streets.

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