THE PENTATHLON PREACHING PRINCIPLE APPLIED

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ABSTRACT: This article seeks to elucidate several of the concepts on which the Pentathlon Preaching Principle operates. The relationship between the internal dynamics of a discourse and generic illocution are explored. The problem of illocutionary distance is revisited, and ways of achieving generic equilibrium between text and sermon are suggested. Finally, the homiletical utility of the Pentathlon Preaching Principle is demonstrated by applying it to the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14.

INTRODUCTION

In a previous article I suggested a method by which a preacher may take stock of the generic elements in a biblical passage and then imagine how to use related generic elements in the oral sermon in order to produce a similar illocution in the latter as found in the former.[1] Building on the work of Peter Low in translation studies, I identified five elements which are integral to generic illocution and set forth a strategy preachers might use to balance the elements together in an oral sermon in order to achieve a particular illocution.[2]

In the present article I wish to further explicate the concepts of generic illocution, illocutionary distance, and generic equilibrium, which form the basis of this framework. Once these concepts are more fully explained I will demonstrate the homiletical utility of this matrix by applying it to the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14.

GENERIC ILLOCUTION

Every literary act plays a specific language-game governed by certain rules or conventions. The literary form of a text determines which elements may coexist in a particular literary act and in what configuration. As Abraham

Kuruvilla notes "A text, then, is an instance of a generic language-game, played in accordance with, and while abiding by, the rules of that game."[3]

The Pentathlon Preaching Principle operates on the assumption that literary acts possess illocutionary force at the generic level.[4] This concept of generic illocution takes seriously the idea that literary texts not only possess meaning, but also perform actions. J.L. Austin introduced this pragmatic approach to language with his three-fold distinction of locution, illocution, and perlocution.[5] Utilizing this approach to language with regard to inscripturated literary acts encourages one to explore what a Scriptural passage *means* as well as what it *does*. By taking note of the generic elements in a text and how they work together to produce both locution and illocution, one may begin to discern the full rhetorical impact of an inscripturated literary act.[6]

At this point it will be helpful to clarify a concept which is vital to both literary and rhetorical discourse, the internal dynamic of a composition. Writing at the level of meta-discourse, Karlyn Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson discuss the difficulties inherent in categorizing and grouping rhetorical acts together based on similarities in genre.[7] However, they posit that there are strategies one might use to identify and group individual discourses into a generic classification, based on the recurrence of shared rhetorical elements in a particular configuration that produce a unique internal dynamic.[8] Although they focus on the relationship of rhetorical acts to one another at the level of genre, their insight into the internal dynamics of rhetorical compositions can help further our understanding of generic illocution in both literary and rhetorical acts.

Campbell and Jamieson claim that the "substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics" of an individual discourse fuse together to create the composition's internal dynamic.[9] Moreover, "If an element is generically significant, it is so fused to the other elements that its absence would alter the character of the address."[10] This fusion of elements within a discourse is the key to discovering how a text's internal dynamic, that is to say, how it produces illocutionary force.[11] Only by analyzing the various literary or rhetorical elements of a discourse may one discover how they coalesce synergistically to create illocutionary force.[12]

ILLOCUTIONARY DISTANCE

Illocutionary distance describes the difficulty inherent in trying to produce a similar illocution in a homiletical speech utterance as found in the inscripturated literary act on which the sermon is based. [13] There are several issues which must be addressed when moving from text to sermon. One must take into account the textuality of an inscripturated literary act when trying to identify its illocution and produce a similar illocution via oral means in a homiletical speech utterance.[14] Furthermore, the speech genres

in one's homiletical repertoire may be quite different from the literary form of the biblical passage, making it difficult to determine which speech type to employ for the sermon. Traversing this distance between text and sermon is hard work and requires a preacher to become competent in both literary and rhetorical criticism.[15]

Commenting on this relationship between literary and rhetorical criticism, Northrop Frye observes "That if the direct union of grammar and logic is characteristic of non-literary verbal structures, literature may be described as the rhetorical organization of grammar and logic. Most of the features characteristic of literary form, such as rhyme, alliteration, metre, antithetical balance, the use of example, are also rhetorical schemata."[16]

In order to cross the illocutionary divide, a preacher must be able to analyze the literary features of the biblical text and ascertain how they fuse together to produce illocutionary force. He or she must then take stock of the rhetorical elements available to them (which vary depending on the speech genre chosen for the sermon), and arrange them so that their fusion produces a similar illocution to that found in the inscripturated literary act. This process results in generic equilibrium between text and sermon.

GENERIC EQUALIBRIUM

The goal of form-sensitive preaching is to "extend a portion of the text's impact into a new communicational situation, that of contemporary hearers listening to the sermon."[17] This is accomplished by achieving *generic equilibrium* between the biblical passage and the sermon. By generic equilibrium I mean a strategic arrangement of rhetorical (generic) elements in the homiletical speech utterance whose fusion produces a similar illocution as found in the biblical text. Although the internal dynamics of the inscriptrated literary act and the homiletical speech utterance are unique (as a result of illocutionary distance), their individual illocutions will share some point of similarity.

The Pentathlon Preaching Principle encourages one to first evaluate the literary elements in the preaching passage in order to understand its internal dynamic (that is, how those elements fuse together to produce illocutionary force). Next, one is invited to imagine how the rhetorical counterparts to the passage's literary elements may be formed in the sermon, creating a unique internal dynamic in order to produce a similar illocution.[18] The generic elements which this matrix takes into account are content, style, structure, rhetorical devices, and orality. By carefully going through the process of evaluation and generation with each one of these elements, a preacher may achieve generic equilibrium and successfully cross the illocutionary divide between text and sermon.[19]

THE PENTATHLON PREACHING PRINCIPLE APPLIED: LUKE 18:9-14

Having briefly clarified how generic illocution, illocutionary distance, and generic equilibrium operate within the Pentathlon Preaching Principle, I will now apply this framework to the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14.

Content

Evaluation of the text discloses that Jesus is comparing a Pharisee with a tax collector, the verdict of which is a truly shocking reversal of expectations. Also at play here is the notion of whom God accepts, outward appearances notwithstanding.[20] The passage contains narrative features such as characters, plot, and dialogue, but economic language and lack of detailed scenery is used to focus attention on the prayers of the two characters.

The insights gleaned from evaluating the text may now generate ideas for shaping content in the sermon. By inhabiting "the world in front of the text," one begins to think through how this text may apply to his or her listeners, and the best way to present this to them. The sermon will need to present the two characters as opposites, while initially painting the Pharisee in a positive light (given many Christian's pre-understanding of what it means to be a Pharisee).[21] The sermonic form might possess a sort of narrative quality, which also suggests that a speech genre be chosen which lends itself to that type of discourse.

Style

The narrative focuses on the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector, since these petitions serve as windows into the hearts of the characters offering them.[22] The Pharisee's enumeration of his righteous works and his use of the first person pronoun five times in two verses give one a lot of information, but evaluation is withheld until v. 14. Only after Jesus' pronouncement does one discern that the Pharisee is not as righteous as he claims to be. In contrast, the tax collector comes off as genuinely humble at that point. But at first glance, the reader is meant to take a dim view of the tax collector and his plea for mercy.

Analysis of these features may generate several possibilities for adapting similar stylistic features to the sermon. When describing and explaining the Pharisee's prayer, it can be used to show what a wonderful Christian the Pharisee is (to put it in contemporary terms). This furthers a goal mentioned in the content criterion, namely, painting the Pharisee in a positive light early on in the sermon.[23] This also prepares for the reversal of expectations later in the sermon. The words one uses here, along with

phraseology, will go a long way in determining how each character is viewed during the sermon.

Structure

The flow and structure of this passage integrates seamlessly with the content. As a "single indirect narrative parable" its structure facilitates the reversal that gives meaning to the text.[24] The Pharisee is contrasted with the tax collector, and initially it is thought that the former will be accepted by God and the latter rejected. However, these expectations are reversed by Jesus in the concluding lines of the parable.

These observations might generate ideas for a preacher to use in molding sermonic content. One obvious structural plan is to include some sort of reversal moment in the text, whereby the congregation has their ideas of whom God accepts turned upside down and challenged. Moreover, it might be necessary to take the congregation through the parable twice; once to help them experience it as Jesus' initial hearers would have, and then again after the reversal in order to explain why the tax collector's attitude is acceptable to God.

Rhetorical Devices

Although Luke states the main point of the parable in v. 9 before it is given, the parable itself operates inductively. By developing the story in this way Jesus is able to employ indirection and identification to draw his hearers into the parabolic world. As they identify with the Pharisee and despise the tax collector, they are set up for the coming reversal and subsequent self-indictment.

These devices suggest ways in which a preacher might draw his or her listeners into the world of the parable. The challenge in applying these devices, of course, is that many parishioners have read this parable already and identify immediately with the tax collector.[25] Nevertheless, fleshing out the implicit details of the text and re-telling the story in a biblically faithful way can draw one's hearers in enough so that they forget about the text's "punch-line." Inviting the congregation to identify with the Pharisee as he is initially cast in a positive light, can also draw the listeners in and prepare them to feel the full weight of Jesus' pronouncement.[26]

Orality

The observations from the previous criteria can be helpful at this point. We know the text sets the Pharisee and tax collector in juxtaposition, with the former initially viewed favorably, and the latter unfavorably. Attention

is paid to the content of their respective petitions, while indirection and identification lead those listening to Jesus to cheer for the Pharisee and jeer at the tax collector. The reversal of human expectation regarding those God accepts leaves listeners examining their hearts to see if they are haughty or humble before the Lord.

In an oral sermon therefore, a preacher might use a lighter tone, colored with admiration when first speaking about the Pharisee; yet after the reversal, one might use a more sober tone consonant with a warning. These tones could be reversed, with some adaptation, when speaking about the tax collector pre and post-reversal. Pitch, inflection, volume, and rate would need be adjusted to match the preacher's natural speaking voice as is appropriate to each part of the sermon.

CONCLUSION

It is my hope that this homiletical framework will aid preachers in traversing the illocutionary distance between the inscripturated literary act and the homiletical speech utterance. By paying attention to concepts of generic illocution, illocutionary distance, and generic equilibrium one will be better equipped to think through the process of moving from text to sermon. Moreover, utilizing the paradigm's functions of evaluation and generation with each generic element will aid one in creating a similar illocution in his or her sermon as found in the preaching passage. In this way one can craft a sermon that is faithful to the preaching passage not only in terms of content, but also in terms of illocution.

NOTES

1. Daniel Gregory, "The Pentathlon Preaching Principle: A Proposed Method for Bridging the Gap Between Text and Sermon," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 17:2 (September 2017): 19-34.
2. Peter Low, "Singable Translations of Songs," *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 11 no. 2 (2003): 87-103.
3. Abraham Kuruvilla, *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue* (Library of New Testament Studies. London: T&T Clark, 2009), 35.
4. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There A Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 340-342.
5. J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975). He explains "We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a *locutionary act*, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a

certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense. Second, we said that we also perform *illocutionary acts* such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform *perlocutionary acts*: what we bring about or achieve *by* saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading (*Words*, 109).

6. Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 227. See also Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 106.
7. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction" in *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*, eds. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Falls Church, Va.: Speech Communication Association, 1978), 9-18.
8. Campbell and Jamieson, *Form and Genre*, 21.
9. Campbell and Jamieson, *Form and Genre*, 21.
10. Campbell and Jamieson, *Form and Genre*, 24.
11. Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Rhetorical Hybrids: Fusions of Generic Elements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 146-57. They note "Genres are not only dynamic responses to circumstances; each is a *dynamis*- a potential fusion of elements that may be energized or actualized as a strategic response to a situation" (*Rhetorical Hybrids*, 146).
12. In *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-Create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 24, 27-28, Jeffrey Arthurs advocates that preachers become conversant with the dynamics present in the various genres of Scripture in order to learn how to "replicate the impact of the text…" in their sermons.
13. Long, *Literary Forms*, 33.
14. In *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II* (trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson [Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991]) Paul Ricoeur observes that "… in spoken discourse, the illocutionary force leans upon mimicry and gestural elements and upon the nonarticulated aspects of discourse, what we call prosody. In this sense, the illocutionary force is less completely inscribed in grammar than is the propositional meaning. In every case, its inscription in a syntactic articulation is itself gathered up in specific paradigms that in principle make possible fixation by writing (*Text to Action*, 145).
15. Long, *Literary Forms*, 34-38. Lamenting the fact that many preachers ignore the tools of literary analysis when preparing their sermons, Leland Ryken ("The Bible as Literature and Expository Preaching," in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughs*, eds. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson [Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007], 52-

53), notes "… forms like story, poetry, proverb, and vision (to name just a few) are the forms *through which* biblical content is mediated. If the writing of the Bible is the product of divine inspiration-if it represents what the Holy Spirit prompted the authors to write as they were carried along (2 Pet. 1:21)- then the only possible conclusion is that the literary forms of the Bible have been inspired by God and need to be granted an importance congruent with that inspiration." On the necessity of applying literary analysis to the study of the Hebrew Bible see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 1981), 12.

16. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 245.
17. Long, *Literary Forms*, 33. See also Mike Graves, *The Sermon As Symphony* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1997), 18; Michael J. Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 149; Tim McBride, *Preaching the New Testament as Rhetoric: The Promise of Rhetorical Criticism for Expository Preaching* (Australian College of Theology Monograph Series. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 3-4.
18. Imagination is crucial when discerning which rhetorical element to use in an oral sermon so that may produce a similar illocution as found in the preaching passage. For a helpful discussion on the use of imagination in the preaching process see Frank Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleaveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1997), 65-67; Cleophus LaRue, *I Believe I'll Testify: The Art of African American Preaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 71-80.
19. However, it must be remembered that bridging the gap between text and sermon is not simply a matter of moving between the biblical passage and the contemporary world. Instead, the preacher stands in the middle of this interpretive process engaging the text in order to bring a word from God to his or her hearers (Long, *Literary Forms*, 34). Concerning this interpretive process Grant Osborne (*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006], 410), notes "As we move from the world of the text to its significance, we must wed those two aspects. We cannot finally separate exegesis from application, meaning from significance, because they are two aspects of the same hermeneutical act. To derive the meaning of a text is already to arrive at its significance, because the horizon of your preunderstanding has united with the horizon of the text, and exposition has become the beginning of significance."
20. Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 126.
21. Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove:

IVP Academic, 2012), 341-42.

22. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 644.

23. Brian C. Stiller, *Preaching Parables to Postmoderns* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 145.
24. Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 462.
25. Frederick Houk Borsch, *Many Things in Parables: Extravagant Stories of New Community* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 26. See also John D. Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards A Theology of Story* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1988), 82.
26. Stiller, *Preaching Parables*, 145.