

# ADOPTION AND ADAPTATION OF RHETORICAL DEVICES IN SOUTH AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

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## **ABSTRACT**

Adoption of rhetorical devices is evident in the preaching of contemporary Pentecostal churches in Durban, South Africa. Rhetorical devices and shrewd unconventionality, which place a twist on those devices adopted, are frequently found in contemporary sermons and preaching activities, but categories of rhetoric suitable for preaching (homiletics) remain as yet unidentified. Arguably, preaching or sermons can be seen as religiously-motivated campaigns or discourses, while professional communication can be seen as persuasive communication towards social or communicative engagement. This article investigates the adoption and adaptation of rhetorical devices which influence preaching and communication and follows from an understanding of professional communication and sacred rhetoric. The paper reports issues surrounding the perceived adaptation of rhetoric in enhancing preacher's sermons and the dissemination of religious discourse to congregants. A qualitative analysis was used to identify those categories of rhetorical device suitable for both Biblical preaching and professional communication. The findings indicate that rhetorical devices are productive features in sermons and professional communication, and their use signifies a movement towards the communication of two fundamentals: body and spirit. A qualitative analysis shows that in the field of professional communication communicators adapt professionalism in their

discourse with mind and body, whilst across sacred communication, preachers adopt emotions and spirituality.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article addresses a new context for researching the interrelationship between rhetorical devices and religious discourse, as well as the gap in the adaptation of rhetoric, by investigating contemporary preaching, and how rhetorical devices enhance the sermons preachers deliver without undermining the spiritual context. The notion of rhetorical devices being adopted by preachers and communicators is explored, which is separate from the concept of integrated marketing communication. Therefore, elements of marketing communication such as advertising, public relations releases, promotions, direct marketing, event marketing, and the new media<sup>1</sup> are not a major focus of this paper. The rhetorical devices adopted and adapted by preachers and communicators are examined to generate a newfound creative expression in discourse.

Making use of qualitative data sources, similarities and dissimilarities between rhetoric in preaching and in professional communication are investigated to find the all emphases, attributes, and skills used by each, as influenced by particular rhetorical devices, which is hypothesised as being a movement towards professional communication. Additionally, the paper identifies perspectives on rhetorical devices more likely to be used when preachers and communicators attempt to enter into coordinated dialogues or discourses with their audiences.

At the heart of the investigation is an emphasis on the usefulness of rhetorical devices in sermons. Rhetoric is an age-old phenomenon rooted in the ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman empires. Thus, efforts to communicate with others and deal with the dynamism of public opinion can be traced back to ancient times within both the preaching and professional communication

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<sup>1</sup> Clow and Baack 2017: 68.

traditions. Some rhetorical devices are rooted in religious contexts (adoption) and carry important religious associations. At the same time, religion is deeply obliged to rhetoric (adaptation), since it would be impossible to sermonise on, connect with, communicate about, develop, preserve, or propagate a religion without the use of rhetorical intricacies.

This dichotomy implies that in reaching detailed agreement on the categories of rhetoric suitable for preaching, sermonising and communication, specific patterns are adapted. How to enhance the prospects of rhetorical roles and responsibilities, and the number of required rhetorical devices in preaching and communication, therefore become a major concern. Related to this is the complexity of marketing communication, and the drawing from a variety of disciplines whose purpose is to use communication to persuade people to purchase products and services.<sup>2</sup>

The principal question that can be raised to justify a semantic debate on the use of rhetoric by contemporary Pentecostal churches is therefore: 'What is the place of rhetorical devices in present-day preaching where so much emphasis is placed on persuasion?' More specifically, the investigation establishes: (i) issues with regard to the perceived adaptation of rhetoric in enhancing sermons; (ii) how frequently rhetoric is required to be used in preaching; (iii) which particular forms of rhetorical device are prevalent in preaching; and (iv) whether a preacher's use of rhetorical devices is suitable for the dissemination of religious discourse to congregants.

Pursuing these issues advances our understanding of how preaching is rhetorically adopted and adapted. The study seeks to improve knowledge within the discipline of professional communication by adding crucial empirical perspectives on the use of professional sermonic language and draws attention to the communicative potential of religious discourse.

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<sup>2</sup> Adebayo and Govender 2015: 251.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Because rhetoric functions as a system or distinctive property of human discourse, problems are often associated with undue use of exaggeration influenced by exposure to Biblical literature, argument, communication to convince others of the truth of their beliefs. This can lead to inefficiencies in sermons, and in preaching as a whole, since certain prophetic statements include precepts which may be regarded as counter-cultural.<sup>3</sup> More consideration should be given to the impact of actions and decisions regarding the use of rhetoric for preaching as a whole, to ensure best oratorical practices in what is considered a very ancient craft. The assumption, therefore, is that the orator's skillful deployment of rhythm, rhyme and other poetic embellishments to communicate, persuade or engage an audience, as evident in the dialogues of Plato and Aristotle which use systematised as classical rhetoric, has been adopted and adapted by contemporary preachers.

Owing to the nature and direction of South African Pentecostalism, as influenced by the work of several Pentecostal missionaries from the United Kingdom and North America, and the establishment of the Assemblies of God in conjunction with the African Faith Mission (AFM) and Full Gospel Church (FGC),<sup>4</sup> preaching has changed gradually but significantly. The nature of preaching is believed to have altered from focusing largely on Biblical hermeneutics, which deals with the principles of interpretation of books of the Bible, to exegesis, which interprets the words and grammar of specific Biblical texts, resulting in congregation-centered homiletics (sermons). In this article, two approaches are intertwiningly debated, although they are not stated so very differently at any point. One approach is "teacher tell" in which the preacher knows what the message is and communicates it to the people who are fairly passive. The other is audience-centred in which audiences are included along the lines of the New Hermeneutics. However, the problem investigated in this study

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<sup>3</sup> Tisdale and de Wet 2014: 2.

<sup>4</sup> Haag 2014: 7.

attempts to provide an answer to the following question: 'Is there evidence of rhetorical inefficiencies or problems that spread throughout preaching in contemporary Pentecostal churches in South Africa today?'

This study makes an effort to show that the challenges associated with preaching cannot be viewed in isolation, because they prevail throughout homiletic (preaching) principles. Although this study highlights significant differences in the way in which different rhetorical device have been employed during various historical periods, it also suggests that preachers' deployment of rhetorical devices may be sensitive to relative and societal factors, hence the need for adaptation. This study proposes that if such problems can be identified and resolved, this could lead to better efficiencies in encouraging the adoption of rhetorical devices. In keeping with the research problem, the study's objective was to determine whether any relationship exists between professional communication and sacred rhetoric.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Preaching as Religiously-Motivated Discourse*

A rhetorical device is described as one of the most often-used strategies, both in formulating sentences, and in rational argument. Eisenhart<sup>5</sup> states that the term 'rhetorical device' refers to an emergent grammar for measuring units of discourse between parts of speech and genres, developed by scholars and practitioners interested in the relationships between forms of discourse, and their effect on audiences, which have been perpetuated for over two millennia. Preaching and sermonising are regarded as religiously-motivated campaigns or discourses, whereas professional communication is regarded as being persuasive communication towards social or communicative engagement. According to Taylor,<sup>6</sup> preaching is the activity of a redeemed person proclaiming,

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<sup>5</sup> 2015: 1.

<sup>6</sup> 2015: 1.

explaining, illustrating, and strongly promoting the word of God, and the gospel of Christ, in such a manner as to make it possible for responsible people to understand and accept it into their lives, or reject it utterly. Thus, the central idea underlying the practice of preaching could indicate it as being the typical means of moving people towards Christ and salvation, and on to eternal life.

Pernot<sup>7</sup> asserts that preaching is a form of discourse on God which belongs to that school of what ancient practitioners of rhetoric refer to as 'deliberative genius,' which consists of exhorting audiences either to embrace a religion they do not yet know or persevere in the beliefs they already hold. In contrast, the form of discourse employed in the professional media are constitutive elements which serve commercial success by the use of persuasion in marketing, public relations and advertising.<sup>8</sup>

Preaching departs from all other forms of public speech, professional communication, marketing communication, discourse or dialogue, in rising above secular activities. Preaching comprises not merely excellency of speech, or the wisdom and power of the world, but is the testimony, wisdom and power of God in His word.<sup>9</sup> Adebayo and Govender<sup>10</sup> observe that, according to Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Biblical preaching is explained as follows:

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony of God ... My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

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<sup>7</sup> 2006: 237.

<sup>8</sup> Haase 2009: 2.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor 2015: 1.

<sup>10</sup> 2015: 262.

As observed, contemporary preaching is religiously-motivated discourse characterised by extensive use of persuasive language. Examination of Saint Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians 2:4 reveals communicative rhetoric: ‘my message and my preaching’ (his style of teaching) ‘were not in persuasive words of wisdom’ (using clever rhetoric), ‘but’ (they were delivered) ‘in demonstration’ (evidence) ‘of the’ (Holy) ‘Spirit’ (operating through me) ‘and of’ (His) ‘power’ (elevating and stirring the minds of listeners or congregants) ‘that the faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God’ (and persuading them not to glory in him, but in the power of God). Malmstrom,<sup>11</sup> presents a table of common principles for application to New Homiletic preaching which details the adoption and adaptation of rhetorical devices (Table 1).

**Table 1: Common principles of New Homiletic preaching**

- Preaching Principle 1 Elevates listeners’ role in preaching; listeners are seen as co-constructors of the sermon and conversational partners.
- Preaching Principle 2 Opens up an interpretative space and acknowledges listeners’ right to form their own opinions regarding claims made in sermons.
- Preaching Principle 3 Avoids a voice of authority; confirms faith more than proving it.
- Preaching Principle 4 Helps listeners to engage in the sermon during preaching.
- Preaching Principle 5 Focuses on preaching as embodiment (experience) and performance.
- Preaching Principle 6 Progresses inductively, as a coherent narrative, on the basis of lived experience concerning faith.

**Source: Adapted from Malmstrom<sup>12</sup>**

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<sup>11</sup> 2014: 563.

<sup>12</sup> 2014: 563.

**Preaching Principle 1** (Elevates listeners' role in preaching; listeners are seen as co-constructors of the sermon and conversational partners) describes preaching as a communicative act. The role the preacher assumes is an important factor for effective communication. As Saint Paul (1 Corinthians 2:4) reflects, God's power is made manifest in sermons which elevate and stir the minds of congregants and persuade them. This implies that both preachers and congregants play important roles in contemporary preaching, and that the correct mood and attitude by preachers should be part of sermonic communication; premodern congregants found themselves in a very different situation, however, when required to consider preaching without the use of any form of rhetoric.

**Preaching Principle 2** (Opens up an interpretative space and acknowledges listeners' right to form their own opinions regarding claims made in the sermon) might be a reasonable principle but this could allow preachers to become distracted from spiritual matters and limit themselves to those of a secular nature. Rhetoric therefore becomes only one of a number of devices for metaphysical reflection but remains the most important tool for rendering sermons.

**Preaching Principle 3** (Avoids a voice of authority; confirms faith more than proves it). Strictly speaking, the 'voice of authority' raises an important rhetorical and philosophical issue. Embodiment, prophetic and even humorous speeches are readily found in contemporary preaching. When one turns to the world of South African Pentecostal preachers, however, one cannot but remark on a decisive difference: it is difficult to imagine how glib communication and ceaselessly asking for the help of the Holy Spirit could possibly be regarded as effective. Traditional sermons have regularly been authoritarian, unilateral and non-mutual, but then congregants of the time did not listen to these sermons in postmodern terms.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Tak 2008: iii.



**Preaching Principle 4** (Helps listeners to engage with the sermon during preaching) promotes communicative engagement. Malmstrom's<sup>14</sup> study, which adopts Hyland's<sup>15</sup> model of meta-discourse which is widely attested in applied linguistics research, operates within a taxonomy of meta-discourse categories. Meta-discourse is operationalised as a framework for understanding preaching not primarily as persuasive proclamation, but as a form of social and communicative engagement between preachers and congregations which assumes an awareness on the part of the preacher that sermons are a form of discourse which imposes certain social and communicative constraints on both preachers and listeners; for example, with regard to preacher-listener status, power, and authority.<sup>16</sup> Preaching in contemporary times assumes the engagement sermon form, where preachers and congregants make constant efforts together to facilitate smoother communication.

**Preaching Principle 5** (Focuses on preaching as embodiment [experience] and performance) poses a fundamental and contextual problem. Indeed, it seems highly doubtful whether there can ever be a truly adequate sermon without embodiment from the preacher in sermon language. There are many common points between a preacher's experience and congregants' experience which can be called upon for effective communication. Preachers can, however become emotional, with their performance being overdramatised with the addition of superfluous illustrations.

**Preaching Principle 6** (Progresses inductively, as a coherent narrative, on the basis of lived experience about faith) critiques the use of extremely complicated and highly philosophical accounts, rather than inductive and deductive syllogisms. Malmstrom<sup>17</sup> states that the basic form and formula applied in various guises to New Homiletic preaching concerns have sermons 'move from the specifics of lived experience to general claims.'

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<sup>14</sup> 2014: 564.

<sup>15</sup> 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Hyland 2005.

<sup>17</sup> 2014: 578.

### ***Professional Communication***

Haase<sup>18</sup> states that marketing, public relations, and advertising are all areas in the field of professional communication. Persuasion used in marketing communication aims to find ways to convincingly sell products to markets. Persuasion used in public relations aims to give positive images to corporations. Persuasion used in advertising aims to believably inform audiences about products with the intent of selling them.

Communication is defined by Craig<sup>19</sup> as ‘an ongoing process that symbolically forms and re-forms our personal identities, our social relations, our common world of meaningful objects and events, our ideas and feelings, and our routine ways of expressing these socially constructed realities’.<sup>20</sup> Professional communicators therefore utilise strategies, learning theories, and technology to more effectively communicate within the business world.

For effective communication, it is important to understand the nature of rhetoric and the rhythmic devices in language. A discourse can be heard, but the related understanding required can only be satisfied through a description of its pitch and tone, which facilitate acceptance of the speech by an audience.

According to Chi Ko,<sup>21</sup> rhetoric is the art of creating aesthetics through the manipulation of words and meanings, which indicates that the use of rhetoric can assist in ensuring persuasive descriptiveness within discourse, along with the more effective delivery of its message. The perspective of communication as ‘imparting’, ‘sending’, ‘transmitting’, or ‘giving information to others’,<sup>22</sup> has given rise to religious communication. Carey<sup>23</sup> and

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<sup>18</sup> 2009: 2.

<sup>19</sup> 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Craig 2000.

<sup>21</sup> 2015: 152.

<sup>22</sup> Laka 2015: 99.

<sup>23</sup> 1985.

Eilers,<sup>24</sup> cited in Laka,<sup>25</sup> note that communication is generally defined from two perspectives: the ‘transmission view’ and the ‘ritual view’.

Viewing the aesthetics of preaching and communication through their use of rhetorical devices, one can perceive that this usage has become a trend borrowed from professional communication. According to the argument presented by Pernot,<sup>26</sup> if a rhetorical approach is applied to Christian texts, to scripture, or to the church fathers, accusations of subversion could follow on the grounds that an emphasis on rhetoric undermines faith and theological doctrine. This subversion is observed in today’s preaching, where the application of rhetorical devices has brought about transformation in discourse and the expression of spiritual messages, thereby reducing the power of such messages, rendering them frivolous and disheartened.

It could be stated that because the relationship between rhetoric and religion is an ancient one, it is difficult to separate them, which becomes a point of conjecture for this study. Given recent accounts of sermonising, it is impossible to cover the immense subject of rhetoric in preaching, or more precisely, professionalism in preaching. However, the time is auspicious to explore the connections between rhetoric, preaching and communication which stretch back to the ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian empires. Table 2 lists a number of rhetorical devices prevalent in both preaching and professional communication.

Some rhetorical devices are rooted in religious contexts and carry important religious associations, and preaching is deeply indebted to rhetoric for making it possible to sermonise on, connect with, communicate, develop, preserve or propagate theological messages.

Discourse, a word derived from the Latin ‘*discursus*’ (‘running to and from’) comprises the meanings ‘written or spoken

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<sup>24</sup> 2009.

<sup>25</sup> 2015: 99.

<sup>26</sup> 2006: 236.

communication or debate', or 'a formal discussion or debate', with the term frequently being used in semantics and discourse analysis.<sup>27</sup> Thus, in exploring the points of relation between rhetorical devices and preaching, it is important to observe that preaching is deeply rooted in discourse about God, the creative power of God, His deeds, and His tripartite nature. Narrative and eulogy are discursive forms that fall within the area of ancient rhetoric, with eulogy having been studied from Gorgias and Aristotle onwards, and narrative occupying a place of importance in the theory of preliminary exercises for rhetoric (*progymnasmata*) taught in all schools of the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 2: Rhetorical Devices Prevalent in preaching and professional communication**

Rhetorical devices
1. Imitation
2. Conversion
3. Figure of speech
4. Antithesis
6. Rhetorical question
7. Climax
8. Emphasis
9. Parallelism
10. Hyperbole
11. Exclamation
12. Repetition
13. Manifestation
14. Apostrophe
15. Pun
16. Anagram
17. Symbol
18. Quotation
19. Malapropism

<sup>27</sup> Haase 2009: 2.

<sup>28</sup> Pernot 2006: 237.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to generate an understanding of the presence, by adoption and adaptation, of rhetoric in preaching, especially amongst Pentecostal preachers and professional communicators in South Africa. The research methods used were both descriptive and exploratory, although the study was primarily qualitative, with some quantitative inputs. The empirical research was conducted within selected charismatic Pentecostal Christian churches in the Durban area of South Africa. Based on a limited literature review, and discussion with senior pastors from churches in the Pentecostal evangelical mission, a semi-structured interview was designed for use in the survey, with the aim of identifying problems experienced in contemporary preaching from a rhetorical perspective.

Interviews were conducted at churches of various Pentecostal congregations, with the consent of the participants (pastors). Interviews were recorded. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The interviews were transcribed and translated if necessary, then coded and categorised according to themes. A list of common principles associated with New Homiletic preaching (Table 1) were used in this study as the standard by which preachers were measured in terms of their use of rhetorical devices. The New Homiletic approach to preaching is the predominant style of preaching used in South African charismatic Pentecostal churches. Observations were compiled to measure the extent to which preachers employed various rhetorical devices, and the problems associated therewith. Sermons found on YouTube were also analysed in support of a more substantial analysis, as some churches refused to grant consent.

To determine whether any relationship exists between rhetoric and preaching in different areas of the communication and linguistics fields, and in line with the objectives of the research, and the aim of this article, correlations were drawn between problems experienced in diverse areas of religious rhetoric. Qualitative methodology was adopted to identify those categories of rhetorical

device suitable for both preaching and professional communication. Amongst these categories are: the rhetorical relationship between speaker and audience; and persuasion, with the aim of rhetoric ‘to move, to teach, and to entertain’.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study suggest the remarkable evidence of preaching containing rhetorical devices or precepts. Respondent 1 said: ‘I spoke as I was commanded’, implying that preachers are not entertainers or motivators (professional communicators), because in the course of preaching miracles, conversions and confessions do occur.’ Respondent 2 said: ‘Serious cases and issues could be mentioned in the course of preaching (discourse), and the Holy Spirit does attend to those cases – depending on the connection between the preacher, the word, and God Almighty.’ Respondent 1 said: ‘When you speak in preaching, don’t speak roughly, jokingly; let your words align with the words of God. There are members of the Body of Christ who cannot identify their left from right, and for this reason the Holy Spirit in 2 Timothy 4:2, gives this mandate to those He has set apart as preachers: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”.’

Preachers are messengers of the true gospel of the Lord, with the intention of declaring God’s entire counsel. The empirical findings indicate that the word of the Lord has, in some instances, been diluted because of the presence of particular individuals within congregations, since the style of preaching adopted pleases those individuals and not God. Respondent 2 explains that, with the adoption of rhetoric, divine preaching can be accomplished, since the preacher can thereby communicate Biblical truths effectively for the better understanding of their congregants. However, with adaptation, there may be omissions in the declaration of Biblical authority, because the spiritual office of a preacher may not be being used for the purpose for which it was given by the Lord Jesus Christ. Respondent 3 asserts that there are versions (adaptations) of

communication with congregants, but many of the preachers who are communicating are not gifted by the Holy Spirit to communicate God's word in order to build and better equip the church.

Observing examples of professional communication by juxtaposing sermons with rhetoric, Taylor<sup>29</sup> states that for preaching to be effective there must be sincerity of presentation, clarity of speech, suitability of material, simplicity of lessons, and sermonic brevity. In some sermons observed online via YouTube, preachers present themselves to audiences as 'Worldly Rappers' or professional motivators, with frequent use of the rhetorical device of 'malapropism', which is the act or habit of absurdly misusing words, and often involves 'inadvertent use of the wrong word', as opposed to errors that show 'ignorance of the correct usage',<sup>30</sup> This is especially the case with words that are similar sounding, as noted by the following evangelistic Pentecostal preachers:

- 1) I want you to take note of this: the Bible says Jesus is Lord ... if you are like maybe I don't pray long enough ... maybe, I should have added seven days prayer, maybe I should have been this or that. I want you to know just because trouble comes, does not mean that the Lord isn't with you. But it's a great sign that the Lord is on your side ... Tell the person on the side of your seat, get up ...<sup>31</sup>
- 2) Yea, O God, now, you going to get a miracle ... there, but he says right now, sacrifice yourself, if you sacrifice yourself today, if you can sacrifice yourself with God ...<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> 2015: 3.

<sup>30</sup> Zwicky 1978: 239.

<sup>31</sup> Winston 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Hyman 2008.

The use of ‘pun’ is a rhetorical device observed in one of the videos examined on YouTube, where a preacher literally runs up and down the pews and falls whilst delivering what can only loosely be described as a sermon. This could also be considered an adaptation of stylistic presentation, with the use of shrewd un-conventionality (unorthodox behaviour) that lends a twist to the presentation of the individual adapting it. The preacher in question delivered his sermon in a tent and shouted “haaaaaa”, “haahaahaa” (pun), while jumping and moving backwards, and performing a backflip when unexpectedly falling.<sup>33</sup>

‘Oxymoron’ and ‘simile’ are comparable juxtaposed examples, as illustrated by the Pastor who begins by saying: ‘Welcome to (name withheld) Christian mission, where the supernatural is natural...’

It needs to be further understood whether the perceived adaptation of rhetoric is intended to enhance a preacher’s sermon, or to quantify preaching objectives and envisaged outcomes. A particular preacher (name withheld) preaching on YouTube expostulates the following:

God is a game, and the funny part of it – the game is very easy ... If you cannot make what you have to offer clear enough [persuasive communication], people are not going to be enticed. People go to church, but they are frustrated. So, somebody has to answer their questions. . . It is about whether you know the game. . .

Further to this is the comparison of an observation on the same topic made by a preacher in a country elsewhere in Africa with one made in South Africa, where preachers employed ‘idiomatic expression’ and ‘theological typology’<sup>34</sup> to make descriptions in their

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<sup>33</sup> Citizen Reporter 2016: 1.

<sup>34</sup> Sequeira and Emadi 2017: 18.



sermons more emphatic and valid. This is reflected in the following excerpts:

- 1) If you follow the laws of giving and of sowing and reaping, you begin to prosper materially ... The difference is that we practice a philosophy that guarantees prosperity. God has offered an alternative: a church, where there is equality, there is prosperity, there's hope, there's faith – then, you choose.
- 2) Jesus was rich and had an accountant, by name Judas Iscariot. In the Bible, for material blessings, the Bible teaches to sow in others for you to have a harvest. It is a fundamental principle of the doctrine of the words of God.

The Bible warns that congregants should beware of words that entice, the use of which can be associated with professional (persuasive) communication. From the perspective of sacred rhetoric, we quote Colossians 2:4 from two different versions: 1) 'And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words',<sup>35</sup> and 2) 'I say this so that no one will mislead you with nice-sounding rhetoric'.<sup>36</sup>

If it is observed that rhetoric is often utilised in preaching; (therein lies the argument that professional communication, or 'public speaking', is juxtaposed with 'orality in rhetoric') its usage could be considered counterintuitive in 'sacred' or 'religious rhetoric', or alternatively, be its ultimate consolidation. Of the eight YouTube sermons observed, the following excerpt makes use of the types of 'metaphor' and 'hyperbolism' more generally associated with professional communication:

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<sup>35</sup> King James Version.

<sup>36</sup> International Standard Version.

Whatever you came here looking for, you will find. I have discovered the secret of God for the higher life ... but many of us are still living in the lower life ... You can't sow your seed just anywhere. A wrong ground produces the wrong harvest. I want to see people driving Lamborghinis, I want to see somebody walk out of this place today, and you buy your Bentley ...

According to Brian,<sup>37</sup> religious rhetoric is persuasive language concerned with explaining the supernatural, which takes as its fundamental assumption that such a realm exists. The concept of adaptation is also found in professional discourse and communication, such discourse having adopted the epistemological patterns of homiletics, and the notions 'rational truth' and 'spiritually-minded and consecrated'.

At this stage it is appropriate to consider whether preachers' use of rhetorical devices is entirely suitable for the dissemination of religious concepts in their discourse to congregants. There are certain characteristics associated with preaching which characterises it as sacred rhetoric, such as 'dialogical rhetoric' associated with prayer ('Amen'), Psalms, worship, songs and music, to mention only a few. 'Amen' is typical language used by the congregants to confirm answers to prayers; it is a response to a prayer in which congregants affirm the words of preacher or in response to the prophesying of a preacher by responding 'Amen'. Examples of dialogical rhetoric, which this study refers to as adaptation, and which can alter over time as a result of social, political and religious factors,<sup>38</sup> are: 1) 'If your amen is bigger, you will get the biggest miracle. If your amen is louder, you will get the biggest miracle'; and 2) 'If you are not praying, you are playing'.

Such statements sound very attractive to congregants, and in view of this pragmatic investigation, it is inferred that saying

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<sup>37</sup> 2010: 1.

<sup>38</sup> Somniso 2005: 132.

‘Amen’ implies that prayers are in accordance with God’s will and should therefore be ‘emphasised’ (said louder). This presents questions regarding the practical possibilities of the use of rhetorical devices and possible distortion of meaning, which casts the adaptation of rhetoric by Pentecostal churches into a new light, in terms of the distinctions between professional communication and orthodox liturgy (fixed forms of worship or prayer). Rhetorical patterns definitely underlie all religious discourse with its use of the power of words, the effectiveness of speech, and the charm of persuasion,<sup>39</sup> for example: 1) ‘Someone that is blessed, say a big Hallelujah! Jump up to your feet and shout Hallelujah!; or 2) ‘Someone that is blessed more than his or her neighbour, shout three powerful “Hallelujahs”.’

Rhetoric in a church context is therefore used controversially in order to promote acceptance or approval of prophetic words, of religious prayers, the acceptance of God, becoming religiously blessed, or to offend opponents of holy utterance. Consequently, the responses from congregants to oratorical pronouncements by preachers, although somehow sacred, are often evoked by preachers through the use of ‘hyperbole’ and ‘repetition’, and also sometimes of ‘parallelism’, as can be observed in the following example:

Preacher:       Someone that is blessed more than his  
                          or her neighbour, shout three powerful  
                          Hallelujahs!  
Congregants: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!! Hallelujah!!!  
Preacher:       If you are happy to be here, shout three  
                          thunderous Hallelujahs!  
Congregants: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!! Hallelujah!!!

The purpose in saying Hallelujah three times, according to Respondent 4, is that repeating the word ‘Hallelujah’ (which is the

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<sup>39</sup> Pernot 2006: 245.

Hebrew word meaning ‘Praise to Jehovah’) emphasises the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in Pentecostal churches. Following from an understanding of professional communication and sacred rhetoric, there are other devices where professional communication as rhetoric and preaching intersect, and this could be categorised as adoption.

It is noted from the empirical findings that ‘personification’, a rhetorical device where the representation of a nonfigurative feature is given human form, is often adopted by Pentecostal preachers, particularly when negotiating issues of religious faith. The language of these preachers is frequently rhetorical, with congregations being urged to take action by the use of many epitomic devices. For instance, a preacher using the initial statement: ‘Jump up to your feet and shout hallelujah!’ could later request that the congregation sit down in a personified manner: ‘Sit down on top of your enemy or sit down on top of the devil. Satan is a liar. Tell your neighbor, say: “Neighbour, the devil is a liar”’.

Also observed in the rhetorical forms adopted by some preachers is that they sometimes make general requests, or engage congregants by asking ‘rhetorical questions’ when preaching, such as: ‘Somebody praise the Lord ... Somebody say Amen! Amen, Amen, and Amen’. As noted, this involves congregants responding to preachers, as would be found in a public gathering or settings with some professional communicators and their audiences.

‘Hallelujah Bazalwane’ is an expression that is also used to stimulate responses during sermons, and can be repeated by a preacher many times, and is also used as an invocation of spiritual intent:

Preacher: Am I speaking to somebody here?  
 Hallelujah Bazalwane? Hallelujah Bazalwane?  
 Hallelujah Bazalwane? Hallelujah Bazalwane?  
 Congregants: Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

In theory, however, Malmstrom's<sup>40</sup> common principles of New Homiletic preaching — to make the transition from adoption to adaptation — the findings concurred with these principles, as already observed. In terms of this study, we understand that, with the elevation of the role of congregants in preaching, congregants are co-constructors of sermons and so become conversational partners, confirming their faith within sermons designed to help them engage in the content, but in this way they may uncritically focus on preaching as both embodiment (experience) and performance. Although this then forms a coherent narrative on the basis of lived experience about faith, the re-imagining of rhetorical adoption and adaptation may only turn out to become yet another form of orthodoxy.

The use of rhetorical devices and shrewd un-conventionality which lend a twist by virtue of their adaption, are frequently found in contemporary sermons. This implies that for as long as religion discourse is persuasive (and, as Lewis<sup>41</sup> argues, the conceptual rhetoric of various religious ideas have *a priori* persuasiveness), rhetoric will remain a common denominator within major areas in the relationship between preaching and communication, as seen from the foregoing and as presented in Table 3. The emphasis, however, is that the correlation between rhetoric and preaching must remain spiritual in nature. Table 3 lists the rethorical devices that are common to preaching and communication.

### CONCLUSION

Narrative, eulogy, preaching and naming are considered acts of worship, and although these acts are comprised essentially of rhetorical devices, they are nevertheless distinctive in that their subject matter is beyond the human realm.<sup>42</sup> Preaching, sermons, prayers, songs and worship are all form of religious expression

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<sup>40</sup> 2014: 563.

<sup>41</sup> 2011: 9.

<sup>42</sup> Pernot 2006: 238.

which can be considered as discourse and are therefore deserving of rhetorical analysis.

**Table 3: Applicable Rhetorical devices to major areas of the relationship between preaching and communication**

Applicable to //	Uses RD	//Does Not Use RD**
1. Preaching	✓	✓
2. Offering or giving sermons	✓	✓
3. Evangelism	✓	✓
4. Prayer	✓	✓
5. Professional communication	✓	✓
6. Persuasion/public speaking	✓	✓
7. Integrated marketing communication	✓	✓

\*\*RD=Rhetorical Devices

The Pentecostal Church in Durban, South Africa is, moreover, a significant force to be reckoned with, and its influence is felt through the everyday use of rhetorical devices. The communication used by the Pentecostal Church is not simply to motivate action, or seek the agreement of its parishioners, but extends to all activities of the church, such as preaching, praying, and singing, which are expressed through the use of rhetorical devices to communicate the doctrines of the church, not just in English but also Zulu, which is the main language of the community.

The practical basis for the adoption and adaptation of rhetoric by professional communicators is very different from that of preaching, although empirically speaking such adoption is natural to both preaching and professional communication. In examining the degree to which differences occur, the findings indicate that despite rhetorical devices being productive features in both sermons and professional communication, the adaptation of rhetoric by both professional communicators and the preachers signifies a movement towards a form of professional communication which addresses two basic fundamentals: body and spirit. The study reveals that within professional communication, communicators adopt the tenets of professionalism with mind, and adapt rhetoric with body;

whilst across sacred communication, preachers adopt emotions and spirituality as their guiding principle (spirit).

Thus, the argument regarding adoption and adaptation of rhetorical devices by both professional communicators and preachers is based on two core beliefs: firstly, the notion that there are concerns surrounding the perceived adaptation of rhetoric to enhance the sermons of preachers and the dissemination of religious discourse to congregants, because adaptation is underpinned by spiritual ambiguity. Secondly, the idea of public speaking (professional communication) concerns professionalism in the context of linguistic discourse, but although rhetorical devices can be productive features in sermons and communication, such devices and innovation, modernisation and adaptation should be determined by the roles played by the power of Holy Spirit. This study therefore recommends further research on the use of communication in sermons which focuses on how the messages of preachers are delivered to congregations which changes their lives and attitudes, but that have become so rhetorically flexible that they now undermine both the faith of parishioners and the credibility of theological doctrine.

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