

PREACHING IN THE *HEAR* AND NOW:
JUSTIFICATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND ASSESSMENT OF 'PARABOLIC
ENGAGEMENT' PEDAGOGY IN FRENCH-SPEAKING MISSIONARY SETTINGS

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. . . which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Spirit teaches, combining spiritual ideas with spiritual words.[§]

[§] For a discussion of the meaning of Paul's use of πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες in 1 Cor. 2:13, see Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. IV, *The Epistles of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1931), 89.

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PREFACE

In 1998, I traveled to the capital city of Cayenne in the French Overseas Department of Guyane¹ on the northeast coast of South America to begin missionary service with my wife and three small children. Sunday after Sunday we endured French, not Creole, preaching by Haitian semi-literates.² I literally sweated my way through the contextual conflicts, culture shock, Creolized French, and worst of all, a poorly implemented exegetical preaching model. It was then that I realized how far certain organizationally-driven homiletical practices had indiscriminately infiltrated the peoples of the world.

There in the Amazonian rain forest, my preaching model crumbled. The honest truth was that not all church leaders had the ability to do exposition, and many listeners could not read or follow the biblical text. Moreover, it became apparent that mission settings rarely enjoyed a homogeneous, stable preaching environment. The physical context was often moving, fluid, and not conducive to detailed, expository delivery. I began to grasp the reality that there might be more natural ways to develop preachers, ones which would make it possible for speakers to respond to life settings and audience changes.

In taking a hard look at leader preaching styles among various groups in French Guiana, all the missiological talk about localizing and contextualizing theology seemed simply theory, theory that got lost when the previous missionaries trained their leaders in the concrete task of sermon delivery of the gospel.³ It was easy to criticize the previous missionaries for what they had done to these congregations by introducing literate standards

¹ Guyane is the French name for French Guiana.

² Speakers, who ordinarily preached in Creole, modified their delivery and spoke French out of “respect” for us. However, often they were reluctant because of a poor grammatical delivery that resulted in criticism from the schooled youth of the church.

³ The Haitians, Carib (Kalina) Indians, Brazilians, and Guyanais all had similar text-based models of exposition. With the exception of the Guyanais, most audiences were only mildly literate, if at all, in their respective mother tongues.

into a world of illiteracy and semi-literacy. Unfortunately, when the time came, I found myself repeating many of the same mistakes because of a lack of alternatives.

At that time, I was regularly training Haitian leaders. Due to extensive illiteracy among congregants, their preaching style entailed a great deal of chanting and repeating. Preachers used these practices to help those who could not read the Bible and who had difficulty in retaining key scriptures or central ideas. Often the leader presented sermonic material with certain intonations, pauses, and interrogatives. These oral formulas and stops indicated that listeners were to repeat the phrase or complete the Bible verse.

Upon first hearing preaching to illiterates, I thought there was senseless repetition of easily grasped ideas. I later learned that certain patterns composed an important delivery system filled with mnemonic devices, essential to people “handicapped” by their lack of reading ability. After I reassessed my conclusions about Haitian preaching style and came to appreciate the necessity of repetitive delivery, I then realized that there was a foreign style of expositional preaching mixed in with this Haitian variety of call and response. I also saw a people highly capable as storytellers but who were forced into a literate expositional method by the ever-encroaching French educational system and by preaching methods imported by western missionaries.

At that time, I started to construct in my mind a preaching model that was image and story-based. I recognized that simplified narrative style would be a step closer to the communication practices of less literate peoples than abstract exposition. I also was convinced that effective preaching needed to be tied to the text as well as to the local setting.

While it was one thing to conceive a different way of preaching, it was quite another to develop *pedagogy*, pedagogy that was theologically and theoretically sound. In addition, a new preaching practice had to be appropriate to the educational ability of the people with whom I was working.

During a year in the United States and England visiting libraries and researching image and narrative inventive techniques, I developed what I now call ‘parabolic engagement’. I piloted some preliminary ideas with Haitians in Maryland and Canadians in Montreal, and came to my present location of Martinique with a preliminary strategy in mind.

Upon arriving in Martinique in 2002 to plant churches, I visited 13 Antillean congregations and heard some of the worst preaching of my life. There was consistent and gross failure in exposition. The preaching was almost entirely in French and had a stultified, rigid, and virtually lifeless quality. It was, for the most part, devoid of almost any vestige of image and story. There was essentially no Creole, and the sermons were often developed without clear reference to the biblical text. By contrast, I discovered that the people of Martinique loved to speak Creole, enjoyed hearing stories, and had a skillful ability to move from French to Creole and exploit the value of each language in informal communicative exchanges. Congregants in the pew, however, came to expect poorly executed, discursive French preaching as normative.

The plan to apprentice a group of people in parabolic methods of preaching grew out of a number of factors, the most important of which were my training in chronological Bible storying technique and my desire to implement a comprehensive, figure-based homiletic. In piloting the resulting ‘parabolic engagement’ pedagogy, I made some significant and unusual discoveries. The first thing that became abundantly clear was that narrative, something historically important to missionary teaching procedure and currently in vogue as a preaching delivery system, was not the most fundamental tool of parabolic method: image was. I found story form to be more complex than I anticipated, more difficult to learn, more difficult to teach, and a far more reflective process than popularly believed. Some people did not easily grasp it. In addition, the story form so highly praised by missionaries because it crossed cultural boundaries, I found to be a specialized discipline mastered only by capable

storytellers. It appeared that almost everyone loved to hear stories, but not everyone could tell them well. Narrative did not seem to be the panacea for common preaching ills.

Image creation was easier, quicker, and foundational to good narrative. It also appeared throughout the Bible and was consistently used in cultural talk, expression, metaphor, and media. It flowed from the lips of everyone, regardless of their educational level, and was constructed almost without effort. It was an unconscious part of language formation and use. This realization brought me back to the foundational aspects of proclamation in light of the missionary task.

Of the approximately 14,000 people groups in the world, about 5,007 have very little or no gospel witness.⁴ They are referred to by missiologists as frontier peoples. Of these 1.5 billion unreached people, an extremely high percentage is illiterate.⁵ Of the world's 6,809 languages,⁶ there are approximately 4,500 that have not been engaged by Bible translators.⁷ These are generally peoples without written languages and whose means of communication is primarily oral. How will the gospel reach these illiterate masses who have only an oral means of communication? The answer is obvious: the preacher. "How will they hear without a preacher?"⁸

The current preaching model being taught to emerging leaders in new fields is either an imported European/North American one that involves exposition, or it is a storying model.

⁴ International Mission Board, "Fast Facts," <http://www.imb.org/core/fastfacts.asp> (02 Feb. 2004).

⁵ "Today, while most Western countries boast of literacy rates of 90% or higher, at least 61.7% of the world's population, about 3,335,000,000 people, possess an oral communication learning preference and lifestyle" (Grant I. Lovejoy, et. al., "Chronological Bible Storying Manual: A Methodology for Presenting the Gospel to Oral Communicators," http://www.chronologicalbiblestorying.com/MANUAL/section_i.htm (02 Feb. 2004)).

⁶ SIL International, "Geographic Distribution of Living Languages, 2000," http://www.ethnologue.com/ethno_docs/distribution.asp (02 Feb. 2004).

⁷ "Fast Facts on Orality, Literacy and Chronological Bible Storying," http://www.chronologicalbiblestorying.com/articles/fast_facts.htm (02 Feb. 2004).

⁸ Romans 10:14.

These two methods pose similar problems. Exposition requires both textual analysis and a delivery form that is often foreign to the intended audience. Storying necessitates reading and memorization. Both approaches demand a literate leader.

Exposition and its non-narrative delivery form are not well suited for oral peoples. For the most part, such methods originated in the context of established churches as a preaching style for pastors who knew how to read.

Storying exhibits some of the same problems but is emerging as the preferred teaching scheme in pioneer missionary fields. Chronological Bible Storying involves the sequenced teaching and memorization of biblical narratives and is currently being implemented globally by missionaries as a discipleship methodology. It is a text-associated form of teaching by which hermeneutic and theological principles come inductively to trainees. Students are not taught how to preach, but how to recount biblical narrative. Repeating narrative in an oral fashion involves very little leadership training in sermonic declaration or the spontaneous application of the kerygma. Storying involves extensive textual and literacy dependence because each biblical narrative extends through several paragraphs or even chapters.

While storying technique provides new opportunities that are to a great extent free from methods of outlining and propositional statements, it is not preaching. It is also very difficult to recount a story in detail or address the non-narrative portions of the New Testament. For many missionaries, the method is a convenient, almost universal choice for teaching, but there is a need for an integrative proclamation practice that includes the use of a wide variety of verbal figures without the genre restriction of narrative.

‘Parabolic engagement’ is an oral proclamation model that moves beyond the memorization of narrative. It provides the preacher with the skills necessary to expound small text units from anywhere in the Bible and to create a constant supply of figurative

material suitable for less literate audiences. Preaching content can be developed around one verse, one sentence, one clause, or even one word.

It has been my goal to advance missionary preaching beyond the strictures of abstraction and heavy reading dependence. Figured forms of proclamation are often more appropriate for house churches, cell groups, storying locations, and other evangelistic pioneering locales.

Traditional Christian proclamation has been built around a model that facilitates the speaker's management of sermonic material through theoretical categories and outlining methods. The practical outworking of that model demands abstraction, categorical classification, syllogistic logic, and extensive subordination. However, such methods of grouping material and systematizing thoughts do not always help hearers comprehend meaning because listeners do not simply construct sense through the clarification of conceptualized ideas. Many peoples of the world, including some in the so-called 'West', have storied ways of organizing thought.

Listeners often build sense by constructing analogies to life experience. This analogical process produces understanding and is sometimes aided by narrative sequence. The use of organizational abstraction by preachers has put distance between the pulpit and pew, or if you are in the third world, between the speaker and the bench, or between the mound and the ground. On the mission field, that distance is magnified enormously when the speaker, who is likely a semi-literate, attempts to employ non-native thought structures with an audience that is even less literate than he or she. Much sermonic form that is currently employed in mission settings is learned with the aid of categorical thinking, the kind of abstraction one masters through the literacy process.

From a missiological perspective of one working in the Caribbean, preaching in the French Antilles is severely restricted by a French perspective of literacy. European

categories and views of texts have shackled up sermonic form. Spontaneity, concreteness, beauty, and wonder are rare. More importantly, engagement is gone. The emotional connection between speaker and listener is minimized because the speaker is overly concerned about expositional elements and a cognitive transfer of information. The instinctual image-creation faculties are quelled to make room for ordered outlines. Figures are *added* to the sermon to make it applicable.

Paradoxically, the day-to-day manner of communication among the more orally inclined people of Martinique is abandoned in the context of the Antillean church. Church is formal. Evangelical churches are Bible-based, text-centered. Consequently, the language and thought forms of literacy dictate communication choices and replace effective, hearer-based strategies that one finds in common life settings.

The preacher in the Antilles has adopted a highly discursive sermonic form, one imported from France with influence from other countries with similar views of literacy. As the research will show, however, the peoples of Martinique in particular prefer that preachers use images and various types of narrative delivery. Culturally appropriate communication forms native to the Caribbean context were found to be more effective in moving audiences and changing ideas.

The task of emancipating students from learned discursive delivery habits involves transforming the sermon into an illustration and being honest enough not only to admit to the fact that Jesus did exactly that, but also being brave enough to practice the same model and to analyze its employment. Christ's principal engagement tool was the parable. At times, He used nothing else.

In order to accomplish the liberation of sermonic form within the Antillean context while staying within the parameters of biblical example, one must isolate a structure and method that correctly reflect both the precision of the text and the breadth of the cultural

setting. After having done so, the new process needs to be released in the postmodern French Caribbean and evaluated for its utility and limitations. The purpose of this work is to qualify the viability of original ‘parabolic engagement’ strategies in the French Overseas Department of Martinique. Once the emancipated gospel sermon is unleashed into the freedom of a contextualized orality, it becomes a beautiful and powerful tool.

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In the course of writing this thesis, it has been my privilege to share ideas with many insightful church leaders, but to none do I owe greater thanks than to Dr. Stephen I. Wright for his sensitive spirit and perceptive comments that truly make this dissertation of value. It has been an honor to be under the direction of a man who, at one and the same time, functions with skill in theology, homiletics, and rhetoric. He has channeled my thinking deeply, and I will reap the benefits of his tutelage the rest of my life.

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GLOSSARY

- Context.** All the variables in any communication setting that influence listener decoding including, but not limited to, the listeners' past experiences, physical settings, literacy considerations, sights, smells, noises, tensions, emotions, and other environmental factors.
- Creole.** Unless otherwise indicated or implied in the context, here referring specifically to the patois Lesser Antillean French Creole. A descriptive term for an individual who speaks fluent French Creole. Of, or pertaining to, the cultural and linguistic historical aspects of French and African mixing.
- Engagement.** The emotional, cognitive, and spiritual connection of the speaker, the listener, and God.
- Figure.** A general term describing imaged or patterned speech forms.
- French.** When referring to an individual and not the language, it here designates a person born and raised in France. In France and its departments, it is politically incorrect to speak of someone as being part of a particular ethnic group. Everyone is "French" even if they have an ethnic origin decidedly Caribbean, French Guianese, Reunionaise, or any of a number of Far Eastern or Amerindian cultures. However, for the purposes of this document it is very important to differentiate cultural origins. So, although the many different varieties of French Creole peoples living within the political domain of France are "French" for political purposes, I have usually reserved the term "French" for someone who is European French.
- Image.** A *verbal* picture, description, or figure of speech.
- Narrative.** An account involving a temporal framework, usually oral in nature. "The act, technique, or process of narrating."⁹
- Oral.** "Spoken rather than written."¹⁰
- Orality.** Speaking capacity and tendencies. The quality and propensity of a people to construct communication verbally rather than by means of print media.
- Parable.** Unless otherwise indicated, a general term including all similitudes, narrative analogies, extended metaphors, fables, tales, stories, and other narrative forms that have some kind of specific teaching moral.
- Parabolic.** In the form of a parable. Sometimes used to mean image-based.
- Preaching.** Verbal engagement in controlled attention settings.
- Story.** A series of narrated events usually involving a plot, characters, and a setting.

⁹ *The American Heritage Dictionary: Second College Edition*, 1985 ed., s. v. "Narrative."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, s. v. "Oral."

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues the utility of ‘parabolic engagement’ method for preachers and listeners in the French Antillean context. The opening chapter defines key terms and clarifies how this imaged sermonic style addresses the listening habits of targeted audiences. It explains that figured delivery is often context-interpretive, involving a more personal, experiential decoding by the listener. Engagement technique increases auditor involvement and creates unique communicative rapport. The chapter points out that the entire experimental process validates the usefulness of the pedagogy.

Part One addresses the theological rationale for ‘parabolic engagement’ method. Chapter Two reviews appropriate literature with respect to engagement. Chapter Three argues the biblical basis for creating a method of figured preaching. Chapter Four discusses how precise homiletic situations demand a circumstantial approach to engaging delivery.

Part Two attempts to synthesize a broad range of image-creation methodologies and make them suitable for teaching among oral peoples. Chapter Five shows the necessity of a grammar for figured proclamation pedagogy. Chapter Six develops simplified classical methods for finding the illustrative crux of an idea or text. Chapter Seven shows the need to then engage the listener by means of analogous correspondence with the concrete world. Chapter Eight explores how circumstantial factors encourage the transformation of engaging analogies into extended narratives.

Part Three validates the thesis within the missionary setting. Chapter Nine describes the suitability of ‘parabolic engagement’ method among Creoles and European French on the island of Martinique. Chapter Ten establishes an experimental design by specifying components, clarifying how the hypotheses were tested, justifying data collection methods, and explaining the use of participatory action research and educational ethnography. Chapter Eleven details the implementation, measurement, and success of engagement strategies.

Lastly, Chapter Twelve argues for the utility of ‘parabolic engagement’ and posits generalizations by summarizing the merits, conclusions, and limitations of the model.

CHAPTER ONE
THE JUSTIFICATION FOR AN EXPERIMENT IN TEACHING
'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT'

'Parabolic Engagement'

Preachers who aspire to communicate well seek engagement, that simultaneous and mystical resonance of their words, divine truth, and revelatory surprise in the understanding of the listener. When the preacher's message rings true with both the listener's experience and the voice of God, they vibrate together like a harmonic. That is engagement, a personal meeting in the *hear* and now.

The 'parabolic engagement' model begins by clarifying the nature of preaching¹ as a relational discipline and not an informational task. It involves a vibrant, personal call to encounter the living Christ along with the speaker.² This communal idea of exchange draws attention to both the unavoidable obligation of the preacher to engineer an assembly of the hearer with her God as well as the potentially intimate interaction of speaker and audience.

A "parabolic homiletic" theory has already been proposed by Black.³ He correctly

¹ The term 'preaching' in this dissertation refers to proclamation in all its forms. The testing aspect of a parabolic preaching model was implemented in French missionary contexts, often without speaker amplification or pulpits.

² Col. 1:27-28; 2 Cor. 4:5; Gal. 1:16; Phil. 1:15-21; John 5:39-47. While the word 'engagement' can imply receptor involvement or listener "*negotiation*" with the message, my use of the term describes the speaker's intentional goal of interpersonal contact (Stewart M. Hoover, "Religion, Media and Identity: Theory and Method in Audience Research on Religion and Media," in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 14, 19 [italics his]).

³ C. Clifton Black in "Four Stations en Route to a Parabolic Homiletic," *Interpretation* 54 (2000): 386-97. What is important to him in preaching is the human-divine interaction, a reality produced by parabolic principles and something I have chosen to call "engagement."

identifies this interpersonal aspect of the sermon when he says that preaching should be a “life-giving encounter.”⁴ In parabolic preaching, sensual and figured portrayal of truth provides the basis for a desired meeting.

What is at issue here is defining the parable in a way that adequately describes the functional aspects of the form. Is a parable a narrative vehicle used for truth-transfer? Is it a story infused with spiritual meaning? To view the fundamental purpose of parables as one of transferring truth or teaching spiritual ideas is to confine the usefulness of a parable to an informational role. However, parabolic delivery is more than a figured correspondence of material realities with spiritual principles. It is a process of building rapport. Arguably, parables were also used for cognitive clarification or for hiding ideas. Jesus used the words “seeing,” “hearing,” and “understanding” to explain His use of parables. However, in the end, Jesus’ primary concerns were “healing” and “conversion,” essentially relational and behavioral objectives.⁵

Certain speech forms and preaching methods facilitate the coming together of speaker and listener more than others, even to the point that some, by their very construction and use, instantaneously create connection because they are anchored in the listener’s own understanding or in common human experience. In ‘parabolic engagement’, God uses the preacher’s imaged delivery to lay hold of the heart and mind of the auditor by means of the latter’s own memory.

In the pages that follow, the term *parabolic* subsumes under it a group of image strategies with diverse verbal structures, structures that have similar *effects*. For example, the

⁴ Ibid., 388. See also Henry H. Mitchell’s idea of parables as encounter “vehicles” in *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 37ff and Craig A. Loscalzo’s notion of “identification” in *Preaching Sermons that Connect* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 15ff.

⁵ Mt. 13:14-15.

formal definitions of the terms *story*, *narrative*, *extended metaphor*, and *parable* are quite different from one another.⁶ However, all have appeal as figures of engagement because they involve listener experience and demand in an extraordinary way that listeners “construct coherence.”⁷ Although all listening requires that auditors construct coherence, verbal figures (both simple and extended) invite an extraordinary level of listener involvement because meaning completion is linked to the auditor’s reservoir of personal experience. The listener is honored by his call to “participate”⁸ and feels respected in the communicative process. Listening becomes interesting and dynamic because it is tied to a remembrance of past phenomena and observations. The auditor’s discovery process in interpreting the figure, however instantaneous it may be, is creative and enjoyable.

⁶ In the world of orality, text-based distinctions between literary genres break down. Typical categorical abstractions and definitions for the principal technical terms used in this work (i.e., *image*, *story*, and *narrative*) are difficult to use with consistency. Having said this, however, *story* is generally a plot-focused word that uses characters and setting to develop ideas. While *story* usually refers to a non-poetic, narrative account, it can be plotted events in any of several genres. For example, an epic story can be recounted in poetic form. By contrast, the word *narrative* usually implies a non-poetic style or genre. More precisely, narrative does not necessarily contain plot but might simply be used as a descriptive reference for a less lyrical delivery form.

The common use of the word *parable* by evangelicals and other church-going people subsumes under it a wide variety of material, including: similitudes, metaphors, stories, fables, tales, and other figures of speech that have some kind of teaching moral. It is in this vein that I adopt the term *parable* in the title, ‘*parabolic engagement*’. At times I use other terms to describe a similar idea, namely, *metaphoric homiletic*, *imaged preaching*, etc.

The word *figure* I have used with more exactitude. It is the general term to describe imaged or patterned speech forms, traditionally seen as tropes and schemes, including figures of speech, figures of thought, and sentence figures. “Let the definition of a figure, therefore be *a form of speech artfully varied from common usage* (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, IX, I, 11 quoted in Edward P. J. Corbett, *CLASSICAL RHETORIC for the Modern Student* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 246).

⁷ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980). “*The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*” (italics theirs, 5). “And what is significant for me will not depend on my rational knowledge alone but on my past experiences, values, feelings, and intuitive insights. Meaning is not cut and dried; it is a matter of imagination and a matter of constructing coherence” (ibid., 227). Lakoff and Johnson’s view of metaphor represents the “cognitive-semantic theory of metaphor” (Troels Nørager, “Heart’ as Metaphor in religious discourse,” *Metaphor and God-talk*, Lieven Boeve and Kurt Fayaerts, eds, Vol. 2 of *Religions and Discourse*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 219).

⁸ Jolyon Mitchell, “Emerging Conversations in the Study of Media, Religion and Culture,” in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 337 [italics his]. Jolyon Mitchell labels the contemporary trend toward audience involvement “*the participative turn*” (ibid.).

When the idea of ‘parabolic engagement’ is placed in the context⁹ of the immediate setting, there arises a host of issues related to the application of speech in a concrete delivery location. A parable cannot be removed from its container, so to speak. The preacher may code an image, but ultimately it is the audience that decodes it on the basis of a matrix of cultural elements that are present at the time of delivery. This matrix helps clarify the type of engagement the parable is creating.

The physical setting becomes central to this model of preaching, and consequently, the aspect of immediacy in parabolic delivery narrows the interchange aspect of preaching to one of “apocalyptic” engagement.¹⁰ The importance of the “circumstantial”¹¹ quality of engagement comes to the forefront of the preacher’s communicative task because the encounter is localized. It is not simply auditory and cognitive exchange but is also a physical and material meeting of people with their God in a hall, in a home, or under a tree.

While the nature of figures is essentially metaphorical, figures cannot be understood unless they are contextually interpreted. They are organically linked to their setting, both the syntactic setting and the physical setting. Metaphor, in its broadest sense, is a context-dependent form that relies upon syntax, culture, and sometimes even the material environment for meaning; some go so far as to define it as a speech act.¹² When metaphor is

⁹ For a discussion of the historical problems associated with the term “contextualization,” see Krikor Haleblan, “The Problem of Contextualization,” *Missiology* 11.1 (1983): 95-111.

¹⁰ Brian K. Blount’s “Preaching the Kingdom: Mark’s Apocalyptic Call for Prophetic Engagement,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 15 (1994): 33. Blount correctly identifies the eschatological sense of the preaching task by highlighting the *urgency* of kingdom proclamation.

¹¹ Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, Kathryn Murphy-Judy, trans., “Foreword” by Walter J. Ong (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 117.

¹² “The context criterion can thus be characterized most simply as the observation of a relation between an expression and its context that renders impossible, improbable or difficult a literal or conventional interpretation of the expression, but indicates a possible metaphoric interpretation” (Mogens Stiller Kjærgaard, *Metaphor and Parable: A Systematic Analysis of the Specific Structure and Cognitive Function of the Synoptic Similes and Parables qua Metaphors* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 42). For metaphors as speech-acts, see Herwi Rikhof, *The Concept of Church: A Methodological Inquiry into the Use of Metaphors in Ecclesiology* (London:

understood as not just a word figure but also as a context-dependent unit, it looks to its *contexts* for sense. These contexts are certainly syntactical, such as a sentence, a proposition, a group of sentences, or a group of proposition(s). However, they can be more. Ultimately, the figure is highly dependent upon the engaging imagination of the listener who is forced to make sense of the non-lexical use of terms within a matrix of other contexts—cultural, verbal, emotive, political, physical, etc. The metaphor lands where it was intended to land, in the field of meaning-completion among the grasses of the listeners' experiences. It is there that listener engagement is at its height, when the hearer constructs meaning in the physical present.

When the notion of narration is inserted into the fabric of a figure, as in the case with a parable, similitude, or any narrative form, a different dimension is added to listener-engagement, that of sequence. Narrative engages the listener by curiosity, by enticement, by order, by hiding, by revealing, and by suspense. A homiletic of engagement cannot remove the narrative figure from its framing medium, time. Therefore, a significant part of this thesis develops and tests methods of figure use in story frameworks.¹³

A story framework in this study will be considered *a sequence of images*.

Temporality is the chain that links the pictures together. The research question that arises out of this reality is how this temporal aspect affects engagement. If a listener constructs

Sheed and Ward/Patmos Press, 1981). “. . . [T]he characteristic features of metaphors have to be located on the level of propositional content” (ibid., 119). However, Rikhof rightly goes one step further. “Only if the metaphor is treated as a speech-act can the special kind of predication that it is to be discovered” (ibid., 120). The idea of certain types of metaphors (“present” and “imperfect” metaphors, i.e. living metaphors) being “suggestive performatives that express an implicit invitation to modify the order that prevails in the conceptual system within which they exist” is an idea also advanced by Kjårgaard (*Metaphor and Parable*, 131).

¹³ This paper addresses preaching through the ethnography of speaking (see e.g. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, ed., *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974)). General concerns involve speech genres, and while the “production of utterance” is of chief concern, the field of psycholinguistics and drawing links with a general production model of language is not my focus (see Hans Hörmann’s discussion of “The Production of Utterances,” in *Meaning and Context: An Introduction to the Psychology of Language* (New York: Plenum Press, 1986), 201ff).

coherence out of past experience, how is storied delivery received differently from simpler images? What are the engagement mechanics of plot invention and incremental disclosure? The engagement value of a single image is different from the engagement value of a narrative sequence. Listener anticipation is heightened in narrative while syntactic simplicity is lost. In image use, anticipation is low because the delivery is a singular and brief instance. Images tend to stand out because of their metaphoric abruptness and syntactic distinctness. They tend to have a certain shock value because the listener does not expect them.

Finally, constructing praxis of oral engagement by means of figure-based strategies can be refined by the *measurement* of basic qualities of both images and extended figures in their physical delivery setting. When it comes to assessing the model in practice, context-dependence and cultural validity are very important. Consequently, functionality of engagement method is tested *within physical locales* later in this document.

A teaching practice that argues for precise localization needs to be implemented in actual contexts to verify its presumed value. Making a message relevant within a particular environment requires both an understanding of, and a functional utility within, the composite and simultaneous layering of multiple contexts. In addition, a preaching model centered on figured engagement must be able to grapple with the subtleties of contextualizing an image.

If it is possible to validate the utility of the engagement pedagogy in the French missionary setting, one can confirm the suitability of a circumstantial model for preaching among the target peoples. In addition, proven practice in one location can also provide the rationale for some qualified conclusions about parabolic preaching in general. It is necessary first, however, to define clearly what is meant by *preaching* in this thesis.

Establishing a Definition of Parabolic Preaching that Includes Engagement

Once upon a time some unsuspecting Jewish servants were sent out as a lynch mob to round up Jesus. They had difficulty fulfilling their task, because in their words, “Never man

spake like this man.”¹⁴

Spoken word delivered in the power of the Spirit by the Master of metaphor Himself left the mobsters verbally captured. Their concluding words echo Christian consensus about Jesus and represent the communicative pinnacle to which most preachers of the gospel desire to rise, the point where one can say that the audience is awestruck and entranced by the message and God’s use of the messenger. The church leader searches for the door through which he might find approaches to preaching that are so captivating that his message rivets the listener’s attention by its simplicity and wonder. Preachers want what Jesus had, namely, that “the common people heard him gladly.”¹⁵

However, this simple attraction and engagement is difficult to find today. The reason, I believe, is that most sermonic paradigms have not begun with oral assumptions about the nature of words, with the fluid and metaphoric nature of language, but with text-based and text-centered orientations that are essentially framed in high levels of literacy and the reading/writing habits of preachers.¹⁶

In reality, preaching is a relational action. It is a meeting of people with their God, a relationship in perpetual construction, a communicative exchange always in the present, always delivered, never prepared. Consequently, I offer the following definitional clarification around which are constructed the generative methods, the pedagogical experiment, and the evaluative outcomes of my argument. ‘Parabolic engagement’ is a

¹⁴ John 7:46.

¹⁵ Mark 12:37.

¹⁶ Preachers have moved away from the “primacy of speech” and the reality that “speaking is universal, writing is not” (Ronald Wardhaugh, *The Contexts of Language* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1976), 23).

relational “event,”¹⁷ orchestrated by the Holy Spirit via a preacher who directs the process of sermonic worship by identifying with the collected church through biblically based figures, verbally delivered. The engagement takes place through proclamation of the divine presence¹⁸ by means of image strategies and storied argument, sometimes episodically constructed and poetically delivered. It is framed *in situ* according to the variables of the cultural context¹⁹ and is a byproduct of auditory storying or imaging wherein the listener decodes figures out of his personal experience. It is at one and the same time pastoral, didactic, and prophetic,²⁰ creating a resonating encounter between speaker, listener, and God.

In the ensuing pages, I present ‘parabolic engagement’ both as an organizational principle, and a very simple form of verbal, participative, speaker-listener activity. However, it is not my objective in this thesis simply to conceive of a preaching model. The theoretical and biblical groundwork in the early chapters is used to develop suitable pedagogy that affords serviceability in oral missionary settings. In the later chapters, I attempt to prove the viability of that pedagogy in the context of the French Antilles, and I argue toward the experimental validation process described in Part III.

The ‘parabolic engagement’ techniques of invention and delivery that emerge from the theological and classical principles early in this thesis were codified and taught systematically to select groups of people over the course of more than two years. This

¹⁷ William B. McClain, *Come Sunday: The Liturgy of Zion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 53. Fred Craddock uses the same term “community event” to define preaching in *As One Without Authority*, 153 as quoted in Eugene L. Lowry’s, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 90.

¹⁸ Quicke calls preaching a “God happening” and draws attention to the centrality of Trinitarian communication in the sermon (Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic and Paternoster Press, 2003), 49).

¹⁹ The use of the word *context* is an attempt to tie the sermon to the concrete environment of the *hearer*. Homiletical meaning emerges from the delivery surroundings of the listening community, not the generative surroundings where the “sermon” was textually prepared with words in an outline or a manuscript.

²⁰ McClain sets up a helpful contrast by generalizing black preaching as *prophetic* in contrast to *pastoral* preaching (*Come Sunday*, 63).

investigative procedure initially addressed an eighteen-month piloting period involving over sixty people. It was followed by a twelve month detailed evaluation of an apprenticeship process in 'parabolic engagement' of two small cohorts totaling fifteen people. The positive benefits and conclusions of the entire project are clear, and although the relevance of the results for other cultures must be speculative, the possibilities for application in additional languages and settings will become evident to the reader.

PART I
THE THEOLOGY OF 'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT'

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR ‘PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT’

Religious communicators, because of five centuries of catechetical and theological training, are so imbued with and conditioned by the values of the alphabetical, literary form of communication that they have remained very close to the culture that stems from this formation. A fish does not stand back and judge the water that it lives in.

Pierre Babin¹

Introduction

In order to demonstrate the viability of an engagement model for church leaders on the island of Martinique, it is important to establish the theological rationale for the parabolic experiment as a whole. Doing this requires an assessment of homiletical literature with respect to the key aspects of engagement preaching.

This chapter will survey three contemporary ideas relative to the definition of preaching specified earlier; namely, that preaching is circumstantial, immediate, and communal. In the next chapter, I address the biblical basis for parabolic method by examining four key subjects with respect to engagement pedagogy: the implications of divine presence, the importance of parables as engagement tools, the value of Old Testament models of speech figures for creating imaged delivery, and the contribution of the New Testament prophetic voice in engagement preaching. In Chapter Four I focus on the need for parabolic preaching to be culturally contextualized. I discuss how the delivery setting molds the construction of figured ideas and how contemporary views of language help define a suitable view of oral delivery and audience decoding.

¹ Pierre Babin, *The New Era in Religious Communication*, with Mercedes Iannone, trans. David Smith (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 204.

Preaching as Oral, Circumstantial Poetry²

Preaching is engagement, a relational action. It is founded upon communicative expectations and exchange between speaker and hearer. The preacher seizes an audience in a particular place at a particular moment, and the two experience an encounter in the immediate, definable here as a circumstantial embrace. The speaker anticipates an emotional meeting ahead of time by forecasting the listeners' cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions (e.g. decision, consent, disagreement) to a given idea.

Successful engagement demands that the preacher capitalize upon certain aspects of listener involvement during the sermon. Audiences not only move along with the emotional cadence of the delivery rhythm but also practice prediction, deciphering, anticipation, interpretation, clarification, disagreement, and rhetorical questioning.

There are several consequences of exploiting listener desire. First, sermon preparation changes significantly. The speaker is obligated not only to prepare his communicative idea, but also to prepare his thinking to take hold of people verbally. Second, engagement changes delivery mechanics. The speaker recognizes that his delivery is not primarily concerned with communicating an idea but is executing ideological and emotional capture by taking advantage of auditors' listening habits as well. Third, the speaker's expectations are altered. She no longer hopes that the people will just understand her concept, but that God will use her and her method to build a relationship in the immediate. Engagement asks, "Are we meeting together—God, the listener, and I?"

In seeing preaching as a liaison rather than a monolog or a dialog, engagement introduces the aspect of relationship and emotion. Speakers seek more than ideological

² "Orality does not mean illiteracy, nor should it be perceived as a lack, stripped of the values inherent to voice and of all positive social functions Such thinking among those who study oral forms of poetry often leads to corollary, albeit unspoken, stereotypes of 'primitives'" (Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, Kathryn Murphy-Judy, trans., "Foreword" by Walter J. Ong (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 17). The term "circumstantial discourse" is the way in which Paul Zumthor describes the performance milieu of oral poetry (117).

or dialogical connection. Many want personal involvement with their listeners.

Consequently, they alter their method and content to produce this rapport.

Relational exchange, however, is subject to other communication factors that are not based in the speaker or his words. Connection is largely a byproduct of certain listener-centered dynamics; namely, the correspondence of spoken words with listener experience, the association of ideas with the material world, the coping of the listener with ideological or emotional tension, the listener's anticipation of the resolution of plot, and the desire for disclosure.

As the speaker looks for the engaging link that ties his intention with listener response, he will find that the necessary ingredients coalesce in the matrix of parable. Parabolic form is an ideal medium for encounter. As already stated, 'parabolic engagement' begins by defining preaching differently. It attempts to understand preaching as cognitive and emotional exchange between speaker and audience. By highlighting emotional exchange, the focus shifts from an informationally oriented delivery to a relational one, from an explanation to an invitation, from a textual clarification to a hermeneutical encounter.

The practical implication of implementing 'parabolic engagement' method requires a change in the way preachers are taught. Sermonic pedagogy in the target culture, namely the French Antilles, must be constructed around relational exchange and not information transfer. Historically, teaching preaching has often revolved around the organization and delivery of content. By contrast, 'parabolic engagement' revolves around constructing encounter. Moreover, the ideological sense of the text, something traditionally viewed as paramount in expositional method, gives way to meeting God. The emotive export and practical relevance of biblical text are in the divine contact. Information gives way to motivation. As a result, preaching pedagogy must teach church leaders to construct encounter.

David Buttrick in his *Homiletic* embodies the rather unfortunate, contemporary view of sermons. He writes: "Thus, the volume you read will be limited to matters of homiletic

design and procedure—the making of sermons. I do *not* discuss the delivery of sermons”³ Sermons are, in his thinking, *some-thing* that can be “made” before being delivered, an episodic drama written in the preacher’s study and performed in the pulpit. They are designed and produced without being spoken. In this view, sermons are not oral events in the present, but like an architect who puts on paper structural designs, they are outlined conceptions waiting to be built. Consequently, one does not erect a house, but constructs an architectural plan and calls it the house. One does not move in the furniture, invite people over, and have a party. One draws a picture of the house with people in it eating, drinking, and talking. There is a mistaken identification of the design plan and the structure itself.

As a consequence of this unfortunate confusion, the sermon has been analyzed and venerated according to how textually transcribed preaching material is arranged. By contrast, what will follow in these pages is a demonstration of how verbal material can be engineered and assessed in a delivery setting to facilitate a meeting of the preacher, his people, and their God. It is an attempt to define how audiences are engaged in the immediate through figurative language and to clarify the theoretical basis of engagement preaching as oral, circumstantial poetry.

It has been noted by Eslinger that “deductive methodology” comes from a tradition that goes back to Aristotle.⁴ In deductive arrangements of prepared speech, there is a focus on *logos* features, namely the verbal and logical arrangement of the material. Yet this idea of content delivery does not sympathize with the reality that preaching is not written words, but

³ David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, “Preface” (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), xi. While Buttrick fights against the “hermeneutic of distillation,” (See Richard L. Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching: New Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 152), he nonetheless practices the distillation of sermonic form by defining the sermon as is a series of moves that can be quantified.

⁴ Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching*, 16.

the spoken sound to people. It contains intonation, intention, hesitation, emotive subtlety, volume, pitch, accentuation, slurring, sequencing, and a host of other non-written elements. These non-written elements are often what create connection and engender feelings in hearers.

Definitions of preaching must be descriptive of the act of engagement, not explanatory statements about the premeditated structuring or verbal arrangement of the words as seen in an inscribed, text form. Text-based definitions of the sermon proceed from certain views of literacy and fail to recognize adequately that preaching is encounter.

In church settings where people are literate, the reality that the Bible is text controls how people view preaching. This idea, along with the accompanying societal memory of the history of Christian preaching as a text-based methodology, makes it difficult to view preaching any other way. Churchgoing people assume that delivering a sermon is explaining meanings discovered through textual/exegetical method. While I assume throughout this work that preaching is to some extent delivery of a message based on the biblical text, I also assume that literacy has destroyed the unique relational aspects of purer orality in the immediate. The ever-present historical memory of Western Christianity imposes an extraordinary influence on preaching form. Since theologians have employed deductive methods for two thousand years, orthodoxy is sometimes unconsciously linked to discursive preaching. Tradition risks delineating for us acceptable and non-acceptable delivery forms.

To take this idea even further, the vocabulary that defines preaching has evolved around word arrangement and structures of logic. Sermons are often defined as being inductive, deductive, narrative, expository, or doctrinal. It is entirely possible, however, to invent other preaching categories that are not based in verbal structures but in relational or context factors. One might ask: Is the preaching verbally interactive preaching, networked/multi-speaker preaching, contextually nuanced preaching, figured-participatory preaching, audience-ignored preaching, or listener response generated preaching?

Grammatically speaking, the word “preach” is a verb, denoting an action. Preaching should not be defined by the logical arrangement the words display when they are written down before or after the fact.

George Whalley in his book *Poetic Process* makes the assumption that “art never assumes the propositional form.”⁵ If this is true, most sermons are not art. Jesus, by contrast, often spoke without propositions. His narrative artistry is a tropical model of oral, sermonical delivery, usually involving engagement, confrontation, disclosure, or concealment. In other words, He was primarily concerned about people and not data.

Since my ultimate aim was to construct and evaluate a contextual model on the island of Martinique, one similar to that of Jesus which focused on the performative aspects of the imaged or narrative delivery procedure, traditional categories and definitions of preaching were inadequate because they were based on the logical arrangement of words. In much of what is written on preaching, figured delivery would be considered “illustrating,” following the classical rhetorical idea that imaged material is tropical embellishment.⁶ By contrast, I have analyzed what happens when embellishment *is* the principle engagement medium.⁷

Constructing tropes is fundamentally a poetic procedure that involves concretizing notions through correspondence with the material world. Correspondences are associations that can be more universally grasped because of their concrete elements or analogies. The use of common objects and experiences becomes the interpretive framework for delivered

⁵ George Whalley, *Poetic Process* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953), 3.

⁶ E.g. Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001); John Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), 228ff; Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 201; Harold T. Bryson and James C. Taylor, *Building Sermons to Meet People's Needs* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 81ff.

⁷ Ryan Ahlgrim presents a similar notion that preaching should involve the prophetic creation of new parables (*Not as the Scribes: Jesus as a Model for Prophetic Preaching* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2002), 89ff). David Buttrick believes “metaphor is a paradigm for preaching” (*Homiletic*, 123). Contrast this with Warren W. Wiersbe who fights desperately not to join the illustration to the homiletic subject (*Preaching and Teaching with Imagination: The Quest for Biblical Ministry* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994), 82-83).

speech. This is in contrast to what Eslinger calls “discursive delivery,”⁸ where speakers count on the interpretive abilities of the listeners to grasp main points and subordinations.

When one adds the idea of “circumstantial discourse”⁹ into the scheme of a figured sermon, the result is a fusion of “poetic process” and delivery environment.¹⁰ The two are joined in a sermonic event; the sanctified union is oral poetry.¹¹

There is, at this point, a need for a taxonomy of sermonic mode. Since there are only a few appropriate terms one can use to describe figure-based preaching, this lack of an onomasticon of style begs the invention of appropriate terminology. Sermons, as they are now being developed in the various narrative forms, need an appropriate classification system. The term “narrative sermon” is not adequate to describe the current variety of sermonic discourse. We are not helped by the fact that the borders between the narrative genre itself and other genres are not clear.¹²

The poetic sermon enters categorically into the adjoining vistas of orality, namely the figurative world outside literary narrative or sequentially outlined discourse. Within that adjacent world are poetic sermons such as the chanted sermon of the Afro-American, the extended tropical form of the parabolic sermon, the role-play, the extended similitude, a protracted riddle sermon, a narrative synecdochic example, metonymic sermon,¹³ extended

⁸ Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching*, 15.

⁹ Zumthor, *Oral Poetry*, 117.

¹⁰ “Poetic process” is universal across the disciplines with only differences in “medium” (cf. “Introduction,” *Poetic Process*, xxix).

¹¹ Poetry is “excellent words in excellent order and excellent rhythm” (Coleridge); “poetry tends to express a universal” (Aristotle); “Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man” (Shelley), (Whalley, *Poetic Process*, 13-14). At the same time, poetry has musical quality and rhythm and is essentially sound as opposed to words (ibid., 94).

¹² The “artificially draw[n] lines within the unlimited field of narrative discourses . . . are simultaneously self-defining and yet ceaselessly moving. Modal distinctions between prose and verse . . . , between the spoken and the sung, lead nowhere” (Zumthor, *Oral Poetry*, 36-37). Zumthor believes that the unifying factor in oral poetic forms is that they are all “mimetic” (*Oral Poetry*, 39).

¹³ I can see the utility of constructing a narrative sermon in which a character is representative of a greater whole (part for whole). The preacher could develop and execute an extended synecdochic parable or

personifications/mimicking, dramatized allegory, prophetic/poetic discourse, visionary/apocalyptic deliveries, extended ironies or hyperboles, “anecdotal tales,”¹⁴ sermons for one person (with the rest of the audience looking on),¹⁵ or a host of other possibilities that are, could be, and should be developed.

Sermonic engagement takes place in an environment, often a sacred one. The circumstantial exchange is greatly affected by situational factors. A sermon is delivered in that setting and becomes a “performance” and is “published.”¹⁶ The degree to which a speaker is able to incorporate elements from the surrounding setting into his performance is dependent upon both his ability and his desire to do so. The various contexts—physical, cultural, social, historical, emotional, etc.—create “common imaginary forms” at the disposal of the speaker.¹⁷

The skill of ‘parabolic engagement’ involves observing and constructing figurative material within those common environmental frameworks.¹⁸ When the preacher is able to “fuse discordant elements and achieve organic unity in the paradoxical poise between spontaneity and conscious selection,”¹⁹ I would say we have an important aspect of the artistic sermon. This artistry is a talent that can be developed, one that involves perceiving correspondences between text and physical setting, raising the level of language to the point

allegory or make some kind of metonymic substitution in name where the principle character, for example, represents someone or something greater than himself.

¹⁴ Ibid., 65.

¹⁵ Ibid., 184.

¹⁶ Ibid., 124-25. “Performance is the complex action by which a poetic message is simultaneously transmitted and perceived in the here-and-now” (22).

¹⁷ Ibid., 214.

¹⁸ Whalley writes: “The productive imagination . . . is a spontaneous and self-determining faculty which synthesizes intuitions into schemata” (*Poetic Process*, 54).

¹⁹ Ibid., 62. He also refers to this objectifying synthesis that ends in a poem as being “*symbolic extrication*, . . . a process in which the poet, through an unwilling and self-generating feat of integration, extricates himself from immersion in reality by incarnating in a symbolic entity the feeling of that reality” (ibid., 63, cf. 104ff).

of art, and utilizing the imagination to connect with the audience through figures. The ensuing connection is a sacred exchange, the *engagement*.

The Immediacy of the Preaching Engagement

Preaching has been historically viewed as a process of preparation-delivery-reception. Our theological vernacular unwittingly betrays the modern concept of the sermon. In the English-speaking West, sermons are *prepared* by means of textual analysis, summary, and written outlining. Preachers then *deliver* the product already *prepared*. Lastly, that delivered product is *heard* or received by a relatively passive listener. In the English-speaking world we often say, “I am preparing my sermon.” We do not say, “I am preparing *for* my sermon.”

In the pages that follow, this thesis attempts to redefine the “sermon,” or “preaching” more exactly, as an *inventive* (i.e. creative) poetic process delivered with verbal *engagement* in a delivery context. Engagement demands speaker sensitivity to both contextual variables and audience needs. The speaker is not *delivering* a sermon, but engaging people in the immediate. In this model, the preacher attempts to make the decoding process of the listener as easy as possible through the use of concrete analogy, in most cases figures, images, and stories generated from life contexts.

During the spoken process, the elements of engagement come to light. Since engagement happens at the moment of delivery, it can be deceptive to say, “The preacher delivered his sermon.” This highlights the informational quality of preaching in both its preparation and transfer. What results is a neglect of the relational quality of communication.

It is my contention that all sermons are constructed the moment they are delivered, regardless of whether or not they are prepared in advance. This is because sermons are oral, not written. They are spoken by a preacher and heard by people.

Creating a sermon is an oral exercise, and any type of preparation, whether written or memorized, is only preparatory for delivery when the sermon is actually constructed (spoken). Rosenberg’s treatise on folk preachers approaches this concept when he says, “for

the spiritual preacher the moment of composition is the performance.”²⁰ For me, this definition is applicable for all preachers, not just the spontaneous folk preacher.

Sermons are spoken in the immediate and are under the constant demand for oral content choices. Those choices should be made not just for the sake of informational clarity, but also for the sake of communicative interchange and listener satisfaction. Every preacher must decide just before the words are uttered what is going into his sermon and what is not, and those choices should be audience-directed.

It is important to build one’s concept of the sermon around the self-evident fact that a sermon is an oral event, not text on paper. Very often, however, preaching textbooks support the notion that the important delivery choices are made in the office beforehand. These choices usually address the logical arrangement of material.

Texts on preaching reveal a lot about the mainstream view of the sermon. In particular, pedagogic approaches that explain how to create parts of a sermon *during* delivery are almost non-existent. The literature is replete with traditional themes like textual exegesis, preparation, sermon outline, structure, subject choice, authority, application, illustration, etc. In the case of preaching delivery, which is our immediate concern, almost everything in current literature addresses *prepared delivery of ideas*. By this I mean, preaching is the presentation of information that is arranged and thought out in advance with little thought of audience interaction. Advanced preparation methodology has produced works such as *Getting Ready for Sunday’s Sermon*, where “planned preaching” is viewed as normative and the *principal* activity for the minister.²¹

Current models of teaching preaching do very little to help the preacher observe the

²⁰ Bruce Rosenberg, *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 47. The term “spiritual preacher” in this sentence is a technical term to describe a preacher who practices “spontaneous oral composition” while relying “solely” on the Holy Spirit for content (ibid., 4ff, 110).

²¹ Martin Thielen, *Getting Ready for Sunday’s Sermon: A Practical Guide for Sermon Preparation* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 11.

physical context, translate the setting, and react to immediate contextual happenings by formulating appropriate responses. They are even less capable of drawing on elements from the immediate setting for images and stories. In addressing this subject of real-time engagement and imaged messaging, I need to make it perfectly clear that I am talking about both the *delivery mechanics* and the theological *content* of a message.

Multiple contexts shape delivery, and the listener environment affects sermon content choices during the entire duration of the preaching process. Consequently, a preacher should prepare for a series of engagements, then engage, and finally respond to the ongoing engagements by continuing to construct the sermon orally, based on the information he is receiving during delivery.

Traditionally, preaching is conceived and executed as a step-by-step exercise and not as a process model where there is constant revision to delivery ideas. Because of the preacher's conditioning with respect to sermon preparation, he arrives with a prepared outline or text and basically delivers what was conceived in advance with little change based on the immediate circumstances. He views his task as one of idea preparation-delivery. It should be, however, preparation-observation-revision-engagement-revision-engagement. Often, a preacher's ability and openness in preparing for engagement or for reading the contextual setting at the very moment of delivery is minimal. Traditional methodology is highly programmed. "Sermons worked with the strict linear rhetoric of the printed word and presupposed people's ability to follow a developing sequential logical argument from introduction through points to conclusion."²²

From the moment a speaker decides he will deliver a sermon until the time he opens his mouth, he makes choices. Most often, these choices are about *what* he wants to say and

²² John Goldingay, "In Preaching be Scriptural," *Anvil* Vol.14.2 (1997). "Thinking could now [with the advent of print] be recorded in linear and logical format with a greatly extended vocabulary" (Michael Quicke, "Let Anyone with Ears to Hear, Listen," Papers of 2002 Meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, cited from <http://www.evangelicalhomiletics.com/Papers2002/Quicke.htm>; Internet; accessed 23 June 2003).

how he wants to say it. Unfortunately, he is not trained to ask himself questions about engagement at the time of delivery: What do I need to say or do so that these people cannot escape an encounter with God and with me? Will the audience be able to decode this message and still pay attention? What environmental realities can I integrate into the message to make it more living and present?

In engagement strategy, preaching is viewed more as an audience-sensitive process, and the audience is not visible until the last minute. Even if the speaker knows every individual to whom she will speak and addresses the same crowd week after week, she does not know the contextual details until she arrives, namely, what state of mind her audience is in, whether there is sadness, joy, or anger in the air. There are a myriad of details that become evident only at the last minute. The sermonic choices a preacher makes, whether or not they are two weeks ahead or two minutes ahead, are ultimately engineered for the final get-together, the engagement.

The immediacy of engagement makes teaching preaching particularly difficult. If preaching is circumstantial, how can teachers of preaching create pedagogy, especially parabolic pedagogy, without actually implementing homiletic technique in a delivery context? It is for this reason that the experimental portion of this thesis treats each engagement technique as a practical oral exercise validated in the classroom and in church settings. In order to prove the viability of circumstantial methodology, it must be possible to prove that the methodology works within a concrete context.

The Preaching Engagement and Contemporary Scholarship

Conservative evangelical preachers often conceive of preaching preparation as the *management of sermonic material beforehand*.²³ This perspective of the homiletic process

²³ See for example, Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980); Hershanel W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers), 2003); Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Messages: A Seven Step Method for Biblical*

deals very little with the relational aspects of delivery itself. The sermon is not constructed to evolve in its context. Rather, it is created in advance and is delivered almost regardless of what takes place in the delivery surroundings. Even less is the preacher responsible to his listeners. He is often viewed as one responsible only to God Himself.

Many who have written and taught about preaching embrace this approach to sermon development and delivery. The reason for this is that great preachers are often pastors of sizeable churches, and the content of preaching books is based on habits developed in larger settings.²⁴ Unfortunately, large audiences are very difficult to engage in a personal way. “Formal messages” become the tool of choice for pastors forced to speak regularly before a crowd of any significant size. Relational, dialogical, and process paradigms are “inappropriate.”

A classic evangelical view of speaker-centered delivery is Haddon Robinson’s text on *Biblical Preaching*. When he finally approaches the area of sermon delivery in the last chapter, he describes about twenty pages of classical rhetorical delivery techniques like pitch, eye contact, and pause.²⁵ Engagement is limited to the speaker’s manipulation of his words or body. It is not sacred encounter. It does not involve either the audience or the physical context.

Often the emotive engagement of the audience is considered by speakers to be something unpredictable or dangerously subjective. There is the risk that things might backfire. Speaker feelings might enter into the sermon and emotionally charge the moment. An audience member waiting to speak might take advantage of the opportunity to create a

Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001). A strong method of advanced sermon preparation can subtly absolve the speaker of his responsibility for contextual engagement. The preacher can hide behind crowd size when in fact the skill of audience interaction has never been learned.

²⁴ See for example, Bill Hybels, Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon Robinson, *Mastering Contemporary Preaching* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989).

²⁵ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 191-208. Donald L. Hamilton’s *Homiletical Handbook* is another classic example of text-centered preaching pedagogy (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992).

volatile scene. Contextual uncertainties can create disequilibria for preachers if they are unprepared for what arrives. Consequently, the sermon and its preparation are defined around what is “manageable,” namely textually centered ingredients.

Homiletic theory and practice are shifting, however, toward a listener-centered paradigm and interactive ideas of delivery.²⁶ The nature of preaching is becoming more audience sensitive and employing techniques that are more oral in nature.

The benchmark for the new movement in narrative preaching in the English speaking world was set by Fred Craddock in 1971 with the appearance of *As One Without Authority*.²⁷ Since then, numbers of voices have appeared that build upon basic orality principles, including Eugene Lowry, David Buttrick, Jolyon Mitchell, Haddon W. Robinson, and Torrey W. Robinson.²⁸ The African-American tradition, of course, never left the vistas of narrative, and it is somewhat ironic or even arrogant to say that when narrative preaching principles were coded in print by mostly white authors, the new movement began. The reality is that the greater part of the black preaching heritage never lived anything else but “telling the story.”²⁹ In addition, non-English speaking authors such as the French researcher Pierre Babin have made major contributions to the discussion of the influence of audio-visual culture on religious communication.³⁰

²⁶ Not everyone thinks interaction is possible. Klaas Ruhia states in *The Sermon Under Attack* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1983), that the sermon is essentially “monological” even in spite of attempts at discussing its interactive, dialogical nature (69-70). Ruhia chooses the term “relevance” to discuss his experiential engagement of the text to the listener (ibid., 73-96).

²⁷ Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Enid, Oklahoma: Phillips University Press, 1974).

²⁸ Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), Buttrick, *Homiletic*, Jolyon P. Mitchell, *Visually Speaking* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), and Haddon W. Robinson and Torrey W. Robinson, *It's All in How You Tell It: Preaching First-Person Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003).

²⁹ Will Coleman, *Tribal Talk: Black Theology, Hermeneutics, and African/American Ways of “Telling the Story”* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

³⁰ Babin, *The New Era in Religious Communication*, 1991. Babin’s definition of communication as *modulation* approaches the multi-faceted and multi-sensory aspects of postmodern audio-visual realities (ibid., 6).

Homiletical theory is in the process of defining how figured speech, in all its narrative and non-narrative forms, is changing preaching delivery and reception. Yet, in spite of all the progress toward the creation of suitable structures for listener-sensitive delivery, there is still a decided focus on sermonic *form* and not on the mechanics of speaker-listener exchange. Moreover, there are not many clear generative methods or engagement techniques in print as I have outlined them in Part II of this thesis.

For example, what David Buttrick addresses at a theoretical level in *Preaching the New and the Now* by asking readers to consider the transformative and revelatory powers of figures in kingdom of God preaching, particularly parables and metaphors,³¹ does not help preachers develop similar transforming figures from scratch. Ryan Ahlgrim calls his form the “prophetic sermon,” but it is basically an authoritative delivery unveiled by the extensive use of parabolic address.³²

Brian K. Blount advances a more helpful prophetic model that includes the idea of urgency and brings us closer to preaching as an interpersonal encounter. He develops the concept of apocalyptic delivery through “prophetic engagement” and details one of the preaching styles of Jesus specifically with respect to the 13th chapter of Mark’s gospel.³³ Blount believes that “eschatological preaching” is “a tactical complement to God’s strategic design.”³⁴ The force of immediacy is seen in the preacher’s “eschatological task of preaching the apocalyptic kingdom of God.”³⁵ More precisely, Blount sees the need for a

³¹ David Buttrick, *Preaching the New and the Now* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 83ff, 121. He also treats the metaphoric basis of preaching in *Homiletic*, 113-25.

³² Ahlgrim, *Not as the Scribes*, 81ff.

³³ Brian K. Blount, “Preaching the Kingdom: Mark’s Apocalyptic Call for Prophetic Engagement,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 15 (1994): 33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

“patient” yet “confrontational posture of engagement.”³⁶ Blount’s view of engagement is not full-orbed, however. It does not include the spectrum of human interaction. It isolates the notion of patient confrontation, but does so at the neglect of other non-prophetic aspects of interpersonal exchange.

Other authors also create only partial views of engagement. Martyn D. Atkins, although addressing the notion of engagement from the vantage point of being honest with the postmodern culture and audiences at every level, offers very few forms for that engagement.³⁷ Richard A. Jensen answers that problem when he focuses on the story as the principle medium of oral communication and calls certain narrative forms extended “metaphors of participation.”³⁸ My view closely parallels Jensen’s, but I define figurative engagement more broadly to include all figures and their concrete analogous principles.

Engagement involves more than verbal construction. It is an interactive process. It is not simply speaking. It is first assessing, synthesizing, and embracing the hearing community. The type of theologizing required as a base for ‘parabolic engagement’ springs from a proper view of the local context.³⁹ For our purposes, the relevant aspect of contextualization⁴⁰ is the necessity to focus “on the role that circumstances play in shaping

³⁶ Ibid., 43.

³⁷ Martyn D. Atkins, *Preaching in a Cultural Context*, The Preacher’s Library Vol. 4 (Peterborough: Foundry Press, 2001), 41ff.

³⁸ Richard A. Jensen, *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-literate Age* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Co., Inc., 1995), 27-28. Jensen’s storied form parallels Eugene L. Lowry’s discussion of structural designs of narrativity in *How to Preach a Parable: Designs for Narrative Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

³⁹ See Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985) and Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992). Consistent in the works on contextualization from a missiological perspective is the near complete absence of a preaching form that adequately permits localization. The consequence is that there is a *theoretical* model for contextualization but not a *practical* model for verbal delivery.

⁴⁰ The problem of contextualization was clearly identified “in 1972 with the publication of the Theological Education Fund . . . report entitled *Ministry in Context*” and addressed the importance of “contextualizing the gospel” (Krikor Haleblian, “The Problem of Contextualization,” *Missiology* 11.1 (1983): 95). Contextualization involves the “complex relationship between message, context, and meaning” for which there are historically two important models: the “translational model” of dynamic equivalence and the “semiotic model” (ibid., 104-108; see also Eugene A. Nida, *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian*

one's response to the gospel."⁴¹ The attention given to cultural adaptation has historically been referred to by the terms: "localization," "contextualization," "indigenization," and "inculturation,"⁴² and what was developed at the grass roots level was referred to as "indigenous theology," "ethnology," "contextual theology," and "local theology."⁴³

To put an idea properly into parabolic form requires localization. The narrative and images on which it is based must obtain their shape from the pool of local signifiers. In a similar way, the interpretation of parable by listeners is defined by the community's sense of language and how they might interpret the figures out of their cultural setting.⁴⁴

This type of circumstantial delivery by means of figured participation is treated to some extent in Leonora Tisdale's *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. She rightly defines the preacher as a folk artist, or folk dancer, who functions within a local matrix of sub-cultures.⁴⁵ It is the preacher's job to participate in the cultural interpretation and life of a community and preach from within it.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, she too, although giving extensive

Faith (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1960), 189-205). Later, other models were developed: the "anthropological model," the "praxis model," the "synthetic model," the "transcendental model," (Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, vii-viii), and the "adaptation model" (Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 9). In dealing with the issues of contextualizing through metaphoric preaching, see for example Okota Longelo's *La contextualisation du message chretien dans les milieux negro-africain chez les Tetela en particulier: Le cas du mariage coutumier a christianiser*, (Th.D diss., Universität Tübingen, 1989) and Louis J. Luzbetak, S.V.D., "Unity in Diversity: Ethnological Sensitivity in Cross-Cultural Evangelism," *Missiology* 4.2 (1976): 207-16. Renck's *Contextualization of Christianity and Christianization of Language* discusses "adaptation" and the Lutheran struggle to metaphorize Christian theology in Papua New Guinea (Günther Renck, *Contextualization of Christianity and Christianization of Language: A Case Study from the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, (Verlag der Ev. Luth. Mission Erlagen, 1990). In the oralization of their catechism, it became necessary to transform the preaching method into narration and ultimately develop an oral theology (ibid., 88, 173).

⁴¹ Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 1.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 5-6.

⁴⁴ Schreiter's discussion of semiotics and its value for *understanding* contextual culture is valuable at the level of comprehension but does little to help the preacher "localize" his speech (ibid., 49ff).

⁴⁵ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 122ff.

⁴⁶ This is similar to David J. Schlafer's exhortation that the preacher must listen to the matrix of voices of the congregational culture in order to be an effective speaker (*Surviving the Sermon: A Guide to Preaching for Those Who Have to Listen* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1992), 48ff).

ways of interpreting physical contexts and audiences, fails to address preaching forms to any significant extent, nor how to clothe her exegesis of congregations.⁴⁷

It is difficult to attempt a synthetic summary of current trends in sermonic theory as they relate to engagement. Even Eslinger's conclusions about modern homiletical tendencies, namely, discussions about image, point of view, and imagination, do not seem to leave the text-centered approach to imaged delivery, although he ultimately concludes with his own model, which lends credence to the performative power of language.⁴⁸ In order to understand properly where engagement theory rests with respect to traditional views of the sermon as well as to more contemporary approaches to narrativity, it is important to return to some simple categorical distinctions with respect to delivery.

Historically, standard categories for sermonic delivery help isolate important aspects of engagement theory. Brown, Clinard, and Northcutt differentiate between four types of traditional delivery patterns: 1) "preaching from memory"; 2) "impromptu delivery"; 3) "extemporaneous preaching"; and 4) "free preaching."⁴⁹ All describe how information is spoken; there is no reference at all to hearers. In reality, traditional delivery form terminology concerns knowledge transfer format and is audience-less.

The first category that they discuss is preaching from memory. It involves verbatim delivery of a memorized text.⁵⁰ Although the method frees up the preacher to express him or herself, it does not address the issue of how content affects engagement nor does it deal with

⁴⁷ Joseph R. Jeter and Ronald J. Allen reproduce almost the identical situation in *One Gospel, Many Ears* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002).

⁴⁸ Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching*, 246-74. Eslinger's use of the term "point of view" reveals that he is still concerned with the "thingness" of sermons, and "image" and "imagination" refer principally to the structural inventions of the speaker. While admittedly the term "point of view" can be an audience-centered perception, it does not have the same communal interpretive force as do the terms "culture" or "context."

⁴⁹ H. C. Brown, Jr., H. Gordon Clinard, and Jesse J. Northcutt, *Steps to the Sermon* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), 87-93.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 187-88.

sermonic evolution during delivery. “Impromptu delivery” means speaking without preparation at all. Of it they say, “The impromptu method is of such limited usefulness and is accompanied by such obvious weakness that it can be quickly dismissed as an adopted style of sermon delivery.”⁵¹ The extemporaneous sermon is one that is prepared in semi-detailed note form and delivered with the notes while taking the liberty to fill in the blanks.⁵² In their discussion of free delivery, meaning a fully prepared manuscript delivered without notes, they laud it saying: “it affords the best possibility for fulfilling the essential functions of both voice and body in public speaking.”⁵³

In liberating the preacher from his prepared notes by encouraging free delivery, what have Brown and his colleagues done and not done? They have approached a model that encourages preparation and freedom at the same time. Their view of what the preacher is free to do, however, is clearly traditional informational delivery. It is obvious that audience interaction, response methodologies, and sermon reconstruction are not a central part of what the preacher is free to do, at least on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, in this four-part categorization, there is also a failure to recognize that all sermonizing is to some extent impromptu delivery. I argue that no matter how much preparation takes place ahead of time, the moment of delivery is also the moment of creation of the oral version. Oral material is fabricated *on the spot in the mind and mouth of the speaker*. The utterance is invented in the immediate. The speaker instinctually chooses a tone, a stance, an inflection, a pause, a precise volume, a rhythm, etc. Preaching pedagogy

⁵¹ Ibid., 188.

⁵² Ibid., 190. Smith, by contrast, defines “extemporaneity” as prepared and organized material that is *not* delivered from notes (Elmer William Smith, *Extemporaneous Speaking* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1932), 8). Ralph Lewis, “Preaching With and Without Notes,” *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 414-16, deals with the advantages of extemporaneous communication in contrast to the disadvantages of impromptu sermons.

⁵³ Brown, Clinard, and Northcutt, *Steps to the Sermon*, 192.

should consequently reflect the reality that speakers are constantly refining their material based on what they see, hear, and think at the moment.

Most preachers have very little good to say concerning impromptu delivery. Spurgeon discouraged it, saying it would “produc[e] a vacuum in [the] meetinghouse.”⁵⁴ He himself, however, believed in and practiced extemporaneous speaking. “[T]he words are extemporal, as I think they always should be, but the thoughts are the result of research and study.”⁵⁵ “Good impromptu speech is just the utterance of a practiced thinker—a man of information, meditating on his legs.”⁵⁶ He also said, “impromptu speech is invaluable, because it enables a man on the spur of the moment, in an emergency to deliver himself with propriety.”⁵⁷

Spurgeon’s comments bring into balance the connection of thought and speech. Advocating the spontaneous creation of delivery choices does not negate the necessity of thoughtful advance planning. Substantive sermons are a result of serious reflection well before their delivery; yet ultimately, the oral form that those sermons take is molded by how the speaker chooses to interact with his content and the physical context.

Paul Scott Wilson, although grossly underestimating the nature of oral delivery, puts us closer to the issue: “Though preaching needs extensive preparation, there is nonetheless an element of spontaneity to it. We are open to the moving of the Holy Spirit to make certain emphases, or proceed in a different direction, even as we preach.”⁵⁸ Spirit-led spontaneity, however, is more than simply “an element” of preaching. It is an ever-present teacher,

⁵⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Encounter with Spurgeon*, compiled by Helmut Thielicke, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 177.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁵⁸ Paul Scott Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 46.

instructing the mouth in choice of words, guiding the mind and the body in appropriate contextual alternatives.⁵⁹ Moreover, it is not easy to systematize a method for capturing the Spirit or to develop spontaneity into a pedagogical framework. We have, nevertheless, attempted in the later portions of this thesis to be sensitive to these issues and assess the pedagogy with respect to them.

At a practical level, Buttrick makes an attempt at immediacy in preaching but ultimately falls short of admitting the obvious. He states that some sermons, some texts, some ideas are better served by “preaching in the mode of immediacy.”⁶⁰ He says this even though he admits that all words are “to some degree, performative.”⁶¹ Immediacy for Buttrick is a mode, a posture that the preacher takes on occasionally. In this mode, “the intentional force of the biblical text is replicated in the consciousness of the hearers.”⁶² Apart from falling into the intentional fallacy by stating that a speaker can replicate divine intention, however, Buttrick also retreats ideologically into the safety of the sermon-as-form. Immediacy, for Buttrick, is not an ever-present reality; it is for him a consciously chosen role-play.

Other partially-constructed views of immediacy exist in contemporary preaching theory. Most affirm the poetic nature of the oral delivery in the immediate and are, to some extent, anti-propositional. They include: Eugene L. Lowry’s *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form; Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*, by Walter Brueggemann; *Imagining a Sermon* by Thomas H. Troeger, and *The Sermon as*

⁵⁹ Congregational spontaneous engagement is treated by Jim H. Rutz in *The Open Church: How to Bring Back the Exciting Life of the First Century Church* (Colorado Springs: The Seed Sowers, 1992).

⁶⁰ Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 362.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching*, 161.

Symphony by Mike Graves.⁶³ In considering these works in a general way, one is certainly out of the domain of strict linear thought with proper subordination. These authors propose the sermon in a variety of forms. The most common is sometimes referred to as a “narrative” form, the elephantine term lumbering around the circus of preaching theory and subsuming under it the enormous weight of extremely diverse elements, from storytelling arrangements to episodic structures to imaged deliveries.

Eugene Lowry developed the idea that the sermon is essentially a narrative plot with tension and resolution. His view of the sermon is formulaic in that it progresses through a series of audience-manipulative “stages”⁶⁴ that resemble suspense constructions in a novel. It is not a full-orbed type of audience interaction in the immediate as I have described it. Lowry’s plot form, while being far more speaker-sensitive than other prototypes, is nonetheless simplistic and basically exploits only one aspect of the speaker/audience exchange platform, namely the tension/suspense/anticipation desire of the listener. Speakers have other ways into the human spirit, so to speak. They can question their way in, remark about a contextual item, rebuke directly, use statistics, heal, cry, and any of a thousand other ways. Even farther than this, preachers can use the controlling powers of the audience. Any audience and setting can unconsciously manipulate the speaker, with babies crying, people getting up, heads down, etc. She can, however, use this contextual, manipulative dynamic herself as leverage to make the delivery more powerful, an idea I pursue later. Many engagement techniques do not fit into the plotted sermon of Lowry. Nevertheless, in spite of Lowry’s one-way preaching model as being decidedly from speaker to listener, what Lowry has done for us is to show us that listener change is linked to listener invitation and

⁶³ Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*; Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Thomas H. Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990); Mike Graves, *The Sermon as Symphony* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1997).

⁶⁴ Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching*, 35.

desire, almost like a permission marketer gains customers by the hearer's authorization.⁶⁵

Wilson introduces the helpful correction with respect to oversimplification of labeling for sermonic form. He corrects the tendency to dichotomize preaching into propositional and narrative formats by explaining that pigeonholing with these terms and others, such as, inductive, deductive, single-story, etc. is reductionist and can hinder latitude in form selection by pastors.⁶⁶ What results is a much larger view of the complexity of sermonic form. The reality of genre diversity within sermons opens the door for viewing preaching as art or as imaged delivery.

Broadly defining the preaching task as a poetic discipline leads us to Coggan's idea of a preacher as "an artist at work," Alec Gilmore's "preaching as theatre," William Wand's "preaching as an art," or Charles L. Campbell's preaching as "exposing and envisioning."⁶⁷ All advocate experiential frames and lyrical artistry.

Brueggeman's perspective on the modern day sermon is that "the gospel is . . . a truth widely held, but a truth greatly reduced."⁶⁸ By this he means that the voice that Christianity has chosen to speak in is not equal to the majestic force of the magnitude of the Almighty. He advocates that preachers embrace the forceful, poetic voice of God.

He argues that the preacher should be a prophet, thereby a poet. "The poetic speech of the text and of a sermon is a prophetic construal of a world beyond the one taken for

⁶⁵ Seth Godin, *Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers into Friends, and Friends into Customers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999).

⁶⁶ Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 209-19.

⁶⁷ Donald Coggan, *Steward of Grace* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), 29; William Wand, *Letters on Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1974), 15; Alec Gilmore's *Preaching as Theatre* (London: SCM Press, 1996); Charles L. Campbell, *The Word before the Powers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), discusses the force of the parable as a poetic morality in storied form (105ff, 120). Preaching is developed in these works as a *learned* art.

⁶⁸ Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet*, 1.

granted.”⁶⁹ He writes that the Christian’s speech should be “daring, liberated, and unaccommodating.”⁷⁰ “I want to consider preaching as a poetic construal of an alternative world.”⁷¹ In describing the sermon he says: “It is an artistic moment in which the words are concrete but open, close to our life but moving out to new angles of reality. At the end, there is a breathless waiting: stunned, not sure we have reached the end. Then there is a powerful sense that a world has been rendered in which I may live, a world that is truly home but from which I have been alienated.”⁷²

As an Old Testament scholar, Brueggemann is attempting to communicate the need for modern day preachers to clothe themselves in the persona of the Old Testament prophets who spoke the word of God in verse. When the prophet spoke, a poet spoke.

Brueggemann’s analysis of preaching proposes an audacity of language that is not linear. It calls for majesty and directness, creativity and spontaneity. He even links the creative acts of a poet/preacher to the immediate and highlights the instantaneous effects of the voice of God.⁷³

Brueggemann’s book does not develop the most characteristic styles of prophetic language, namely poetic image and tropical language usage. While being concerned with the personal force of the poet’s words, he is concerned less with the images utilized by the preacher in communicating forcefully. He leaves us with the lingering question, “What is the content of the poem?”

Thomas Troeger picks up where Brueggemann leaves off. He addresses the practical side of imaginative generation of sermonic material in his work *Imagining a Sermon*.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 6.

⁷² Ibid., 10.

⁷³ Ibid., 134.

Troeger writes, “What, then, are the principles for using our imaginations so that we can receive the *ruach*, the Spirit of the living God to Whom our preaching is a witness? The primary principle from which all the others are derived is that we are attentive to what is.”⁷⁴

Troeger believes that preachers need instruction in the careful examination of reality. He says, “The untrained eye is not adept at seeing things accurately.”⁷⁵ As a result, it is necessary to begin a sort of self-imposed training in observation. Troeger encourages the communicator to follow Margaret Miles’ pedagogic principles for developing image observation skills: “1) Become aware of the messages we receive from the images with which we live. 2) Assess how those images are shaping our political and social perspective. 3) Develop a repertoire of images that help us to envision the transformation of life.”⁷⁶

The sermon material emerges from what we see around us. The modern day preacher is faced with the challenge of becoming more figure conscious in his observation and more image laden in delivery. John Goldingay’s suggestion to the preacher is that he become “televisual.”⁷⁷ This resonates with the postmodern desire for visual cues.

When visual qualities are verbalized in sound, there is a sensual reproduction of human experience. Troeger states that “the physical properties of speech—its rhythm, pitch, volume, and inflection—are a kind of music that makes the imagination dance.”⁷⁸ Music is a “metaphor” for the tapestry of different facets of preaching, including the “dimensions of vision, imagination, and poetic approaches to grasping and sharing truth [that] are especially

⁷⁴ Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon*, 15.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁷ John Goldingay, “In Preaching be Scriptural,” 91.

⁷⁸ Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon*, 67.

relevant to postmodern sensibilities.”⁷⁹ The speech form produces a sort of melody that resonates either positively or negatively with the listener. That melody is often contextually defined, and the reception of the sound is validated within the ear of the listener.

It is precisely at this point of melodic poetry that one moves into the realm of African-American preaching and its view of engagement. The black church has a dependence on music as a controlling support throughout the worship experience. Ellis uses the phrase “song of the soul” to describe the chanted yearning of the black worshipper.⁸⁰ The preacher should be the chief practitioner of choral declaration.

The image has to make music, so to speak. “The voice of the preacher gives witness to the wonder and the ineffability of God by being alive with the wonder and ineffability of human personality as expressed by the best physical qualities of spoken language.”⁸¹ This is Ford’s point when he reiterates that the form of preaching is “personal and poetic.”⁸²

Black preaching is, nonetheless, culturally defined and strictly limited in usage. For example, call and response is a contextually controlled form. It does not work in the same way in white churches as it does in black congregations. The exportation of a culturally appropriate engagement medium is a dangerous practice. Engagement that works in one location, in one culture, in one language, does not necessarily work in another. However, the overarching principles and practices of black preachers have wide-reaching ramifications if

⁷⁹ Barry L. Callen, ed., *Sharing Heaven’s Music: The Heart of Christian Preaching (Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey)* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 11. The idea of music as an “engagement” vehicle is treated in Jeremy Begbie, “Unexplored Eloquencies: Music, Media, Religion and Culture,” in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage, eds. (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 97ff. See also Evans E. Crawford’s discussion of “homiletical musicality” in *The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 15ff.

⁸⁰ Carl F. Ellis Jr., *Free at Last: The Gospel in the African-American Experience* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 182.

⁸¹ Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon*, 69.

⁸² D. W. Cleverley Ford, *Preaching Today* (London: Epworth Press & SPCK, 1969), 61, quoting J.I. Packer in *The Johnian*, 1957.

applied in other milieux. The preacher is the poet, the musician, the choral leader, and the call and response engager.

This larger view of the preacher and his sermon is expressed in Mike Graves' terminology when he calls the sermon a "symphony," a "moving and majestic experience."⁸³ However, Graves uses a text-bound approach to sermonic development, one that is not principally concerned with a physical context. He believes that "the very forms of biblical texts can give us clues about how to preach them, resulting in an approach to preaching that I call 'form-sensitive.'"⁸⁴ Graves' central concern is that the preacher respect the literary form of the biblical text in homiletic arrangement. The majestic experience comes from the preacher's expositional delivery.

While it may be dangerous to move outside the textual foundations of the exegetical tradition and embrace an imaged view of proclamation, it is equally as dangerous to assume that a historical/exegetical model engages listeners simply because there is a discursive explanation of a group of verses. The preacher needs to remain text-based while still being free to communicate ideas in fresh ways that are not discursive. Buttrick advises that we ground our metaphor-making in appropriate aspects of Christian theology.⁸⁵

The pedagogy described later attempts to create sensitivity not just to text forms, but also to audience forms, physical milieu forms, and cultural context forms. In the same way that the biblical material may dictate sermonic form, the audience should have some control over the preaching as well. For example, telling a joke at a funeral is usually not appropriate because the delivery context forbids emotionally shallow laughter.

The at-the-moment and ongoing happenings during the delivery of a sermon are

⁸³ Graves, *The Sermon as Symphony*, xv.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5. This is similar to Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989).

⁸⁵ Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 116ff.

integral to the continuing development of the preaching itself. In a more traditional, text-based model of sermonic development, the preacher attempts to determine where the biblical text wants to take the listeners from start to finish, and arranges the material *ahead of time* into a *coherent bundle that he can manage*.⁸⁶ All the ingredients of the sermon as best as can be understood by the preacher are quantified in advance and engineered based on textual, thematic issues. The speaker correctly searches out “inherent illustrations” from the text, and seeks to communicate them in a sermon that is a weaving of exegetical method and illustrative material.⁸⁷ This practice minimizes the identification of contextual variables, however. There may remain an enormous distance between the text and the audience, a distance that could be easily overcome by the use of local and cultural images, or polemical tropes that emerge from the preaching context.⁸⁸

The process of harvesting relevant clues from within a physical setting is a contextualizing art. Methods of analogizing a scriptural idea for an audience within a concrete locale allow the preacher to couple his textual observations with the audience’s world in a creative way. The pedagogy and the homiletical experiment described later in this document attempt to implement a process whereby it is possible to fuse scriptural ideas, analogous material from the immediate physical surroundings, and the vast poetic quality of oral communication. The generative procedures of parabolic invention attempt to overcome some of the serious limitations of a preaching model that addresses sermonic development principally from the vantage point of information transfer and logical outlining.

⁸⁶ Graves, *The Sermon as Symphony*, 24.

⁸⁷ Peter Masters, “Steps for Evangelistic Message Preparation,” *Sword & Trowel* 1 (2001): 25. See also Stuart Olyott’s *Prêcher comme Jésus* (Chalon-sur-Saône: Europresse, 2003), 22ff.

⁸⁸ A trope is created “lorsqu’une impertinence logique de l’énoncé, ordonnée à un effet particulier, entraîne la réévaluation du sens littéral d’un segment et fait désigner à ce segment un autre objet que celui que le code linguistique lui assigne, en vertu de l’appréhension d’une relation entre les deux objets” (Bernard Meyer, *Synecdoques : Étude d’une figure de rhétorique* (Réunion: Conseil Régional de La Réunion, 1993), 64).

The Limits of Logic and Abstraction

Qualifying the limitations of the preacher's advanced preparation of logical discursive frameworks is important in establishing the value of non-sequential and spontaneously produced imaged communication. Prepared discourse is planned discourse, whether it is narrative or more propositional delivery. Material engineered beforehand does not necessarily reflect happenings or needs in the immediate.

Logical rhetorical structures have historically greatly influenced sermonic delivery form and are based on a sequential ordering of propositions prepared in advance. Both discursive delivery and narrative consist of a series of arranged ideas or ordered thoughts. Neither, however, guarantees sensitivity to the audience or physical setting. Narrative and syllogistic discourse depend on sequence for some of their communicative force and are not usually structured around their immediate and emergent links to the physical context.

The circumstantial quality of spoken language is clear, however. Meaning is, for all intents and purposes, constructed within the physical setting. The importance of discourse sequence and narrative time is consequently balanced with circumstantial factors that emerge from within the material context where the language is spoken.

Contemporary views of storied time can have a tendency to destabilize the chronological quality of narrative, however, even when there are concrete ties to the physical world. Postmodern narrative often has a "self-referentiality" that can result in phenomena such as "backwards" or "looped" sequence.⁸⁹ As Middleton and Walsh properly point out in their chapter "They Don't Tell Stories Like They Used To," the orthodox redemptive scheme is based on a sequential view of narrative.⁹⁰ A biblical view of historical storying "answers

⁸⁹ Maria Simms, "Away from the Centre: Postmodern Writing Theory," <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/hmcs/human/writing/introwrittext/lectureNotes/Lecture11.html>, (25 May 2004).

⁹⁰ J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *truth is stranger than it used to be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (London: SPCK, 1995), 63-80.

. . . [our] worldview questions” via the chronological redemptive framework.⁹¹

Consequently, it is more than a little dangerous to undermine the clearly sequential views of narrative time by which God chose to reveal Himself.

But while prepared narrative and sequenced propositions both have an obvious importance in Christian communication, the Holy Spirit is always at work in the immediate. The Spirit needs to have the freedom to create the verbal text in the mouth of the speaker according to the never-ending intersection of audience/speaker/environment interplay. Yet, how is this done today in our contemporary culture? What is the paradigm that preserves a biblical view of narrative and sequential logic and also moves into the immediate? In addition, how can that paradigm be transformed into practical steps for teaching preaching to people that have a primarily oral communication preference?

One might say that the construction of a parabolic form is not accomplished by totally rejecting the past. The dismantling of story and story-telling conventions in contemporary culture often results in the substitution of the real with the reproduced, or as Appignanesi and Garratt say, the replacement of reality by instantaneous hyper-reality.⁹² This is not altogether a good thing. What the contemporary preacher competes with is a media-improved “aestheticized commodity world,”⁹³ and it is not easy to contend with the flashy display fabricated by a computer. The “aestheticization of the quotidian” by the “image production industries” makes the dynamic of the contemporary preacher literally pale in comparison.⁹⁴

The preacher’s ethos is undermined by the simple fact that she is not what the audience is used to seeing in performers. This makes engagement more difficult, even on the

⁹¹ Ibid., 64.

⁹² Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt, *Postmodernism for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon Books, Ltd., 1995), 49.

⁹³ Walter Benjamin’s term used from an unquoted source by Hans Bertens in *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* (London: Routledge, 1995), 213.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 214.

mission field where satellites and cable networks bring modern-day, Madison Avenue glitz into tribal areas of remote jungles.⁹⁵ The preacher, nevertheless, does have one advantage if he or she will use it: namely, the physical immediacy of the circumstances. The concrete context is usually far more interesting than the one artificially created by the media. For example, in contrast to the “radio church” with its implied corporeal presence,⁹⁶ the Christ-in-the-midst reality of the congregation gathered for worship is the strongest dynamic available to a preacher who wishes to take advantage of the spontaneous moving of the Spirit.⁹⁷ It is in the divine presence among Christians that the unbelieving world finds “sanctuary.”⁹⁸ In effect, there are real people with real problems gathered to receive healing and answers. If preachers testify to that reality, no artificially generated media can match the power of this type of spiritual interaction.

The difference between prepared oral or written communication and extemporaneous engagement is that in the former the audience variables are removed. In prepared speech, the words are designed based on a static audience, fictionally created in the composer’s mind. Oral communication at its best exploits the speaker/listener rapport so that there is “directness of relationship between the speaker and his listeners.”⁹⁹ Smith elaborates on this idea by saying that “the presence of an audience that expects you to direct its thoughts and the wish to satisfy that expectation and achieve results better than those expected of you are stimuli

⁹⁵ For example, in the interior of French Guiana the jungle is filled with people who do not make an effort to have running water but who own satellite dishes and big televisions.

⁹⁶ Virginia Stem Owens, *The Total Image: or Selling Jesus in the Modern Age* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 63. John P. Ferré also highlights the differences between “disengaged” reproduced media and interpersonal orality (“The Media of Popular Piety,” in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 88).

⁹⁷ William Beckham, *The Second Reformation: Reshaping the Church for the Twenty First Century* (Houston: Touch Publications, 1995), 95-113.

⁹⁸ Owens, *The Total Image*, 83.

⁹⁹ Smith, *Extemporaneous Speaking*, 10.

that have no equal.”¹⁰⁰

The preacher is the principal actor in the oral transmission of Christian tradition, interacting with members of his community in the immediate. He is an oral “performer” in sociological, anthropological, and folklorist terms, a storyteller responsible for cultural diffusion.¹⁰¹ In biblical terms, he is a preacher, reconstructing the apostolic kerygma in the 21st century. He is living in the immediate. He is contextualizing.

Compare a media show with the delivery event of a typical preacher of our day who uses a list of didactic precepts prepared and illustrated in advance and delivered before an audience that is largely physically passive and intellectually battling to stay alert. Since thoughtful reflection is not a discipline that is highly developed in contemporary society, and grasping more objectified, propositional truth is more difficult for listeners raised in front of the storying media like the television, ordered statements of principles are not easily accepted or understood.

The skill of abstraction is mastered by very few, and the principle-to-example bridge commonly used in some churches, where people extrapolate concrete application from propositions, is not traversed by many. Usually, advanced stages of literacy increase a capacity for abstraction because thinking skills are refined and modified by a print-orientation. McLuhan says, “the alphabet is an aggressive and militant absorber and transformer of cultures.”¹⁰² Printed literature changes the way people think. Consequently, people who are more accustomed to objectifying truth in a reading process have an easier

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰¹ Although he does not call the preacher a prophetic storyteller, I have here used Overholt’s terms describing the sociological aspects of storytelling to define the preacher in his context, Thomas W. Overholt, *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Sourcebook for Biblical Researches* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 314.

¹⁰² Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 48.

time following a sermon sequenced by propositions.

The preacher is often among the most educated and the most adept at abstraction within the four walls of the church. This can create enormous distance between him and the congregation because of his tendency to neglect the simplicity of the common person. Consequently, the preacher is operating out of what Richard Jensen calls “Gutenberg hermeneutics” and “Gutenberg homiletics.”¹⁰³ Most hearers, by contrast, are functioning out of experiences, images, and relationships.

The challenge becomes how to construct a preaching model based on listener realities, particularly the tendency toward concreteness and proximity to immediate physical circumstances. Validation of the utility of a preaching model must show the viability of a model that is less abstract, that has a spontaneous interactive quality, and that manifests a clear view of temporal sequence.

Interpretive Community and a Networking Homiletic

Where do we begin to lay the philosophical groundwork for a parabolic preaching paradigm that is rooted in common experience and not in postmodern views of narrative time or fluid approaches to language? Discourse is not simply floating signifiers, but words in exchange. This is why Hamelink argues that a suitable communication model for the church should be “dialectical” and have an “orientation toward public communication as being a communal process,” one that does not rob people of the right “to manage their own minds.”¹⁰⁴ In this communicative framework, the speaker’s responsibility is to create material with inherent respect for the listener’s capacity to interact, not only with the message, but also with the messenger. Ultimately it is the listening community that attributes meaning to the spoken word and has the responsibility to validate or invalidate

¹⁰³ Jensen, *Thinking in Story*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Cees Hamelink, *Perspectives for Public Communication: A Study of the Churches’ Participation in Public Communication* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1975), 101-2.

communicative worth.

The way in which “audiences discursively make sense of texts within environments of social practice,” is a study field within the area of social semiotics from which is developed the idea of “interpretive community.”¹⁰⁵ Audiences filter and sift material based on their convictions and social norms. A responsible communicative preaching model must take this reality into account and not simply tacitly acknowledge its existence. A preacher must recognize that people are clamoring for listener respect. Kraus put it this way: “The authentic community is the hermeneutical community. It determines the actual enculturated meaning of Scripture.”¹⁰⁶ If the preacher refuses to defer to the audience’s capacity and desire to interact and sift the delivered material, speaker credibility plummets and loss of listener consent becomes a reality.¹⁰⁷

Stott is among those who call the exchange aspect of preaching, “dialogical” delivery.¹⁰⁸ Dialogical values emphasize the interaction between speaker and audience. Although Stott finds a clear model of this characteristic of preaching among black churches in the United States, with respect to himself he signifies this term to mean the “silent dialog which should be developing between the preacher and his hearers.”¹⁰⁹ Silent dialog, or what

¹⁰⁵ Daniel A. Stout, David W. Scott, and Dennis G. Martin, “Mormons, Mass Media, and the Interpretive Audience,” in *Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations*, eds. Daniel A. Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 244. This idea of interpretive community sometimes is reflected by other terms such as “systemic semiotic elements/relations,” or in simpler terms a shared language or non-language base (János S. Petőfi, “Metaphors in Everyday Communication, in Scientific, Biblical, and Literary Texts,” J. P. van Noppen, ed., *Metaphor and Religion: Theolinguistics 2*, New Series No. 12, (Brussels: Study Series of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 1983), 154).

¹⁰⁶ Norman C. Kraus, *The Authentic Witness: Credibility and Authority* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), as quoted in Paul G. Hiebert, “Critical Contextualization,” *Missiology* 12.3 (1984): 293.

¹⁰⁷ Also, there is often a simple desire for “usable information” (Calvin Miller, *The Empowered Communicator* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 77).

¹⁰⁸ Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, 60.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 61. Mawhinney calls it “internal dialog.” Bruce Mawhinney, *Preaching with Freshness* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1991), 109.

Brooks calls “implicit dialog” can be used as an excuse for avoiding more direct forms of exchange during preaching.¹¹⁰ Donald Coggan’s view of dialog is much more concrete. He believes that the clergy have a responsibility to interact with the laity in an exchange. Nevertheless, his view of dialog is more formal, one that is generally carried out in controlled settings *after* the sermon.¹¹¹ A much more living form of exchange between preacher and listener is one practiced by missionaries in chronological Bible storying when they assign listening tasks to illiterate, primary oral learners.¹¹² “A listening task is a fact or truth that the storyer asks the people to listen for in a story.”¹¹³ The speaker then returns to a communicative exchange after the story to verify that there was comprehension. This rhetorical practice is used in regular intervals in black congregations in the United States as part and parcel of African-American narrative preaching and their use of the call-and-response method.¹¹⁴

Preaching is interactive. It involves actors and lends itself to engagement.¹¹⁵ The communication medium is inherently participatory and attempts to maximize the sensual

¹¹⁰ R. T. Brooks, *Communicating Conviction* (London: Epworth Press, 1983), 82.

¹¹¹ Donald Coggan, *New Day For Preaching: The Sacrament of the Word* (London: SPCK, 1996), 27. A liturgically integrated form of speaker/listener participation in sermon preparation and delivery was also the focus of a study by John R. Brokhoff (“An Experiment in Innovative Preaching,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 66 (Oct. 1973): 82-97).

¹¹² LaNette W. Thompson, *Sharing the Message Through Storying: A Bible Teaching Method for Everyone* (Ouagadougou: Burkina Faso Baptist Mission, 1996), 32.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Henry H. Mitchell’s, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 100-113. Certain preaching forms produce dialogical effect more than others. “Narrative preaching,” is a highly interactive medium but is often used as a term to describe a *genre* or a practice of preaching *from biblical narrative*, instead of a *narrative style where truth is communicated inductively through stories* (see e.g. David L. Larsen’s model of preaching from narrative in *Telling the Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching* (Wheaton: Crossway Books: 1995). See also David Schmitt, “Freedom of Form: Law/Gospel and Sermon Structure in Contemporary Lutheran Proclamation,” *Concordia Journal* 25 (1999): 54. Roger Alling and David J. Schlafer offer similar form distinctions when they describe *Preaching as Image, Story, and Idea* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1998), vi).

¹¹⁵ Coggan, *New Day For Preaching*, 5.

interaction of those involved in the communication exchange.¹¹⁶ Describing this exchange is not an easy thing, nor is there agreement among scholars about the nature of preacher/listener interaction. Buttrick attempts a description of “what may actually take place in consciousness during the production and hearing of sermons.”¹¹⁷ He describes a *process* of communicative exchange. His notion of storied communication is, however, not “narrativity,” but “plotted mobility.”¹¹⁸

The type of process that I am speaking of is one that H. Grady Davis calls “generative.”¹¹⁹ Lowry’s development of this idea into a “narrative” sermon whose “plot” unfolds with “continuity” is one helpful way for us to approach an engagement paradigm.¹²⁰ Some even “view the experience of human consciousness as being ‘in at least some rudimentary sense narrative.’”¹²¹

The complex nature of speaker/audience interchange throughout the delivery, however, surpasses mere plot. It approaches drama and even moves beyond it. One might see the matrix as a communication network where there is continual verbal and non-verbal exchange connecting speaker, audience, context, text, and God.

In his discussion of alternative models of preaching, Bryan Chapell highlights two basic forms of sermons, that of the traditionally Western deductive approach and the

¹¹⁶ This is Moyd’s point in his discussion of “[c]ontext, [p]raxis, and [h]ermeneutics,” what he believes to be three inseparable elements in the “multidimensional” preaching event. Olin P. Moyd, *The Sacred Art: Preaching & Theology in African American Tradition* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1995), 83.

¹¹⁷ Buttrick, *Homiletic*, xii.

¹¹⁸ David Buttrick, “On Doing Homiletics Today,” *Intersections: Post-Critical Studies in Preaching*, Richard L. Eslinger, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 95.

¹¹⁹ Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 2.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹²¹ Richard L. Eslinger, “Narrative and Imagery,” *Intersections: Post-Critical Studies in Preaching*, ed. Richard L. Eslinger, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 67, quoting Stephen Crites, “The Narrative Quality of Experience,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (Sep. 1971): 279.

emerging inductive model that is based on orality principles.¹²² Chapell's presentation of inductive models as new alternatives is based on his literate worldview, and shows the difficulty in escaping North American, organizational reference frames. The problem is made worse by the centralization of his material around "three-phase" and "two-phase" modeled plans of sermon material. The fact that an author would offer alternative ways of *sermon material arrangement* under a section of an anthology entitled *Contemporary Preaching Methods* demonstrates how far some homileticians have come in wrongly associating preaching *content and arrangement of material* with preaching *method and delivery*.

The problem of linking preaching method with content organization is unfortunate in that it turns the focus of the sermonic discipline inward toward verbal structures and not outward toward the audience. However, it is possible to view the complex of variables in a delivery situation as the birthing ground of an interactive engagement with multiple forms of exchange.

Today, the word *networking* represents multiple communication connections. It exists mainly in the business world, but has also become a philosophical way of describing contemporary communication realities outside the realm of informational systems. Castells describes a network as a "set of interconnected nodes."¹²³ It illustrates the interplay that links the preacher with all the other dynamics in a delivery setting and depicts for us the exchange aspect of engagement.

The modern day idea of networking with the audience, the environment, the text, and God in a radical, living way is not found much in the extant literature on preaching. If,

¹²² Bryan Chapell, "Alternative Models," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Dudit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 123-24.

¹²³ Jim McGuigan, *Modernity and Postmodern Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), 110.

however, “a network-based social structure is a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance,”¹²⁴ would it be possible to conduct preaching in a way that responds to context variables? Such a model would normalize more interactive preaching and teaching methods,¹²⁵ not just questions, answers, and confrontations, but also touching, deliverance, and cryptic parables spoken without explanation.

Fred B. Craddock states that “Christian responsibilities are not . . . predicated upon the exhortations of a particular minister . . . but upon the intrinsic force of the hearer’s own reflection.”¹²⁶ A homiletic pedagogy constructed with this assumption accounts for audience-sensitive realities of pervading postmodern values. If the message is contextualized and delivered in an understandable way, and the hearer is involved and interacting with the material and other elements within the physical setting, none the least of which is God Himself, the gospel will change a person as she reflects upon it or sees it develop before her eyes.¹²⁷

In his opening chapter on “The End of the Modern World: A New Openness for Faith” in *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World*, Diogenes Allen justly writes that postmodern man’s needs drive him to search for the ultimate and make him open to experience divine grace.¹²⁸ His point is that in spite of, or even because of, the logical conclusions of postmodern thinking, people still have basic needs that are met in Christ.

In developing a preaching medium for arranging this encounter of postmodern man

¹²⁴ Ibid., 111.

¹²⁵ Rick Gosnell, “Proclamation and the Postmodernist,” in *Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 382-387.

¹²⁶ Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 58; quoted in Gosnell, “Proclamation and the Postmodernist,” 383.

¹²⁷ This is similar to Troeger’s call to preachers to view “the sermon as received” (Thomas H. Troeger, “A Poetics of the Pulpit for Post-Modern Times,” *Intersections: Post Critical Studies in Preaching*, Richard L. Eslinger, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 52).

¹²⁸ Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* (Louisville: Westminster, 1989), 19.

with a living Savior, we cannot overlook the fact that the biblical example for engagement was metaphoric, interactive, and inductive. Jesus' teachings were carried in the immediate by images and parables. Those figured communications allowed people to embrace truth with a minimal number of propositions and abstractions.

There is a scriptural link connecting interpersonal communicative dynamics, needs-meeting, and 'parabolic engagement'. Human value and values are communicated in word pictures amid a dynamic network of people. Sentiments like respect, curiosity, and joy are accentuated by an imaged method rooted in a communicative context. People find healing and satisfaction when they know that others identify with their pain, suffering, and hopes. A parable that is grounded in a setting and culture, visibly and unmistakably pictures a common dilemma or solution.

When a speaker like Jesus employed an image or narrative, He did so not just to hold attention, but also to heal, to reform, to correct, to organize, and to connect people with each other and their God. Parables were listener tools designed to enter the spirit and psyche of an audience and perform precise restorative functions.

Ultimately, the circumstantial aspect of preaching is not primarily concerned with the inanimate, physical elements of the delivery environment, but addresses how the message creates *interpersonal connections* within a setting. The preacher and his analogous links to the concrete world create spiritual and emotional associations between people and the living Christ.

Since the viability of the engagement process is dependent on its capacity to encourage spiritual encounter in the immediate between the hearers and their God, the assessment of the 'parabolic engagement' pedagogy described later was set up in part to test this theological dynamic. More precisely, it was imperative to construct the testing instruments and interviews in such a way that it would be possible to measure whether or not people were *spiritually* engaged with the speaker and his message. It was important to know

if the hearers experienced an encounter, even a collective encounter, by means of parables and images, or whether they were simply entertained by the engagement process.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BIBLE AND ‘PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT’

Jotham went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.
The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them¹

The Bible and ‘Parabolic Engagement’

The Bible is replete with figure-based engagement. Scriptural examples demonstrate that imaged speech has the power to reference common experience and create unique speaker-listener rapport. There are some obvious illustrations, like prophetic images and the parables of Jesus, as well as more subtle forms like certain imaged Psalms or Pauline metaphoric allusions.² In this chapter, the examination of figured delivery within the biblical material provides the basis for a methodological starting point in imaged engagement.³

For the purposes of this thesis, a testable teaching structure based on biblical examples must be easily employable in the French-speaking Caribbean. Consequently, the intention in the ensuing material is to establish the biblical basis for suitable engagement pedagogy. The scriptures reveal how God engages people, both directly and through the mediation of biblical characters. The practices gleaned from examining these interactions provide essential elements of parabolic techniques taught later in Part III of this document.

In developing the underlying theology of verbal image engagement from scripture,

¹ Judges 9:7-8.

² Paul’s language can be highly metaphoric without being parabolic. He speaks of the armor of light (Rom. 13:12), leaven of wickedness (1 Cor. 5:8), members as weapons (Rom. 6:13), sin as service (Rom. 6:16), teaching as milk (1 Cor. 3:2), the body as a temple (1 Cor. 6:19), Christ’s freedman (1 Cor. 7:22), knowledge as a mirror (1 Cor. 13:12), the body as a tabernacle (2 Cor. 5:1), sin as a murderer (Rom 7:11), life as a contest (1 Cor. 9:24-7), church as a body (1 Cor. 12:12), and the body as seed (1 Cor. 15:35) (references are from Friedrich Hauck, “παραβολή,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 760).

³ This is in addition to the idea that the biblical text provides the *content* for preaching material. In spite of the hermeneutical barriers of employing written literary techniques from varying genres as oral frameworks for postmodern preaching delivery practices, in some way, scriptural use of simple and extended figures of speech must provide a model for engagement method.

particular fields are of critical importance: the theology of God's presence, the idea of the living word, the posture of the prophetic voice, and the biblical use of figures of speech. More precisely, the rationale for preaching in a parabolic form grows out of Jesus' use of the parable, here broadly defined as a figured engagement.⁴ The idea of parabolic pedagogy, however, goes beyond the parable. It takes in the broad imaged proclamation techniques found in the scriptural material as a whole, including the prophetic habit of messaging in the immediate through focused circumstantial delivery.

Divine Engagement and Its Implications for Preaching

Modern homiletic theory is virtually in denial about the ramifications of the doctrines of imminence and immanence for preaching engagement. The reality of divine presence or the breaking in of a sovereign God removes an element of control from pastoral, sermonic management of material. While very few pastors would deny the necessity of divine intervention, not many practice a method that genuinely relinquishes control of the message content to the guiding presence of the Spirit. Yet, God's presence is a communicating presence and should have the capacity to intervene at any moment. Our interaction with that presence gives us something to communicate to an audience, or that audience to us.⁵ Engagement is not simply the connection of a speaker with his hearers but a connection of speaker and hearer with their God. The preacher should be "able to evoke, through dramatic performance, the embodied presence of the God he preach[es]."⁶ English's point in *An Evangelical Theology of Preaching* is crucial. "This awareness that God is present in

⁴ See Mt. 15:15, Mk. 7:17, and Lk. 6:39.

⁵ "The Church is the continuation of this self-communication [of the Trinity] into the here and now of every time and place" (Franz-Josef Eilers, "The Communication Formation of Church Leaders as a Holistic Concern," in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 160).

⁶ Theophus H. Smith's ideas are developed in *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 23.

worship is more than a basis for our preaching. It is fundamental to its content.”⁷

In a discussion of the high climactic point in the black preacher’s sermon, Lischer refers to the preacher’s “*talk about God*” giving way to call and response interaction that culminates with “*experience of God*.”⁸ It should be the preacher’s ultimate desire that the congregation commune with the Almighty and not simply absorb truth at the intellectual level.

The essence of proclamation and discipleship in Jesus’ ministry is the communicative, engaging presence of God. He abides in us and we in Him, and ministry is impossible without an intrinsic unity.⁹ He advances this notion in the Great Commission when He says that He Himself would be with us as we went into all the world teaching.¹⁰ In our hour of crisis before the magistrates, it is the Holy Spirit who would teach us what to say.¹¹ God is at work in His body, continually communicating to it by means of His Spirit.¹²

English describes a shift in the modern paradigm of preaching toward the necessity of God’s presence in proclamation. “We are required to have more than a grasp of the biblical and theological basis for affirming God’s presence in the world—transcendence in the midst. We are expected to *recognize that presence when we see it* [italics his].”¹³ He calls the preacher an “interpreter of God’s presence in individual lives, and prophet of God’s activity

⁷ Donald English, *An Evangelical Theology of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 16.

⁸ Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 139. “Call and response is a metaphor for the organic relationship of the individual to the group in the black church. More specifically, the congregation’s response helps establish the sermon’s rhythm” (Ibid., 135).

⁹ John 15:1-8; 17:20-26. This is not simply a synoptic notion, but Paul also expresses the fundamental unity with God by his most repeated expression in the epistles, “in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 3:7-11; 1:13; Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:4-6; Col. 1:28; 2 Tim. 1:1; 1:9; 1:13; 2:1, 13, etc.).

¹⁰ Mt. 28:18-20.

¹¹ Mk. 13:11.

¹² 1 Cor. 6:19.

¹³ English, *An Evangelical Theology of Preaching*, 19.

in the world[,] . . . *the herald of liberation* [italics his].”¹⁴

Although not many contemporary theologies tie the concept of *presence* to preaching, Fee, in *God's Empowering Presence*,¹⁵ and James Forbes, in his Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale Divinity School in 1986, attempt to define the sermonic task as “an event in which the living word of God is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶ In trying to develop a preaching model that is more dynamic in its appreciation of what the Spirit is doing at the moment, Fee's and Forbes' perspectives are helpful in that they refocus our attention not on the need to engineer a language that produces human results, but on what God is doing by His sovereign Spirit in the declared message at the moment. Charette states a similar idea. “It is the community imbued with the eschatological Spirit which exhibits the reality of the restoration of God's presence and in this way bears witness to the nations of the restoration to physical and spiritual wholeness which stands at the heart of God's redemptive purpose.”¹⁷ The ethos of the preacher as one filled with the Spirit, brings the power of the applied word of God to people via God's presence.

This same physical accompaniment of God in His word is decisively clear in the theology of presence in the Old Testament. The most obvious symbol of this reality is the cloud that rests over the Holy of Holies, in which are enshrined the 10 *words* of God in the Ark of the Covenant. The meaning is clear. God's presence is in His word.

In the Book of Numbers,¹⁸ God's presence descends on the tabernacle as Moses

¹⁴ Ibid., 25.

¹⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994). Fee explains that the proclamation message of Paul was delivered: 1) as the ministry of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:8); 2) as tied to power, miracles, and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:18-19); 3) without sophisticated language but “accompanied by a demonstration of the Spirit's power (1 Cor. 1:18-25),” (849).

¹⁶ James Forbes, *The Holy Spirit & Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 56.

¹⁷ Blaine Charette, *Restoring Presence: The Spirit in Matthew's Gospel*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series, No. 18 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 139.

¹⁸ Num. 11:24-30.

places the 70 elders around the tent. In the exact words of Yahweh in 11:17, God says to Moses: “Then I will come down and talk with you there.” By the mediating force of the Spirit, God in His presence poured communication into the mouths of the elders.

Kutsko in *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* develops a *kabôd*-theology as it relates to the prophetic movement.¹⁹ The *kabôd*, or the glorious presence of God, is the means of “God’s self-disclosure and His intent to dwell among men.”²⁰ Kutsko points to Ezekiel chapters 2 and 3 and how “the divine presence directly addresses Ezekiel and commands him to speak God’s words to Israel, a commission that is dramatically carried out.”²¹ The presence of God relates to Ezekiel in four concrete ways in this passage: 1) visually (1:4); 2) aurally (1:28); 3) by gustatory means (3:1); and 4) bodily (3:12). What is remarkable in these verses is that God met Ezekiel in sensory and concrete ways: seeing a whirlwind, hearing a voice, eating a scroll, and being lifted up. God contextualized and incarnated His message.

In Hawthorne’s discussion of the prophet in the Old Testament, he calls him “the Spirit-bearing person” according to the connotation of Hosea 9:7, one who could utter proclamations like: “I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord” and “The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me, His word is upon my tongue.”²² Max Warren in his summary of the 1966 conference of the College of Preachers describes the Old Testament prophetic voice in this way: “Explain it how we will, these men, an Amos and a Hosea, an Isaiah and a Jeremiah, a Habakkuk and a Micah, uttered words which were themselves *events* [italics

¹⁹ John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 79ff.

²⁰ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Walke, “*kabed*,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Volume 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 427.

²¹ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 89.

²² Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), 19, citing Micah 3:8 and 2 Sam. 23:2.

mine].”²³ The prophetic words of the preacher are not simply sounds that carry no efficacy, but by the Spirit of God are sanctified words that renew hearts, change conduct, and bring about the will of God on earth. Warren says that preachers “can dare to hear that speech, to echo it, to be themselves ministers of life and death, because in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—in that word-event—they have accepted the judgment and mercy of God for themselves, and so are able to interpret it to other men.”²⁴

The active presence of God is in the proclamation of the word.²⁵ Speaking is not just verbal activity, but the words themselves are active, if in fact they are filled with the Spirit. Verbal engagement should contain a spiritual quality wherein God addresses humanity through words, through the words of the preacher.

Coggan says, “The New Testament concept of preaching proceeds from the revelation of a God who speaks. From the mountain top where God discloses His will flow the streams of preaching which are to water the plains of human life.”²⁶ His notion of preaching is one that starts with the verbal presence of God similar to the mountain encounters of Moses. As God speaks, there is reason and content to preach.

Preaching is heralding in God’s presence. The moving of God is something experienced by the Christian community during the corporate meeting through a dynamic message of His presence applied within a physical context.²⁷

Walter Ong, in discussing the psychodynamics of orality, states “the spoken word is always an event, a movement in time, completely lacking in the thing-like response of the

²³ Max Warren, *The Day of the Preacher* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1967), 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵ See Jean-Jacques Suurmond, *Word and Spirit at Play: Towards a Charismatic Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 45.

²⁶ F. D. Coggan, *The Ministry of the Word: The New Testament Concept of Preaching and its Relevance for To-day* (London: The Canterbury Press, 1945), 13.

²⁷ For example, see: 1 Cor. 14:3, 23-32; Acts 2:14ff; 17:22-24.

written or printed word.”²⁸ Unlike the Bible, which is a written text, when one discusses preaching or delivery, one is discussing an oral enterprise that has little to do with writing. The divine manifestation of this idea is pictured by God’s metaphor of Jesus Himself, the spoken Word of the Father, a word uttered not “inscribed.”²⁹ Defining preaching as an oral exercise is something that Eugene L. Lowry does when he says that the sermon is an “event-in-time” and has a “plot” as it unfolds.³⁰

While the sermon might be understood as declaring the truth of God, in fact, it is in essence a bundle of actions under the control of the Spirit of God. The construction and manipulation of spoken material is under constant revision right up to the moment it is spoken. This is due to the fact that the Spirit is constantly at work teaching the preacher. The message prepared in advance is subject to the sovereignty of God until it is uttered.

Preaching as presence engagement involves the preacher’s state of mind. His spirit should be one that flows within a doctrine of God’s imminence and immanence. If a speaker is to be sensitive to what God is doing, or is about to do in the immediate, he or she should be careful to observe, to modify, and to reconstruct sermon content. In these ways preachers should attempt to articulate verbally the force of the Spirit’s active presence.

Worship leaders of late have been very successful at creating habits for recognizing and following divine presence in worship. Often they are trained in observing what God is doing at the time of the collective gathering of the church. Many of the same principles used in musical and other forms of worship can and should be applied to preaching. Worship is in part our response to the loving, communicative moving of God.

Changes in worship habits have demonstrated how the idea of divine presence has

²⁸ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), 75.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 26.

almost totally redefined the corporate gathering of the church. However, many contemporary views of worship do not even include preaching because there is this lack of sensitivity to the active presence of God during the sermon.³¹ Those who omit preaching from worship do so in spite of the fact that proclamation is usually the central event of the New Testament meetings. Fortunately, some authors recognize preaching, both as worship itself in its own right, and as a part of worship in the wider corporate celebration of the church.³²

The presence of God was seen most often in the communities of the New Testament in the preaching, teaching, and healing events.³³ It was often during the delivering of the word that God manifested Himself. Preaching as proclamation of the divine presence is central to the presuppositions of this study and is explicitly stated in my discussions of definition in Chapter One. If one relinquishes the importance of God's presence in an immediate setting, the whole idea of engagement loses its force. Moreover, any validation of a preaching methodology that advocates the implementation of the present working of God through the construction of figured teaching material must by definition be able to prove it can introduce the active engagement of God. This is the rationale for the experiment in impromptu creation and modification of figures presented in Part III.

A closer examination of the preaching practices of Jesus and the prophetic voice in general clarifies the importance of the presence/proclamation idea. Jesus offered a public

³¹ "We have so elevated the pulpit . . . that we have created stiff-necked people who think they have worshiped if they took good sermon notes. Our tendency to equate worship with preaching is a long-standing one" (Paul Anderson, "Balancing Form and Freedom," *Leadership* (Spring 1986): 28 quoted in Sally Morgenthaler, *Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999) 43). By contrast, in the black church the very idea of preaching being part of worship is a celebrated assumption and the sermon itself becomes a climactic adoration of God (Olin P. Moyd, *The Sacred Art: Preaching & Theology in African American Tradition* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1995), 108).

³² David M. Greenhaw and Ronald J. Allen, eds., *Preaching in the Context of Worship* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000).

³³ Gal. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:4; Titus 1:3; Col. 1:27-29.

manifestation of God when He preached.³⁴ Hawthorne's development of Jesus being recognized as a voice for God is explained in his examination of John's proclamation in 3:34-35.³⁵ "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure." The coming of God in Christ, His Word, speaks most powerfully to this concept. When God comes, He is communicating. He is giving His Word. In the words of G. W. Bromiley, God is giving His "special presence . . . by the coming of Jesus Christ, Immanuel."³⁶

The reality that God is in Christ, present in the preaching event, should be central to the nature and goal of sermons. New Testament proclamation is preaching Christ. "Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach . . ."³⁷ The very content of our sermon should be the Word of God. The delivery system is words. What results is a strange union of subject and medium. The medium should become the message. In the words of the Second Helvetic Confession, "The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God."³⁸ Farris states "that the true "word of God" for us is the word that happens between God and the congregation as a result of this encounter between the biblical text and the people."³⁹ In other words, preaching does not demand that we identify our declaration as the words of God in a sort of speaker/instrument fusion, where we profess that our words are the actual utterances of

³⁴ Jesus was a "revealer and interpreter of the mind of God, [an] authoritative instructor of the people [as in] (Num. 12:6; 1 Sam. 3:19-21; 1 Kings 16:7-12; Jer. 1:5-7; Ezek. 2:3-5)" who gave the masses "promises (Mark 10:29-30) and threats (Matt. 23:13-29/Luke 11:42-52)" (Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 160).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 152-53.

³⁶ G. W. Bromiley, "Divine Presence," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Hants: Marshall Morgan and Scott Publications, 1984), 873; c.f. Mt. 1:23; John 1:14.

³⁷ Col. 1:27-28.

³⁸ Second Helvetic Confession, quoted in Stephen Farris, *Preaching that Matters: The Bible and Our Lives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

God.⁴⁰ Yet, we cannot simply state that our preaching is an explanation of the Word of God, as if proclamation is divorced from divine presence.

The biblical model is this: When God spoke, words were contextualized to a physical setting. Although God regularly communicated to people individually in private and then had His message communicated to the wider community, more often He communicated at the moment of the collective gathering. His spoken presence was in the immediate.

From the standpoint of pedagogy, divine presence not only changes the organization and presentation of sermonic material, but also changes the preacher and his habits of approaching delivery. Teaching preaching in such a way as to account for the work of God in present circumstances must have a quality that permits and even seeks to alter sermon content *at the moment of delivery*. Consequently, the way in which a preacher is trained must permit the development of skills that help identify the immediate work of God. It becomes important, moreover, to follow the biblical example of addressing that work using metaphoric language. It is for this reason that the ensuing preaching experiment employs precise observation exercises in impromptu delivery as well as figure development methods that respond to discoveries made by the preacher within the delivery milieu.

Parables as Contextual Engagement

On-the-spot relevance is a quality seen clearly in the parabolic teaching of Jesus. Parables are pictured truth applied to an immediate setting. Their general universality is not nearly as poignant as their contextual relevance.

The importance of the parable for developing a biblical model for circumstantial preaching cannot be underestimated. It is a central feature of this thesis. Consequently, it becomes imperative to identify the aspects of parabolic speech that are suitable for an

⁴⁰ In fact, it is possible to preach without any divine presence, as in the case of the false invocation of the presence of Christ by the sons of Sceva in Acts 19:13ff.

engagement method deployable in the French Caribbean. This chapter seeks to define the parable by its biblical function as a *contextual engagement* medium. Within this idea is encapsulated the issues of personalization, localization, enlightenment, and even shock.

To begin with, Jesus' parables are verbally delivered to real people with real issues and questions. They employ culturally appropriate material from within the environment to explain divine truth. This idea is clearly seen in the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 when Jesus addressed the Pharisees' criticism that the Lord mingled with sinners.

Abstract ideas, by contrast, are far less contextual, and while abstraction is to some extent determined by language and physical setting, a story or an image is integrally tied to a situational framework. The parable or narrative is localized by detail and is impossible to understand apart from its concrete wrapper. For example, I can talk about the abstract idea of witchcraft to most audiences; however, I cannot tell a story about a *kenbwazé* (sorcerer) just anywhere without adequate explanation about Creole magical practices.

Behind oral communication is the immediate situational dynamic, and some New Testament scholars address this issue. In William Barclay's treatment of New Testament parables, he identifies one of Jesus' chief reasons for using the parables as the desire for "the sudden awakening."⁴¹ "He wanted to persuade men to pass a judgment on things with which they were well acquainted, and then to compel them to transfer that judgment to something to whose significance they had been blind."⁴² Barclay's focus is the urgent demand for a response. The story was intended to raise the consciousness and elicit a decision. Jones' identification of direct appeal in the parables through the means of using the question, "Who

⁴¹ William Barclay, *And Jesus Said* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1970), 13.

⁴² *Ibid.*

among you . . . ?” is also a good example of an immediate response mechanism.⁴³

Jesus’ parables are considered by some to be ideological subversion/reconstruction.⁴⁴ Dodd considers various ones “parables of crisis”⁴⁵ because of their soliciting type content, while Jeremias refers to their call to “resolute action” as “the challenge of the hour.”⁴⁶ Wright calls the ethically evocative quality of the parable “an invitation to refashion a whole out of the part they had been given” and “a moral challenge.”⁴⁷

Borsch’s way of looking at this type of immediate involvement is through the arena of drama. He believes the story invites listeners to become “participants” in the “play” by means of identification with the “characters.”⁴⁸ In his discussion of “extravagant stories,” he says that the parables make “outrageous demands,” offer “incomprehensible grace and new ways of belonging,” and he goes on to say that “[t]hey indicate that now is the time for decisions of the greatest importance.”⁴⁹

Parables are stories that throw listeners into a crisis or that create spontaneous joy. They give clarity to moral dilemma or hope to discouraged people. They are immediately applicable and relevant, and they bring form to a preaching idea that involves clothing the presence of God for people who have trouble seeing Him.

Historical ways of classifying synoptic figures do not adequately define their

⁴³ Peter Rhea Jones, *Studying the Parables of Jesus* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1999), 51.

⁴⁴ Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 66. Blomberg uses the term “subversive” in an anti-rabbinical, anti-traditional sense.

⁴⁵ Dodd calls the parables that have to do with preparedness, “parables of crisis,” namely, the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants, the Waiting Servants, the Thief at Night, and the Ten Virgins (C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1935), 154).

⁴⁶ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (Bloomsbury: SCM Press, Ltd., 1963), 180.

⁴⁷ Stephen I. Wright, *The Voice of Jesus: Studies in the Interpretation of Six Gospel Parables* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 206.

⁴⁸ These are issues used by Borsch to open his community-slanted reading of the parables. Frederick Houk Borsch, *Many Things in Parables: Extravagant Stories of New Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

performative power. Parables can be defined clearly and precisely as *contextual engagements*. They *are* what they *do*. However, this is not the general descriptive trend in scholarship.

Parable studies can be divided into interpretive movements. Dodd and Jeremias viewed the parables according to the historical-eschatological currents of their day.⁵⁰ Linneman and Via followed the thoughts of Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Bultmann, and Fuchs in a historical-existential way,⁵¹ although Via was principally concerned with parables as aesthetic objects.⁵² Jones similarly defined the parables in terms of art,⁵³ and Bailey in terms of literary cultural concerns.⁵⁴ Wittig saw the possibility of viewing parables according to the principles of semiotics, which opened up a sort of “indeterminacy” of parable sign meaning based on the interpretive perspective of the reader.⁵⁵ All these, however, are definitional perspectives generated according to what a parable is and not what it does.

Jesus’ figurative teachings have been described by numbers of technical and literary terms including allegory, simile, metaphor, synecdoche, example, symbol, similitude, and a host of other words used to describe figures of speech, both tropical and non-tropical. Unlike a traditional way of viewing the New Testament use of the term *parable* as a generic

⁵⁰ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 16-17.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 19-23; E. Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition* (London: SPCK, 1966); Dan Otto Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

⁵² Via, *The Parables*, ix.

⁵³ Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 23; G. V. Jones, *The Art and Truth of the Parables* (London: SPCK, 1964).

⁵⁴ This is the major concern of Bailey’s *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*.

⁵⁵ Mary Ann Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 35, 39.

term to mean an extended figure of speech, I move away from an abstracted definition of a parable to an active one. I prefer to focus on the hooking aspect of the parable rather than its thing-like qualities, even though it is grammatically a noun. A parable is *throwing alongside* not just some-*thing* thrown alongside. This is the nature of a story. It is a communicative exchange, not just a narrative.

Many of the historic differentiations and definitions of the biblical parable do not recognize this idea of engagement. Early Christian interpretations saw the parables in an allegoric fashion,⁵⁶ although their tendency was to avoid the label.⁵⁷ More recently, the parable is seen as metaphoric. This idea is developed in contemporary literary criticism, seen, for example, in the works of Bernard Brandon Scott who would view the symbolic representations of the parable texts as having “endlessly renewable meaning.”⁵⁸ Among similar figurative examples of hermeneutical structures for understanding the parables is Adolf Jülicher in *Die Gleichnisreden Jesus* who saw “the essential nature” of the parables as one of simile, stories with correspondences of “clear purpose,” not veiled truth.⁵⁹ Wright has developed a theory of synecdochic meaning for the parables, where he believes “*Jesus focused the world in realistic stories of characters intended as exemplary*” [italics his].⁶⁰ Wright identifies the element of meaning construction by stating that the responsibility falls on the listener to “complete” the synecdochic meaning implied in the example story.⁶¹

When one moves toward meaning-making in the mind of the listener, one approaches the real sense of parable. The engagement paradigm functions on the premise of parabolic

⁵⁶ Wright, *The Voice of Jesus*, 62ff.

⁵⁷ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 31.

⁵⁸ Wright, *The Voice of Jesus*, 155ff, 174.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 115-16.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 219 and 202.

use. Meaning is thrown down to be picked up by the listener.

From a lexical perspective, this idea is less easy to validate. The reason for this is that there is significant diversity in parable studies concerning parabolic speech forms. The basic terms are similitude, parable, allegory, and illustration.⁶² As already stated, they are nouns. While the similitude generally speaks about “typical situations,” parables are based on more “particular case[s];” illustrations are argumentative examples of real life situations without corresponding analogies while allegories are stories with figures that mean something by extension.⁶³ These distinctions have long histories with origins in classical Greek authors. Specific categorical subtleties have long been under analysis, particularly with respect to the words παραβολή (parable or similitude), μεταφορά (metaphor), ὁμοιωσις (simile or comparison), and ἀλληγορία (allegory).⁶⁴

It is my contention that regardless of what meanings are applied to the word *parable* and its contingent terms, the *purpose* of the parable is engagement. The medium is the figure. Defining the parable in terms of its functional interaction upon the listener, one can more clearly grasp the sense of the synoptic decree that Jesus never spoke except by parables.⁶⁵ He spoke to them to engage them, to reveal to them, to blind them to His kingdom purposes.

In looking at the images that Jesus used in His teaching, many have attempted to evaluate the parables of Jesus from the perspective of speech figures. However, this approach does not explain how and why Jesus used them. Nor does it address their utilitarian

⁶² Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 3-8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3. By contrast, Harold A. Bosley views the parable as “quiet, earnest conversation. It is a teacher explaining a point to a listener” (*He Spoke to Them in Parables* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), vii).

⁶⁴ Hauck, “παραβολή,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 5:745-6.

⁶⁵ Mt. 13:34; for other stated uses of parable in the synoptics see: Mt. 10:18-20; 12:9-13; 22:15-21; 13:31-35.

aspects as engaging, meaning-vehicles or argumentative figures.

Much of our understanding of the first century perspective on parables is through a comparison with the rabbinical literature, particularly the 325 Tannaitic parables.⁶⁶ Through a comparative study we discover that Jesus' use of extended figures of speech was similar to rabbinical employment in length, introductory formula, argumentative symbol, topic, and imagery.⁶⁷ Yet, one must agree with Blomberg and Berger when they say that the "uniqueness of Jesus' parables lies neither in their form nor in their content but in 'their function in the context of the transmission of Jesus' proclamation.'"⁶⁸ Parables are functional vehicles contextually employed to engage the crowd in kingdom teaching.

Jesus also spoke in *parabolic-type speech* in the New Testament without really speaking formal parables. In so doing, He was moving in the prophetic, poetic, and imaged tradition found throughout the Old Testament.

He felt no compulsion to rest within artificial categories of literary labels or to ensure that everyone had the same listening experience. The imaged polemic did not convince everyone, but argued the opposite for some. Its purpose was to make concession to a truth impossible for those who did not possess the faith. It then might be asked, "Was the truth hidden or revealed in what He said?"⁶⁹ He declared that His teaching was in one way intentionally hidden. Perhaps those who could not understand refused to pick up what was thrown down. He claimed that the sign of the prophet Jonah would be the only sign for those who had no heart to receive His message.⁷⁰ His teaching was admittedly aphoristic and

⁶⁶ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 58.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 58-65.

⁶⁸ Klaus Berger, "Materialen du Form und Überlieferungsgeschichte Neutestamentlicher Gleichnisse," *NovT* 15 (1973):37, quoted in Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 67.

⁶⁹ Mt. 11:25; 13:34-35.

⁷⁰ Mt. 12:39; 16:4.

cryptic. Figures that are designed to have opposite effects on different people defy analysis. This is one of the reasons why scholarship prefers talking about parabolic form. There is less ambiguity.

Wright makes an important point when he puts the parables “in the category of persuasive rhetoric, or implied argument.”⁷¹ In coming to this conclusion, he follows Boucher and Carnell who identify parables as ‘heterotelic’, figures of speech with “purpose beyond themselves.”⁷² The so-called *implied* aspects of the argumentative force of narrative are what I would define as the engaging elements.

Whether short or long, allegorical or exemplary, highly metaphoric or realistic, the synoptic figure stories are engagement vehicles that use contextually relevant image.⁷³ As a general term of figured engagement, the term *parable* includes other sub-genres of synoptic literary devices. The moral purpose within a setting, more than the grammatical form, emerges as a defining quality of the term *parable*. The word becomes the umbrella term in popular discourse for a wide variety of figures that have an ethical quality.

Biblical studies involving parables offer us some significant means whereby we can move to a more practical implementation of similar methods. Any preacher wanting to capture the relevant issues of text and audience at a given moment must begin by grasping the figurative principle appropriate to the immediate context. Peter Jones’ concept of a “master metaphor” is appropriate here.⁷⁴ Jones groups the parables by subject: “the householder

⁷¹ Wright, *The Voice of Jesus*, 207.

⁷² Ibid., 224. This view of metaphor as argument is developed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca who see analogy as polemic technique (Robert Maier, “Religious Communication and Pragmatic Metaphors,” in *Metaphor and God-talk*, ed. Lieven Boeve and Kurt Fayaerts, Vol. 2 of Religions and Discourse (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 117.

⁷³ According to Horne, of the 61 stories that he considers parables, 34 deal with people (55.7%), 16 with things (26.2%), 7 with plants (11.5%), and 4 with animals (6.6%) (Herman Horne, *Jesus the Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 79).

⁷⁴ Jones, *Studying the Parables of Jesus*, 47.

parables,” “the seed parables,” the “regal stories” or “kingly parables,” and the “father parables,”⁷⁵ and raises for us the larger question of controlling metaphor and Jesus’ mastery of contextual images. A good question which preachers of scripture might ask is whether or not they have a similar mastery over controlling metaphors, rhythmic qualities, and other oral techniques involved in syntactical choices made in a particular setting.

She might use a trope, an example story, a similitude, a parable, or a proverb. It might be historically true or invented.⁷⁶ The final determinant must be the physical context, or more appropriately, contexts.⁷⁷ The oral aspects of the delivery setting must be carefully weighed in order to maximize substantive engagement.

If we use the biblical writers’ employment of images as instructive for the length of our own imaged engagements, we would follow the principle of brevity. In full-length parables, there might be only 80 words such as in the case of the Rich Fool or Barren Fig Tree parables.⁷⁸ Many parabolic sayings are only ten or twenty words similar to the Old Testament aphoristic parallelisms. While some parables are longer, like the parable of the Sower, most can be read out loud in under a minute, many in less than ten seconds. It is almost as if the biblical material is teaching us that the ability of a speech vehicle to engage and to transmit meaning is sometimes inversely proportional to its length. Certainly, the length of biblical parables does not reflect the time element of most plotted narrative sermons.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 47-50.

⁷⁶ Drury discusses Aristotle’s fundamental distinctions between “the historically true and the imaginatively fictional, in the context of oratory” (John Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1985), 17).

⁷⁷ “Language comprehension is clearly a process of integrating multiple levels of information together, and a major focus of comprehension research concerns questions of precisely how the different levels are represented and how integration within and across levels takes place” (Maryellen C. MacDonald, “Lexical Representations and Sentence Processing” *Language and Cognitive Processes* 1997, 12(2/3): 121).

⁷⁸ Jones, *Studying the Parables of Jesus*, 55.

In describing the gospel parables that have no narrative, Findlay creates a category of aphorisms that he calls “parabolic sayings” that often use questions.⁷⁹ He remarks that frequently these parabolic sayings begin by querying the audience: “How can Satan cast out Satan?” (Mark 3:23); “Can a blind man lead a blind man?” (Luke 6:39); “Does the lamp come (into the room) to be put under an upturned pot or under the bed?” (Mark 4:21).⁸⁰ The stories or phrases are not strictly parables; they are sayings. They are often brief and demand immediate thought. Their labeling as parables in the scriptures creates a unique definitional problem for the term parable with respect to form. However, if one defines them by their functional engagement powers, their validity as speech forms does not differ greatly from more fully developed parables.

Jesus uses 28 “short comparisons,” not formally parables.⁸¹ These aphoristic statements are in the tradition of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Comparative and proverbial sayings of Jesus demonstrate the typical characteristics of some proverbial literature minus the parallelism. The sayings themselves are striking and provide a model of simple, imaginative speech that is relevant to the immediate context.

Shorter and more appropriately rhythmic figures may communicate better because they demand less work by the listener. Brief arguments may be just as effective as long ones, or even more effective. This seems to be the conclusion of ancient sages in their use of the boiling down principle of aphoristic literature. Comparison of ideas to physical objects reduces word volume and bypasses the necessity for thick logic.

Propositions can be denied in their abstraction whereas stories, by their very nature, are tied to a concrete worldview that is implicitly assumed by listeners. When the worldview

⁷⁹ J. Alexander Findlay, *Jesus and His Parables* (London: The Epworth Press, 1950), 12.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7. See also Luke 6:39ff.

⁸¹ Horne, *Jesus the Teacher*, 73.

premises upon which the story is based are the same as one's own, one accepts the implied meaning unreservedly. The narrative compels the reader to consent to the moral conclusions of the controlling metaphor. To deny the sense of the story would be to deny personal experience.

Illustrating becomes for the preacher a reaching out into the world for a connection between two like objects and juxtaposing them in an immediate context.⁸² The preacher looks for, finds, and constructs a contextual metaphor whose interconnections are undeniable in the experience of the listener. When the listener is shocked by the truth of the figure and makes connections to his immediate life, the applicative value of the teaching, whether implied or explicit, is incontrovertible. The listener would have to nullify her own past if she were not willing to accept the conclusions of the story or image.

The nature and power of the parable as a revelatory tool, however, has to be transformed into a practical, teachable scheme. That is why parabolic delivery is developed into a suitable teaching model for the less educated in the ensuing chapters. The parabolic preaching techniques as outlined and employed in Parts II and III are constructed around the specific theological qualities highlighted in this subsection. Awakening methodology, immediacy technique, visualization/sensory tools, and methods for creating imaged polemics and crisis type discourse are the practical outworkings of the foregoing theological analysis and are developed through precise methodologies of figure construction.

Old Testament Speech Figures and the Parabolic Delivery

In attempting to construct a homiletic model of figure generation for church leaders in the French Antilles, one is compelled to summarize the major patterns of associated speech practices in the Old Testament in such a way as to make them suitable for a parabolic

⁸² Tolbert breaks down the metaphorical process present in illustrative parables into its two parts, the connection/transference/comparison between figurative elements, called epiphor, and the combination of two unlike elements called diaphor (Tolbert, *Perspective on the Parables*, 44-46).

pedagogy in the given context. Certain observations come to light and are particularly useful in the creation of simplified engagement technique explained later. The following paragraphs detail the principal qualities of Old Testament speech figures and their contribution to parabolic delivery, namely: sensorial language, comparison, compression, oral quality, prophetic immediacy, and imaged argument.

The Old Testament is replete with images, and these images provide a vast pool from which preachers have drawn water for more than two thousand years.⁸³ It is not my purpose, however, to discuss how the scholarly dialogs of form, source, and literary theories potentially create modifications in sermonic structure, but simply to make specific observations about the final or given rhetorical form of our version of the autograph.⁸⁴ To construct a platform for contextual image engagement from biblical prophetic literature, it is not necessary to establish here the development of source or oral forms. My concern is the *employment* of figures, not their *origin*.

In this regard, I accept the idea put forth by B. Long that it is important to accept the *Sitz im Leben* of Old Testament prophecy within the context and “dynamics of performance.”⁸⁵ This governs my development of a preaching model that is not only textual, but also concerned about audience and delivery.

In Ralph Lewis’s work on *Speech for Persuasive Preaching*, the author offers the analysis of the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Micah as examples of writers who make extensive

⁸³ A key classic work on biblical figures of speech is that of Bullinger, which works from a definitional perspective and catalogs figures based on their type (E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London: Messrs. Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898)).

⁸⁴ This does not minimize the importance of Mowinckel’s discussions, for example, which established the place of oral “specialists, whether narrators or rhapsodists, or saga-tellers, or singers and poets, or reciters of the law” (Thomas W. Overholt, *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Sourcebook for Biblical Researches* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 310).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 313. Overholt is commenting on Burke O. Long’s “Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and the Question of *Sitz im Leben*,” *Semeia* 5:35-49; and “Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and their Bearing on O. T. Criticism,” *Vetus Testamentum* 26:187-98.

use of sensory images in communicating their message. In his evaluation, he divides the types of images into seven sensory categories: *visual*, *auditory*, *gustatory*, *olfactory*, *tactual*, *kinesthetic*, and *organic*.⁸⁶ Reproduction of images by sensual features is concrete and works well as a model in even the simplest of settings, including missionary settings in the French Antilles.

From the straightforward point of observation, one might say that the prophetic method of delivering a subject was to clothe ideas in image attire. Prophetic speakers practiced parabolic homiletics. Black's idea that "[a]uthentic Christian preaching may be construed as an intrinsically parabolic activity" could also be applied to the prophets.⁸⁷

Parabolic engagement involves the prophetic/poetic fusion.⁸⁸ This union combines prophetic "inspiration" and poetic "technique," and often includes music.⁸⁹ Troeger defines sermonic poetics as ". . . the character of our articulation of reality as it arises from our historically conditioned imaginative construction of the world."⁹⁰

Although Old Testament figurative material does not have homogeneity in style and form, nevertheless there are relatively standard categorical distinctions and elements of style that are used to categorize Hebrew poetry.⁹¹ Out of the practical use of these forms emerge

⁸⁶ Ralph Lewis, *Speech for Persuasive Preaching* (Ann Arbor: LithoCrafters, 1968), 265. He found 1044 images in the three books, and over six hundred in the book of Hosea alone.

⁸⁷ C. Clifton Black, "Four Stations en Route to a Parabolic Homiletic," *Interpretation* 54 (2000): 388.

⁸⁸ James L. Kugel, "Poets and Prophets: An Overview," *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 1.

⁸⁹ Alan Cooper, "Imagining Prophecy," *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 27. Cooper's discussion at this point of defining a prophet as a technician is built around Robert Lowth's work *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, which highlighted the idea that the Hebrew concept of a *Nabi* fused the ideas of prophet, musician, poet, and inspiration (188).

⁹⁰ Thomas H. Troeger, "A Poetics of the Pulpit for Post-Modern Times," *Intersections: Post Critical Studies in Preaching*, Richard L. Eslinger, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 43.

⁹¹ παραβολή is used almost uniformly to translate the Hebrew word for 'proverb,' *mashal* (Hauck, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 5:747). A *mashal* involves comparison and can also mean "mocking" language as in a byword (Deut. 28:37; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Chron. 7:20; Ps. 69:11; Ez. 14:8; Jer. 24:9) (ibid., 747-8). It can also be used to describe similitudes, allegories, or even "apocalyptic visions" (ibid., 750).

features of figurative engagement strategy. They are *comparison*, *compression*, and *oral quality*.

The fundamental form of aphoristic literature is the similitude or comparison, known to us in formalized structure as the proverb, what Kent and Burrows call “the basic literary unit in all wisdom literature.”⁹² Their analysis of the proverb raises the importance of brevity. The proverb is the synthesis of experiential truth. They say that the proverb represents “the concise . . . crystallized results of experience.”⁹³

When two ideas are put into relationship with one another, the listener is forced to draw conclusions about the similarities or differences of the two ideas. Contrast and comparison are two major aspects of aphoristic material and provide foundational technique for an engagement paradigm. Similarly, synonymous and antithetical parallelism in poetic literature utilize correspondence and negation, the latter two being ideas central to the discussion of an inventive grammar discussed in Part II.

The importance of *short* comparison and its value for preaching cannot be underestimated. Brevity has a certain lexical shock value that permits instantaneous learning, retention, and transmission. Short proverbs carry with them authority by nature of their traditional use as compressed teaching tools. Preachers in our study were taught to create

Nathan’s allegorical story in 2 Sam. 12:1-4, is not described as a *mashal* (ibid., 749).

The term ‘parable’ in the New Testament is used to translate the “dark sayings” (Ps. 49:4; 78:2 in Mt. 13:35) and provides a basis for the “mystery” aspect of the proverbial sayings of Jesus (Findlay, *Jesus and His Parables*, 4-5). Parables reveal or hide truth (Mt. 13:11, Mk. 4:11, and Lk. 8:10) and for this reason are sometimes viewed as *dark*. The Old Testament proverb is often antithetical in its parallelism and has an ideological shock value (e.g. Prov. 10:1-22:16 has 376 couplets that are “chiefly antithetical” (William Gesenius, *A Hebrew English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 605). 70 of these are “comparative sayings,” what Westermann sees as a subgroup of generalized comparisons (Claus Westermann, *The Parables of Jesus in Light of the Old Testament*, trans. Friedemann W. Golka and Alastair H. B. Logan (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 9).

παροιμία (proverb) seems to be “a synonym for ‘*parabolé*’” (Findlay, *Jesus and His Parables*, 2). Some of Jesus’ sayings reflect an imaging that is proverbial (Findlay calls Jn. 10:6 and Jn. 15 “‘*paroiimia*’, a provisional description, true and illuminating for the time being” (ibid., 3).

⁹² Charles Foster Kent and Millar Burrows, *Proverbs and Didactic Poems* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927) 13.

⁹³ Ibid.

analogies with an economy of words, where closeness of analogy and contextual relevance were much more important than lengthy development. In contrast to narrative preaching which applies a storied genre through long sections of oral delivery, parabolic engagement strives for compression with concreteness.

Often there was musical quality in the poetry of Hebrew authors. To understand the value of Old Testament poems for contemporary preaching engagement, it is best not to view them as written products.⁹⁴ Gordon points out that the Old Testament is replete with communal songs, epics, ballads, recitatives, odes, women's songs, harvest songs, shepherd-songs, nature songs, foolish drinking songs, laments, grief utterances, battle songs, worship hymns, adoration praises, dedication hymns, victory hymns, tribal oracles, gate songs, festal songs, court songs, and others.⁹⁵ Analysis of such texts with respect to their utility for a preaching model focuses on the oral aspects of ancient poetry, especially rhythm and parallelism.

The particular value of oral poetics to this study lies in the emulation of image-impregnated and rhythmic speech. The link between the oral aspects of sermonic delivery and the syntactic value of the words themselves is integral to preaching delivery. The image can be poorly or expertly "played" according to the sum total of value judgments and delivery choices of the speaker. An image is nothing without being uttered, just as the musical score is not heard without a vibrating string, reed, or vocal chord. It might be inspiring for some to look at the notes on a score of Handel's *Messiah*, but most people prefer hearing the Hallelujah Chorus.

Within orally saturated cultures, meaning-transfer in formal discourse is often directly linked with rhythmic poetics. Sense is delivered to the ear as much by the sound construction

⁹⁴ Alex R. Gordon, *The Poets of the Old Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 23ff.

⁹⁵ These musical categories are Gordon's but have been syntactically modified for listing purposes (*ibid.*, 23-43).

as by the words themselves.⁹⁶

Oral communicative structures and laws frequently dictate the capacity of listeners to accept and receive the intended message. In the Old Testament, the principal deliverer of the oral message was the prophet. His speech mode was oral poetics. He was a principal participant in the manufacturing of a biblical, oral paradigm for preaching. He was the master of image engagement and his method deserves a closer analysis.

Prophecy is far from a homogeneous topic. Even less cohesive are the opinions of those who write about the prophetic gift and its manifestations today, or for that matter, its usefulness as an appropriate preaching and teaching speech form. For our purposes, it is relevant because of its power of authoritative engagement.

Much of the dialog concerning biblical prophecy today does not concern the *prophetic voice* as image-infused, oral poetry. Rather it revolves around cessation of the *gift*, existence or non-existence of the *office*, the *role* and *nature* of the prophet himself, suitability of *formulae* such as “Thus saith the Lord,” prophetic *agenda* as political means of confrontation, *criteria of judging* prophecy, and the *historical intervention* of prophets.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ James Weldon Johnson called African American meter “rhythmic intoning” (*God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 5).

⁹⁷ Wayne Grudem in *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester: Crossway, 1988) argues for a moderated, non-cessationist position. A strict cessationism is developed in F. David Farnell’s series, “The Current Debate about New Testament Prophecy,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (July-September 1992): 277-303; “The Gift of Prophecy in the Old and New Testaments,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (October-December 1992): 387-410; “When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (April-June 1993): 171-202. See R. Fowler White, “Richard Gaffin and Wayne Grudem on 1 Cor. 13:10: A comparison of Cessationist and Noncessationist Argumentation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 35, no. 2 (June 1992): 173-81. *Christianity Today’s* publication of Grudem’s “Why Christians Can Still Prophecy,” (16 September 1988) addresses prophecy in the mainstream church. A cross-cultural approach is taken by Sister Mary John Mananzan’s, “Prophecy as Resistance: A Philippine Experience,” *International Review of Missions* 74 (August 1984): 405-7. James W. Skillen also treats action as the logical outcome of a prophetic critique of society in his “Prophecy, Critique, Action,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 58 (1996): 85-110. Walter Brueggemann in “The Prophetic Word of God and History,” *Interpretation* 48 (July 1994): 239-51, says that “Jesus of Nazareth cannot be understood except in terms of the rhetoric and epistemology of Jewish prophecy” (243). This idea is also true in prophetic *form* utilization, which Brueggemann does not address. The form/function union is of supreme importance in developing a preaching/prophetic *stance*.

Prophetic verbal patterns and images are generally not addressed in any of the afore-mentioned articles. Prophetic speech forms and their construction are treated in *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment*, by Christopher Forbes (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), Thomas W.

The use of prophetic speech forms and voice is crucial to developing a biblical preaching model that uses image generation as a primary vehicle.⁹⁸ The extent to which any preacher claims to speak *for* God is only a matter of degree. One cannot eliminate the viability of a prophetic engagement model, even if one does not accept the existence of the prophetic office or prophetic speech today. When we speak like Jesus, do we take on divinity? When we use a pentateuchal formula or a command from the pulpit, are we a divine lawgiver? If we sing a Psalm and substitute artistically appropriate parallelisms for biblical lines, do we pretend to be creating biblical verse? Naturally not. If someone consequently assumes that the prophetic office has ceased, then speaking for God, with God, by God's Spirit's power, or by using biblical language that reflects prophetic speech, does not imply that the communicator who uses such language presupposes himself to be a prophet in the biblical sense. It is possible to use Christ's language and prophetic forms and methods in a contextually appropriate manner without taking on divinity or playing the role of Isaiah.

The force in the prophetic voice is its authority. Engagement takes place at the confrontational level of right and power. When the prophet speaks, engagement is inevitable because his perspective is absolute. He speaks as from God. The listener is forced to reconcile his own perspective with that of God's message delivered by the prophet.

Regardless of how one defines prophecy,⁹⁹ one of the principal grammatical mediums

Gillespie's, *The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), and James L. Kugel, *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁹⁸ "One of the characteristics of prophetic revelation is that it is sometimes allegorical or symbolic . . ." (Mike Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1996), 196).

⁹⁹ Definitions vary from strict verbal forms of inspiration, which include stringent views of intermediation and oracular speech, to much more loosely defined forms of inspired language. Those who associate prophecy exclusively to scriptural revelation do not allow for use of oral prophetic speech today. For example, Farnell criticizes MacArthur's use of the term prophecy as *proclamation* ("When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?" 183, note 41). Farnell, like others, views prophecy as "apocalyptic" or "Gnostic" (terms used by Robin Bruce Barnes in *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988)).

Prophecy is often seen as: "the spontaneous, powerful working of the Holy Spirit" that results in a verbal directive that is less authoritative than scripture (Grudem's view as encapsulated by G. R. Houston in his

of the prophet's message was imaged argument. The polemic was communicated in a metaphoric vehicle. Authors writing on prophecy in its contemporary usages, however, often treat the subjects surrounding prophetic speech, but not the reproducible qualities of the prophetic speech form itself.¹⁰⁰ For example, Johnson has addressed the possibility of using the prophetic office and method as a model for contemporary preaching and pastoral ministry.¹⁰¹ In his discussion of prophetic *office*, however, he deals very little with the verbal aspects of *message construction* beyond topical correlations of prediction, protest, injustice, judgment, and comfort.¹⁰²

The employment of prophetic speech can be summarized in the words of Skillen: "The biblically directed life always implies and requires a radical critique of life in this age, a critique of sin and evil from the standpoint of God's creational/redemptive purposes and promises."¹⁰³ When the "radical critique of life in this age" is verbalized in metaphorical clothing,¹⁰⁴ what results is a contextual engagement, the very heart of biblical preaching.

analysis of *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* by Wayne Grudem in *The Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (July 1989): 276-79); ecstatic possession that involves inspiring emotion, "mystical experience," or "illumination" (a term used by Heschel to define individualistic purpose as opposed to more global proclamation, cited in Skillen, "Prophecy, Critique, Action," 89); social reform proclamation (Mananzan, "Prophecy as Resistance," 405; Johnson, "Palestinian Refugee Ideology," 61ff); encouragement (Diane Renis, "A Brush With Prophecy," *Christianity Today* 39 (13 November 1995): 64-65).

¹⁰⁰ See for example the problems of accountability and directness: Cedric Harmon's "God's Lightning Rod," *Charisma and Christian Life* 26 (April 2001): 62-66+ and Stephen Strange, "Prophets and Accountability," *Charisma and Christian Life* 26 (April 2001): 114; Michael Sullivant, "Can Prophets Be Polite," *Charisma and Christian Life* 25 (April 2000): 98-107.

¹⁰¹ John E. Johnson, "The Prophetic Office as Paradigm for Pastoral Ministry," *Trinity Journal* 21NS (2000): 61-81.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 70-77.

¹⁰³ Skillen, "Prophecy, Critique, Action," 96.

¹⁰⁴ See the Quaker view of preaching in Michael P. Graves, "Functions of Key Metaphors in Early Quaker Sermons, 1671-1700," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 364; Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 178.

The value of Quaker impromptu preaching is difficult to assess because the Friends community believed in telepathic knowledge, premonitions, visions, and other "inspired preaching," which they attributed to the Holy Spirit (*ibid.*, 62). They frequently used metaphors as controlling medium in their spoken sermons. Following on the work of Nels Johnson, Graves found five "key metaphor clusters" operative in Quaker preaching (Graves, "Functions of Key Metaphors in Early Quaker Sermons," 364, 375. C.f. Nels Johnson,

Engagement in New Testament ‘Prophecy’

The employment of an image-based, prophetic engagement is not difficult to observe in biblical literature. It is much more complicated to formulate a similar model, especially based on the variety of New Testament prophetic speech forms and the difficulty of defining them with exactitude. It is not always possible to catalog forms and persuasive speech figures in such a way that one can assess all their rhetorical uses, especially for church leaders in the Caribbean. There is, moreover, the basic problem that a visionary event is “ultimately impenetrable.”¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, it is clear that there are certain qualities evident in New Testament prophetic speech that are suitable for the development of an engagement technique.

How can an interpreter of scripture extract principles for reproducing an act that “def[ies] all attempts at a hermeneutic” and “distinguishes itself by virtue of its ‘otherness’?”¹⁰⁶ Evaluating speech structures is one thing, but constructing or reconstructing a model for replication is impossible in light of the fact that no one has control over divine inspiration. Notwithstanding this constraint, in order to approach a biblically based model for imaged engagement, one has to deal with the diversity of New Testament and Old Testament prophetic activity. Knowing the basic employment of imaged engagement in the prophetic literature as *compressed comparison orally delivered*, it is important to build a bridge to the New Testament and examine its parallel uses there. It then becomes important to describe

“Palestinian Refugee Ideology: An Enquiry into Key Metaphors,” *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 34 (Winter 1978): 524-539). What Graves and Johnson refer to as “key metaphors” I later discuss as controlling metaphors, a term used by Bruce Salmon (Bruce C. Salmon, *Storytelling in Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 83ff). Osborne and Ehninger call them “thematic metaphors.” Thematic metaphors “extend their symbolic fields so as to exercise a qualifying influence on passages far removed from their immediate environment, or even qualify the entire discourse of which they are a part” (Michael M. Osborn and Douglas Ehninger, “The Metaphor in Public Address,” *Speech Monographs* 29 (August 1962): 228-229). Later, Osborn develops the idea of “archetypal metaphor” in “Archetypal metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 52 (April 1967): 115-126.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Lieb, *The Visionary Mode: Biblical Prophecy, Hermeneutics, and Cultural Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 353.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

their suitability for employment among church leaders in Martinique.

Jesus worked within the conventions of the Old Testament, but with some clear differences. Witherington believes that Jesus “lived at a time when the rivers of the prophetic, apocalyptic, and sapiential traditions had already flowed together.”¹⁰⁷ New Testament scholarship in general is not so clearly concordant with this view, however. The discovery of the *Didache* and subsequent scholarship on the notion of prophecy in the post-New Testament era have produced a variety of viewpoints with respect to the prophetic. For example, Harnack viewed prophets as Spirit-endowed itinerants while David Hill sees them as teachers in the church.¹⁰⁸

The Old Testament prophetic forms are evident in the New Testament, but are not easily definable. Providing that it is even possible to delineate prophetic passages, extracting generative methodologies from those occurrences is less than easy.¹⁰⁹ It seems that the only consistent aspect of early Christian prophecy is “the presence of formal framing devices.”¹¹⁰ Yet even this is not accepted by those who see prophecy as “pastoral preaching,” or align it synonymously with the “prophetic sermon.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 291 quoted in Siegfried S. Schatzmann’s book review in the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 43 (Fall 2000): 85-86.

¹⁰⁸ Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 1-5.

¹⁰⁹ According to Gillespie, Rudolf Bultmann in *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1963) claimed that through form critical analysis one could substantiate that certain sayings of Jesus “were oracles of early Christian prophets that were gradually assimilated into the dominical tradition” (ibid., 5). As a result, what we read in the New Testament is partly redacted prophecy and does not reflect the original saying. Käsemann asserted that a “*proclamation tradition*” (italics his) with essentially an “apocalyptic outlook” existed in the scriptures and could be particularly identified in legal style formulations; this assertion was supposedly repudiated by David E. Aune (ibid., 6, 9, 11). Boring advanced a notion that “‘early Christian prophecy was a relatively *unstable and unstructured institution within early Christianity*’ that ‘*produced no distinctive speech forms which would have been readily identifiable as prophetic speech*’” (ibid., quoting Boring 19). Gillespie notes that David Hill did not believe that it was possible to define any New Testament prophecies except possibly for the letters to the seven churches of Revelation (ibid., 26).

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Gillespie quoting Aune, 20.

¹¹¹ This is Gillespie’s view. This idea of a prophetic preaching model is built upon Harnack’s notion of the prophetic sermon (ibid., 23-35).

Image engagement similar to that of the Old Testament cannot be built solely around the prophetic phenomena in the New Testament because there is a lack of substantial examples of consistent prophetic forms in the latter. Although the use “of formulas, conventions, and genres” exists in the New Testament material, their appearance is more reflective of “early Jewish prophecy” and not classical Hebrew prophetic poetry and Old Testament norms.¹¹²

The New Testament prophetic phenomena are not epic in length and do not usually involve extraordinary behavior. Unlike the contemporary Hellenistic culture, Christian prophecy of the period also “had no priestly hierarchies, no consciously formalized prophetic ritual . . . , no oracular places, and no procedure for securing an oracle.”¹¹³ If one accepts that New Testament prophetic forms do exist, however, they might be seen to involve some poetic form and parallelism.¹¹⁴

Continuing in the assumption that the classical New Testament prophetic passages cited below are actually examples of prophecy in one form or another, one could then catalog their content: comfort, prediction, injustice, council, and intermediation. New Testament prophecy “praised the ‘mighty works’ of God, predicted coming events, and (presumably) selected individuals for special tasks, helped in the solving of disagreements, and gave guidance in the making of other kinds of decisions.”¹¹⁵ All of these content aspects were transmitted via the vehicle of imaged story, although some believe “[d]reams, visions and other forms of revelation” were not considered prophecy.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Ibid., 25.

¹¹³ Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech In Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 318.

¹¹⁴ See Lk. 1:67-79 and 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

¹¹⁵ Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 221.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 319.

In the New Testament, especially in the Luke-Acts tradition, the Spirit of God is “presented almost exclusively as the source of inspired speech and special revelation. Miracles (healing, exorcism, feats of strength) are also associated with the Spirit, but only in an indirect and cautious way. According to Luke, the primary manifestation of the Spirit is prophetic inspiration which results in Charismatic wisdom and/or inspired speech.”¹¹⁷ The power of the Spirit in the New Testament is primarily a power of prophetic-type witness.¹¹⁸ This would be consistent with Grudem’s view of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, where he sees “the gift as always spontaneous and unrehearsed, and that revelations received were thoughts that the prophets had not previously entertained.”¹¹⁹ Forbes offers a similar analysis. “[P]rophecy is public proclamation of a revelatory experience, and predominantly a verbal one at that.”¹²⁰ This would of course be significantly oracular, and vastly different from the prophetic sermon idea of Gillespie who sees prophecy as the inspired explanation of apostolic kerygma.

The principal difference is between a view of prophecy as spontaneous and contextual, and a view of it as reflective and perhaps prepared. There is not coherence among scholars about what constitutes prophetic utterance and form in the New Testament. This makes generalization dangerous, if not impossible.

It may be a reality that prophecy forms are not clearly identifiable in the New Testament, but it is a denial of observable prophetic qualities to consent to the idea that prophecy does not exist in the New Testament, or to the idea that Paul records “no examples

¹¹⁷ Robert P. Menzies, “The Spirit of Prophecy, Luke-Acts and Pentecostal Theology: A Response to Max Turner,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15 (1999): 53.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹⁹ G. R. Houston, review of *The Gift of Prophecy* in *The Evangelical Quarterly* 61:278. See also Grudem, “Why Christians Can Still Prophecy,” 30-31.

¹²⁰ Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 220.

whatever of prophetic speech.”¹²¹ The absence of consistent form does not preclude the existence of prophecy. Even if one accepts the possibility of extensive redaction, which I do not, the difficulty in locating prophetic form may require a shift in our consideration of what constitutes New Testament prophecy. Since prophecy is usually seen as a poetic genre, when people look for prophetic texts in New Testament writings, they search for versification. It seems, however, that a study of New Testament oracular phenomena reveals narrative speech vehicles and not purely poetic ones.

Traditional Old Testament prophetic forms that are more developed and even epic in nature and which include certain formulas, invocations, parallelisms, and commonly longer judgment/redemption cycles are subsumed in the New Testament into new genres and speech forms such as parable, prophetic teachings, and declarative sentence prophecies. In other words, prophetic or inspired speech in the New Testament comes through most often as narrative, not as oracular poetry. In Luke particularly, however, there are a few examples of pronouncements that resemble Old Testament prophecy.

Poetic prophetic forms seem to be found in the birth prophecies of Luke 1:46-55, 1:67-79, and 2:34-38.¹²² Wayne Grudem identifies these passages as prophetic songs of praise.¹²³ They are oracular because they make predictions. They are in style and content similar to the verse of Luke 3:4-5, 4:18ff, and prophetic declarations like 6:24-6. The passages are charged with images and have the rhythmic cadence of poetry. All constitute

¹²¹ Ibid., 222. Contrast Gillespie’s premise that prophecy is a revelatory sermonizing of the kerygma with Forbes’ idea that only the inspired interpretation of the mysteries qualifies as prophecy (Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 234). 1 Corinthians 15:35-34 stands alongside other passages that are considered by Forbes to represent Paul’s prophetic role of expounding the mysteries (ibid., 223). Other Pauline imaged discourse of a prophetic character are contained in passages cited by Müller, who views Rom. 13:11-14, 1 Thess. 5:1-11, and 1 Cor. 7:29-31 as “prophetic exhortation,” Rom. 16:17-20, Phil. 3:17-4:1, and Gal. 1:6-9 as “prophetic judgment” and 1 Thess. 4:13-14, 1 Cor. 15:51-52, and Rom. 11:25-26 as “prophetic proclamation . . . and comfort” (Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 23-24). See also Rom. 13:11-13 and 1 Thes. 5 where Paul uses the images of night and day as well as sleeping and rising to illustrate spiritual awareness.

¹²² Max Turner, *Vox Evangelica*, vol. XV(1985): 11.

¹²³ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy: In the New Testament and Today* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1988), 161.

image engagement: Mary's exaltation/denigration images, Zechariah's victory horn image, and Simeon's salvation-light and divisioning sword images. These prophetic utterances are all made by means of argumentative picture. The theological import of this Lucan account is that prophetic utterance is short, versified, pictured, and delivered by believers with no formal training. Prophecies are spoken by lowly people who follow in the tradition of suffering and humble piety common to Jesus and the Old Testament prophets.¹²⁴

What is abundantly clear by a close analysis of the disputed prophetic passages in the Pauline writings or the book of Revelation is that they are not strictly poetic, but are didactic or narrative using figures of speech to communicate spiritual principles. Images are central to the quasi-prophetic statements of the New Testament wherein engagement is through pictured thought.¹²⁵ Figured speech appears more spontaneous and less premeditated, and image use has direct connection to the physical context. Prophetic type pronouncements are condensed in compressed delivery forms and have a figurative quality.

Even if a strict application of prophetic speech form is applied to New Testament passages and certain verses are thereby also found not to possess prophetic quality, figurative engagement is still central to the textual idea. In other words, genre form does not greatly affect performative value of imaged communication. Oral features and rhythms are evident whether or not one chooses to identify the form as literarily prophetic.

What is transferable to the target context in the French Caribbean is that Creole peoples tend to be highly spontaneous in their interpersonal delivery. Moreover, they are experts at creating images and narrative that spring from the setting and often use speech that is naturally figured. As with most Creoles and unwritten languages in general, a limited

¹²⁴ R. David Kaylor, *Jesus the Prophet: His Vision of the Kingdom on Earth* (Louisville: Westminster: John Knox Press, 1994), 203.

¹²⁵ The letters to the seven churches in Revelation are considered by Müller to be prophetic sermons (Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 23). They resemble short parabolic sayings in their engagement quality and contain extensive imaging.

lexical base from which to draw forces the expression of ideas by means of figures. In everyday speech, they already practice the essential element of prophetic speech, namely, compressed comparison. Consequently, the contextualized prophetic image as displayed in the biblical material is a natural and transferable engagement technique employable by the target cultures.

Beyond prophetic models, however, the foregoing evaluation of scriptural figure use on the whole demonstrates God's intention to use common images to create relationship with Himself. The very idea of parabolic engagement is based in the fusion of two biblical realities detailed in this chapter, figured speech and divine encounter. Not only the language of divine presence but also parabolic address and biblical imaged proclamation technique provide key elements for a testable, circumstantial pedagogy employable in the French-speaking Caribbean.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HOMILETICAL CONTEXTS OF ENGAGEMENT

The officers answered, “Never man spake like this man.”¹

Contexts of Engagement and Capturing the Metaphor of the Moment

The ability of a French Caribbean church leader to *capture a controlling metaphor of the moment* and the capacity of his listeners to receive it is one of the specific objectives of this experimental exercise. It is based on the premise that the texts, the speaker, and the physical context coalesce in a garden of useful metaphors to be picked, shared, and tasted by an audience.

In his cognitive psycholinguistic summary of word recognition in spoken settings, Uli H. Frauenfelder describes several factors of contextual interpretation of words. He clarifies that certain syntactical elements have significant implications in verbal interpretation, the most important being lexical context and sentence context.² Frauenfelder’s treatment clarifies how sentence context demands that a listener clarify meaning after the total syntactic and semantic setting is laid.³ If two men are talking, and one says to the other, “I saw your wife enter that hotel with another man,” it means something entirely different than the whole sentence spoken with a full contextual understanding: “I saw your wife enter that hotel with another man, who I assume was her father.”

What this teaches us is that when speakers manipulate syntactical contextual elements to form intended meaning, the complete meaning is revealed after hearing the entire delivery.

¹ John 7:46

² Uli H. Frauenfelder, “Une introduction aux modèles de reconnaissance des mots parlés,” *La reconnaissance des mots dans les différentes modalités sensorielles*, Régine Kolinsky, José Morais, and Juan Segui, eds. (Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), 18-21.

³ “. . . le contexte phrastique à la fois syntaxique et sémantique—ne peut pas avoir son effet avant la fin des phases de traitement lexical menant à l’identification des mots” (ibid., 20).

The speaker relies upon a “stockage central ou d’un lexique mental” of the listener.⁴

Although a speaker has little control over stored lexical definitions of listeners, she can construct an entire verbal context in order to specify connotation.

The danger in differences in personal understanding or lexical reference is that there can be a discrepancy between speaker and hearer. It is the speaker’s responsibility, nevertheless, to overcome the disparity. Kraemer believes that listeners have “rights,” and that they “should be enabled to hear the message.”⁵ Christian communicators have a responsibility to use “translation and transposition” in their declaration of theological principles.⁶ In David Henderson’s terms, speakers have the duty of cultural adaptation, the need to enter into their world in a sympathetic way.⁷ This was Wesley’s view. He believed that the Anglican preacher should “face his auditors ‘in society’ where hearers may talk back and where inadequacy and failure in communication might be corrected by insights of interpersonal relationships.”⁸

In this exchange, speakers are forced to identify listeners’ understandings, usually based on verbal and linguistic clues. The speaker then makes delivery choices based on how he wants to engage those views. The contextual assessment is done via observation and communication. He gleans from sensual clues and other communicative indicators the information necessary to construct a mental plan of engagement.

⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵ Hendrik Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), 121.

⁶ Ibid., 122.

⁷ David W. Henderson, *Culture Shift: Communicating God’s Truth to Our Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 40.

⁸ David Shipley, “The European Heritage,” in *The History of American Methodism*, quoted in John Brown Childs, *The Political Black Minister: A Study in Afro-American Politics and Religion* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980), 27.

From a missiological perspective, this type of verbal contextualization is an issue of ongoing concern. Message relevancy has a lot to do with setting and the symbols around which people build their lives, as well as the meaning that they attribute to those symbols. It is for this reason that preacher training detailed later dealt extensively with constructing messages around figured and symbolic meaning.

The homiletical exercise in Part III attempts to teach church leaders on the island of Martinique to recognize aspects of the context and incorporate them into their preaching by means of figured delivery. It was necessary to teach how ideas needed to be properly clothed in culturally appropriate garb. This required extensive discussions about the transformation of ideas into image and narrative. It also required specific techniques to make the tasks of observation and figure construction easier. In order to do this, it was important to separate and simplify the different layers and aspects of culture.

Hiebert identifies different types of cultures that exist within a society: material culture, expressive culture, and ritual culture.⁹ These different areas, he says, correspond respectively to what the people use (materially), how they express themselves (verbally and non-verbally), and what ceremonies they employ in the course of life (ritual and myth).¹⁰

Cultural beliefs must be respected and exploited by those who wield images and tropes in their communication. The very capacity of a congregation to accept the gospel message may be dependent upon the speaker's ability to shroud the message in culturally appropriate forms, particularly metaphor and narrative. "The mythical language of a community discloses to us the structures of ultimacy in which our community lives Thus particular symbolic forms, carried by a community and a tradition, are the essential

⁹ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 171-83.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

media of each human apprehension of ultimacy and so of our creative answers to ultimate issues.”¹¹

If a speaker is to speak to be understood, she must do so by means of shared communication structures.¹² She must enter into the cultural context of her audience, both the wider cultural context and the immediate physical context. For most Christian communicators, the immediate physical context is overlooked when in fact it should be exploited in such a manner as to incorporate audience variables into the content and delivery of the spoken word. For example, a sermon may be prepared for audience members who have worked hard all week but not for someone who the preacher finds sleeping in the pew.

The physical context brings with it a culture that should be, but is often not, put to use by the preacher. The context is a reservoir of ideas at the disposal of every preacher. The preacher should fashion his message into a contextualized, receivable entity. Stephen Denning calls this parallel speaker/listener quality “co-creating the same story,” that is, telling the story on the basis of common values so that both the teller and the listener understand the story as closely as possible in the same way.¹³

Context is Culture

To propose that context is culture is an idea difficult to validate since both the terms *context* and *culture* are difficult to define with exactness. Culture is traditionally conceived as shared convictions and practices on a more broad, societal scale. However, in the

¹¹ L. Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind. The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 419 quoted in F. W. Dillstone, “Attitudes to Religious Language,” *Theolinguistics I*, Brussels: Vrije Universiteit, ed. J. P. van Nopen, 18.

¹² Morris J. Niedenthal, and Charles L. Rice in “Preaching as Shared Story,” in *Preaching the Story*, Edmund A. Steimle, Morris J. Niedenthal, and Charles L. Rice, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 1. See also LeRoy Kennel’s *Preaching as Shared Story* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1987) in which he calls the “storytelling” and “storylistening” event a “circular process,” 6. John S. McClure’s *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) argues for the sermon becoming a “communal event” through congregational involvement (51).

¹³ Stephen Denning, *The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2001), 93.

unraveling of any communication event, one finds a contextual culture or more precisely, contextual cultures. These are the shared observations and values a group experiences while being physically present in the same place at the same time, such as a church service or a teaching hour. When a baby cries, thunder strikes, the auditorium is unbearably hot, the rain beats on a tin roof, mosquitoes appear in mass, or some other shared experience happens in the room itself, it may create a stronger moment among those present than even long standing, culturally held norms.

The immediate context has, among other things, physical factors such as noise, room arrangement, and people movement. It has emotional factors such as congregational spirit of grief, anger, or numbness. There is perceptual culture, namely, things that the congregation sees and does not see. There is a shared experiential culture, as with a community that has lived through a mudslide or plane crash. These items are all at the disposal of speakers when they speak and are powerful tools in the hands of conscientious preachers. Immediate cultural elements become, in a sense, tools for engagement.

It is from within this immediate context that there is a reception framework for appropriate communication themes. All the preparation in the world cannot give the preacher the right to overlook what the Spirit of God is doing in the physical context of the delivery among the hearers. It is for this reason that over and over during the apprenticeship process I stressed the importance of observing situational phenomena and utilizing techniques to convert them into preachable material.

Both Kraft and Fasol call the person who is audience sensitive someone who is “receptor oriented”; that is, a speaker whose speech conforms to the listener’s conceptual framework.¹⁴ Theologians traditionally called the divine parallel to this *accommodation*. If

¹⁴ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 169ff and Al Fasol, *With a Bible in Their Hands: Baptist Preaching in the South 1679-1979* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 187.

you apply this to an immediate context, you have *circumstantial accommodation*.

The capacity to observe and accommodate was central in the instruction of preachers taking part in the homiletic exercise described later in this thesis. I attempted to give them training in circumstantial factors. Communication effectiveness can be multiplied significantly when the preacher clearly understands the actual setting of the audience. His capacity to be effective in “transculturation” of ideas depends upon his ability to make the idea relevant to an audience through culturally meaningful vehicles.¹⁵

This is a standard discipline expected of every missionary working in a cross-cultural setting.¹⁶ Every Christian communicator, not just cross-cultural workers, should master context-interpretive skills. We sometimes assume wrongly that if we are speaking to a crowd with the same mother tongue that we have a shared culture. This is only partially true. Culture is ultimately defined in the immediate by the exact makeup of the audience, its immediate surroundings, and the sum total of past and present societal variables.

Circumstantial Delivery

In order to succeed at persuasion in many cultural, or sub-cultural frameworks, one has to build upon socially embedded narrative and commonly held stories. Often, competing stories have to be replaced by new stories that contain the supplanting conceptual framework. The readiness of an audience to accept a potentially conflicting value system from within a story depends to some extent upon the suitability of the presentation within the immediate physical and cultural settings. In other words, there must be appropriate circumstantial delivery.

¹⁵ Ibid., 281. The importance of using a multiplicity of speech vehicles is treated in Bruce Mawhinney, *Preaching with Freshness* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1991), 88ff.

¹⁶ “Target Core Competencies for Missionaries” (Richmond: International Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, privately printed, 4 June 1999, photocopied). A missionary should be able to demonstrate these expected outcomes by the end of his first two years on the field “1. Can utilize principles of contextualization to apply the gospel to other cultural contexts. 2. Understands and can apply redemptive analogies to other cultures” (ibid).

With respect to the preaching context in the Caribbean in particular, I taught students to find a culturally accepted medium and local symbols to tell their stories. It was necessary for them in order to be persuasive. What emerged were parables that contained coconut palms, beaches, crabs, chickens, local foods, and Caribbean, not European, settings.

In a similar method to my own, Martin Goldsmith develops what he calls “parabolic teaching” out of his context of doing evangelism among Muslims.¹⁷ Goldsmith tells how he adapted the parables of Jesus to a Muslim context and retold them, thereby gaining a reputation as a storyteller. In that role, he discovered that the “visual and pictorial . . . will move the heart to love and worship more than forms based only on the conceptual word.”¹⁸

Brooks identifies eight types of stories: documentary (or history), myth, paradigm, legend, parable, allegory, illustration, and example.¹⁹ He explains that people hear from within a context he calls idiom,²⁰ what anthropologists would call structures. The interpretive frameworks are important for discovering the intended meaning or symbol of the story. Every listener brings to the interpretive process a reservoir of interpretants from his or her life. The effect generated by the story is controlled, among other things, by the author narrating his story from a clear understanding of what he perceives to be his audience’s culture.

This is the great challenge of an experiment in figured engagement. The delivery of an image by a speaker must be communicated in such a way as to insure as much as possible that the listener reinterprets the trope with appropriate symbolic meaning. Marguerite Kraft, in her explanation of the worldview of the Kamwe people of Nigeria, states: “It is not enough

¹⁷ Martin Goldsmith, “Parabolic Preaching in the Context of Islam,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 4.2 (1980): 219.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁹ R. T. Brooks, *Communicating Conviction* (London: Epworth Press, 1983), 50.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

simply to declare the message of God in our own terms. The message must be translated into forms that the people understand and are willing to trust.”²¹ Language always runs the risk of being misinterpreted, however. Figures of speech are especially delicate verbal units of interpretation because by definition they are groups of words wrenched from a normal, common usage and meaning.

The construction of images and parables within a context is a skill highly developed among street preachers. The interactive audience dynamic is raised to a level that does not normally exist in church homilies and demands that speakers create forms that are circumstantial and easily understood by pedestrians. In order to hold the attention of an audience on the street where there are a great number of other agendas active at any given moment, the preacher, out of necessity, must engage the people in such a way as to keep their focus against other competing imperatives.

In a very fascinating account of gospel work in Yoruba, J. D. Y. Peel writes of the street preaching of the Church Missionary Society missionaries in Yoruba. He gives an account of a young missionary preacher who employed appropriate media within the context to create preachable figures in the immediate. “In his early days in Abeokuta, going from market to market and speaking through an interpreter, Hinderer gave short addresses often on themes suggested by the immediate surroundings, like the Rock of Ages near the rocky outcrops of Ijemo or God as a consuming fire, shortly after a fire at Kesi, or the robe of Christ at a weavers’ shed. People’s curiosity ensured that he drew large and usually friendly crowds”²² This type of linking of the message to the physical setting has significant force. On one occasion, we are told that a Yoruba missionary by the name of William Moore

²¹ Marguerite Kraft, *Worldview and the Communication of the Gospel* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978), xi.

²² J. D. Y. Peel, “Preaching the Word to the Yoruba, 1845-1912” (Cambridge: Position Paper Number 35 of the North Atlantic Missiology Project, 1997), 4.

spoke to a “group in a blacksmith’s shop about the burning lake of fire in hell.”²³

Later, preaching in Yoruba developed through the use of “stands,” local “well chosen spots in the town where the missionary might preach regularly once or twice a week.”²⁴

These preaching points afforded “a relationship of dialogue between the preacher and an accustomed local audience.”²⁵

The example of pioneer preaching in Yoruba shows how a circumstantial backdrop can give rise to culturally appropriate metaphor. In the examples just listed, it is the context that determines the content, such as the blacksmith’s shop that gives rise to preaching on hell.

The immediate applicative force of a message is multiplied by the emotional connection between participants and their setting. Bob Harrington, a street worker in New Orleans, Louisiana for many years, practiced a sermonic contextualization in his ministry arena. Among the actual accounts in his book, *The Chaplain of Bourbon Street*, he tells of a conversation with a prostitute, in what Ruth Senter calls “a sermon for an audience of one.”²⁶ In the question and answer banter of the moment the following dialog ensues with a woman named Sunbeam.

“Don’t you think my hair is beautiful?”

“Yes, it’s beautiful. But it’s going to burn in hell if you don’t get your heart right with God.”

“I don’t believe in hell.”

“That won’t make the temperature down there one degree cooler.”²⁷

In vivid and dramatic language, the chaplain’s use of an applied image of the temperature of hell covered the doctrines of eternal punishment, death, temporality, judgment, belief,

²³ Ibid., 9.

²⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ruth Senter, “Sermon on the Street,” *Leadership* 16 (Fall 1995): 72.

²⁷ Bob Harrington, *The Chaplain of Bourbon Street* (Nashville: Impact Books, 1969), 13. See also Arthur Blessitt’s *Street University* (Santa Ana: Vision House Publishers, 1978).

and unbelief.

The sermonic relevance into a physical setting begins with a proper entry. Charles Williams calls precise verbal engagement a “hook.”²⁸ He explains that “the message will be understood in terms of what the individual can grasp from his or her worldview.”²⁹ Because of the change in listening habits of audiences, even on the street, he counsels his preaching teams to use sketchboards and tempera paints to accommodate the “shift in style of communication.”³⁰ This also appeals to the visual desire of contemporary listeners where reinforcement is possible through sight learning. Engagement moves from being purely verbal to including a concrete element.

In an early piloting seminar, I taught this principle of concrete reinforcement of verbal image. Surprisingly, the following Sunday, one of the student preachers brought a spoiled pig’s foot to the church to explain the image of how sin ripens in our life and stinks up those around us.

This method of concrete imaging has been used by Open Air Campaigners effectively for many years. Open Air Campaigners is an organization established in 1892 under the name New South Wales Prayer Band.³¹ They believed that if people would not frequent a church, the church should take the gospel to the people.³² What is of particular interest to this study is their integration of visual image in their street preaching as well as their use of the physical context.

One of the world’s best-known street preachers is Ray Comfort of New Zealand, now

²⁸ Charles Williams, “Does Street Preaching Still Work in the City?” *Urban Mission* 12 (March 1995): 33.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

³¹ The history of the Open Air Campaigners can be found at www.oacusa.org/whoweare.htm.

³² Cited from <http://www.oacusa.org/whoweare.htm>; Internet; accessed 3 November 2001.

resident in California and publishing a host of evangelistic materials with interactive and image-ridden themes under the banner of Living Waters Publications.³³ Street preaching publications, such as tailor-made tracts for that purpose, are reflective of an engagement view of preaching. Often these materials are printed versions of oral technique and “quips,” such as Comfort’s material: “It goes down well and is a great icebreaker” (concerning the Titanic’s sinking); “If at first you don’t succeed, don’t try skydiving”; or, the “IQ Test.”³⁴ Like many preachers, he uses a “blend of come-ons and comebacks rarely seen outside the Improv.”³⁵

Experienced street preaching is a balance of audience engagement and contextually appropriate verbal hooks. Catholic street missionaries exploited these techniques from 1934 to 1965 in rural parish work of small town America.³⁶ In order to combat serious anti-Catholic sentiment in the mid-western region of the United States, Vincent de Paul missionaries took up the methodologies of the British Catholic Evidence Guild, an organization started by Vernon Redwood and brought to the Great Plains states by Stephen A. Leven, and used street preaching and crusades to turn the tide of public opinion in favor of a softer stance toward Catholicism.³⁷ What developed was “motor missions,” itinerant mission preaching using music, a collapsible pulpit, portable altar, sermons, and a formal question/answer engagement. Questions were dealt with this way. “Pencils, paper, and a box were to be placed near a sign reading, ‘If it is a question about the Catholic Church, ASK A CATHOLIC.’”³⁸ Slawson explains the necessity of the inquiry and response time during the outdoor events. “The most important part of the evening was the question and answer period,

³³ “Tickets to Heaven,” *Charisma* 26 (May 2001): 76.

³⁴ *Ibid.*.

³⁵ Ed Donnally, “Taking It To the Streets,” *Charisma* 26 (May 2001): 74-83.

³⁶ Douglas J. Slawson, “Thirty Years of Street Preaching: Vincentian Motor Missions, 1934-1965,” *Church History* 62 (March 1993): 60-81.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

for it allowed missionaries to respond directly to the concerns of their listeners.”³⁹ The open air engagements of the Vincentians moved from formal, prepared structure to interactive and process engagement. The success of the methodology can be judged by the outcomes, where in the course of less than twenty years, “1 million people had requested information about the church, . . . 164,000 had enrolled in a correspondence course,” and many Catholic churches, missions, and even one diocese were formed.⁴⁰

Although street preaching raises the importance of environmental factors to the extreme, it demonstrates the effectiveness of contextually-based teaching. The greater the distraction, the more facility of understanding, interchange, and interpretability become issues. Methods of engagement become more and more necessary as tools for keeping people’s attention.

Moving from the examples cited above, it is possible to draw a fuller picture of circumstantial preaching as this study conceives it. Missionary preaching designed for the French Antilles attempts an engagement model that derives key parts of its delivery method and/or content from the immediate physical context. Upon close examination of New Testament proclamation, one sees that “preaching begins with the known so as to lead the hearer to the unknown.”⁴¹ The initial idea that begins the sermon or the driving image(s) upon which the sermon is based will connect the listener to the central biblical and theological truths that the speaker wishes to communicate.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid., 65.

³⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 74-5, 80.

⁴¹ Michel Philbert, *Christ’s Preaching—and Ours (La Prédication de Jésus et nous)*, trans. David Lewis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh House Press, 1963), 34.

⁴² See Jesus’ use of Isaiah in Luke 4:16-21; Peter’s use of the Book of Joel in Acts 2:14-36; Peter’s springboard idea in Acts 3:12-26 in which he uses the setting-generated idea of “popular excitement”; Paul’s notion of “God’s revelation in creation and providence” in Acts 14:8-18, or his appeal to popular “religious life and literature” on Mars Hill in Acts 17:16-23 (ibid.).

In order to raise consciousness about a particular idea, speakers often test the depth of understanding of their auditors. Jesus frequently employed an interrogative method.

Herman Horne calls Jesus' framing of His questioning methodology "inquiry learning."⁴³

The teacher properly identifies the central concern or core subject by bringing the students into focus on one pivotal issue. Horne calls initiating devices "openers."⁴⁴

The gospels record Jesus using 237 questions, most of which are rhetorical in nature.⁴⁵ Jesus often responds to, and instigates discussion with questions: "How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners? With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?"⁴⁶ As with the last example, sometimes these questions have an imaged base or require an imaged answer.

However, what is the engagement value of questioning? Interrogative methodologies are always immediate. There is a transfer of responsibility to the listener, even if it is an implicit engagement as in a rhetorical question. In order to produce engagement, the preacher must ask questions about the delivery setting. What does the situation demand? Where should questions appear, before or after the discourse?⁴⁷

Every preacher preaches for some kind of response, even if it is intellectual consent. The preacher should decide whether or not he is seeking verbal response, cognitive change, or modified conduct. Does the preacher want immediate response during or after the sermon? Can that outcome be advanced by a question? The desired result will determine

⁴³ Herman Horne, *Jesus the Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 41.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁵ Mawhinney, *Preaching with Freshness*, 109. For precision in types, motivations, and pedagogical reasoning behind questioning method, see Horne, *Jesus the Teacher*, 51-61.

⁴⁶ Mt. 18:21; Luke 10:25; Luke 5:30; Mark 4:30 (Frederick Houk Borsch, *Many Things in Parables: Extravagant Stories of New Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 1).

⁴⁷ See Mark 12:9 and Luke 10:36.

part of the engagement format of the preacher.

Preaching design is ultimately determined by a combination of speaker objectives and circumstantial elements. Engagement may be intentional and to some degree planned, but it is *always* modified to some extent according to the immediate elements of the situational context. In order for the preacher to be well received, or at least properly understood, he or she must communicate according to the given value systems and culturally accepted medium of those in the delivery setting.

Oral Qualities of Figured Delivery

Donald E. Demaray identifies six elements that are fundamental to preaching, what I would consider rudiments of a localized kerygma process. They are: *seeing, wonder, rhythm, order, pictures, and music*.⁴⁸ To Demaray's list I must also add *argument* and *participation*. When these are properly woven together in narrative structure, we have a truly free form, fully biblical, fully employable in the postmodern world. We have a Jesus parable,⁴⁹ an imaged argument, not without structure, but loose enough to be shaped according to the oral speech demands of the present. Yet, is it suitable for the French Antilles?

In developing a metaphoric homiletic process in the French Caribbean, it was impossible and would have been unwise to reproduce a non-native preaching style. Certain oral qualities would not work in the context of the local church. Call, response, chanting, and repeating are not native to the Martinique church environment. Strangely, however, they are present in the larger societal context. While preaching form within the church is often storied, music and response are not present during preaching delivery. Storytellers in Martinique, by contrast, are often rhythmic in their delivery. Because of these observations

⁴⁸ Donald E. Demaray, "Imagination: The Genius of Creative Sermon Construction," in *Sharing Heaven's Music: The Heart of Christian Preaching (Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey)*, edited by Barry L. Callen (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 109.

⁴⁹ David Buttrick states in his *Speaking Parables* that sermons need to be like parables, "designed to deconstruct the social world in which we live and open sudden glimpses of another world, the real world, God's world" (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 38.

of somewhat contradictory discoveries, it became my purpose to develop more seriously engagement elements such as episode, rhythm, and plot in the apprenticeship plan. Episodic delivery became especially important since it fit both Christian and secular delivery models already present in the society.

It is interesting that black preaching in the Americas employs a similar, culturally rhythmic paradigm. It is oral and spontaneous but not without structure. Its content and method are reflective of a more metaphorical homiletic. The sermon in black contexts is image-centralized, story-based, and highly reflective.⁵⁰ What results is a contextualized sermonic practice.

Within the contemporary English-speaking world, it is often in the black American churches with their oral expertise and their capacity for narrative that the preaching medium reaches a high level of verbal art and effectiveness.⁵¹ James O. Stallings in *Telling the Story: Evangelism in Black Churches* explains the idea of stories being the controlling medium for most communication within that community.⁵²

The black American community is a story-shaped community. Its self-understanding, language, beliefs, attitudes, and ideals are passed from one generation to another through story. Black Americans sing, play, learn, love, hate, despair, and hope through story. It is the form of all communication, whether serious or playful. In the black American community, dreams, memories, anticipation, frustrations, beliefs, rumors, and even gossip are experienced or spoken in narrative.⁵³

The depth of the spiritual aspects of storying methodology latent in verbal framing of black

⁵⁰ “This is because it [the African-American community] knows that some of the key traits of this [postmodern] condition—fragmentation, decenteredness, and alienation—were introduced to African-Americans under modernity and the so-called Enlightenment” (Will Coleman, *Tribal Talk: Black Theology, Hermeneutics, and African/American Ways of “Telling the Story”* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 194).

⁵¹ Black churches in the United States have historically been churches that are pastor-centered, or “charismatic-centered,” Eugene Rivers, “The Word on the Street,” Interview by C. Stephen Evans and Gail Gunst Heffner, *Books & Culture* May/June 2000, 19-20.

⁵² James O. Stallings, *Telling the Story: Evangelism in Black Churches* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988), 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 16.

preaching⁵⁴ must be evaluated because it can be used as a model for imaged preaching as a whole. “Black preaching has contributed greatly to the vitality of the preached Word in all segments of the Christian community in America because of its story-telling style, which creates a living experience in the preacher and those to whom the Word is being preached.”⁵⁵

Stallings explains that stories are “imaginative way[s] of ordering our experience.”⁵⁶ Cartesian logic and Western/white ways of ordering reality are sometimes brought into the black church; yet, they are not the norm. In typical black preaching, there is image, oral poetry, liberation, and a host of other issues and forms that help create an imaged engagement.⁵⁷

For Smith, the preacher’s voice is mimetic, or imitative of “God’s ‘wide and varied range’ of theurgic [god-working] expression: that is, God’s cosmic, historical, and transhistorical activity.”⁵⁸ The preacher’s voice must be itself an image, a mime of the divine

⁵⁴ The term “black preaching” is used to describe African-American pastors who preach sermons in the Negro tradition. See Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin’ Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1941).

⁵⁵ Warren H. Stewart, Sr., *Interpreting God’s Word in Black Preaching* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1984), 51.

⁵⁶ Stallings, *Telling the Story*, 15.

⁵⁷ Theophus H. Smith characterized African-American sermonizing as a conjuring methodology that utilizes the Bible, one that emerged from African folk spirituality on American soil (Theophus H. Smith, *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3). He says that this *folk pharmacy* involves spirit *invocation* by use of *magical arts* via an *image* by a *conjure doctor* (ibid., 4). To this he also adds the idea of magic, “a primordial and enduring system of communication . . . ‘language’”, healing, and power invocation (ibid., 5). His thoughts show the convergence of African-American spirituality, black theology, liberation theology, and inherited African spiritism (see preface ix). For a discussion of the fusion of African and Euro-American ideas in the black church see Henry Mitchell, “Black Preaching,” *Review and Expositor* (Summer 1973) reprinted in *The Black Experience in Religion* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1974), ed. C. Eric Lincoln, 70, who quotes the father of black homiletical scholarship, W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro Church* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903).

⁵⁸ Smith, *Conjuring Culture*, 23.

activity in the present. Smith offers an example with respect to divine creation. The image is one of head shaking, an action of centrifugal force where elements fly out from the center and land randomly in the perimeter. God is the center, and the stars are shooting out from Him in His creative spin.

God shook his head
And a thousand million diamonds
Flew out from his glittering crown
And studded the evening sky and made de stars.⁵⁹

Call and response is part of this mimetic phenomenon of the chanted sermon of the American folk preacher. The landmark publication of the chanted sermon was done by James Weldon Johnson in *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*, which in 1927 scripted the poetic style of what became known as the African-American folk sermon.⁶⁰ The style is classified by some as the Southern Oratorical Preaching style and was later studied as a sociological, anthropological, and theological movement.⁶¹

Bruce Rosenberg's *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* is among the most helpful to us in its form-critical perspective of folk preaching as circumstantial, epic verse. It outlines for us the philosophy of contextual rhythm and oral apprenticing developed later in the preaching pedagogy.

Rosenberg's study of American folk preachers, most of whom were Negro from four distinct regions of the rural United States, brought him to an analysis of spontaneous composition of sermonic material through "oral formulas" by reading-capable pastors using a

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26, quoting Hurston, *Mules and Men*.

⁶⁰ Cheryl J. Sanders, "God's Trombones: Voices in African American Folk Preaching," in *Sharing Heaven's Music: The Heart of Christian Preaching (Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey)*, ed. Barry L. Callen (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 152.

⁶¹ Gary Halloway, *O. B. Perkins and the Southern Oratorical Preaching Tradition*, Studies in American Religion, Vol. 58 (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 1-5.

blending of literate and oral recipes.⁶² He begins his study by drawing stylistic parallels between the American oral sermon and the Yugoslavian guslars who sang narrative as metrical epics.⁶³ Rosenberg makes a utilitarian distinction typical of folk delivery, that those who used notes in their preaching were not “spiritual” preachers because they were not totally oral, rhythmic, or spontaneous.⁶⁴

American folk preaching was and is poetic in one sense, yet not in the sense we are used to as literates. Folk “sermons almost never rhyme, they seldom alliterate, the imagery is meager.”⁶⁵ Yet they are metrical and they take on an almost melodic quality through the use of repeated spoken formulas. The formulas are employed at the moment, but are not imaged. Lord calls them “metrical narrative.”⁶⁶

Most of these preachers speak the first part of their sermons, but their real power comes from the rhythmic chant with which they intone the main body and climax [T]hey celebrate an array of their own rhetorical skills. These include a prodigious memory in which they store thematic set pieces that they have “almost” memorized, the Spirit-given freedom to create new the thematic sections on their feet, and the inspired gift of doing it all in poetic meter.⁶⁷

The oral quality of the folk material is helpful for our purposes because it is generated within the speaker setting itself. The material is also poetic engagement because it is chanted and rhythmic. However, oral formulas, where repeated grammatical constructs are the inventive criteria, are considered *schemes* in rhetorical terms.⁶⁸ Schemes are not tropical

⁶² Bruce Rosenberg, *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 4-5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4ff.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁶ Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 5.

⁶⁷ Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 114.

⁶⁸ Schematic arrangement is a branch of literary stylistics that studies verbal formulae and patterns. Richard Sherry in his *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* brought over schematic categories into English from Latin in 1550 (Delmar, NY: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977).

because the sense of the words themselves does not take on a figurative meaning. In chanted formula, words that are ordinarily placed in sentences with typical syntax, albeit folk grammar, become emotively or informationally charged through juxtapositioning with parallel phrases. For example, sentences or phrases that do not use figures of speech can create uncommon comparisons, contrasts, and sequenced narrative when placed in a metrical formula. The oral quality of the discourse forces the listener to draw connections between parallel elements in the formulaic scheme. The following example shows intensification through schematic climax.

And Pharaoh called his generals,
 And the generals called the captains,
 And the captains called the soldiers.
 And they hitched up all the chariots,
 Six hundred chosen chariots of war,
 And twenty four hundred horses.⁶⁹

Chanted discourse is, of course, not unique to black American preachers, but is found in a great deal of other cultures. For example, “rhythmical recitative ‘singing’ of poems” is practiced by the Central Celebes of Indonesia.⁷⁰ It was used by the great preachers of the Eastern Orthodox Church—Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, and Gregory Nazianzen.⁷¹ Haitian Creoles also have their own variety of rhythmized preaching. Rhythm is universal, and in Weber’s view, it “fixes” communication.⁷² It is sometimes called “cadence” in preaching texts.⁷³

⁶⁹ James Weldon Johnson, *God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 50.

⁷⁰ H. R. Weber, *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates: Based on a Missionary Experience in Indonesia* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1960), 39.

⁷¹ Fredrick W. Norris, “The Catholicity of Black Preaching,” *Sharing Heaven’s Music: The Heart of Christian Preaching (Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey)*, ed. Barry L. Callen (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 137.

⁷² Weber, *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates*, 40.

⁷³ Norris, “The Catholicity of Black Preaching,” 137.

Oral delivery that includes chanted material, rhythmic speaking, and formulas engages by means of metrical episodes. The speaker listens because he waits to hear the completion of the metrical parallels. Among oral groups, people are dependent upon “formulary patterns” in communication.⁷⁴

One can learn much from the spontaneous generation of sermonic material through formulas. Consider the following text for example.

You may not be a florist
 Am I right about it?
 But you must tell them, that He’s the Rose of Sharon
 I know that’s right
 You may not be a geologist
 But you must tell them, that He’s the Rock of Ages
 I know that’s right
 You may not be a physician
 But you must tell them, that He’s the great Physician
 You may not be a baker
 But you must tell them, that He’s the Bread of Life
 Am I right about it?⁷⁵

Parallel lines produce within the reader/listener an expectation about the next metaphorical, occupational reference. Audience participation is raised by the interspersed questions, and the whole unit functions with forward movement of linguistic power as oral poetry. This is very similar to “genre fiction” or formula fiction writing, where the expected desire for plot advancement and resolution is programmed so that the reader is satisfied with the meter of the story.⁷⁶ Rhythm, inflection, crescendo, intensification, and other oral methodologies that might have been used in the oral delivery when the above sermon was spoken, create shocking verbal arrangements similar to the juxtaposed correspondence found in metaphor or simile. Principles of analogy function in oral meter and phrase parallelism as they do in the

⁷⁴ Ana María Pineda, RSM, “Evangelization of the ‘New World’: A New World Perspective,” *Missiology* 20:2 (1992): 158.

⁷⁵ Rosenberg quoting a sermon by D. J. McDowell entitled “The Christ of the Bible” (*The Art of the American Folk Preacher*, 49).

⁷⁶ Don Cupitt, *What is a Story* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 25.

mechanics of metaphors.

Orally chanted material often produces engagement that is grounded in shared concrete experience. In the foregoing example, the use of the terms “florist,” “physician,” and “baker” help the listener relate to who Jesus is. Orality reference frames are concrete. Oral learners have ways of interpreting reality with a minimal amount of objectification and abstraction of ideas. Ideas are constructed around connections with life settings through analogy and repetition.⁷⁷

Orality, while also being linear, has a different linearity than Western logic. That is, the former is not extensively subordinated like the latter. When oral communicators use a simple narrative quality, the aspect of linearity is contained in clear, chronological progress.

Plot development is the medium for story forms where ideas evolve through advancement in time. Engagement and understanding are tied to a culturally generated expectation revealed in story form. Depending on the culture in which the communication takes place, one’s upbringing teaches one what to expect by way of storied resolution and the teaching moral.

Yet, while oral speech is linear in that it functions by plot advancement, it is not all that straightforward. Some go so far as to say that “[o]ral rhetoric is circular or repetitive or spiral rather than linear.”⁷⁸ The spiral or circular characteristic of oral communicators pivots on the reality of spoken repetition. One might view recurring patterns in oral communicators as displaying a non-linear approach to narrativity.

Stories in oral cultures often employ “temporally–extended patterns or sequences.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Steve Jussely argues that “biblical truths [must] neither fly over heads nor reside in the surreal world of doctrinal jargon and abstract principle,” “A Case for Illustrative Preaching,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16:2 (1998): 48. This oral, audience-focused method was also the technique employed by Maximus (see Marietta Cashen Conroy, *Imagery in the Sermones of Maximus, Bishop of Turin*, Dissertation published in Patristic Studies Series Vol XCIX, (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 222.

⁷⁸ John Goldingay, “In Preaching be Scriptural,” *Anvil* Vol.14.2 (1997): 91.

⁷⁹ Cupitt, *What is a Story*, 25.

The reason for this is that, if you intend to convince someone, especially in a primarily oral culture, it will require not only image usage and story, but also repetition and reinforcement. The repetition becomes patterned for easy listener reception and, in the process, satiates auditory desire.⁸⁰ Don Cupitt in attempting to define *story* identifies links between narrative and desire.⁸¹ He says that stories are “seductive.”⁸² Like films and works of art, they are “constructed as to produce and to play upon a culturally-formed emotion” and generate “feelings, differentiate them and attach symbolic values to them.”⁸³

Orally inclined individuals have a less developed sense of abstraction and are forced to organize material through “stories of human action.”⁸⁴ These stories might be fitted next to one another in a strict chronological fashion, but most often are arranged as episodes. Episodic structure is a type of narrative sectioning wherein compositional pieces can be separated out as individual units, fully capable of standing on their own in some respect.

Episodic structure gives oral storying a flexibility of plot.⁸⁵ Episodes can often be arranged or rearranged, either intentionally or unintentionally without losing the basic elements of the story.⁸⁶

The oral quality of the episodic mindset is a helpful thing for the preacher to understand. Audiences, regardless of their level of literacy, have a natural tendency to store information in narrative segments. Muslim preachers, for example, practice episodic

⁸⁰ Asian storytellers are fond of using lists of words, images, and rhythms in their storytelling (Cathy Spagnoli, *Asian Tales and Tellers* (Little Rock: August House Publishers Inc., 1998), 29-30).

⁸¹ Cupitt, *What is a Story*, 16ff.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁴ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), 140.

⁸⁵ In Joanna Dewey’s “Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark,” *Intersections: Post-Critical Studies in Preaching*, Richard L. Eslinger, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 26.

⁸⁶ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 142-47.

structuring in their teaching. In his mapping of the Sufi lesson, Trix found that his Albanian Bektashi *murshid* (spiritual master-teacher) usually taught episodically, often by topic, by story, by question and answer, and by poem readings.⁸⁷ Episodic teaching structures permit interaction, pause, dialog, and what Trix calls “attunement” between the teacher and the student.⁸⁸ Segmented teaching via episodalism is a powerful learning device that is part and parcel of an engagement model.

Even in everyday speech, people use episodes in their conversations, recounting what happened at school, at the market, or on the bus. This episodic technique is practiced in missionary storying where biblical story episodes are first identified, then practiced, delivered, and repeated by learning groups.⁸⁹ The technique is based on the incremental nature of listening habits.

In the fabrication of narrative figures, the speaker most often invents verbal images to transfer units of information for her listeners. When the material is arranged and spoken, a listener has no trouble absorbing the verbal episodes because the delivery is a narrative succession of concrete images.

One proposed reason for the facility of image-based reception is that “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.”⁹⁰ Words are, in essence, signifiers of concrete reality. Ordinary conversation is a constant exercise in the interpretation of metaphors. When we use formal verbal metaphors, in the categorical sense of figures of speech, it speaks to who we are in terms of our

⁸⁷ Francis Trix, *Spiritual Discourse: Learning with an Islamic Master* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 31ff, 132, 147.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁹ Tom A. Steffen, *Reconnecting God’s Story to Ministry: Crosscultural Storytelling at Home and Abroad* (La Habra, CA: Center for Organizational & Ministry Development, 1996), 97.

⁹⁰ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3, as quoted in Thomas H. Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 134.

communication system and conceptual framework. In other words, even though all language may be in some sense metaphorical in that words represent other realities, when we use formal metaphors, we create new verbal ways of looking at reality. We no longer simply use words with their established meaning, but we juxtapose unlike things on the basis of analogous qualities. The analogies we create via figures reveal how we connect ideas or objects. For example, people from a culture that eats insects might connect a maggot with food, while a person from another culture might see it as something disgusting and unclean.

Ultimately, our story language and metaphor-making reflect our cultural framework. It is for this reason that a metaphoric homiletic is very effective in engaging people. When a preacher properly uses figures, he enters immediately into the foundational issues and norms of a group of people. His image becomes a reference for truth, not simply an entertainment device. If he strings images together in a narrative, the new story establishes a self-contained, cultural framework. The listener is confronted with a new way of constructing reality.

Preaching students in Martinique who practiced figured method during the training experiment had a very particular transformation in thinking when they saw the practical value of figured delivery. They discovered that their own way of observing the preaching task changed when they began looking for analogies and narratives to communicate ideas. Their perception of the world was increasingly imaged. Their concept of good communication also began to reflect their figured perceptions, and they began naturally to construct a metaphoric homiletic. They saw the value in addressing ideas and engaging listeners through rhythmic narrative. They also reaped the benefits of positive feedback from their listeners.

Cultural Storying

“No more powerful teaching or research tool exists than that of storytelling.”⁹¹

⁹¹ Tom A. Steffan, “Storytelling,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 909.

Steffan's view is held by anthropologists and small children, by sociologists and mothers, by literary greats and indigenous tribal peoples. Stories are at the heart of culture. It is for this reason that a significant portion of the pedagogical preaching experiment in engagement concerned the employment and validation of precise storying techniques suitable to the culture.

There has been a resurgence of storytelling in recent years, especially of reading out loud as a means of oral storytelling.⁹² Stories are "important to our identity as human beings in community."⁹³ "Every human community has a story which it tells both to itself and to others concerning its distinctive origins and *raison d'être*, and about the sort of place this world in which it exists is."⁹⁴ There are few places in the world where this idea is more clear than in cross-cultural Christian ministries where the story of redemption is the principal content of our preaching, and where the scriptural source of that content, the Bible, "is 80% stories."⁹⁵

Missiologically speaking, there are fine distinctions made between different types of Christian storytelling based on the literacy level and the objectives of the teacher. Slack makes four basic distinctions currently in use across missionary settings: narrative preaching, chronological Bible teaching, chronological Bible storytelling, and chronological Bible storying.⁹⁶ They are listed in an order by descending levels of literacy. Much of the early storying practice that has been documented was developed in the Philippines.⁹⁷ Techniques

⁹² Shirley Palmer, "'Just One More Chapter—Please,'" *Christian Herald* (March 1978): 16-21.

⁹³ Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (London: SPCK, 1995), 107.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Johani Gauran, *The Witnessing Kit: Using Chronological Bible Stories to Present the Good News* (Makati, Philippines: Church Strengthening Ministry, 1991).

⁹⁶ James Slack, *Chronological Bible Storytelling* (Manila: Church Strengthening Ministries, 1991), 25-32.

⁹⁷ Slack explains the work of Trevor McIlwain and his work with New Tribes mission as well as that of Jeff Palmers in *Chronological Bible Storying*, 28-30.

and methodologies were designed around reception and retention structures as well as according to the cultural capacity, literacy level, and learning tendencies of the listeners.

In Bible storying, discovered listener-based teaching techniques are constructed around an “oral Bible strategy,” and are woven into holistic catechisms progressing through the principal stories of the Old and New Testaments.⁹⁸ There are even specialized, oral storying catechisms prepared for subsections of culture groups. Each preaching context demands a particular approach and arrangement of the materials because foundational images and ideas have to be treated according to priorities in the given locality.⁹⁹ This is even true of vast differences between sexes of some cultures where the demand for gender-oriented curricula is clear. Terry found that women preferred stories and discussions that involved “relationships, feelings and emotions” as well as family issues, while men preferred centering on the “action in the story . . . and doctrinal truth.”¹⁰⁰

Missions-directed story-teaching among illiterates is usually done in “tracks”¹⁰¹ because the intention is to create a series of biblical stories upon which to construct a new worldview. By contrast, the principal concern in my engagement experiment is the creation and employment of original image and story to explain the biblical text. I am less concerned with the comprehensive sequencing of biblical stories in catechism tracks.

⁹⁸ J. O. Terry, Jim Slack and Steve Evens. *Chronological Bible Storying* (Johannesburg: International Publications Services, 1996), 35. Examples of storying catechisms include: Johani Gauran, *Apologetical, Chronological, Theological & Scriptural (ACTS): Bible Stories for Evangelism* (Bansalan, Philippines: Mindanao Baptist Rural Life Center, 1995); LaNette W. Thompson, *Sharing the Message Through Storying: A Bible Teaching Method for Everyone* (Ouagadougou: Burkina Faso Baptist Mission, 1996); John R. Cross, *Stranger on the Road to Emmaus* (Sanford, FL: Goodseed International, 1999); Bill Perry, *Storyteller's Bible Study for Internationals* (Ephrata: Multi-Language Media, 1992); Gauran, *The Witnessing Kit*; George Walker and Bob Kennel, *Evangelizing Cross-Culturally: The Bisorio [Papua New Guinea] Example* (Sanford, FL: New Tribes Mission, 1989); Trevor McIlwain, *Firm Foundations* (Sanford, FL: New Tribes Mission, 1991); Paul Bramsen, *The Way of Righteousness: Good News For Muslims*, (Spring Lake: CCML, 1998).

⁹⁹ Walker and Kennel, *Evangelizing Cross-Culturally*, i.

¹⁰⁰ J. O. Terry, *God and Woman: A Chronological Bible Storying Model For Storying the Good News to a Primarily Oral Culture of Muslim & Hindu Women's Worldview* (Singapore: n. p., 1998), i.

¹⁰¹ Thompson, *Sharing the Message Through Storying*, 11; Slack, *Chronological Bible Storying*, 32-46.

Methods and prolegomena in storying among illiterates and semi-literates can instruct us in foundational methodology for communicating images at any level of literacy, even though those methods are not in the least circumstantial or modified according to a local context. Weber writes about the Luwuk-Banggai illiterates of Indonesia: “The more intimately the Western theologian came to know them [illiterates], the more he was amazed at their powerful imagination, their ability to *see* [italics his]: pictures, actions and significant happenings in nature and human life. Many of these illiterates revealed themselves as true artists in observation and communication.”¹⁰² Weber realized that he had to free the gospel from “the abstract ideas of our catechisms and doctrines” and become a learner among a people who had many ways of communicating verbally, ways with which he had no familiarity.¹⁰³

At a more general level, students of preaching need to learn the importance of story as a cultural container. Middleton and Walsh define storying as “*socially embodied narrative*” [italics theirs].¹⁰⁴ They go on to say it is a “first-order activity or practice, the way of life of an actual community of persons oriented toward and guided by a common heritage and common goals. On the other hand, however, *story* can refer to a *grounding or legitimating narrative*, the worldview which guides the practice of a given community.”¹⁰⁵ That is, preachers must understand context-specific story bases, recognize the power of stories to establish or disrupt foundational beliefs in society, and use pivotal story themes to construct a message that will be received by an audience.

In James I. Macnair’s book on preaching to illiterates, he explains in detail the

¹⁰² Weber, *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates*, 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *truth is stranger than it used to be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (London: SPCK, 1995), 69.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

necessary elements of good storytelling: “adaptation to life,” “seizing dramatic points,” “enlarging at appropriate places,” “suppressing irrelevant details,” and “weaving in and emphasizing the main moral.”¹⁰⁶ Stories begin with commonalities between the story itself and the listeners. As hearers make connections between what they are hearing and what they have experienced in the past, they grapple with moral ramifications of the story through identification.

In Macnair’s model, the speaker and the listener end up at the main moral together. The applicative aspect is the principal concern of a teacher who wants certain conduct-outcomes. Whether or not the moral is explained or “emphasized,” as he puts it, is up to the speaker who makes explanatory comments within the overall scheme of content choices. This approach might be contrasted for clarity’s sake with a “conviction-driven sermon” where delivery is much more didactic and the expected outcomes are almost always clearly enumerated.¹⁰⁷

Jesus sometimes explained the meaning of His metaphoric teaching and perhaps even stated the outcome, but very frequently He simply uttered figures and left the Spirit to be at work in His word to clarify desired behavioral changes in the heart of the listener. This is the analogous nature of symbolic preaching. The hearer is expected to connect the story to his or her concrete experience and apply its implications.

In Frederick Buechner’s *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale* the author explains how preaching intentionally pushes the gospel metaphor to its limits. Biblical stories for Buechner plumb the depths of the human condition, not just in their tragic and euphoric qualities, but also in their mystery, their fairy-tale. In fairy-tale, there is a vortex of illusion, battles, magic, emotional extremes, dazzle, and countless other

¹⁰⁶ James I. Macnair, *Village Preaching: A Simple Course of Homiletic Instruction for Christian Workers Among Illiterate People* (London: The Christian Literature Society for India and Africa, 1924), 10-14.

¹⁰⁷ S. Bowen Matthews, “Conviction and Compassion,” *Leadership* 16 (Fall 1995): 69.

sensations.¹⁰⁸ The gospel is “Telling the Truth,” a truth telling of the variety that is stranger than fiction. The very fact that the gospel is true makes the impact that much greater because there is a rationally unbelievable quality about it.¹⁰⁹ Buechner’s perspective is that of a storyteller. The preacher is obliged to tell the gospel in all its truth, and in the telling, reach for the heights and depths of language so as to clothe the narrative in the majesty that it inspires.¹¹⁰

Oral cultures have this quality without being taught it. They regard the storied word as the carrier of “thought,” “intellect,” and “emotions.”¹¹¹ They remember ideas communicated in narrative format.¹¹² One could add to this that stories and images are tied to the concrete world and the spiritual world simultaneously. The “picturesque,” the “symbolic,” and the “dramatic” can be intimately linked to sacred beliefs and must be utilized if the Christian communicator is to concretize the spiritual world for his less literate listeners.¹¹³ That world can be extraordinary, “full of power and wonder,” or it can be mundane, communicated in proverbs or riddles.¹¹⁴

Story form is a cultural bottle. It is not simply an attention-getting device or an illustrative technique. It is precisely because it is a container that holds human tradition, belief, and ritual, that the preacher must be prudent in his construction and use of the story

¹⁰⁸ Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 73ff.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

¹¹⁰ A similar idea to that of Buechner is developed in H. Maxwell Butcher’s *Story as a Way to God: A Guide for Storytellers* (San Jose: Resource Publications, Inc., 1991), 39-59.

¹¹¹ Weber, *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates*, 21.

¹¹² James P. Vaughn, *Chronological Storying Among the Wolof People of Senegal, West Africa: Model for a Rural Church Planting Movement*, M.A. Thesis (Fort Worth: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999), 92.

¹¹³ Weber, *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates*, 33-38.

¹¹⁴ Thompson, *Sharing the Message Through Storying*, 5.

form. Storying engages people at the level of convictions and disturbs their emotions. It addresses spiritual realities and helps the listener learn truth. Ultimately, stories construct or deconstruct listener culture. They help create a listening framework as well as a platform for divine engagement.

When the student preacher elevates the importance of story, her preaching practice changes altogether. She no longer looks for story illustrations to support her main points. She looks for didactic and discursive material to support her stories. The stories contain the kernel message. This makes it much more difficult for a preacher to deliver a message without figured material. Without a story, she has no message. What was formerly viewed as supporting and illustrative is now the main part of the sermon itself.

In the preaching experiment described later, engagement became the principal goal of the student. The apprenticeship process taught that information transfer functions in a secondary role to the encounter with God. The latter is actualized in part by the context-specific story base, plot, and character movements. Students learned that inherent in the stories themselves are cultural and ideological modifications that perform the task of reconciliation. People experience God and His ways when they hear and accept the story that has been analogized from the biblical text.

Oral Delivery as Hermeneutics

Is hermeneutics interpretive science (finding meaning) or applied science (communicating meaning)? Is it the methodological system of textual discovery or is it the oral explanation in the preaching moment? As I will explain below, it appears to be both a deciphering task and a delivery event.

Once a person moves into hermeneutics-as-oral-delivery, as do some preachers especially in the African-American tradition, there are unique issues that revolve around accepted ways of communicating meaning. If a culture communicates meaning via stories or images, the historically accepted, literate way of interpreting and explaining texts gives place

to metaphorical delivery. Hermeneutics is no longer a science concerned with textual analysis but with figured explanation.

The migration in contemporary homiletics is to associate hermeneutics with preaching.¹¹⁵ More precisely, there is a desire among some to view the sermon as oral interpretation. Even further, within this interpretive process is included the deciphering of audiences. The hermeneutical circle spirals outward when the preacher himself interprets the audience and text and then turns around and interprets a message to that same audience based on his prior analysis. In other words, unearthing meaning continues right up until oral delivery, and the lines between discovery and delivery are virtually eliminated.

It is clear that this reality alters the task of teaching preachers. The sermon preparation process is not neatly divided into exegetical and expositional phases. Rather, one never leaves the task of interpretation to move on to delivery. The student preacher continually grapples with the idea that delivery is interpretation.

Traditionally, preaching has not been viewed as hermeneutics. Craddock typifies the methodological distance between interpretation and finding the appropriate means of communication. “The work of interpretation, which is the heart of arriving at a message, and the work of deciding on design and movement for framing that message into a sermon are two processes with their own integrity, their own skills, and their own climaxes.”¹¹⁶ For Craddock, hermeneutics is *arriving at a message*. This latter aspect of *framing a message* he does not view as part of interpretation.

However, this separation of a discovery phase and a design phase is not as clear and distinct as it appears. The reason for this is that the preacher discovers a design for his

¹¹⁵ David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 263ff.

¹¹⁶ Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 84.

sermon right up until the moment he opens his mouth to preach. There is an organic unity of content and delivery. The two cannot be separated. Delivery defines content, and content defines delivery. Although we separate the two for clarity and analysis, we are constantly interpreting, discovering, redefining, and *arriving at a message*. Moreover, the *framing* is part of the *arriving*.

Messages cannot be framed in a vacuum. Neither are they framed in the preacher's study, as is commonly perceived. As oral events, they are framed when they are spoken. Framing involves intonation, pause, delivery rhythm, volume, movement, facial expression, word choice, and a host of other spoken variables, most of which are ultimately created at the moment of delivery.

The idea that hermeneutics is the discovery of scriptural meaning is a conceptual limitation originating out of our reading and writing orientation. Hermeneutics involves first the *construal of texts, contexts, and audiences*, and second, the *verbal interpretation of meaning to listeners*.

Hermeneutic principles have historically been applied to the discovery of meaning in a text. However, once the preacher moves away from the interpretation of textual elements into the interpretation of audiences and contexts, he no longer has use of the grammatical tools he has refined over thousands of years of literary analysis.

For example, if in the reading of a New Testament narrative, a preacher discovers that the audience for Jesus' message on persecution in John 16 is bilingual, Galilean, middle-aged men who have left their wives and families at home, it will be necessary to make an interpretive leap to the 20th century, monolingual, mixed-gender audiences of youth and adults from broken families of today when the message is being framed. In discovering a textual idea like a precise audience of bilingual male adults, the preacher has not *arrived* at his or her message. Her message is fused in non-textual frameworks that are as much a part of the message as the "main idea" of the text. Among the most important elements of her

message is the refinement of her sermonic idea based on who will receive it.

Both the speaker's interpretation *of* the audience, and a message *to* the audience, are necessary for any preacher attempting to be relevant. Traditionally, hermeneutics was not seen in the light of interpersonal communication but rather as an interpretive science worked out by people studying texts. The interpretive harvest that results from examination of the printed word may be where the preacher starts, but interpretive delivery to a group of people is where he ends. Ronald J. Allen in his *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching* takes this approach: "If the text is alleluia, I want the people to feel it rise up within themselves. If the text is a story, I want the people to participate in it; I want the reading to stimulate their emotions and set in motion the rhythms that characterize actual events."¹¹⁷ Allen's aim in interpretation of the text is the emotive results that form the starting point and finishing point for his delivery.

A similar rhetorical model for doing interpretation is the notion of Kenneth Burke's idea of "language as symbolic action" where the speaker can create an event that is more than simply a verbal exercise.¹¹⁸ Since "Burke understands a work of literature as a strategy for solving a problem," the preacher who employs this hermeneutical perspective can easily create images that attempt to answer questions being raised in the text.¹¹⁹ Loscalzo elaborates this tradition of Burke's "identification" model in his *Preaching Sermons that Connect*.¹²⁰ Identification is also called by Burke "the rhetorical 'principle of courtship'" in which the speaker romances the listener on common ground.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ronald J. Allen, *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1984), 26.

¹¹⁸ Craig Loscalzo, "A Rhetorical Model" in *Hermeneutics for Preaching: Approaches to Contemporary Interpretations of Scripture*, ed. Raymond Bailey (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 114.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹²⁰ Craig A. Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons That Connect* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

This is close to the speech-act hermeneutic model where words have inherent performative power.¹²² Divine authorship of the scriptures carries with it intention, and in spite of the contemporary claims to an all pervasive, reader-based hermeneutic, the fruitful nature of speech-act hermeneutical dynamics for this experiment is clear. It lies in the desire of the preacher to be a change agent in the hearers. Part and parcel of the speech-act hermeneutic is the implication that “speech-acts entail performance-acts.”¹²³ The end result should be engagement and audience change. “Effective and accurate hermeneutics in preaching has the final purpose of causing persons to *do*—either to do better, do less, do more, or do differently.”¹²⁴

This result-oriented preaching is the case in the African-American hermeneutic, which involves immediate response. Black preaching is “evolutionary” in that the black preacher sees himself as a “holistic liberator” who himself has been delivered by an Almighty Deliverer and is constantly engaging in the liberating task while simultaneously being freed himself to preach appropriately in the context.¹²⁵ This is what Moyd calls the “practical theology . . . of affirmation.”¹²⁶ The preacher and the audience move along the sermon continuum together affirming one another, each encouraging the other as both experience spiritual “elevation.”¹²⁷

Modern hermeneutics has summed up the vast possibilities facing us as we attempt to

¹²² Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 597.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 598.

¹²⁴ Stewart, *Interpreting God's Word in Black Preaching*, 65.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. Stewart combines the ideas of delivery and internal deciphering. He talks about hermeneutic “modes” as ways of preaching and speaks of the “prophetic” and “constitutive” modes as delivery styles or interpretive methods.

¹²⁶ Olin P. Moyd, *The Sacred Art: Preaching & Theology in African American Tradition* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1995), 34.

¹²⁷ Glenn Hinson, *Fire in My Bones* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 283-84.

interpret the words in the text in more concrete, outward ways. “It [the text] is a ‘sign-language’, with an inherent ambiguity which allows for symbolic representation . . . [T]he characters in it become ‘larger than life’ so as to illuminate our lives, so that the whole takes on a universal quality and reveals the glory of God in the midst of tragedy. And the illumination produces captivation, and captivation means contemplation, and contemplation brings discernment, and discernment means involvement”¹²⁸ One of the preacher’s roles is to interpret the text by use of analogy in such a way as to produce illumination and ultimately, involvement.

In this perspective, interpretation is *not the mental aspect of engagement of the text by a literate person*. Hermeneutics in the English-speaking world often revolves around the principles of examining the printed text in a mental exercise, someone reading the words and making sense of them either in his head or on paper. However, interpretation could be considered much broader, that of a person hearing the text and decoding its meaning internally. It might even be a literate or non-literate individual interpreting the biblical text orally for others.

Marrying hermeneutics to oral delivery is not new. Black hermeneutics, if one could even generalize by racial lines, would view the act of interpretation in this holistic sense, from beginning to end so to speak. For the black preacher, there is little difference between interpreting the text internally for oneself as a preacher and interpreting the text for an audience. Discovery and delivery are only two stops on the preaching continuum, and both are hermeneutics.

In contrast to a hermeneutic that includes delivery interpretation, any text-based method of sermon development gives second place to the oral nature of the preaching

¹²⁸ Frances Young, *The Art of Performance: Towards a Theology of Holy Scripture* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990), 186. Rather than “inherent ambiguity,” I would prefer to say that syntactically the text permits some degree of interpretive latitude.

enterprise.¹²⁹ It also has a tendency to consume preparatory energies, and runs the risk of taking away the supreme importance of how God wants to engage the audience through the preacher.

In Thomas Long's work, *The Witness of Preaching*, he writes about the oral nature of sermon delivery in his chapter, "Desk to Pulpit."¹³⁰ However, delivery never occurs from desk to pulpit but from pulpit to pew. His book as a whole does not reflect the fact that preaching is an oral enterprise. This assumption about the text-based nature of preaching is inherently contradictory. Orality demands speech-centered, delivery-centered, audience-exchange-centered methodology lived out in the immediate. This is the point of Hall and Heflin when they make a helpful distinction between *sermons* and *preaching*, the latter being the totally oral form of the former.¹³¹

From any century, from any theological tradition, print will never capture tears, pause, pitch, volume, inflection, intensity, passion, body movement, facial expression, gestures, volume, anger, sorrow, audience interaction, or emotions of any kind. Oral communication remains spoken, and the volume of preaching textbooks that deal with the literary orientation of current and past Christianity, bears evidence to the need not only for this study, but also for a total reevaluation of modern day homiletics in general. The anthologizing spirit that exists in preaching circles today illustrates the fact that we are not at the heart of our discipline. Publications of sermons creates words frozen in time and space without regard for who was in the room, what parts of the reprinted sermons were left out during delivery and for what reasons, and a host of other contextual questions revolving around the actual setting.

¹²⁹ The term I use is "text-based," but Rosenberg describes various kinds of homiletic organizational patterns that emerge from the Middle Ages and Puritans into the current day: "text-and-context"; "text-context-application"; and "text-context-application-resolution" (*The Art of the American Folk Preacher*, 32-33).

¹³⁰ Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 182-84.

¹³¹ E. Eugene Hall and James L. Heflin, *Proclaim the Word* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985), 178.

This is not to say that sermon manuscripting and publication is not useful, but reading a printed sermon is like looking at a new, parked Ferrari. It's beautiful, but it's not moving. In the words of Richard Lischer commenting on the printed sermons of Martin Luther King:

Any appraisal of King's preaching on the basis of his sermons published in *Strength to Love* . . . is bound to distort the essence of his preaching . . . because *no* book can capture oral performance [F]or the sermon's meaning occurs in the voicing of the word. The sermons in *Strength to Love* have been ripped from their context, which was the church's defiant worship in the midst of social and political upheaval in the South. King and his publishers decontextualized his sermons in order to give them a timeless and universal quality, which King should have known is the very antithesis of a sermon.¹³²

This is a powerful and scathing critique of modern homiletics. Not only has scholarship reduced interpretation to a text-based phenomenon, but also it has further decontextualized the spoken sermon into the reductive print medium. Textualizing a sermon betrays the essentially oral nature of preaching and reveals a conceptual flaw in the way in which much of modern scholarship perceives homiletics.

By contrast, an oral hermeneutic model such as engagement isolates the primacy of delivery without abandoning the biblical text. The preacher is an oral poet communicating biblical truth.

Preaching is no ordinary speech. However, preaching is no ordinary poetry either. It is the sound of God speaking, and as such, it is the intelligible sound of our salvation taking place. It is oral speech of a unique sort, rooted in Scripture and the oral traditions that gave it birth In preaching we also perpetuate oral traditions we have heard for those who follow.¹³³

When the speaker is an oral poet, his primary task is to clothe his biblically based message in verbal attire that helps the people meet God in the preaching "event."¹³⁴ Image invention and

¹³² Lischer, *The Preacher King*, 109. Charles L. Bartow confirms the same idea when he says along with Clyde Fant that "the preaching moment [is] an irreducible oral/aural event," *The Preaching Moment: A Guide to Sermon Delivery* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 103.

¹³³ Paul Scott Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 19.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 21. "Let him reach for an analogy, or throw the truth into a picture, or give an instance of the principle he is enunciating, and both relief and recognition will register on his hearer's faces. It is as though they say with a smile, 'We've got it now'" (William E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Illustration* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1978), 19).

delivery are fused into what Michael Lieb calls the “visionary mode,” where “hermeneutics and poetics converge.”¹³⁵

Churches are filled with people who do not have extensive skills in following highly abstracted or subordinated discourse. They simply want to meet God. They come to church for that purpose. Globally, only one percent of the population has a college education and 36.4% are illiterate, at least two billion people.¹³⁶ The world is not given to abstracting and interpreting propositions. We return to Craddock’s advice about *creating* suitable form for sermonic material and the need to fuse it with oral dynamics typical of modern, image-laden media.¹³⁷ Modern man prefers aurally visual delivery, wherein he unconsciously discerns in the delivery of the verbalized message that he himself was made the object of the speaker’s hermeneutic process.

If hermeneutics actually involves interpreting a message to people and is not simply a science of discovering meaning, then engagement is a hermeneutic process. In addition, validating the engagement model requires that the ensuing experiment examine how textual meaning reaches the listener. It is no longer sufficient to analyze if the discovered meaning has been properly interpreted, but it is now also necessary to scrutinize if the delivery medium properly reflects the meaning of the text and whether or not that biblical idea accurately arrives in the heart and mind of the listener.

Figures and Postmodern Decoding

In attempting to explain how people construct understanding within a preaching

¹³⁵ Michael Lieb, *The Visionary Mode: Biblical Prophecy, Hermeneutics, and Cultural Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 307.

¹³⁶ David Barret, *Our Globe and How to Reach It*, quoted in James B. Slack and J. O. Terry, *Chronological Bible Storying: A Methodology for Presenting the Gospel to Oral Communicators*, monograph (Co-produced by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1997), 6.

¹³⁷ Craddock, *Preaching*, 182.

context, there are specific aspects of circumstantial decoding that need explanation. Olin P. Moyd underscores the fact that all “theology is contextualized language—that is, defined by the human situation that gives birth to it.”¹³⁸ When a preacher prepares a message to be understood, he is “encoding” a message for a precisely defined group.¹³⁹

In order to communicate and to be properly understood, preachers have to encode according to the local decoding practices of audiences. That is, the preacher constructs a message knowing how that message will be heard and understood in a given setting. It then helps not only for the speaker to understand the nature of the coding/decoding enterprise but also how the immediate context modifies those practices.

The reality is that every audience is also a multi-cultural audience. Each listener comes to listen from a micro-culture, even if they are all from the same culture group. The immediate context is layered with multiple decoding processes. There is a problem of the non-homogeneous interpretation patterns among auditors. The entire listening process is enshrouded in a complex of interpretive variables. David Harvey states the problem this way: “The ‘atomization of the social into flexible networks of language games’ suggests that each of us may resort to a quite different set of codes depending upon the situation in which we find ourselves.”¹⁴⁰

Rick Gosnell adds a contingent problem for the Christian speaker in his article, “Proclamation and the Postmodernist”: “[A] great chasm exist[s] between the church and contemporary society.”¹⁴¹ There is an enormous gap between the way the Christian church

¹³⁸ Moyd, *The Sacred Art*, 7.

¹³⁹ Al Fasol, “Preaching to the Video Ergo Sum Generation,” in *Sharing Heaven’s Music: The Heart of Christian Preaching (Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey)*, ed. Barry L. Callen (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 99.

¹⁴⁰ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989), 46.

¹⁴¹ Rick Gosnell, “Proclamation and the Postmodernist,” in *Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 374.

communicates and the way people want to receive communication. The problem is compounded by “the cultural canyon that yawns, both wide and deep, between the ancient world in which God spoke His Word and the modern world in which people listen to it.”¹⁴²

We live in a postmodern present with all its assumed values, including ideas about the spoken and visual word as well as the printed word penned two thousand years ago. Veith, in the final book in the Turning Point Christian Worldview Series, explains that contemporary society has turned over its culture to the mores of postmodernism. “The postmodernist rejection of words in favor of images, the replacement of reason with emotional gratification, the abdication of meaning in favor of entertainment are all inherent in the genre.”¹⁴³

The implied error in Veith’s reasoning, however, is that “meaning” is better contained in propositional thinking. How image-as-entertainment defines society and language is a debatable thing. His commentary on 21st century culture and views of language may be difficult to prove in an age of textuality.

In the context of Veith’s analysis, these trends toward visualization are seen as largely negative. When attempting to cast positive light on his subject he says that there is a need to “participate in a positive way in contemporary thought.”¹⁴⁴ For the preacher, however, participation at the level of “thought” is far easier than creating an oral homiletic paradigm that is uniquely visual and that reaches people.

In Jolyon Mitchell’s “Preaching in an Audio-Visual Culture,” the author draws some helpful conclusions for the contemporary preacher. He says speakers need to take frequent shifts in point-of-view by moving from “proclamatory to conversational discourse” and by

¹⁴² John R. W. Stott, “Christian Preaching in the Contemporary World,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (1988): 366.

¹⁴³ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 122.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

using “multi-sensorial” depth in speaking.¹⁴⁵ These ideas are further developed in *Visually Speaking* where Mitchell encourages the contemporizing of preaching through “multi-camera discourse” and oral delivery that has “rapid shifts in viewing angles.”¹⁴⁶ Preaching that makes frequent modifications in outlook with diverse visual approaches to ideas captures the natural tendency of the human eye and mind to process multiple perspectives at the same time. Preaching becomes in some respects, a media event, and reflects the observational habits of our day.

Media are what Zygmunt Bauman calls “the principal vehicle of culture production and distribution.”¹⁴⁷ Electronically imaged idea has become a collective thought pool and a societal mirror. “The metaphoric *process*,” Gozzi says, “has power . . . because it structures discourse itself and becomes more prevalent than other discursive alternatives.”¹⁴⁸ Imaged episodes as a possible tool to shape Christian thinking are in marked contrast to confessionalism, creedalism, and what Wilson identifies as “propositional preaching.”¹⁴⁹

Bauman’s negativity toward the move away from propositional thought is elaborated in his work *Modernity and Ambivalence*, where he attributes ambivalence and anxiety to the experience of postmodern life.¹⁵⁰ Terry Eagleton is also representative of those who have written strong criticism against postmodern ethical values and ways of reasoning.¹⁵¹ He devotes over forty pages to addressing “fallacies” and “contradictions.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ Jolyon P. Mitchell, “Preaching in an Audio-Visual Culture,” *Anvil* 14.4 (1997): 267-72.

¹⁴⁶ Jolyon P. Mitchell, *Visually Speaking* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 29-30.

¹⁴⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 31.

¹⁴⁸ Raymond Gozzi, Jr., *The Power of Metaphor in the Age of Electronic Media* (Cresskill, N. J.: Hampton Press Inc., 1999), 4.

¹⁴⁹ Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), 1.

¹⁵¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 93-135.

This postmodern ambivalence is extremely pronounced in Martinique, especially in the church. European ideas, development, and structures continue to invade the historically Creole culture. Creole life was at one time simple and oral. It is now technologically advanced and riddled with ethical battles between European and Afro-Caribbean ideas. Satellite dishes, cable TV, cell phones, and the information structures commonly associated with developed nations all exist in Martinique with European standards. Consequently, the church, which was established upon Caribbean norms, is increasingly involved in defending itself against postmodern French thinking.

The people of Martinique, although historically more oral, are trained in French schools to reason like Westerners. Even more paradoxical is that now they are being thrown back into the imaged world of electronic, figured communication media. They live this contradiction daily. As a consequence, this study attempts to embrace the metaphoric medium within the preaching discipline and validate its practicality amid all the contradictions.

One helpful way of looking at this broader trans-cultural, contemporary phenomenon is that people are once again getting control of how to interpret figures, albeit electronically reproduced ones. Owens calls media “metaphysical metaphor.”¹⁵³ Children of the age become masters of interpreting cyber-figures of speech, and in the same way that the older generation grasped printed images with facility, modern culture is schooled in image hermeneutics and the interpretation of abstract visual and audio clues.

If at the heart of the contemporary human spirit is a thirst for images, the postmodern preacher must identify the sanctifiable elements of his medium of words and give his congregation a drink. One way to enter into the production of fruitful Christian

¹⁵³ Virginia Stem Owens, *The Total Image: or Selling Jesus in the Modern Age* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 13.

communication in the twentieth-century is to embrace the reality of the postmodern concern for the images in the immediate, and attempt to formulate a preaching paradigm that reflects that milieu in a similar way to Jesus' approach to addressing His own setting. This clarifies the practical rationale for the analogous methodologies described in the ensuing chapters. The preacher stands at a methodological crossroads needing to become aurally visual.

Creating figures for an immediate setting is a notion that is largely undeveloped in homiletic pedagogy. Postmodern culture, however, lives amid the ever-changing world of image creation. Harvey put it this way: "The collapse of time horizons and the preoccupation with instantaneity have in part arisen through the contemporary emphasis in cultural production on events, spectacles, happenings, and media images."¹⁵⁴ Most audiences want something produced in the immediate, something more than simply didactic communication. They want a story, an image.¹⁵⁵

Mitchell explains that when a communicator is verbally visual, it permits the listener to create or complete the image and its meaning based on the listener's own personal experience.¹⁵⁶ The speaker wants the sensory and emotive levels to be totally implicated as well, what Mitchell calls involving the "experiential secondary orality" of the contemporary individual.¹⁵⁷ The result is an engaged participant.

¹⁵⁴ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 59.

¹⁵⁵ Audience desire includes the "pew right" to turn off the preacher (Van Harn's term, quoted in: William E. Pannell, "Preaching: Pew Rights and Prophecy," *Sharing Heaven's Music: The Heart of Christian Preaching*, ed. Barry L. Callen (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 18.)

¹⁵⁶ Mitchell, *Visually Speaking*, 55. Listener interaction and listener decoding move away from the traditional "conduit metaphor" often used to describe the nature of language (John Oakeshott-Taylor, *Metaphors of Communication and the Nature of Reading/Listening Comprehension*, (Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, 1985), 20). The "conduit" view of language fails to involve the "sometimes highly complex, and not always successful negotiation process between participants . . ." (ibid.). The conduit metaphor was originally explained by Michael Reddy (see Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 10).

¹⁵⁷ Mitchell, *Visually Speaking*, 194. Zumthor develops a similar idea, which he calls "the new orality" (*Oral Poetry* 18). Zumthor also introduces other helpful terms: an orality "deferred in time and/or space" called "mediatized orality," where "the speaker is eliminated" and the media "ensures exactness and permanence" similar to printed forms in literature; "mixed orality" or "partial"/"retarded" orality where "orality coexist[s] with writing" (ibid., 19-20, 25). In many parts of the world, primary oral cultures and total illiterates live in the midst of mediatized orality. This is the case with Diaspora Haitians in French Guiana, for example.

This is why the use of a metaphor, which demands the interpretation of terms outside their normal usage, concretizes reality for a listener. For example, statements like: “Their mouth is an open sepulcher,” “Whose God is their belly,” or “Their heart is as fat as grease,” actually bring us closer to meaning and understanding because these phrases appeal to our prior knowledge and experience about death, gluttony, and cholesterol.¹⁵⁸

Explaining an idea must be done in a way that a person can understand and with terms and experiences that that person already knows. If a speaker uses a figure that pictures for the listener an idea or a concrete object with which that auditor already has familiarity, the speaker achieves a level of understanding and comprehension with the auditor that is based on *that person's* prior experience. The new knowledge the preacher proposes is related to something the listener already knows to be true. A figure may not clarify categorically new information, but emotionally and analogically it creates affinities in the mind that resonate with the receiver of the information. Explaining abstraction, idea, or even experience with things that are not native to the listener, leaves the listener with only a partial understanding of the issue being communicated. The preacher is better off rooting listener decoding in common life settings by the use of concrete language and pictures. The speaker establishes rapport based on ties to universal experience. That rapport defines the communicative engagement.

Summary

When a preacher accepts the idea that communication is always circumstantial, the nature of the sermonic task changes. The complex physical and spiritual settings give form to the sermon itself. The sermon is no longer a bundle of prepared ideas shared with listeners, but a series of verbal invitations to experience God. The fundamental element in the delivery context is people who desire encounter. Their need for engagement shapes the sermon itself.

¹⁵⁸ Ps. 5:9; Phil. 3:19; Ps. 119:70.

A preaching model that takes advantage of emerging, circumstantial material requires: first, a strong anticipation of listener expectations; second, speaker freedom to recreate the sermon at the moment of delivery; and third, skills to interpret and adapt to what is happening in all the different contexts within the setting. Preaching is no longer simply about the transmission of textual meaning. “Preaching the word” involves improving relationship with God. The task of the preacher evolves into orchestrating a connection, an engagement. Jesus showed most clearly how to do that. He preached parables.

Images and more extended figures of speech provide a connection of God’s truth with human experience, or better yet, a connection of people with the God of truth. Because figures of speech associate ideas with concrete realities, when the preacher’s message is shrouded in metaphoric language, theology itself becomes mediated by prior knowledge of the physical world. We discover God in the familiar.

Figures demand decoding that is rooted in the listener’s past or present. In some respects, a hearer cannot escape the implications of teaching that is based in her own experience. Engagement becomes a byproduct of the listener’s association of the speaker’s words with her own past. The speaker who communicates with images can be more or less assured that the person listening captures his idea, since the concept is presented using familiar objects and settings.

The engagement task is further aided by understanding the oral and metaphoric nature of language. The educated preacher who desires to engage people, intentionally works against his tendency to use abstraction. A consistent immersion in print media by the preacher can deform his perception of those who have to listen to his message. Consequently, she regularly reminds herself that messages become more relevant when they are tied to the physical world by means of figures.

Preachers who see the sermon as circumstantial poetry view their task from the vantage point of the auditor and construct a message that has a listener-sensitive cadence.

This means that the rhythm of the speaking is framed so the listener can make sense of the ideas and pay attention. The preacher adopts a delivery mindset that involves interpreting a text or idea *to someone*, not simply *for someone*. A preacher who communicates *to someone* treats the listener like an individual who needs to meet God in the midst of whatever informational exchange takes place. The value is in the meeting, the engagement.

The question remains, however, how a preacher can practically go from text to circumstantial delivery. What is the actual process that reflects the foregoing theological basis of engagement? How can parabolic engagement as a technique of encounter be described grammatically as a discovery methodology?

The ensuing three chapters outline the mechanical elements of parabolic engagement construction at the word level. In order to demonstrate the viability of a figured engagement pedagogy in the French speaking Caribbean, it is necessary first to detail the generative techniques for the most commonly employed types of speech figures and their narrative forms. It is also important to explain the three-part pedagogical framework employed later in the experimental portion of this thesis; namely, analysis, analogy, and extension.

PART II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT' PEDAGOGY

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GRAMMAR OF 'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT'

Great eloquence, like fire, grows with its material; it becomes fiercer with movement, and brighter as it burns.
Tacitus, *A Dialog on Oratory*, 36

Parabolic engagement is built around common experiential frames and needs. It begins with the assumption that a speaker can construct imaged speech, which the listener will find virtually undeniable. This congruence of mind between preacher and hearer is based on familiar knowledge and common experience. The closer that common experience is in time, space, and language, the more fresh the common ground. Consequently, this thesis attempts to move part of the message construction process into the delivery setting. Preachers, however, need tools for that discipline.

To progress toward circumstantial, parabolic delivery pedagogy on the island of Martinique, it helps to have concrete ways of approaching imaged discourse. Part II of this thesis explains three figure development methods that circumscribe the inventive side of the engagement process. They are: 1) *analysis* or the defining subjects; 2) *analogy* using figured correspondence; and 3) *extension* by employing contextual realities to expand material and control delivery method.¹ The experimental study and validation process described in Part III grow out of these inventive practices.

While the term I have chosen to describe the circumstantial connection of speaker and listener is *engagement*, the fundamental grammatical principle in most of the ensuing engagement methodologies is the notion of *correspondence*.² An engaging tie takes place

¹ I have chosen the term 'extension' to express the idea of lengthening or elongating, usually into narrative. The more appropriate term might be 'amplification.' However, 'amplification' is used in classical rhetoric to mean the detailed focus of the speaker on the virtues and vices of someone, especially in ceremonial discourse (Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 141, 210).

² Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery: Metaphor and Kindred Imagery* (New York: Haskell House, 1965), 27.

when there is some kind of correspondence between: 1) the speaker's words and the listener's experience; 2) the idea and its associated figure; 3) the rhythm of life and the rhythm of the narrative disclosure.

This idea of common recognition through verbal correspondence is the foundation of figured communication. Unlike discursive delivery, which often is built on subordination, parabolic engagement is built around experiential identification. The listener identifies objects, actions, and situations that are familiar. This is not to say that discursive delivery cannot be imaged or that parabolic speech is not logical in its progression; however, discursive delivery is more abstracted and sequential than is image. Parabolic communication invites the listener to detect and link the speaker's words with something that the listener already knows to be real or true.

In contrast to print, speech is sound and always exists in a moment of time, in the *hear* and now. A system that attempts to exploit the immediate setting must work to some extent within the limitations and time restraints of the present. As a consequence, preparation or refinement of figured material may be brief and temporally restricted. Engagement discovery methods therefore must have ease of use in speaker settings and produce results relatively quickly.

Ultimately, parabolic engagement should be accessible to an average communicator in most situations. The speaker must be able to locate the precise idea needing illustrating, find adequate metaphoric clothing, and then put it out to her audience. The practice of quick discovery and deployment cannot have the constraints of method that are typical in written invention; namely, reference materials, outlines, and paper. In figure invention that takes place in the delivery setting itself, time for reflection is at a minimum. So while many of the same principles that apply to written invention also apply to oral invention, they must be simplified to account for the typical constraints found in spoken delivery.

In reviewing classical and rhetorical disciplines for techniques that are appropriate in oral figure creation, I have identified and extracted practical steps suitable for an engagement model. The chosen focus in the ensuing chapters of Part II is *image generative method* and not other rhetorical fields such as classification or embellishment. The reason for this is that engagement is the goal, not analysis. The attempt has been to draw together inventive techniques and perspectives from various disciplines that bear directly on aspects of the preaching experiment. This was done to create the framework for pedagogy in parabolic engagement and something that could be validated.

The road to figure creation in an oral setting is not the same road as one takes to get to figure differentiation in a print context. *Invention* of spoken figures is a creative art. It defies some of the quantifying that is typical of written figure *analysis*. While oral figure invention is an art and subject to a vast number of variables, what follows are a series of useful and uncomplicated methods for discovery and employment of that spoken art.

In teaching oral image invention, it is important to begin the training process with words as they are heard, focusing on examples and not abstractions. Consequently, the engagement pedagogy first involved illustrating uncomplicated techniques to identify concrete relationships. After listening to how it was possible to generate parabolic material, students could create simple, oral figures through generative methods without any prior experience in figure or story formation.

The motivation for developing a grammatical method of figured engagement is rooted in the metaphorical nature of language. Syntactic elements such as sentences and entire speech units can and should be built on the idea of representation and not just on the notion of logical progression. With this in mind, the motivational reasons for constructing discourse change. The stimulus becomes showing the image, not connecting ideas.

It might be said that while formal education tends to emphasize the idea that argument

is a series of persuasive ideas, less literate peoples recognize effective argumentative engagement as intentionally attempting to remove and replace standing or accepted stories or images that exist in the mind of the listener. Smith instructs people who want to be convincing in their speaking to remove “competing thoughts or images” and to gain consideration through “action and pictures that rivet attention.”³ Capturing attention by images is one of the first steps in arresting the thought or the will, and is a significant stride in the ultimate persuasive aim.⁴

Persuasion is the form of speech that redirects "attention," gains a desired "emotional response," or convinces a listener of a thought.⁵ In his discussion of the secret of argumentation, Smith states that persuasion involves “setting up in the minds of your hearers the ideas or images that will lead to the actions you want them to perform or the conclusions you wish them to accept.”⁶

It has long been held that figures of speech are veiled persuasive tools and that similitudes in particular are “generally advanced not as illustrations but as arguments.”⁷ The word picture, when not used simply to define or differentiate, is often used as an “image-proof.”⁸

A preaching model that recognizes the metaphoric fabric of speech can easily build pictured persuasion, image frames, and a figured grammar. The figures resulting from that grammar carry their own innate purpose and can imply argument or solicit a response, even

³ Elmer William Smith, *Extemporaneous Speaking* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1932), 80.

⁴ Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 215-16.

⁵ Smith, *Extemporaneous Speaking*, 80.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947), 371.

⁸ Ibid., 355, 377.

when they do not explicitly state a case in a classical sense.

The type of verbal engagement or captivation proposed by this thesis, whether ideological, emotional, psychological, or spiritual, is similar to what Longinus called “the Sublime.” He said that quality communication is “what inspires wonder casts a spell upon us and is always superior to what is merely convincing and pleasing.”⁹ Engagement is not simply persuasion in the classical sense. It becomes for the Christian preacher the desire for superior emotional and intellectual encounter.

So, how might one easily create images of encounter? Since image generation in the engagement model is tied to a setting and a shortened discovery process, figure-production method needs to be simple. Classical methods of *defining* and *divisioning* have produced helpful principles in this regard, and when simplified for use in missionary settings are quite useful as an entry point into oral image invention and finding the illustrative crux of the subject.

Defining was an Elizabethan discipline developed as part of a total partitioning process where ideas and words could be classified by their “name, by difference from other things, metaphorical[ly] by a figure, . . . by contrary, by circumlocution, by example, by want or defect, by praise or dispraise, by similitude, . . . by etymology.”¹⁰ Rhetoricians called it *definition*, because when a speaker or writer “praise[d] or dispraise[d]” a subject with a figure, he used one of the defining methods by focusing on its causal elements, its parts, or its essence in order to elucidate the central idea he wanted to develop.¹¹

The *defining* process with all its specific methodologies was precursory to formal

⁹ “Longinus,” *On the Sublime*, 1.3, The Loeb Classical Library, T. E. Page, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 125.

¹⁰ Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*, 301.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 299-301.

invention. In my defining process below, I have reduced the task of finding the illustrative crux to four general domains. Once the student properly defines the pictured domain in which the main idea falls, she can then precisely nuance her subject by imaging.

For the medieval and classical authors, pedagogical starting points for generating images pivoted on a concept similar to defining called *divisioning*, often referred to by the terms “parting” or “distributing.”¹² Words and ideas were classified according to use, for example, “cause, effect, ‘things adioyning,’ contraries,” etc.¹³

During the classical process of subject preparation, once something was classified, defined, or divided according to its nature or according to the desire of the speaker, he would process through a series of exercises to develop the idea. This latter process was called *invention*.¹⁴ “Poetic Invention” was different from invention in logic, and Tuve describes it this way: “writers [who] trained for years in finding matter for persuasive, demonstrative, expository, or disputative discourse, by the means of playing the mind down certain prescribed paths [invention], do not forget this useful process when they turn to find ways to shape poetic subjects.”¹⁵

The limits of Elizabethan and other classical grammatical invention techniques detailed in this study lie in the fact that processes were highly refined and based upon a

¹² Ibid., 300.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “[T]hey [Elizabethan poets] had given them[selves] to [learning] a subject [invention] which was regarded, without cavil, as the substructure of all types of discourse. The training was ubiquitous, uniform as to method, consistent over several years, and high in prestige” (Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*, 329). Acquiring skill in invention was done by mastering first the process of “discrimination” and then the “subtilizing of the process in the study of dialectic” (ibid., 317).

The general term for invention was “amplification,” and it produced “copiousness,” “dilation,” “variety of matter,” and “plenty of matter” (William G. Crane, *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: The Formal Basis of Elizabethan Prose Style* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964), 4); related terms for the process were “expansion,” “embellishment,” “ornamentation,” or even “wit” (ibid., 1). Amplification was taught using “devices” (ibid., 1).

¹⁵ Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*, 310.

technical approach to written language.¹⁶ The extensively developed literacy of Elizabethan authors, for example, restricts their contributions to an oral engagement strategy, especially since contemporary preaching is constantly dealing with the reality of postmodern poetics and missionary proclamation to oral or semi-oral cultures. The disciplines of defining and divisioning are, nevertheless, very useful when they are simplified and modified for oral use.

After compressing the defining and divisioning process so that it can be used in spoken invention, the result is an uncomplicated analysis methodology for finding the illustrative crux of the biblical subject. Often students are capable of identifying the meaning of the text but are unable to isolate how those ideas can be pictured. The development of a simple, figure invention process resolves some of that problem.

The methodologies detailed in the ensuing chapters outline a progression whereby a teacher can orally model generative techniques for students who need to hear how illustratable ideas can be developed into analogies and stories. The ensuing three chapters move incrementally through stages of figure development, from analysis of the text, to analogizing to the concrete world, to extending correspondences into narrative. They attempt to integrate the theoretical principles of engagement technique, circumstantial delivery, contemporary homiletic theory, and biblical imaged delivery methods into practical generative methodologies.

¹⁶ Even the most simple and concrete literary examples are sometimes difficult for the average person to grasp because of English language evolution (Henry W. Wells, *Poetic Imagery: Illustrated from Elizabethan Literature* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), 26).

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS: FINDING THE ILLUSTRATIVE CRUX OF THE SUBJECT

And they read in the law of God distinctly out of the book,
and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.
Neh. 8:8

Analysis: Finding the Illustrative Crux of the Subject

Before creating an appropriate figure to engage a listener, it has to be entirely clear what one wants to illustrate. Clarity and suitability of thought about the figure arrive via attention to the precise meaning of words and concepts needing to be put in image or story form. In the end, one isolates the exact notion needing to be illustrated. This progression varies in difficulty based on the complexity of words as well as the subtlety of the idea to be pictured. Refinement of the crux of the illustration involves working through four basic questions (see Table 1 below).

In an analysis of the biblical subject, the rhetorical techniques of defining and dividing precede subject expansion. Locating the figured potential of words comes before techniques for narrative extension. The former is a search for image qualities inherent in words and ideas.

In my personal experience, not only as a preacher but also as a teacher of illustration, I have found that locating the subject for illustration is far more difficult than inventing the subsequent image or story. It is for this reason that skill in subject analysis is of extreme importance in the whole process. It becomes the basis of correct figurative development.

Exactitude in subject analysis is a relative art and only the speaker himself will know when he is satisfied with the fine-tuning of his illustrative theme. The quality of his judgment is very important in this respect because after the figure is put out to the audience, the listener thereafter becomes the final judge of the appropriateness of the speaker's figure choices.

Accurate nuance in topic is one of the first and critical steps in establishing communicative correspondence with an audience. If the precise notion being illustrated is not identified with exactitude, an analogous idea in image or story form will not be congruent to the subject, but rather be an idea analogous to a deformation of the intended subject. The reality that the figure corresponds to will not be the reality the speaker wants to communicate. The result is a puzzled listener who struggles to make a connection between the figure and the truth it is supposed to represent.

The compression of classical methodologies of subject analysis results in four questions that help locate figure material. These questions subsume a large number of rhetorical techniques and represent the beginning of what one might call image exegesis for preachers.

TABLE 1

FOUR BASIC ANALYSIS QUESTIONS FOR FINDING THE ILLUSTRATIVE CRUX

-
1. What is the precise movement or state in the subject?
 2. What is the communicative nuance of the concept?
 3. What are the moral ramifications of the subject?
 4. What are the emotions being generated by the subject?
-

The fifth question not listed but of extreme importance is how can these four questions be elucidated by negation? Negation is a way of clarifying the identified subject. That is, any item, its movement, its cause, its effect, its moral implications, or its feeling can be made clearer to the listener by the speaker's development of its negation or opposite. These general categories provide an entry into the complexity of the inherent qualities of the subject. What I have discovered by experience is that students' innate capacity for constructing the illustration is often remarkable, but what they need is a door into subject analysis.

Finding the Precise Movement or State in the Subject

The first approach to finding the illustrative crux is to examine the movement or state of the subject. Fixed qualities describing state are found in nouns or described by adjectives and adverbs. Movement qualities such as cause and effect are located in the verbs or in entire contexts. Ultimately, analogies can be invented to correspond with any one of several syntactical elements: word, word compound, phrase, sentence/proposition, or parallel verbal idea.

This methodology for developing figures is found in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*,¹ and while actually involving analogous method, is offered here under a discussion of analysis because the goal of isolating figured qualities of precise parts of speech is essential to moving immediately to their pictured value. In the *Ad Herennium*, the author illustrates a way to produce an image through substitution of elements in a simple sentence much like the method of negation of subjects and predicates. Each major grammatical element is replaced by a corresponding part of speech. In the sentence: “The Lord measured out the heavens with a span,” one might create an image by substitution in this way: “The Great Architect grabbed his compass and circled the universe on his tablet.” I could then make it a narrative by supplying extensive detail, drama, tension, and a time element. The correspondence would evolve from the lexical level to a narrative representation.

One starts by identifying the essence of the nouns. It is possible to look closer at the fixed qualities of the nouns to find associating elements. For example, these elements might include associations from the form, the set/subset qualities, what it adjoins in space, and what it might signify. By contrast, creating figures of movement means identifying verbal action. The simplest way of teaching less educated peoples how to distinguish between nouns and

¹ [Cicero] *Ad C. Herennium De Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica Ad Herennium)*, Harry Caplan, trans. (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1964), III.xxi, 217.

verbs is to help them classify words as either things or actions, as objects or movements.²

TABLE 2
IDENTIFYING ESSENCE AND MOVEMENT OF SUBJECT FOR FIGURE
CONSTRUCTION

Movement or fixed quality	Precise Description	Observation Method	Negation
Is it a thing?	Its form	Look for things with the same form: its container, its contents.	The opposite form
	Its place in space	Look for two objects that are close in space.	Objects removed from the specified one
	Its symbolism	Look for another thing that symbolizes positively or negatively in the same way.	The opposite symbol
	Its human qualities	Look for human qualities to liken it to.	Its non-human qualities
Is it action? Movement?	What it does; its function	Look for similar functions.	The opposite action
	How it gets there; its cause	Look for similar ways to move.	How it could not get there
	What it does to things or to others; its effect	Look for similar effects.	What it does not do to others
	What power it operates under	Look for similar power operations; its possessor.	What it does not operate under
	Its time sequence	Look for similar sequences.	Interrupted sequence or stopped sequence
	Its human quality	Look for human parallels.	Human imperfections
	Its sense appeal ³	Look for similar sense stimulants.	Without sound, smell, etc.
	Its human-like action	Look for human actions that are similar.	Non-human like action

Table 2 details different ways to identify the essence and movement of a subject in

² For a simplified subject analysis method for semi-literate preachers see Wayne McDill, *Preparing Bible Messages: A Workbook in Bible Exposition* (Wake Forest: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 25-36.

³ Cicero deals extensively with this, especially the importance of the visual aspect of metaphor and its supremacy over the other senses. See *de Oratore* III.xxxix.160; *Cicero: De Oratore*, Book III, H. Rackham, trans., The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

order to construct an appropriate figure.⁴ It describes a way of looking at words in terms of their form or their action.

What I have done in this study is to develop a means of constructing figures based on identifying the essence or quality of the principal word or phrase in a way simple enough to find analogous tropes. It neither begins with categories nor attempts to develop figures from definitions. Orally inclined peoples and semi-literates do not move in the arena of parts of speech or grammar categories. An illiterate does not need a chart of formation ideas in front of him to be skilled in trope formation. People in general do not need to know how to *identify* or *classify* figures in order to *create* them. Consequently, in building figures, *their invention must be based on both the interpretive powers of the person to see the concrete quality or function of the idea that needs representing and the capacity to draw a picture of a related or opposite idea.*⁵ The base of this figure-generative technique is the student's observation and his interpretive power, not his imitation of written forms.

Beyond this, it is imperative that the speaker is able to assure herself that the central movement or form she has isolated is also something recognizable to a listener. Engagement will never take place if the isolated idea is beyond the grasp of the auditor in some way.

Finding the Communicative Nuance of the Concept

The second way of entering into the precision of the subject is to reduce it to its precise communicative concept. Quintilian discusses types of causal bases upon which development or argument might depend.⁶ They more closely define a way to scrutinize the

⁴ Table 2 is constructed around the seven ways that thoughts are often associated according to Sir William Hamilton: successive in time; adjoining in space; dependent by cause/effect, effect/means, means/end, whole/part; contrast or similarity; operations of the same power; sign and signified; or same sound; see Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 62-63, in his discussion of *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 1865.

⁵ Figure generation that uses opposites generates understanding in the listener by contrast. This analogy by contrast is what Aristotle called "contrariety" (Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 63).

⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.4.21 (*The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, H. E. Butler, trans. (London: William Heinemann, 1922). Figure-focus is in contrast to locating differences of opinion or the *stasis*

communicative idea.⁷ His divisions detailed in Table 3 are very helpful in identifying the precise communicative nuance of the concept.

TABLE 3

IDENTIFYING THE PRECISE COMMUNICATIVE NUANCE OF THE CONCEPT

Communicative Nuance	Negation / Abstraction of Nuance
Essence or whether a thing is	Whether it is not
Quality or definition of terms	Lack of quality of something
Magnitude and number	Deficiency in number
Relation, competence, comparison up	Incompetence, comparison down
When and timing	When not to and bad timing
Where, place	Where not to
Doing	Not doing
Enjoying, excess	Suffering, deprivation
Possessing	Not possessing
Position of action	Incorrect position
Things written	Questions of unwritten fact
Definite	Indefinite
Action	Knowledge
Properly defined	Improperly defined
Cause as justified, pure, unwitting	Unjustified, impure motives, intention
Good effect	Bad effect
Particulars	Abstraction
Who	Who not to
Have you done it? (definitive)	What have you done? (conjectural)
I did not do it.	You should have done it.
I did it with reason.	You did it without good reason.

It is often the critical idea of a biblical text that is the focal point of the homiletic endeavor and could benefit from expansion. The above chart is a complex divisioning tool, too diverse for use in delivery settings. Yet it has value as a reference base. Most students in Martinique were capable of identifying the precise subject with minimal coaching without written aids.

For illustration purposes, we might use the following example. God asks Moses,

(στάσις) of an argument, namely, “what is *at issue* in a dispute” (“Stasis Theory: An Introduction,” n.d., <http://www.ctlw.duke.edu/prgrms/uwpResB.htm> (Accessed 17 November 2003)).

⁷ See Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.5.4ff and 3.4.23ff for a summary of Aristotle’s analysis of the ten categories on which all questions turn. Table 3 is a synthesis of Quintilian (*Institutio*, 3.5; 7.10).

“What is in your hand?” The Almighty tells him to throw it down. How might this be pictured using the above divisioning techniques? Moving beyond an analysis based on the first technique which might focus on a noun such as “hand” or a verb like “throw,” wherein a preacher could ask a carpenter to throw his hammer down, one could continue the subject analysis by asking, “*Who?*” It is Moses, not Joshua, not Aaron, not God. It is a particular man at a particular time in his life (*timing*) at a particular location (*place*). “*What were the good and bad effects?*” It struck fear into Moses and also gave him confidence to obey God when the result might be death. Illustration comes by finding analogous images and stories that illustrate the concept of *confidence in God in the face of death*, or the *unexpected encounter with God of a working man when he turns away from his place of employment*. In identifying the subject exactly, the speaker is more apt to approach common ground with the audience. As the details of the communicative thought emerge, often the precision brings a universal appeal or a quality that a listener will find gratifying. Generalizations leave the listener wondering what the speaker’s intentions were. Detailed precision of subject, however, builds clarity into the sermonic form and makes it easier to find sensorial properties that are recognizable to the listener.

Finding the Moral Ramifications of the Subject

The third aspect of identifying the figured qualities of subject, namely, identifying moral ramifications, was developed extensively during the mediaeval period when Christian preaching had a highly refined sense of ethical call. Preachers in that period used a method of invention that moved beyond the simple classical identification of subject to include this aspect of moral suitability.

Everyone struggles with the rightness or wrongness of thought and action; therefore, the benefit of moral precision in preaching is clear. Listeners appreciate being shown clearly the moral advantage or danger of certain choices. Engagement is heightened when listeners

know that something serious is at stake. A brief survey of mediaeval ways of identifying the moral ramifications of the subject is in order. It will be followed by a simplified list that highlights the principal aspects of their method.

In a mediaeval tractate on preaching, a Dominican author-compiler, asserting that he has assembled preaching ideas from Thomas Aquinas and others, recommends one such methodology in his discussion of amplification and explains how separating out of words helps in finding individual associations with virtues and vices.⁸ Each term of a scripture portion can be defined and expanded by definition, and then developed by considering the effects of vices and virtues. This is different from cause and effect invention in that a virtue/vice focus addresses ethical motives, usually by means of praise or denigration. Moral value that one discovers can be used in preaching to correct or encourage. This praise or denigration can be with respect to the agent, the instrument, or the one acted upon. For example, in the story of the Magi, rather than speaking generally about the men coming to see the young king, a speaker might take time to praise in detail the wise seeker, or his sacrificial gift, or the worthy Jesus.

Similar to the positive/negative elaboration method spelled out in this tractate are the possibilities of developing polarized ideas from “opposites,” “affirmation of the contrary,” “denial,” “privation or possession,” “praise or blame,” and “through the fourfold combination of copulative and disjunctive parts” (the divisioning and negating of subjects and predicates).⁹ All are based on similar ideas of idealizing in a moral sense either the good or bad quality of words, phrases, or the entire proposition. In the same way that one might enumerate advantages of virtues, one could accentuate the vices. It is also possible to negate

⁸ Harry Caplan, *Of Eloquence: Studies in Ancient and Mediaeval Rhetoric*, Anne King and Helen North, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 61.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

the non-grammatical elements; for example, the emotive, the sensory, or the behavioral.

Besides polarizing between good and bad, praise and blame, or virtue and vice, one might also create images of degree. These images intentionally do not picture vice in its extreme, but mitigate the contraries to form an in-between mixture of virtue and vice that can be negated. Most people live in the realm of moral indecision. Once images of people in positions of good, better, or best can be established, namely, images of degree, one can negate, if necessary, partial goodness as an illegitimate category. Ultimately, the speaker praises the superlative.¹⁰ Note the following delineating progression: “One might pray daily. One might pray hourly. But praying with an honest heart, that’s praying effectively.”

Negation, virtues, and vices are some of what came to be known in English as “commonplaces,” what were classically known as topics.¹¹ A more complete list of “amplification” techniques during mediaeval times might include “resemblances, relative notions, contraries, cause and effect, vices, virtues, heaven, hell, exemplification anecdotes, continuation, definition, distinctions, observation of the issue or end of a thing, setting forth the essential weight of a word, kind, species, interpretation of Hebrew names, etymology, parts of speech,”¹² “concordance of authorities,” “[r]atiocination and argument,” “comparison” (great, greater, greatest), “dialectical topics,” “similitudes,” and “allegories.”¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 68-69.

¹¹ Caplan, *Of Eloquence*, 87. These were considered places “where the preacher can get themes for artistic development” (ibid.), that is, “the artistic finding of the right argument communicable to the right audience in the right circumstances” (ibid., 122). “Commonplaces” during the Elizabethan period meant “subject headings” and became a classification system for then contemporary wit (Crane, 33ff). Originally, the term “commonplaces” was used as a specialized term describing “general principle[s] or theme[s]” of moral value that were common in public argument; they were used by students as practice grounds for argumentative instruction (Quintilian, *Institutio*, 2.1.9 and footnote, p. 208; also 2.4.24 and 3.5.5). During the classical period, a commonplace “assumed the facts to be established” and the student simply practiced confirming or refuting them (Donald Lemen Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (Morning Side Heights, N. Y.: Columbia University Press, 1957), 192). The techniques were “common” because they could be systematically applied to other similar argumentative conditions (ibid., 193).

¹² Caplan, *Of Eloquence*, 87.

¹³ Ibid., 125-26.

Ciceronian *topica* would also include some elements that are not on this list: “relationship,” “similar derivation,” “difference,” “adjuncts,” “antecedents,” “consequents,” “contradictories,” “what has been done,” and “authority.”¹⁴

Since orality brings with it limited capacity for objectifying categories, and because I am trying to avoid canonizing a complex catalog of generative techniques, the above detailed lists need to be reduced to a practical level. What topics are suitable for creating engagement? What might constitute a list of oral commonplaces? What topics are especially useful for nuancing the subject when figure generation with a moral value is in view?

Since the focal issue in this study is figured engagement and not syllogistic argument, it is important to narrow the breadth of topical methods to those that address moral illustration, and are easily recalled without written help.¹⁵ Table 4 represents the simplification of mediaeval techniques for moral probing. All of the six elements of the table identify the moral ramifications of the subject through comparison, except for the aspect of divisioning by time. That is because the rightness or wrongness of an idea is most easily clarified when it is placed next to other similar or contrasting notions.

TABLE 4

IDENTIFYING THE MORAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THE SUBJECT

-
1. Polarizing: good and bad, praise and blame, or virtue and vice
 2. Defining by degree: good, better, best
 3. Praising or denigrating the agent, the instrument, or the one acted upon
 4. Analysis of opposites and negating of subjects and predicates
 5. Dividing by time: moral adjuncts, antecedents, consequents
 6. Understanding by relationship
-

¹⁴ Ibid., 83.

¹⁵ The number of methods to analyze, divide, and generate argument and supporting material was vast and those methods “circulated all over Europe” in the form of tractates (Caplan, *Of Eloquence*, 92). Later in Elizabethan times and successive periods they were written up in books to teach writing.

Engagement is established with listeners when there is correspondence to a moral dilemma or a moral progression. Choices are easier when they are placed next to one another in some fashion. This comparative quality or practice is one of the clearest and most identifying aspects of Spurgeon's sermons and contributes partly to his success as a preacher. He frequently used a technique related to moral comparison, what I would call *contrastive suspense*.¹⁶

The common struggle of moral choice begins with the precise identification of the moral ramifications of the subject. If the speaker can properly isolate the universal aspect of moral obligation that springs from her subject, she will be able to present powerful choices to her audience. Rightness and wrongness are common to everyone. Moreover people enjoy the liberty of picking from options. Engagement springs from giving listeners the choice of two or more unequal moral options with the encouragement to do what is *right*.

Finding the Emotions Being Generated by the Subject

The fourth and final area of locating the illustrative crux is identifying the emotion or emotions inherent in the idea. The ability to isolate the feelings being generated by the subject is largely based on the preacher's intuitive power to identify properly the expressive factors.

Osborn and Ehninger define two basic motives or change objectives in rhetoric, the desire to *move* or to *demonstrate*.¹⁷ When the goal of communication is to move the listener,

¹⁶ This idea of moral comparison and subject negation in the sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon is a complex idea but can be easily seen, for example, in the introduction and first point in his sermon on Colossians 1:12-13, "Special Thanksgiving to the Father," *The Treasury of the Bible*, vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 586-87. "What does this mean? Does it mean that the believer is perfect; that he is free from sin? No, my brethren, where shall you ever find such a perfection in this world? . . . When he is perfect he may cease to be a believer. No, brethren, it is not such perfection that is meant . . . Far less does this mean that we have a right to eternal life from any doings of our own . . . What, then, does it mean? Why it means just this . . ." (569).

¹⁷ Michael M. Osborn and Douglas Ehninger, "The Metaphor in Public Address," *Speech Monographs* 29 (August 1962): 232. In the business world, these notions are paralleled in the terms "motivation" and "objectives" (Richard Raspa, "Organizational Storytelling," *Traditional Storytelling Today: An International*

one enters the domain of “affective communication.”¹⁸ According to Osborn and Ehninger, metaphor, and I would say other tropes as well, have a “stimulus” in their denoting “objects, ideas or feelings” outside their traditional lexical meaning.¹⁹ The emotive aspects of speech are clearly exploitable and easily comprehensible to less-literate peoples. One might summarize the issue with questions like these: How do we want to make people feel? What figures produce such feelings, and what analogies will engender the sentiments that are appropriate to the communicative subject and context? Tropes can thereby be generated according to their emotive purpose.

Finding appropriate figures of speech to advance argument is a matter that involves the subject, the corresponding associative items, and the motive of the speaker. The speaker first must identify whether her *subject* is an emotive one or a logical one. If she finds an emotive quality in the “subject,” then she can find a suitable “item for association.”²⁰ Since in the realm of metaphor, words take on non-traditional meanings, sense is constructed around parallel relationships or concepts. This means that in the mind of the speaker and listener there must be parallel emotive correspondence. To move someone toward sadness, toward elation, toward pity, toward anger, one chooses images that evoke similar emotions.

The traditional classical dualism of moving/persuading undergoes meltdown in the fusion of some figures, especially metaphor. Moving becomes persuading and persuading becomes moving. In many types of images, the figure becomes “an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” or “a vortex or cluster of fused ideas . . . endowed

Sourcebook, ed. Margaret Read MacDonald (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 544). The distinction is helpful in that it nuances the difference between organizational language and persuasive rhetoric.

¹⁸ John C. Condon, Jr., *Semantics and Communication*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), 102ff.

¹⁹ Osborn and Ehninger describe three stages of metaphoric interpretation: “*error*, *puzzlement-recoil*, and *resolution*” (italics theirs) (“The Metaphor in Public Address,” 227).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 228.

with energy.”²¹ It is hard to differentiate between logical and emotional purpose. Yet while the process of using certain figures confuses clarity of purpose in argument, there is still value in the dualism just cited: speakers are generally either trying to correct/build thinking or move/motivate.

Those who study the psychological aspects of metaphor in particular validate the importance of this dualism. Robert Rogers states that “[f]or heuristic purposes poetic ‘thought’ may be divided into two categories. One may be characterized as concrete, pictorial, perceptual, emotional, intuitional, and more imaginative. The other is abstract, conceptual, less emotional, analytical, more controlled, and less spontaneous. It follows that language embodying these two types of mental activity will have corresponding attributes.”²² Freud recognized this dualism and called it “primary process” (emotive) and “secondary process” (conscious, deliberate).²³

In the emotive aspects of speech, orators can wield whatever emotive symbols are in society. They do this to captivate their listeners’ emotions and build credibility. When speakers use metaphors at the conclusions of speeches, those metaphors tend to change attitudinal disposition toward the subject and, in general, foster speaker ethos.²⁴

To summarize the foregoing ideas by way of example, one might illustrate emotive parallel in this way. The feeling of detestability exists in the biblical passage, “The dog is turned to his own vomit again.”²⁵ This is quite different from the feeling of brave

²¹ Robert Rogers, *Metaphor: A Psychoanalytic View* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 75-76, quoting Pound without a source citation given.

²² *Ibid.*, 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15, citing Freud’s *Project for a Scientific Psychology: Std. Ed. I*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, et al., (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), 283-397.

²⁴ John Waite Bowers and Michael Osborn, “Attitudinal Effects of Selected Types of Concluding Metaphors in Persuasive Speeches,” *Speech Monographs* 33 (June 1966): 147-55.

compassion when Jesus touched the leper.²⁶ Illustrating the emotive force of an idea is often more productive than its logical, argumentative value.

The detestability of a dog eating his own vomit generates a repugnancy that has incredible rhetorical force, almost too much force. Similar abhorrent emotions are present with words like maggots, blood, pus, etc. In order to be syntactically congruent, the feeling must be placed in a complete idea; namely, that an individual repeats grotesque consequences because he chooses to relive his error. “The beggar intentionally, painfully picked at his open sore day after day to retard healing simply so he could generate pity in those passing by.” Even the thought of preaching emotive congruence in this passage would be abandoned by most preachers in typical western church settings. The speaker would likely opt for euphemistic figures. However, in cultures where sights and realities such as this are common, affective similarities might be entirely appropriate and communicate well.

A figure generates feelings and interpretations that are based on the past experience of the listener. The past experience of the listener becomes the basis for the truth claim. In addition, the listener’s own feelings and his previously validated experience encourage him toward a new behavior or thought. The process is graphically represented in Table 5.

If a propositional idea possesses distinct innate feelings or emotions, the speaker identifies the emotive center and searches for similar images or scenarios that express similar sensations. In hearing them spoken in the form of a verbal picture of some kind, the listener is able to associate familiar feelings with the new idea the speaker is proposing.

Figures that appeal to the affective side of human nature “appeal to the imagination and the emotions,” wield passionate “force,” or clarify “finer shades of *nuances* of

²⁵ 2 Pet. 2:22.

²⁶ Mt. 8:3.

TABLE 5
THE CREATION OF EMOTIVE PARALLELS

Propositional Idea	Core Feelings or Emotions	Parallel Experience with the Same Emotion
God is a forgiving God.	Justifiable fear of accountability	Fear of debt collection by bank God as a debt collector
	Joy of grace Love as motivator	Joy of forgiven debt by friend Love for a child when he does his best but fails an exam
Jesus will return in anger. ²⁷	Anger	Angry boss dissatisfied with the quality of work.
	Revenge	Vengeful king after an insurrection

thought.”²⁸ In the employment of images, logical exactitude is not the chief feature, and the obscuring of the subject is frequently the result. This is because figures, metaphor in particular, form a relationship between two ideas that is implicit.²⁹ Sometimes the listener is not able to make the implied connections.

Speaker motivation becomes significant because when using figures, the speaker appeals to the experience of the listener and experience is tied to the emotions.³⁰ “And so a man comes to take his feelings for premises, and to let passion draw the conclusion.”³¹ Ultimately, the use of emotionally charged figures must be made with care because they have significant power to influence listeners, both in positive and in negative ways.

While some people view emotionally based appeals as potentially dangerous, there is great value in addressing listeners as emotional beings. Sermons that fail to address the

²⁷ Rev. 19:15.

²⁸ Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 52, 57. The reason for the darkening quality of metaphor lies in the undefined nature of the two objects. When the “*scope of the comparison*” is not clear, the sense of the metaphor is undefined (*ibid.*, 52-53).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

emotional side of audiences fail to respect the innate desires of people who are often looking for a speaker to organize their feelings.

While the analysis aspect of the parabolic construction process does not in itself guarantee speaker/listener rapport, techniques such as finding the emotional qualities of the textual idea create the groundwork for effective oral engagement later on. Speakers must first properly separate out suitable ideas for illustration before they can hope to assemble figures that will inspire or captivate their listeners.

Identifying the emotions being generated by the subject is the final, and often the most volatile aspect of the inventive process. Once the emotional aspect of the idea is located and clarified with respect to the precise movement, the communicative nuance, and the moral ramifications of the subject, the speaker is ready to look for analogous correspondence in the common terrains of life.

In the practical outworking of these methods among students in Martinique, it was a highly subjective endeavor to isolate the communicative subject through analysis. Differing educational levels and capacities for analyzing a textual idea made for varying results. In spite of these realities, however, each classroom exercise focusing on analysis of the biblical subject produced clear progress by almost every student. The short surveys and interviews showed that it was possible to teach a student to break down verse units, assess communicative concepts, and prepare the ideas for image development. Moreover, the development of a reflex for finding the illustrative crux of a passage was a clear benefit of the apprenticeship process. When students finished the teaching sequence, they continued to employ imaged analysis habits in their sermon preparation as a natural part of the exegetical process.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALOGY: ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE

L'analogie est essentiellement une égalité, ou tout au moins une similitude de rapports entre des choses qui par ailleurs peuvent être extrêmement différentes
Maurice Debaisieux, *Analogie et Symbolisme*, 1921.

Analogy and Engagement

After a preacher isolates a biblical concept through the analysis process, he then attempts to locate an engaging analogy that can illustrate his idea. When he finally verbalizes his figure with concrete settings and objects, the listener should be able to move in cadence with the message. Although each listener has a particular way of decoding, there are usually common frameworks of interpretation. A good speaker exploits familiar settings and figures, those things that are shared by everyone or nearly everyone present during the communication. In this way, an audience moves along together making meaning by relating the discourse to universally shared experience and reality.

Basic elements of the speaker's invention process have to be identified and systematized into manageable units before it is possible to teach methods of analogizing in the target setting. Particularly important is the need to isolate techniques that aid localization of figurative preaching material. Consequently, this chapter attempts to codify the practices of verbal analogy that are particularly appropriate to circumstantial engagement strategy. It is then possible in the subsequent experiment to teach the methods to church leaders in the French Caribbean.

In figure creation, the underlying connection between the communicative idea and the concrete common reality is called analogous correspondence. The nature of the relationship of two ideas is based upon "the analogy of intrinsic attribution."¹ Intrinsic to every idea or

¹ Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery: Metaphor and Kindred Imagery* (New York: Haskell House, 1965), 229-30.

thing are certain qualities that permit or forbid analogy.

It is the proper use of this connection-making principle that renders successful, figured communicative exchange. Egan says that “our thinking is suffused with metaphors and analogies,” and that our thought process progresses when we make connections with the concrete world via analogy.² Bailey calls this “apperception,” “the involuntary mental process by means of which the human mind makes its own the strange, the new, the unfamiliar idea by a method of fitting it into the class of familiar ideas already known.”³

The speaker builds a kind of authenticity when she appeals to universal experience and observation. She says to the listener, “We have this in common. We can make sense of this part of the world by recognizing the universal truth found in this figured representation.” This extraordinary rapport between speaker and hearer is accomplished by the *appropriate use of image following good analogous principles*. Not all correspondence is fitting correspondence. Poorly constructed analogies do not connect the speaker and the listener. The listener often decodes a message and arrives at a different conclusion than that which was desired by the speaker. In effect, the argumentative export of the figure does not match the intended meaning in the discourse.

Speakers often explain unknown and unfamiliar concepts by means of known persons, things, processes, ideas, examples, or symbols. “This type of reasoning is probably as old as human thought for it relies simply upon the application of our experience in familiar areas to problems in unfamiliar areas. When we explore new problems we seek a frame of reference

² Kieran Egan, *Teaching as Story Telling: An Alternative Approach to Teaching Curriculum in the Elementary School* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 32ff.

³ Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, *For the Story Teller: Story Telling and Stories to Tell* (Springfield, MA: Milton Bradley Company, 1913), 1-2.

by relating them to old problems.”⁴ Yet whether using “argument from analogy,”⁵ argument from “example,” or argument from “sign,”⁶ the connection between the symbol and idea must be clear or the listener may draw false conclusions about the intended meaning.

Appropriateness in Analogy

One preaching text that treats the centrality of appropriate analogy is Wayne McDill’s *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*.⁷ McDill develops what he calls the idea of “Natural Analogies,” and is especially helpful in discussing the mechanics of appropriateness of analogies through his discussion of “particularizing the analogy.”⁸ What McDill calls “particularizing” is usually referred to as ‘appropriateness’ or ‘aptness’ in classical terms. There are four precise ways to test the appropriateness of figures: 1) through *audience reception*; 2) through reason and *causal connection*; 3) through the *similarity of elements*; 4) through the precision of *qualification*.

Oral debate and forensics follow general principles of *audience reception* in the development of valid imaged argument.⁹ The same principles can be applied to preachers. They include: 1) constructing a “*vivid picture . . . striking enough to make the listener remember it*”; 2) citing an illustration that is “*closer to the everyday experience of the listener*” than the argued principle; and 3) “[g]iving enough details to make the picture

⁴ Henry Lee Ewbank and J. Jeffery Auer., *Discussion and Debate: Tools of a Democracy* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1941), 149.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Wayne C. Minnick, *The Art of Persuasion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 149.

⁷ Wayne McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 201-20.

⁸ Ibid., 201, 212-14. Stephen Farris builds his entire preaching model on the concept of analogy (*Preaching that Matters: The Bible and Our Lives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998)). Pierre Babin also addresses the issue of “natural analogy,” (*The New Era in Religious Communication*, with Mercedes Iannone, trans. David Smith (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 6).

⁹ Harrison Boyd Summers, Forest Livings Whan, and Thomas Andrew Rousse, *How to Debate: A Textbook for Beginners* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1950), 49.

complete.”¹⁰ These tests for validity are audience-based. This is because argumentative validity is ultimately a listener issue.

Freely offers four different tests of evidence that can also be applied to the suitability of analogy. His questions are: 1) “Is the evidence [analogy] consistent with the beliefs of the audience?” 2) “Is the source of the evidence acceptable to the audience?” 3) “Is the evidence suited to the level of the audience?” 4) “Is the evidence consistent with the motives of the audience?”¹¹ In the final analysis, determining whether or not to incorporate an analogy or an engagement strategy is, in part, determined by the extent to which the audience will embrace it. The speaker must ask himself, “Will my analogy resonate with my listeners?”

There are other more precise criteria used by debaters to determine whether or not analogies are valid. These reasons revolve around logic and *causal connection*. Ewbank and Auer offer six questions to test analogies: “1) Is the analogy relevant?” “2) Does the analogy disregard fundamental differences?” “3) Does the analogy rest upon a valid generalization?” “4) Is there a valid causal relationship in the analogy?” “5) Are the asserted facts of the analogy verifiable?” “6) Do other methods of reasoning support the analogy?”¹²

In the generation of engaging material from within the delivery setting, verifying the appropriateness of an image is nearly impossible. When it is feasible to think carefully through the use of imaged material, the speaker needs to clarify precisely the figured correspondence and link it to the setting and the experience of the listener. With respect to time, this could be done in advance, and usually is; however, it is the context that ultimately influences or determines the appropriateness of the analogy.

¹⁰ Ibid., 66-71.

¹¹ Although Freely uses the term “evidence,” the words “analogy,” “image,” or “illustration” could be substituted in most cases to perform the same tests of acceptability (Austin J. Freely, *Argumentation and Debate: Rational Decision Making* (San Francisco: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1961), 82-84).

¹² Henry Lee Ewbank and J. Jeffery Auer, *Discussion and Debate: Tools of a Democracy*, 1st edition (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1941), 166-68.

Appropriateness in the use of images can sometimes be validated by precise causal correspondence, either stated or implied. The most common are: “(1) *cause to effect*, (2) *effect to cause*, and (3) *effect to effect*.”¹³ If I am arguing cause to effect: “If God is good, we ought to praise Him,” I can generate images along the same *if/then* pattern. For example, “If my child cleans his room, I should praise him;” “If the cake tastes good, I will have another piece;” “When the ant labors hard, we admire him.” If I am arguing effect-to-cause: “They are praising God. He must be good,” we can illustrate like this: “If they are praising their children, they must have cleaned their room;” “That man keeps going back for more cake; it must taste great.” “That scientist is really admiring the ant; it must be doing something remarkable.” Effect-to-effect reasoning can be similarly demonstrated: “God was good to Sue when He saved her. God will be good to me when He saves me.”

Causal argumentation can be flawed, and in fact, images are always only analogously supportive of the propositions they imply. Most figures are inevitably faulty in some respect. The introduction of extreme cases of “faulty analogies,” “unrelated examples,” or “faulty causal relations” is frequently a consequence of moving away from closeness of correspondence.¹⁴

“Argument from sign” is a similar type of illustrative device for supporting argument.¹⁵ It is based on implied causality. “[T]his type of reasoning assumes that whenever two or more circumstances invariably accompany each other, the observed presence of one of them is a sign that the other is also present.”¹⁶ One might assume that if

¹³ Henry Lee Ewbank and J. Jeffery Auer, *Discussion and Debate*, 2nd ed. (New York: F. Crofts & Co., 1951), 158 (italics theirs). Cause-to-effect, they call “*a priori* reasoning, since it sets up a conclusion indicating the probable effect of a specified action or circumstance.” Effect-to-cause is “*a posteriori* reasoning” (ibid).

¹⁴ Ewbank and Auer define “unrelated examples” such as “fallacy of evidence” and “faulty analogy and causal relation” as “fallacies of argument” (ibid., 167).

¹⁵ Ibid., 160.

¹⁶ Ibid.

there is snow on the ground, there are a lot of car accidents and old people with broken hips. For some, snow thus becomes a sign of disaster and difficulty.

“Argument from sign is really based upon a generalization”¹⁷ as well as “implicit cause-effect relationships.”¹⁸ If I see abandoned oxygen bottles strewn about at 27,000 feet elevation on Mt. Everest, I assume climbers have been there before me. I generalize about the cause when I see the effect. In addition to cause-effect generalization, there are two other types of generalizations that are developed later: “attribute-substance relationships” and “part-whole relationships.”¹⁹

In preaching, the speaker must use culturally conditioned signs appropriately. The legitimacy of the analogy is determined by the relationship of the specific image to the “implied generalizations.”²⁰ If the sign or the analogy is in some way “inadequate,” the force of the image as evidence supporting an argument is undermined.²¹ “In other words, there must be a sufficient number of similarities on important characteristics to lead one to believe that, in the argument under consideration, the claim is warranted.”²²

The degree to which one issue, picture, or piece of evidence relates to the main argument in its correspondence, may determine its degree of support for the overall polemic. The mind is constantly searching for the “feeling of likeness” or the “feeling of difference”

¹⁷ Ibid., 161.

¹⁸ Minnick, *The Art of Persuasion*, 162.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 163, 170.

²¹ Richard D. Rieke and Malcolm O. Sillars, *Argumentation and the Decision Making Process* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1975), 92.

²² Ibid.

and how these feelings are relatable to past experience.²³ The speaker must strike the chords of similarity if she is to convince.

In their discussion of figures of speech, Rieke and Sillars elaborate on the four *qualifiers* of metaphor that determine appropriateness: “contextual qualifiers”; “communal qualifiers”; “archetypal qualifiers”; and “private qualifiers.”²⁴ The defining features of the words within an image are determined by the context, the community, the societal archetypes, and the private understanding of the speaker and listener. Listeners are constantly searching for detailed nuance. When the speaker accurately qualifies her figure, she greatly aids listener decoding and significantly advances her own argument.

Creating images and using potentially volatile word signs, however open to abuse they may be for their lack of accuracy, are two skills very useful in generating connections that relate to people. There is a pool of culturally charged words and universal experience within a society that is at the disposal of a preacher who chooses to argue from sociologically defined sign and common knowledge base.

The receptivity of an audience to an image is largely determined by its appropriateness, and appropriateness is, at least in part, determined by the audience’s familiarity with the ideas being illustrated. “[F]igures of speech should lie well within the experience of the audience.”²⁵

Appropriateness for the Christian communicator must also examine the moral and truth aspects of the figure. This was the contribution of the mediaevals discussed above. The Christian cannot escape certain principles that control her image production, namely, that she

²³ Herbert J. C. Grierson, *Rhetoric and English Composition*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1951), 56.

²⁴ Rieke and Sillars, *Argumentation and the Decision Making Process*, 222-23.

²⁵ A. Craig Baird, *Argumentation, Discussion, and Debate* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1950), 209.

is commanded to live in the present and that the Spirit of Christ is alive in her to generate a spontaneous lifestyle founded upon unity with God.²⁶ In Norman Grubb's theology of selfhood, he builds upon the premise that "our life is hid with Christ in God . . . Christ is our life."²⁷ What we produce by way of communicative metaphor must be generated from our union with Christ and not simply be a product of generative technique as in the classical idea of "enargia."²⁸ Our ideas should be rooted in divine relationship whereby the Spirit gifts us with words possessed with a certain spiritual charge.

In both simple figures and extended analogies, a speaker's capacity to give enough detail to the analogous correspondence to make it truthful, believable, and spiritually appropriate will directly reflect upon his ethos. Failure in detail presentation may be a failure to tell the truth, because reality is distorted. When reality is distorted, the speaker loses credibility and the message risks being lost. The overuse of generalization, for example, speaks to a malfunction in observation that in a sense is rooted in laziness or false assumptions. The speaker should give enough details so that the image reflects the facts and God's feelings about the facts.²⁹

It is for this reason that one must make clear distinctions in illustrating the quality of something. In metaphorizing the features or essence of an idea, figurative representation deforms the original. Connecting the subject to something by means of apt analogy, however, clarifies certain *precise* aspects of the subject needing illumination. When the analogy is appropriate, engagement naturally follows because the listener finds the exact connection suitable and pleasing.

²⁶ Norman Grubb, *The Spontaneous You* (Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1966), 64.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 65; Col. 3:3,4.

²⁸ Grierson, *Rhetoric and English Composition*, 59.

²⁹ Grierson's point is relevant here. Detailed analogy communicates feelings and not simply factual correspondence (*ibid.*, 60).

In the pedagogy itself, I came to realize that I had to avoid teaching all but the simplest tests for figured appropriateness. Students were taught instead a process of specific association. They unconsciously qualified their own analogies through the introduction of detail.

Finding Analogous Correspondence

How is the method of finding appropriate analogy taught to students? How can correspondence or Aristotle's idea of suitable use be taught at the micro level to people who do not have extensive education or training in delivery?

A practice of simple substitution drills works well. "Analogy responses" is a technique used by teachers who desire that students associate ideas with their personal experience and come up with parallel "concepts or principles."³⁰ Experience provides the material for analogous images.

William J. J. Gordon developed a method of teaching students to create metaphors, and Burke summarizes the sequence whereby individuals were taught to generate analogous ideas using his process.

1. The teacher provides some explanation of a new topic.
2. The teacher communicates an analogous situation and asks the students to describe it.
3. The teacher asks the students to put themselves in the place of the analogy—to be the analogy.
4. The teacher asks the students to identify points of similarity between the original idea and the analogy.
5. The teacher has students explain where the analogy does not fit—what is not similar.
6. The teacher moves back to more explanation of the original topic.
7. The teacher asks students to develop their own analogy for the new concept.³¹

I employed a modified version of this method with my students using the third chapter of James. James employs a series of images to describe the tongue: a fire, a rudder, a spring.

³⁰ Richard R. Burke, *Communicating with Students in Schools: A Workbook for Practitioners and Teachers in Training*, rev. ed. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984), 145, 147.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 149-50.

Students were introduced to the passage and then brought through Gordon's steps in image creation and substitution. The results were remarkable and took less than ten minutes.

The broader context involved building an analogy reflex for use in communicative delivery by walking the student through the process of analogous idea generation. By analogy reflex, I mean the intuitive capacity of a student to draw logical or symbolic connections between the biblical text and the concrete world. Although building a reflexive capacity took my students about six months, most had a fairly substantial capacity to connect ideas into images before the formal training even began.

The essence of figures of speech is captured in "what rhetorical theory calls 'translation'—the actual wresting of signification so that each word means something it does not ordinarily say."³² People are, by nature, attuned to the sensual world and concreteness and have the innate ability to manufacture verbal images by means of translation. Figure-inventive procedures that teach translation are based on the idea that listeners generate analogies from their own experience. "Metaphor . . . [is] an attempt to express in terms of experience[,] thought lying beyond experience, to express the abstract in terms of the concrete, to picture forth the unfamiliar by means of the familiar, to express insensuous thought by sensuous terms."³³ To construct an invention model for Christian pastors and teachers that tries to integrate labels and category-to-figure generation techniques, that is, tries to create figures after explaining the definition to the student, is excessively complicated and goes against one of the basic assumptions of this dissertation—that concrete analogy emerges from experience and is limited by abstraction. My method has been to teach analogy and let the student create the image without reference to literary categories.

³² Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947), 100.

³³ *Ibid.*, 33.

After the student locates the precise communicative concept and is taught how to look for analogous correspondence, usually she naturally fastens on to ideas, actions, objects, or experiences that represent the principal idea. She does not consciously say, “Now I look for metaphors that have appropriate correspondence.”

Arguments in general can be built around visible realities as long as there is “tacit identification” between the verbal idea and the material experience of the listener.³⁴ The correlation between two ideas, however, “must be obvious.”³⁵ It can further be said that “the more remote and unlike in themselves any two objects are, the more is the mind impressed and gratified by the perception of some point in which they agree.”³⁶

Aristotle continues our apprenticeship toward appropriate correspondence in his advice about analogies of beauty. He says, “The materials of metaphor must be beautiful to the ear, to the understanding, to the eye or some other physical sense.”³⁷ Tacitus presents the same idea:

Nor does it follow that our speeches are less successful because they bring pleasure to the ears of those who have to decide. What if you were to assume that the temples of the present day are weaker, because, instead of being built of rough blocks and ill-shaped tiles, they shine with marble and glitter with gold? . . . Now I would have an orator, like a rich and grand householder, not merely be sheltered by a roof sufficient to keep off rain and wind, but by one to delight the sight and the eye; not merely be provided with such furniture as is enough for necessary purposes, but also possess among his treasures gold and jewels, so that he may find a frequent pleasure in handling them and gazing on them.³⁸

³⁴ Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 49.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 58. This identification is what is also called the “ground” of the metaphor (I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 117).

³⁶ Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric: Comprising an Analysis of the Laws of Moral Evidence and of Persuasion, with Rules for Argumentative Composition and Elocution*, Douglas Ehninger ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), 280.

³⁷ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 3.2.1405b.17-19.

³⁸ Tacitus *A Dialogue on Oratory*, 20 and 22. *Complete Works of Tacitus*, Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, trans. (New York: The Modern Library, 1942), 751-52. Tacitus does offer a corrective to unrestrained embellishment when he speaks figuratively of plain and ornate speech: “[S]o much better is it for an orator to wear a rough dress than to glitter in many-coloured and meretricious attire.”

What Tacitus states figuratively in this paragraph is what Quintilian calls *vividness*, or the ability to visualize to the mind's eye by means of words.³⁹

The preacher can employ the principles of beauty and vividness when implying value or disdain. He can look to diamonds, champions, eagles, banquets and the like if he wishes to extol something, or to mud, criminals, anger, pigs, and food scraps if he wishes to pour scorn on an idea.⁴⁰ Moral appropriateness concerns the invention of positive and negative metaphor. Aristotle states that these should be generated using something better or worse “in the same line”; thus, one can degrade someone else by employing “beg” for “pray,” “plunder” for “take,” or “crime” for “mistake.”⁴¹ If the speaker wishes to compliment or elevate an idea, she must search for appropriate correspondence among objects, people, and actions that are commonly praised. Denigration works the same way in a converse sense.

Aristotle defined the type of argument that employed illustration as “argument by example.”⁴² He considered examples to be of two varieties: past events or invented illustrations.⁴³ Since this study is primarily interested in inventive technique, a few comments about Aristotle's “illustrative parallel” and “fable” (*παραβολή*) are in order, in spite of the fact that narrative extensions will be treated in detail later.⁴⁴ They fall under his category of invented illustrations and are not actual past events. Illustrative parallel and fable are sometimes called “figurative analogy” because they create “figurative comparison”

³⁹ Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 8.3.63.

⁴⁰ The safeguards against creating inappropriate metaphor are addressed by Aristotle in *Rhetorica* 3.3.1406b.5ff.

⁴¹ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 3.2.1405a.18-29.

⁴² Aristotle *Rhetorica* 2.20.1393a.22.

⁴³ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 2.20.1393a.25ff.

⁴⁴ The term “parable” used by Aristotle is translated “fable” in the McKeon edition, probably because of Aristotle's context of inventive image being developed around examples from Aesop.

according to the *function* of the item being illustrated.⁴⁵ Illustrative parallels and fables are what Quintilian calls “realistic narrative” and “fictitious narrative” respectively.⁴⁶ Neither is historical in the sense that it recounts actual happenings, but each has differing similarities to reality, the latter being emblematic of something that is real and the former having the possibility of being real.

Aristotle considered parables to be “suitable for addresses to popular assemblies”; he states that “they are comparatively easy to invent.”⁴⁷ When developing a manner of creation, however, he remarks simply that you “frame them just as you frame illustrative parallels; all you require is the power of thinking out your analogy, a power developed by intellectual training.”⁴⁸ He offers very little detail about the process itself.

At the juncture of putting together a way of teaching basic analogous correspondence to church leaders in the Caribbean, my search for method yielded some suitable techniques for pedagogy, particularly “analogy responses.” Producing fitting parallels requires searching for obvious analogous correlation and suitable *translation* at the lexical level, employing principles of aptness, beauty, vividness, and identification.

Analogy and Different Types of Comparison

It is important to recognize the mechanics of translation and decoding that go on during the delivery and hearing of imaged speech. If the fundamental aspect of analogy is correspondence, it becomes critical to develop understanding in the basic types of translation around which correspondence is built. The very critical principle of *tension* also grows out of the theory of translated words and concepts. In comprehending that tension emerges from

⁴⁵ Donald C. Bryant and Karl R. Wallace, *Oral Communication: A Short Course in Speaking*, 3rd ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1962), 80.

⁴⁶ Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 2.4.2.

⁴⁷ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 2.20.1394a.1-3.

⁴⁸ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 2.20.1394a.3-5.

suspense, it becomes easier to understand the movement from analogy to extension described in the next chapter.

Brown offers the breakdown in Table 6 to differentiate the simplest types of translation in what he calls figures of “comparison.”⁴⁹ The more a speaker is able to make connection by dividing and associating her subject, the more concrete illustrations she will find at her disposal. The concrete associations she builds become the framework for engagement and a kind of imaged common ground with her audience.

TABLE 6
CATEGORIES OF TRANSLATION FOR FIGURES OF COMPARISON

Substitution with Comparison	Literal Comparison	Simile	In narrative form: Parable, Fable ⁵⁰
	Implicit Figurative Comparison ⁵¹	Metaphor	In narrative form: Allegory ⁵²
		Personification	
		Metonymy	
Substitution without comparison		Synecdoche	
		Symbol	
		Emblem	

⁴⁹ Brown, Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 2. Brown attempts to address the “nature and functions of the principal figures” (ibid.). His functional conclusions about the nature and effects of figures are more fruitful than trope lists or classification schemes that shift according to chronological era and discipline. Ricoeur found the 19th century reduction of writing to the cataloging of stylistic devices to be one of the causes of the death of the rhetorical discipline (Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, Robert Czerny, trans. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 9).

⁵⁰ Parables and fables are often seen as types of allegories with morals, and if so, would more properly be a subcategory of metaphor (cf. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Chris Baldick, ed., “fable” and “parable” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 80 and 159).

⁵¹ Grouping metaphor and metonymy together under figures using substitution with implicit figurative comparison does not annul Jakobson’s basic distinction that metonymy and synecdoche function on the principle of “contiguity” (Daniel Chandler, “Semiotics for Beginners: Rhetorical Tropes,” 11 December 2003, <http://www.Bedfordstmartins.com/online/cite7.html> (5 May 2004)).

⁵² Personification can be the basis of allegory, although Brown does not state this in his summary, (see *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “personification,” 166). Also, Quintilian sees different types of allegory consisting of various employments of metaphor as well as viewing obscure allegory as riddle (*Institutio Oratoria* 8.6.52). Allegory is essentially “continued metaphor” (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 9.2.46).

In this study, I am primarily concerned with the following figures: metaphor (narrative form: allegory), simile (narrative forms: parable and fable⁵³), synecdoche, metonymy, personification, and symbol.⁵⁴ Because of the difficulty in teaching categorization to people whose literacy skills are not highly developed, I have limited myself to these more-or-less basic categories of figures in my pedagogy and testing and attempted with some vigor to avoid the many other specific subcategories of tropes. I dealt even more strictly with the figures. I found it easier to validate a suitable engagement practice, for example, by teaching students to create tension, to isolate emotions by means of word pictures, and to transfer concepts to material situations than to teach the definitions of metaphor and simile.

In oral invention, the correspondence of an idea with its concrete image is usually a byproduct of an analogy of idea or experience, not of literary analysis. Concreteness and proximity to reality, nature, and experience are essential in creating images that connect with listeners. The principal issue in concrete illustration is clarity. It is what Quintilian stated in reference to similes but is applicable to all figures: “[A]nything that is selected for the purpose of illuminating something else must itself be clearer than that which it is designated to illustrate.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Extended similes in narrative or verse are also called “epic similes” or “Homeric similes,” and are often used to compare “one complex action (rather than a simple quality or thing) with another: for example, the approach of an army with the onset of storm-clouds” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “epic simile,” 71).

⁵⁴ Some tropes are morally and linguistically complex and hence difficult to use in church settings. For example, hyperbole is an easy trope to teach but involves exaggeration of the truth and cannot be developed along a narrative framework as easily without becoming sarcasm, irony, satire, or parody. In the words of Quintilian hyperbole “provides the easiest road to extravagant affectation” (*Institutio* 8.6.73). It is also not possible to deal with analogies of sound and rhythm evidenced in episodism, assonance, alliteration, and other figures. Cicero deals with the importance of sound (see *Orator*, 19.64; *Cicero: Brutus, Orator*, H. M. Hubbell, trans., The Loeb Classical Library, T. E. Page, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952)).

⁵⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 8.3.73.

In order to enter into a discussion of how precise types of comparison produce clarity and different forms of engagement, it is necessary to make a close assessment of individual figures. Each of the major tropes listed above creates a different type of connection between the principle communicative idea and the figurative representation.

The fundamental trope is metaphor,⁵⁶ where the typical signification of a word is replaced⁵⁷ by another meaning because of analogous usage. This is with respect to the metaphor's form. To define metaphor more precisely, however, it is important to seize the essential elements of metaphor as a syntactic unit such as a sentence or proposition(s) in a contextual setting, and even more specifically as was stated early in this thesis, as a speech-act. In defining metaphor in more than simply grammatical terms, for example as an "implied analogy" with a functional structure,⁵⁸ we move beyond grammar. In so doing, we consider "metaphor as a conceptual phenomenon," and not simply a word or a sentence.⁵⁹ Metaphors are the "mapping of two concepts belonging to different knowledge domains," a "source" domain that explains a "target" domain.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Colin E. Gunton offers an excellent discussion of the impossibility of defining metaphor (*The Actuality of Atonement: Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 27ff). Ricoeur develops the fact that metaphor can be understood at the word level or the semantic level of the sentence (*The Rule of Metaphor*, 3-5). However, ultimately, he expands the definition of metaphor around the copula (263), an idea developed by E. W. Bullinger one hundred years earlier in *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London: Messrs. Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898), 735-43.

⁵⁷ The term *metaphor* (μετα φέρω) can be understood literally by its meaning in Greek, "transferred" (Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 29). Defining figurative transference with precision, however, proves elusive. Metaphorical transference at a linguistic level is developed in "substitution theory" and seeks to explain metaphor as word replacement, while "tension theory" explains metaphorical process in a syntactic sense (Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 193). Wells states that a metaphor is "the recognition of a suggestion of one concept by another dissimilar in kind but alike in some strong ungeneric characteristic" (Henry W. Wells, *Poetic Imagery: Illustrated from Elizabethan Literature* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), 21).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁹ Lieven Boeve and Kurt Feytaerts, "Religious Metaphors in a Postmodern Culture: Transverse Links Between Apophatical Theology and Cognitive Semantics," in *Metaphor and God-talk*, Lieven Boeve and Kurt Feytaerts, eds, Vol. 2 of *Religions and Discourse* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 167.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* When Vanparys explains the limits of metaphor, he states that: "In order for a metaphor to be successful, there must be some perceived structural resemblance between the two domains" (Johan Vanparys,

The most common image production in classical works revolved around metaphor.⁶¹ The classical mind believed that “it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh.”⁶² Since what most speakers desire is that their listeners “get hold of something,” the importance of metaphor is clear.

In post-Enlightenment reasoning, metaphor is often viewed as obscure and proposition as clear. The classically trained mind, however, viewed concreteness and comprehension as something achieved by images, as much as, if not more than, by syllogistic logic.

Aristotle saw that metaphor demanded engagement; in his words, it required that the listener “seize a new idea promptly.”⁶³ The “liveliness” of speech was dependent on the “graphic” quality of the metaphor and its accompanying “activity” that created a visual excellence.⁶⁴ The liveliness of the phrase was created because the listener “expected something different” from juxtaposed words wrenched from their normal usage.⁶⁵

It is because of the effectiveness of metaphor that classicists developed elaborate ways of defining, and to some extent, generating metaphoric speech. Aristotle defined metaphor as “the transference of a name from the object to which it has a natural application; this transference can take place from genus to species or species to genus or from species to

“A Survey of Metalinguistic Metaphors,” *By Word Of Mouth: Metaphor, Metonymy and Linguistic Action in a Cognitive Perspective*, Louis Goossens et. al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995), 4

⁶¹ Aristotle understands metaphor to include simile (*Rhetorica* 3.10.1410b.18). He also believes that similes, proverbs, and hyperboles are converted metaphors (*Rhetorica* 3.11.1413a.3-19), as well as riddles (*Poetica* 22.1457a.26). Probably the same could be said of maxims (*Ad C. Herennium* IV.24). Mogens Stiller Kjærgaard found in his study of synoptic parables that similes and parables function as metaphors (*Metaphor and Parable: A Systematic Analysis of the Specific Structure and Cognitive Function of the Synoptic Similes and Parables qua Metaphors* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 238).

⁶² Aristotle *Rhetorica* 3.2.1405a.12-14.

⁶³ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 3.10.1410b.21.

⁶⁴ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 3.10.1411b.22ff.

⁶⁵ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 3.11.1412a.19.

species or by analogy. A genus to species example might be: ‘This ship of mine stands there.’ For to lie at anchor is a species of standing.”⁶⁶ Extensive habits of *classifying* types of metaphor were developed right through the Victorian period. *Generative* methods, however, were less abundant.

Aristotle defines the groundwork for appropriate metaphor in his development of the idea of suitable use. This corresponds to the idea of appropriateness mentioned above. He states that “metaphors, like epithets, must be fitting, which means that they must fairly correspond to the thing signified It is like having to ask ourselves what dress will suit an old man; certainly not the crimson cloak that suits a young man.”⁶⁷ He also calls appropriate correspondence of metaphoric phrase with its accompanying idea a “proportional metaphor” because the two ideas are in proportion to one another.⁶⁸

From a grammatical standpoint, the metaphor is often considered the paradigmatic figure because it is the simplest irreducible form (X is Y). For those subscribing to the substitution theory of metaphor, every metaphor has three parts: A main idea, a more concrete or common idea, and the linking of the two.⁶⁹ A metaphor is sometimes verbal, adjectival, or constituted in a phrase.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Aristotle *Poetica* XXI.1457b.18ff. Stephen J. Brown does not like this definition of metaphor. He believes that this more properly should be applied to synecdoche (*The World of Imagery*, 44).

⁶⁷ Aristotle *Rhetorica* 3.2.1405a.12-14. This idea of correspondence is called by Ricoeur among others, “resemblance” (*The Rule of Metaphor*, 193).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 207. This “movement” is what Ricoeur calls “epiphora,” an idea he develops from Aristotle (Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 17). Max Black calls the attribution of qualities of one thing to another “the *application* of the metaphorical predicate” (ibid., 89, italics his; referencing *Models and Metaphor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962)).

⁷⁰ According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, a metaphor can be a “thing, idea, or action formulated as a verb, adjective, or phrase: “a talent may *blossom*,” “a novice may be *green*,” and a baby can be “throw[n] out with the *bath water*,” (“metaphor,” 134). Verbal, adjectival, and clausal metaphors are based on the same principle of implicit comparison. We are not dealing with subcategories of metaphors such as conceits or metaphysical conceits which are simply more complex metaphors whose correspondence between ideas is more distant (The UVic Writer’s Guide, “Metonymy and Synecdoche,” (The Department of English,

When a word is used metaphorically, there is tension. Tension is a basic aspect of metaphor and defines the frictional quality of correspondence. Good communication creates some degree of interpretive tension. When tension is imaged into a communication medium, we have a figured engagement vehicle.⁷¹

Metaphor forces the involvement of the listener because meaning and sense are only possible if the listener makes connections that explain the figure of speech. In the words of Gertrude Buck, “Metaphor is pleasurable . . . because it incites the reader to reconstruct the mental process by which it came into being, and thus sets up in him an activity which, being both harmonious and varied, satisfies the demands of the physical organism for nicely adjusted, symmetrical, free yet unified exercise.”⁷² Metaphor permits the linking of ideas to concrete examples. It “creates a new mental reality, for in seeing something new or old in terms of something else, metaphor helps to change and colorize people’s perceptions and actions.”⁷³

Metaphoric tension engages the listener. Upon hearing the figure, the auditor is obliged to make sense of words that are wrenched from their typical meaning. Mugabe says that metaphor “belongs both to the world of ideas and the world of existence, necessitating an ontological ‘now.’”⁷⁴ For Mugabe, the metaphor is not only the delivery system of the

University of Victoria, 23 Sep. 1995) <http://www.clearcf.uvic.ca/writersguide/Pages/RhetConciet.html>, accessed 8 March 2001).

⁷¹ For a theological theory of applied image in communication in French contexts see J. P. van Noppen, ed., *Metaphor and Religion: Theolinguistics 2*, New Series No. 12, (Brussels: Study Series of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 1983), particularly the discussion of how metaphors cross cultural and linguistic barriers, (Sheldon Sawatzky, “Metaphor, Cognition and Culture,” 5-26) and J. M. Buscarlet’s idea of how metaphors control thinking within the church (“Le bateau et la lampe. Église et mission,” 269-84).

⁷² Gertrude Buck, *The Metaphor: A Study in the Psychology of Rhetoric* (Folcroft, PA: Folcroft Library Editions, 1971), 69.

⁷³ Henry Johannes Mugabe, *Tilling with our own hoes: Shona religious metaphor for an African Christian Theology*, Doctoral Dissertation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services), 1993.

⁷⁴ Mugabe, *Tilling with our own hoes*, 24.

message, but also part of the message itself in that it creates engagement that is engendered by cultural, tangible understanding. The listener's mind and emotions are implicated through inference, expectation, and concretization.

Although the metaphor is the principal figure, “the *readiest* [italics mine] means of illustrating an object or an action or even an idea is by representing it as *like* [italics his] something more familiar,” namely, by means of a simile.⁷⁵ The difference between a simile and a metaphor is that the former is based on a stated similarity, captured in the very nomenclature, simile/similar, and the latter usually has implicit, unstated, or more importantly, undefined comparison.

Upon examination, figures do not always divide easily and there is extensive ambiguity in form. At what point does a short figure become a story? When is an extended metaphor a parable? A similitude? According to Bryant and Wallace, a short example is an *instance*, and a long example is an *illustration*; a short comparison is a *metaphor* or *simile* and a long comparison is an *analogy*.⁷⁶ In reality, labels are only generalizations that help us speak in broad, sweeping, metaphorical ways.

Emotively, however, it might be stated that a simile has logical force by its explicit comparison, but has inferential weakness. The simile does not require that the auditor infer meaning from comparison. His or her interpretive powers lie unengaged. It is for this reason that simile is figuratively “weaker” in grabbing the listener. As an engagement medium, it is softer and appropriate in certain circumstances.

This emotive side of figures is especially evident when one moves from metaphor to

⁷⁵ Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 118. Brown says that explicit comparison using *like* and *as* “brings a pause, a slackening, and a certain coldness” as compared with metaphor (Brown’s discussion of Goldsmith, 120).

⁷⁶ Bryant and Wallace, *Oral Communication*, 70, 79.

the “implied analogy” of personification.⁷⁷ “*Personification* is a way of attributing personal traits to inanimate objects and abstract ideas.”⁷⁸ The use of human characteristics to describe non-human things or ideas is intimately tied to the experience of the hearer because the striking human quality is not usually associated with the non-human idea. There is an almost reflexive response to hearing things or ideas described with person-like qualities.

Furthermore, we are giving life to the lifeless and thereby resurrecting it from the dead.

Personification has the same type of emotive effect as its opposite, making the human inhuman:⁷⁹ “Her face was granite and her steps like felled trees in winter.”

Metonymy functions by the principles of “*contiguity* between two things.”⁸⁰ There is a symbolic value placed on an item that has close representative value to another. The listener is drawn into the discourse by associating the label with the thing it represents. Part-to-whole or whole-to-part images (synecdoche) force upon the listener the speaker’s personal knowledge of the idea, encouraging the auditor to complete the picture drawn by the speaker. Synecdochic and metonymic relationships are built around *imaged representation* of one idea for another.

Metonymy and synecdoche serve a different engagement function in that they often force a concrete substitution; for example: “Can you drink the *Chalice* that I will drink?”⁸¹ The reader or listener must ask herself, “What does this item stand for? Surely he will not drink the chalice!” The larger idea of “imbibe/live this experience” is replaced by the

⁷⁷ Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 144.

⁷⁸ E. C. Buehler and Richard L. Johannesen, *Building the Contest Oration* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1965), 114.

⁷⁹ See Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric* 284-85. In the experimental setting, Creole has no male or female nouns and does not express gender through pronouns, articles, or endings, except if the speaker intentionally substitutes “misyé” or “manzèl” for the pronoun “i”/“li” which represents “he,” “she,” or “it” (Pierre Pinalie and Jean Bernabé, *Grammaire du Créole Martiniquais: en 50 leçons* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), 23-24).

⁸⁰ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “metonymy,” 135.

⁸¹ Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 154.

concrete “drink the chalice.”

In generating synecdoche and metonymy, one employs a distinctive type of substitution methodology. The nuance between the two figures can be pictured and taught spatially in that metonymy substitutes from outside itself while synecdoche substitutes from within the main idea itself.⁸² Stated another way, metonymy seeks to “replace the name of one thing with the name of something else closely associated with it.”⁸³

Teaching figure generation and the creation of metonymy/synecdoche by substitution is easier than one might think, especially with respect to nouns. Spatial ways of creating figures by substitution from within and without are very effective. In an ideal setting, a hierarchicalized pattern of substitution exercises is best organized from simple to complex according to abstraction difficulty. It is usually easier to break down a thing into its component parts (synecdoche). Going from whole-to-part is easier than seeing something in its place among a larger group (also synecdoche) or seeing it in a representative abstract form (metonymy).

Synecdoches and metonymies are more easily created when beginning with concrete, namable, and spatial nouns and then progressing to more abstract ideas. This is because at the heart of metonymy and synecdoche there is a simple idea graspable by the common person: figures are more easily generated from similar ideas or things that are “*next* to each other in space or time” as opposed to generating things that are “*like* each other” in some quality.⁸⁴

⁸² Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery*, 152. To use Brown’s examples: “A fleet of twenty *sail* (i.e. ships) . . .” is synecdoche, and the substitution of the word “sail” for “ships” is a substitution from within. In contrast, “from the *cradle* to the *grave*” is a metonymy by substitution from without, where the abstract ideas of birth to death are not contained in the concrete nouns *cradle* and *grave* (ibid.).

⁸³ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “metonymy,” 135.

⁸⁴ “Metonymy and Synecdoche,” *The UVic Writer’s Guide* (The Department of English, University of Victoria, 23 Sep. 1995) <http://www.clearcf.uvic.ca/writersguide/Pages/RhetMetSyn.html>, accessed 8 March 2001.

The table below shows differing types of abstraction and accompanying questions that assist in locating figures to represent ideas. The chart is essentially oversimplified. If one attempts to construct figures based on abstract verbs or nouns, the task becomes significantly more difficult for people not trained in conceptualizing or objectifying categories. For example, to move from the non-concrete idea of “holiness” to the concrete clothing of “white robes” or from “truth” to “scales” is a complex progression.

TABLE 7
TYPES OF ABSTRACTION IN SYNECDOCHE AND METONYMY

Synecdoche	Part for Whole (What part can symbolize the whole?)	<i>In the house</i> can be expressed as: behind the door, under the roof, on the carpet, the other side of the curtains. <i>Purchasing a new vehicle</i> , as: he is driving new wheels.
Metonymy	Effect for Cause (What result accompanies this action/thing?)	Old age becomes: gray hair, wrinkled skin, weak knees, false teeth, arthritis
	Possessor and Possessed Office/Occupation and its Symbol (What symbol exists for this job or person?)	A jock is an athlete (e.g. for possessor/possessed).
Synecdoche	Species for Genus (What is the sub-group for this item?)	Give us this day our daily bread.
Metonymy	Container for Contents (What is a larger item that contains this idea?)	He angered the village. She woke up the neighborhood.

In teaching figure formation, better results can be obtained by avoiding traditional categories of trope analysis, using instead descriptive labeling questions as described in column two. The capacity of a student to identify the dynamics or differences between the types of metonymy is far less important for our purposes than being able to concretize an idea by relating it to another familiar thing or notion.

To summarize the central aspects of analogy, concretization is largely dependent upon the listener’s native intelligence, the “clearness” of the image, and the image’s ability to bring

home the correlation between the language and the idea it represents.⁸⁵ It is this skill of building a rapport through correspondence that produces quality images and, ultimately, engagement. Balanced engagement takes place when idea, intent, and context coalesce in an appropriate analogous image.

The vitality of the correlation or comparison drawn between the subject and the image is a measure of its verbal quality and its capacity to engage. The features already elaborated define that quality: suitable use, proportion, tension, visualization, transference, pleasurability, reconstructability, ideological surprise, inferential force, personified attributes, spatial proximity, symbolic correspondence, clarity, energy, and beauty.⁸⁶ The most important ideas from this list were codified in an assessment instrument used to measure the suitability of particular figures created during the experimental program.

Analogy as Culturally Shared Image

Full concretization in the ear of the listener is dependent upon his ability to unravel the communicated figure within a physical setting. Decoding is a byproduct of all the interpretive variables combined. The speaker must make his language as precise and as detailed as possible for the audience and culture in which he is speaking. Specific elements of the pedagogy developed in Parts II and III are based on the principle of culturally shared image elaborated in this subsection.

When the interpretive center moves from the speaker to the listener, the question

⁸⁵ Ibid., 190-91.

⁸⁶ Cicero adds to this list “exaggeration” (i.e. hyperbole and understatement), irony, and “impersonation” *De Oratore*, III.li.203-liv.208 and lv.209-212. Cicero talks very little about generation techniques. “However, there is no need for me to give you a lecture on the method of inventing these or on their classification” (*De Oratore* 3.38.156). The same lack of imaging technique is observable in the writings of other orators. On the “Second Sophistic,” see John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray, *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, “The Arts of Prose: The Early Empire,” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 658-9. Although Seneca’s *Oratorum et Rhetorum Sententiae, Divisiones, Colores* was intended as a manual to teach his children oratory, it is based on an inductive method of examples from Latin declaimers (*The Sausoriae of Seneca the Elder*, William A. Edward, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), Introduction x-xi).

arises: How does interpretive orientation affect engagement strategies for the speaker? In addition, what principal qualifiers and factors determine listener understanding, and how are they important to the speaker in the organization of his delivery?

One of the contributions of semiotics to our study lies in its reinforcement of the idea that meaning is made in the heart of the listener and that the construction of a delivery approach must be made with listener considerations in mind. Semiotics analyzes the construction, presentation, and acceptance of the sign process.⁸⁷

Semiotics advances upon the premise that the listener finishes the meaning of words based upon her own deciphering of language⁸⁸ within the “cultural” and “hermeneutic” codes that are preexistent in other texts, in the culture, or fabricated by the speaker.⁸⁹ Sense is made and completed in the mind of the listener when she rallies her cultural and linguistic faculties to make sense of the words. In the context of a story or image, there is “an irruption of the mythic in the midst of the typical,” and the reader/listener is shocked into participating in “restored” or “destroyed social orders.”⁹⁰

Unlike reader-based hermeneutics that presumes that sense is *entirely* made in the listening process of the individual hearer, the engagement model functions on the principle that *sense solicits* from listeners a sort of consent. Based on the speaker’s word arrangement and the cultural implications of the grammar, the sentence frames meaning in the same way

⁸⁷ Mary Ann Tolbert, *Perspectives on Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 35. Further clarification is offered by Geninasca: “Semiotics constructs a representation of th[e] signifying process using for this purpose an unambiguous language (a “metalanguage”) which is ultimately capable of describing *how any text becomes meaningful* without taking up the text’s terms again or paraphrasing them,” (Jacques Geninasca, *Signs and Parables: Semiotics and Gospel Texts*, Bary Phillips, trans. (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1978), 5, italics mine).

⁸⁸ Tolbert, *Perspectives on Parables*, 39.

⁸⁹ Wilfred L. Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 250.

⁹⁰ Georges Jean, *Le pouvoir des contes* (N.p.: Casterman, 1981), 112.

one might offer a man an apple pie. The receiver of the pie may slice it and eat it, put it in a mixer then eat it, or eat it part-by-part beginning with the entire top crust. The pie, however, presents itself in a manner that is culturally acceptable to be eaten. In a similar way, grammar is socially defined, and the syntactic taste, so to speak, is determined by the listening community, not by the speaker.

Semiotic scholars use the terms polyvalency, or “indeterminacy” to define latitude of meaning in words, sentences, and figures.⁹¹ The implication is that meaning is not fixed but is always under construction to some extent by the listener. In the same way that polysemy,⁹² a “range of meaning,” is applied in lexicography to delimit the meanings of words, similar rules apply in the instinctive structuring and interpreting of discourse based upon experience, grammar, and culture. Meaning is determined by form, and changes in form have “important ramifications in terms of the meaning conveyed.”⁹³ Although the decoding of figures is in a constant state of flux during the time that an audience is listening, the grammar of words forces culturally defined limits on the decoding process. The freeplay of text is somewhat imprisoned by the constraints and dictates of cultural and linguistic decorum and by the sum total of forms that frame the contexts. Aarts and Calbert draw attention to the fact that there

⁹¹ Tolbert, *Perspectives on Parables*, 40. In psychological terms, words have “modal ambiguity,” “intermodal” if the image appeals to both the emotive and the cognitive sides, and “intramodal” if the image has multiple “referents” in either the emotive *or* the cognitive processes (Rogers, *Metaphor*, 69).

⁹² Ricoeur’s discussion of the concept of polysemy involves Stephen Ullmann’s use of the term “vagueness” to describe the flexible quality of language that permits words to become metaphor and to push out the limits of meaning (Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 113). This vagueness is clarified, or really permitted, by contextual usage, both “verbal and *non-verbal*” (124, italics his). By contrast, Derrida’s deconstructive concept that “every reading is a misreading” leaves one lost in the never-ending stream of lexical relativity (see Raymond Gozzi, Jr., *The Power of Metaphor in the Age of Electronic Media* (Cresskill, N. J.: Hampton Press Inc., 1999), 32ff). There is latitude nonetheless. “Le conte est “polysémique” : on ne peut le réduire à une signification unique. Celui qui lit, dit, écoute, en capte ce qu’il peut sur le moment et complète par la suite les significations qu’il prête aux événements” (Louis Fèvre, *Contes et Métaphores* (Lyon: Chronique Sociale, 1999), 11). In the words of Fèvre, there is a “narrator-listener complicity,” a “pleasurable sharing between storyteller and listener” (18, translation mine).

⁹³ Marcia Scott Howden, *A Semantic Study of Word Formation in French* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, Ph. D., 1979), 143.

are “expected referents,” “contextual restrictions,” and “*likely readings*” that offer control to the endless possibilities of meaning randomness.⁹⁴

In the realm of speaker choices, meaning is no longer controlled just by normal word use and context, but by the listener variables within their cultural grammar. In this model, listener considerations help define for the speaker the construction of metaphorical choices. These listener-centered interpretive strictures are called *qualifiers*.⁹⁵

The speaker’s adeptness in being able to juggle cultural and contextual qualifiers will often determine her success in engagement. If a speaker ignores or is ignorant of important qualifiers, her capacity for intentional, emotional, and intellectual exchange with hearers will be greatly reduced. Specifically with respect to figure interpretation, Osborn and Ehninger explain that qualifiers define “how interpretants are associated by a reader-listener; the qualifiers suggest or direct how the metaphor will be understood.”⁹⁶

These qualifiers are valid for almost any figure. The speaker has the capacity to control the meaning being decoded in the audience by minimizing private qualifiers, those that will distort intention. He engineers the other qualifiers in such a way that “puzzlement-recoil are telescoped or dampened.”⁹⁷ The speaker constructs a metaphor and attempts as much as possible to control the outcome of its interpretation by word choice, grammar, and oral dynamics.

⁹⁴ Jan M. G. Aarts and Joseph P. Calbert, *Metaphor and Non-Metaphor: The Semantics of Adjective-Noun Combinations* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1979), 9, 214, 221. He calls meanings that are less likely to be correct “deviant” and states that a good semantic model can make distinctions between meanings that are likely and those that are “odd” (5).

⁹⁵ Michael M. Osborn and Douglas Ehninger, “The Metaphor in Public Address,” *Speech Monographs* 29 (August 1962): 228.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Osborn and Ehninger, “The Metaphor in Public Address,” 233.

Controlling the interpretation of metaphor in discourse is accomplished not only by the construction of a picture that will be defined according to predictable communal and archetypal qualifiers, but also by the means of lexical qualifiers called “extensions.”⁹⁸ Extensions tend to minimize misunderstanding and clarify meaning. First, lexical qualifiers are the grammatical “amplifications or projections of the item for association.”⁹⁹ For example, in the phrase: “Jim is a beaver of industry,” there is a certain predictability about Jim based on communal and archetypal understanding about beavers. The words *of industry* define how I want the metaphor to be understood and not understood. In other words, by saying Jim is a beaver *of industry*, I do not want people to think he is a loner or to ascribe some other quality to Jim that they might create from their personal experience about beavers. Extensions are the augmentations, qualifying the metaphor by enlarging the idea. We might say that: “Jim is a beaver of industry. He gathers his commercial sticks into his production den and dams up the supply-rivers of the competition.”

Meaning is ultimately *revealed* in the common understanding of the audience within a culture. While meaning is in one sense determined in the mind of the individual listener, the community as a whole reveals a collective meaning in the same way that dictionary definitions are based on general usage, not singular instances. Stated in another way, the audience as a whole is the final determinant of whether the speaker’s delivery choices were appropriate.

If as I am arguing, the roots of engagement lie in the ability of the speaker to associate ideas through concrete analogous correspondence by means of figures, the resulting figures need to have a similar sense to both the speaker and the receiver. The cultural backdrop of

⁹⁸ Ibid., 228. The use of the term *extensions* here as qualifying language to clarify a metaphor is different from my use of the concept in the ensuing chapter where I employ the word to mean storied amplification.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

both individuals has to have enough common ground for them to arrive at a similar meaning for the figure.

While it is imperative that students become skilled at detailing their figures, I discovered teaching principles of qualification during the apprenticeship process was beyond the scope of the simple class sessions. I opted merely to explain the practice of detail development. The application of particularizing the figure seemed to be intuitive for most students. A great many of the problems with respect to figure qualification and extension were rectified through adequate insertion of details. It was almost impossible to address the topic of metaphoric qualifiers from a theoretical level.

Analogy as a Structural Frame

Figures are often used to control entire blocks of thought. When this is the case, the figure takes on a structural importance for part or all of a discourse. It also attempts to control the thought process of the listener through its framing qualities. This could be said of Jesus' use of the "kingdom" images in Matthew 13, for example, where successive parables are linked around a controlling notion.

The management of larger blocks of spoken material by means of pictured speech is especially frequent in political discourse and is used to delineate issues. In his discussion of the capacity of metaphor to define politics, Preston demonstrates lucidly how "metaphor enable[s] supporters to frame" situations.¹⁰⁰ Often metaphor has the power to "instantaneously organize thoughts."¹⁰¹ It has the ability to intrude into the mind of a listener

¹⁰⁰ C. Thomas Preston, Jr., "Characterizing the Issue: Metaphor and Contemporary Impromptu Discussions of Gender," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 28.4 (Spring 1992), 185-92, Internet Item Number: 9610313480.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 185. See also John S. Nelson's *Tropes of Politics: Science, Theory, Rhetoric, Action* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). He differentiates between figures of speech and his very useful concept of "tropes of argument" (111).

because the unstated implications are generated in the figure rather than in precise adjectival descriptors.

In his advice about the marshalling of evidence for forensic political debate, Roger C. Aden advises that people who construct argument to defend political positions should choose evidence that is “vivid, authentic, and memorable.”¹⁰² This is clearly different from the classical advice typical in the history of political argumentation and forensics, which encouraged the choice of material that was not emotionally based.

In an age of television, audiences are coming to expect a more emotive style from politicians, and I would say, preachers as well. Kathleen Hall Jamieson in her treatment of political speechmaking explains that today people expect a “‘womanly’ style,” one that contains a “self-disclosive, narrative, personal” manner on the part of communicators.¹⁰³ In addition to this stylistic change, media priorities have encouraged a turning away from traditional speech making to finding “[t]he moving synoptic moment” in which “the memorable phrase, the memorable picture” or the dramatized story can capture the values of the moment.¹⁰⁴

Modern culture lives under time constraints, and the desire to have the issues summarized in a controlling metaphor dictates modern information-diffusion agendas. People want more than ever to *see* the controlling image in a brief excerpted synopsis.

For our purposes, when metaphors are deployed systematically as guiding images in an entire discourse, they are called *thematic metaphors* or *controlling metaphors*.¹⁰⁵ When

¹⁰² Roger C. Aden, “Making Rhetorical Choices: The Parallel Between Extemporaneous and Presidential Speaking,” Internet item number 9610313479, *Argumentation and Advocacy* 28.4 (Spring 1992), 178-85.

¹⁰³ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 89.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 117ff.

the controlling or thematic metaphor is not built around an existing, culturally identifiable structure, it should have limits that are fabricated and defined by the speaker within the immediate context. This would be an extended metaphor intentionally built outside the culturally prototypical rules of decorum.

The idea that people want aid in controlling their thought process may appear surprising. Listeners are often confused, however, by excessive choices and moral dilemmas. They would welcome structure into their thinking. Controlling figures provide, in a positive way, a response to an organizational chaos that often reigns in discourse and in competing social agendas.

Certain students were able to accept the practice of metaphoric structuring of discourse with facility. Some had heard preachers deliver sermons with extensive repetition of thematic figures, phrases, or themes. Parting from this base, it was simple for students to accept the concept. Implementation of a sermon based on a controlling figure, however, was more difficult. It was easier for beginning students to develop smaller portions of delivery around imaged themes rather than entire sermons around a complex of thoughts unified by a controlling figure.

Whether or not a figure is brief or repeatedly used in the verbal governance of an entire block of material, there are basic principles that can be universally applied when assessing the use of an analogy. These principles are also important in developing an expanded generative strategy based on correspondence.

Fitting analogies can be assessed in terms of appropriateness. A suitable analogy is one that has detailed correspondence and that produces ideological tension as well as surprise. Its quality and capacity to engage are also tied to its inferential force. This force is

¹⁰⁵ Russian Formalism developed a similar idea in its approach to literature analyzing texts according to their recurring themes and functional elements in story and plot (Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 240, 245).

in part built upon its clarity, intrinsic verbal beauty, and visual quality. Appropriate figurative clothing provides the means to engage an audience once the illustrative crux is tied to the suitable analogous idea. If the analogous idea can benefit from expansion, narrative extension can then be used to enlarge the medium.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EXTENSION: FROM ANALOGY TO NARRATIVE

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
Matthew 13:10

The Engagement Qualities of Narrative Extension

There are moments when, either by the nature of the material itself or in order to conform to the needs of the hearers, narrative forms will communicate better than discursive delivery or simple figures. During the development of the narrative aspect of parabolic method, it was important to build an approach to extended figures that permitted creation according to the principles of localization, analogy, and engagement laid out in the previous chapters. The design of the generative technique needed to fit the context. This also meant that the extension methods had to be suitable and measurable for less literate peoples. This chapter attempts the identification of viable engagement narrative techniques appropriate for a pedagogical experiment in the French Antilles.

The simplicity of the ensuing extension method is seen most clearly when narrative is viewed as a series of images sewn together on a protracted temporal framework. While short figures argue by clear analogy, long ones reveal their polemic during the evolution of the accounting. In longer narrative, the sense of the story is more implied and less crisp. Lengthened structure requires a more elaborate and even subtle argumentative arrangement where meaning is discovered by inference, perhaps through consequences.

The ways in which narrative appeals to a listener are somewhat different from the ways in which other figures please the ear. Whereas an image's force is based on the vividness of the analogy and the listener's ability to see the implied connection between the image and the subject it represents, a narrative's power lies in its ability to identify *repeatedly* with the listener. The effective story has a capacity to present characters and settings with

universally identifiable traits common to the experiences of the listeners.¹ Identification of the listener with the story content takes place in two principal domains: 1) the *physical context of the story*, and 2) the *disclosure rhythm*.

The principle of *identification with the physical context* works in a similar fashion to analogous correspondence. In the former, the listener creates connections between the narrative setting and life experience. Rather than the correspondence being limited to one thing or one subject, however, the identification is with a complex web of people, settings, and ideas. A narrative creates ties to a listener by character, background, or thought through a detailing of commonly identifiable traits or feelings. The story may contain, for example, characters true to the life experience of the listener: the dull person, the talkative person, the ignorant person, the incorrigible person, etc. It may contain a setting known to the listener: a kitchen, a farm, or a school. It may detail a feeling such as sadness, hope, or joy. The listener either identifies with or simply recognizes the principal elements to be possible. There is *circumstantial identification* of the listener with the story and its details.

Various types of identification can happen when the speaker sharpens the picture in the mind's eye of the listener. Identification is linked with the "instinctual" elements of learned experience.² That is, as an individual listens to the story, she looks for natural or unnatural³ instinctive responses that she herself knows through familiarity. Some concrete instincts that people survey most often are "motor," "rhythm," and "self-preservation."⁴ One

¹ Bill Mooney and David Holt, *The Storyteller's Guide: Storytellers Share Advice For the Classroom, Boardroom, Showroom, Podium, Pulpit and Center Stage* (Little Rock: August House Publishers, Inc., 1996), 40.

² Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, *For the Story Teller: Story Telling and Stories to Tell* (Springfield, MA: Milton Bradley Company, 1913), 124.

³ For example, Smith uses the example of meeting "a family of pigs in the vestibule of a good-looking hotel" as illustrative of the incongruous or strangeness principle (Elmer William Smith, *Extemporaneous Speaking* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1932), 159).

⁴ Bailey, *For the Story Teller*, 124.

might also add emotive, dramatic, and fantasy elements, which are immediately transferable into the experience of the listener who feels, moves, and dreams in cadence with the story.⁵

Ultimately, storytelling involves showing the listener an experience. Story *presentation*,⁶ or what Albert calls “the sacred gesture,”⁷ is creating an extended narrative with self-contained interconnections. When a story is told, time is drawn out. The sense of the story may or may not be interpreted by the speaker. Interpretation may or may not be left up to the audience.

This is important, because storytelling alone has no secondary agenda or applicative follow-up unless the storyteller chooses to add a discussion at the end, in which case, she is outside the realm of formal storytelling. It is even linguistically unorthodox to say that one is “delivering a story.” This is because stories are not formal presentations but autonomous life narratives that have few reference frames other than internal ones. “All the emphasis should be placed upon the story rather than upon the storyteller, who is, for the time being, simply a vehicle through which the beauty and wisdom and humor of the story come to the listener.”⁸ This is obviously an overstatement, since a story cannot really be separated from its context, and more precisely, the speaker cannot be removed from her setting. The environment affects the story, and the storyteller cannot escape listener interpretation.

Students were taught continually during the experimental exercise that the ability of a story to create a listener experience that is satisfying lies in the fact of whether or not the hearer has facility in identifying with the details of the narrative. For Albert, these details are

⁵ Ibid., 142-170, 191-230.

⁶ Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene, *Storytelling: Art and Technique* (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1987), 61ff.

⁷ Susan Wittig Albert, *Writing from Life: Telling Your Soul's Story* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996), 7.

⁸ Baker and Greene, *Storytelling: Art and Technique*, 61.

stored in image “clips.”⁹ The capacity to see potentially evocative clips or “*sacred stories*” that are also worthy of being publicly communicated is a discipline that must be learned.¹⁰ Albert likens story generation to giving birth. “Birthing happens every day Once we become aware of it, we see it in our own life, in the lives of our loved ones, our friends. Old things come to an end, are outgrown, or outworn. New life emerges out of grief and loss and pain, and with it a sense of wonder, of joy.”¹¹

Mooney and Holt who compiled storytelling techniques from storytellers throughout the world also found that ideas for stories are generated from simple life settings: a memory, “a word, a rhythm, or a character.”¹² Once the story is born, it is infused with sensory possibilities, and developed around sensual orientations: sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste.¹³ It is then made unique by developing its relation to other material, especially its “incongruity or strangeness.”¹⁴ In other words, the story can be made to fit or not to fit reality.

It is from the pool of common experience that a speaker draws his narratives that identify with the audience. The common experiences do not in themselves necessarily hold the interest of the hearer. What captures attention is also suspense and uncommon interpretation unveiled in unique ways. Engagement is built both on the succession of common images revealed by the narrative and the listener’s comparison of the action with his own experience.

⁹ I find Albert’s use of the term “clip” or “clippings” appropriate for our study. It encapsulates the ideas of brevity, episode, and image in the same word (Albert, *Writing from Life*, 6).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xi. Italics are hers. She describes “story as sacred act” (7).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹² Mooney and Holt, *The Storyteller’s Guide*, 40.

¹³ Bailey, *For the Story Teller*, 23-35.

¹⁴ Smith, *Extemporaneous Speaking*, 159.

This leads to the second major aspect of narrative, *disclosure rhythm*, or the similar idea of plot resolution. The listener not only identifies with the people, places, and ideas in the narrative but also with *how those elements are unveiled*. The manner in which the plot develops and the characters evolve rings true or false to the listener and his past.¹⁵ I discovered in the course of the teaching experiment that disclosure desire is universal, but rhythm is often culturally defined. Creole peoples practiced a more complex disclosure habit, while the European French were much simpler in their approach.

Usually the listener screens the actions of characters according to cultural experience to see how they advance. He mentally tries to anticipate the outcome. This guesswork is a function of storied clues and the listener's own expectations. There exists in the mind of the listener a conflict between how the story progresses and how the listener thinks it should progress. This clash between the listener's anticipated resolution of the plot and the actual story itself is called "suspense" or tension.¹⁶

There are instinctual and experiential filters in constant use by the listener. She wants to find concrete elements in the story that relate to her personal past. When the speaker aids the listener to make a prediction about the outcome of the story, the result is suspense. Suspense intensifies engagement between the speaker and listener. The resolution of tension captivates the hearer to receive the teaching force of the story. When she feels and lives the resolution, she compares it with her own experience and makes appropriate judgments.

This emotive anticipation is extremely strong. A story has the ability to cast a spell. The storyteller throws her enchantment over a people who in some way want to be enraptured

¹⁵ For a discussion about the usefulness of story in contrast to plot, see *Preaching that Connects* by Galli and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 74-75.

¹⁶ Bailey, *For the Story Teller*, 57ff. On the use of tension and suspense as a teaching method see Kieran Egan, *Teaching as Story Telling: An Alternative Approach to Teaching Curriculum in the Elementary School* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984) and Catherine Dunlap Cather, *Story Telling For Teachers of Beginners and Primary Children* (New York: The Caxon Press, 1921). Martha S. Bean, "The Role of Traditional Stories in Language Teaching and Learning," *Traditional Storytelling Today: An International Sourcebook*, ed. Margaret Read MacDonald (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 548-51.

into the spiritual realm and experience deep truths. The dream ends when the teller ends her yarn.

Moving the listener to a fugue-like state during a story is the subject of Sturm who used the “interview model to study the storytelling trance.”¹⁷ He found that listeners who concentrate on stories exhibit characteristics similar to a hypnotized condition. They are, in their own words, described as being “pulled into,” “swept away,” or “wrapped up in a story.”¹⁸ This is accomplished in great part by a multi-sensory suspense in the telling of the story.¹⁹

Stories are emotive and “arouse intense interest and feeling.”²⁰ Stories may either appeal to feelings or actually “produce the feelings” that were not there before.²¹ This interest on the part of the listener is intensified by the fact that stories usually “blend fantasy with reality” and create a desire on the part of the listener to continue with the story to see if the tension is resolved according to their personal experience or resolved in a surreal way.²²

The creation of useful stories in preaching is tied to the arousal of the speaker’s heart. As excitement about an idea grows, it will produce increasingly evocative images. Baker describes a student who was unsuccessful at telling a simple story, but thrived with a more difficult one. It was “because her empathy with the emotions dealt with in the story gave color to her telling.”²³ Preachers who are searching for images as they develop a story must

¹⁷ Brian Sturm, “An Analysis of Five Interviews with Storylisteners to Determine How They Perceive the Listening Experience,” *Traditional Storytelling Today: An International Sourcebook*, ed. Margaret Read MacDonald (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 563.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 563, 565.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 563.

²⁰ Cather, *Story Telling For Teachers*, 12, 13-21.

²¹ Don Cupitt, *What is a Story* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 47.

²² Baker and Greene, *Storytelling: Art and Technique*, 30.

²³ *Ibid.*, 27.

search for them in the emotive areas of their thought processes. In the same way that a storyteller searches within the story for “where the appeal lies,” a preacher should look for the qualities within an image that will make it more communicative.²⁴

This entire affective domain is a strong motivator to learning. Storied suspense becomes the principal appeal of using narrative method in sermonic engagement. Cather has practical suggestions at this level. She states that the storyteller in Christian settings should clearly state the “element of conflict . . . at the beginning of the plot thread” and resolve it in a narrative “climax.”²⁵ The climax, she says, should be dramatically and simply stated like “a child [who] tells a secret to another child.”²⁶ The rhythm and the character development unfold appropriately to bring the listener to understanding through the resolution of the carefully orchestrated conflict. In the words of Bailey, “climax knots the thread of the narrative” and brings about the suspension relief, “*dénouement*,” or conflict resolution anticipated by the listener.²⁷ If the story is told slowly, and the climax is unfolded with deliberate intention, the unhurried “pace says, ‘Feel this; live this.’”²⁸

This aspect of tension and resolution has educational value and should be exploited. Attention-holding that is created by suspense has purpose in itself. It keeps the listener attentive. Yet, it is one thing to hold listener attention and quite another to change thought patterns. The preacher wants ultimately to change the value system of the listener, not simply entertain.

The pedagogical importance of storied expectation and resolution cannot be

²⁴ Ibid., 46.

²⁵ Cather, *Story Telling For Teachers*, 117-19.

²⁶ Ibid., 119.

²⁷ Bailey, *For the Story Teller*, 89.

²⁸ Galli and Larson, *Preaching that Connects*, 87.

underestimated. Jesus practiced it often in His longer parables such as the Good Samaritan and in short parabolic teachings such as the Lost Coin. Egan points out that a story appeals to us both “affectively” and cognitively.²⁹ When someone tells a story, that person expects the listener to have a *desire* to see it resolved. Roberta Simpson Brown says it this way: “You cannot teach someone what they do not want to know. No matter how hard you try. So utilizing the story gives me the opportunity to help the children care about what they need to know”³⁰

Incremental disclosure creates anticipation through suspension. Latin oratorical convention was very skilled at this level.³¹ Cicero advocated the employment of tactical delay of ideas with slow narrative disclosure. This notion of calculated disclosure is a simple, cross-cultural, and communicable idea, namely that people want rhythmic unveiling that reflects timed and incremental discovery. In some way, the gradual revelation reflects a rhythm of life.

Suspense takes on a variety of forms. It is usually seen as the “set[ting] up [of] a conflict or sense of dramatic tension,” creating a “rhythm of expectation,” and “satisfaction” of the conflict.³² Most good stories function within a “narrative pattern” called a “plot-theme,” or in Lévi-Strauss’s term, a “mytheme.”³³ The story is either based on or creates a

²⁹ Egan, *Teaching as Story Telling*, 29.

³⁰ Mooney and Holt, *The Storyteller’s Guide*, 145.

³¹ Cicero in particular developed it in *De Oratore*, *Orator*, and *Brutus* (John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray, “Cicero and Rome,” *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, 456). See also *De Inventione* and John C. Rolfe, *Cicero and His Influence* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1963), 92. Cicero is well known for his desire for balance, rhythm, and euphony (*ibid.*, 90). I am not advocating that students adopt a Ciceronian periodic style, however.

³² Egan, *Teaching as Story Telling*, 25. Egan calls the conflict the opposition of “binary opposites” (26).

³³ Cupitt, *What is a Story*, 13.

human need, then satisfies it.³⁴

There are any number of standard plot-themes that produce anticipation for the listener: pilgrimage to goal; desire to satisfaction; struggle to victory/success; opposition to mediation; conflict to resolution; bound to free; lost to found; problem to resolution.³⁵ Like an image that possesses an analogy based on correspondence of nature, cause/effect, or some other appropriate association, a story draws a verbal picture based on a basic human desire. The desire to reach a goal, be satisfied, have victory, resolve tension, end conflict, obtain freedom, be found, and resolve problems are central theme motivators.

In Cupitt's analysis of plot, the cultural form within a story is called a "universal pattern," and our reaction to the story narrative involves "feeling-responses."³⁶ Among the important storying patterns is the dominance of the pilgrimage/goal journey. In this frequently employed plot structure, the listener responds to a story as a voyage through time. Patterned elements of stories are classifiable in other ways, however. That is, stories can be categorized by narrative disclosure through the way in which the plot unfolds or by the manner that tension is built and relieved. Tsoungui catalogs what he calls the keys to African and Creole stories.³⁷ These categories were extremely useful in teaching narrative engagement in the Antilles. They became part of the story creation exercises and were helpful in teaching categories of plot tension. They were even used as models for identifying biblical verse movement and possible narrative development from scripture passages. Tsoungui lists seven basic paradigms of plots that can be graphically represented for

³⁴ Ibid., 45.

³⁵ This list of pairs is derived from a chart in Cupitt, *What is a Story*, 13.

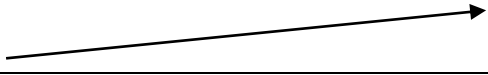
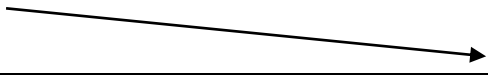
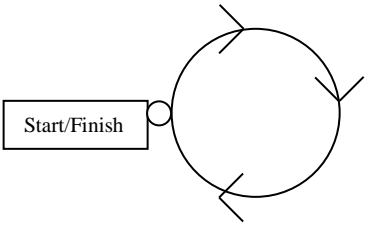

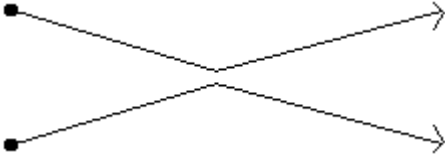

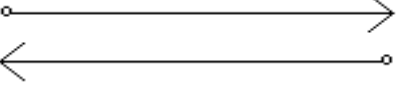
³⁶ Ibid., 35.

³⁷ Françoise Tsoungui, *Clés pour le conte africain et créole* (Paris: Conseil International de la Langue Française, 1986).

pedagogical purposes by linear types of ascent or decline:³⁸

TABLE 8

PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION OF BASIC PLOT STRUCTURES

<p><i>Ascending Type</i> Lack → improvement → fulfillment</p>	
<p><i>Descending Type</i> Normal situation → deterioration → lack</p>	
<p><i>Positive Cyclical Type Negative</i> Stable situation → danger → misfortune → rescue → stability</p> <p><i>Negative Cyclical Type</i> Initial lack → lack filled → dissatisfaction → disobedience → return to lack</p>	
<p><i>Ascending or Positive Episodic Spiral</i> Difficulty → a series of tests → success</p> <p><i>Descending or Negative Episodic Spiral</i> Difficulty → a series of tests → failure</p>	
<p><i>Positive Ending Mirror</i> Ascending hero story → descending story of antagonist</p> <p><i>Inverted Mirror with a Negative Ending</i> Ascending antagonist story → descending story of hero</p>	
<p><i>Hourglass Type</i> Heroes start simultaneously at differing contexts → their paths intersect → they experience differing outcomes</p>	
<p><i>Reciprocal Type</i> Characters experience a parallel give and take</p>	

Tsougui explains the fundamental aspect of the creation of narrative tension as

³⁸ Ibid., 10-15. The negative spiral, inverted mirror, and reciprocal patterns are not listed in Tsougui but grew out of student exercises that showed additional paradigms were necessary.

“l'évènement modificateur d'équilibre,” or the event that upsets the equilibrium.³⁹ People identify with life-changing events. In the same way that one might search for resolution to tensions in one's personal life, the reader/listener expects to experience the outcome of the initial change-event in the story. During the story development sessions in the pedagogical experiment that I shall describe, these plot theme prototypes were given extensive treatment. Because of their ease of use, they were adopted as constructive models for story invention.

In summarizing the major techniques for narrative engagement, the list in Table 9 crystallizes the important subjects upon which methods were constructed. Each method motivator possesses its own appeal and is useful according to a given situation.

TABLE 9
NARRATIVE ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Method Motivator	Engagement Appeal
Tension	The listener is in suspense about the resolution of the narrative.
Disclosure Rhythm	The listener feels the cadence of the disclosure.
Expectation	The listener pays attention by curiosity.
Conflict	The listener desires to discover the outcome of the conflict.
Context Identification	The listener is pleased about the familiarity or is curious about the strangeness.
Vividness	The listener is captivated by the details of the narrative.
Episodic Development	Forward movement in the time sequence is carefully grouped to captivate the listener's curiosity and direct the story outcome.
Resolution	The listener is satisfied when the tension is resolved, and his world is framed to some degree.
Human Need and Desire	The listener is satisfied when his need is met.
Specifying Cultural Limitations	The listener's ideas and behavior are framed and modeled by cultural limits highlighted by the speaker.
The Change Idea	The listener is motivated by new objectives.

All of these techniques are learned inductively through the teaching of standard plot

³⁹ Ibid., 77.

themes except for the last two, which will be treated in the next subsection. During the experimental teaching sessions, students were not taught each individual method and its value. With the exception of episodic development, which was taught by itself, students were instructed in the basic principles of suspense and how to use the plot paradigms to engage audiences. Those who learned to create a narrative on a *journey and return* theme, for example, naturally put together stories that possessed several of the methods. The value of each individual method for an engagement model was not always examined in classroom exercises but was learned by practicing the narrative frames on which the stories were constructed.

Narratives as Structural Framing Devices

Story structures are often more than plot arrangements and patterns. Like controlling images, they systematize societal truths.⁴⁰ In many story models, the structure is not simply an arrangement tool for use by the story creator, but a framework for ideas, beliefs, and solutions to life questions.

Folklore, for example, is the oral art of handing on culture through “tales, skills, rituals, music and so on.”⁴¹ The basic storytelling *tool* in folklore is the image. Within the folklore story are a series of images that hold cultural norms and doctrines. In her book on Asian storytelling and tellers, Spagnoli tells how “words paint pictures, and certain words share images understood at once by Asian listeners.”⁴² Images become the utensils of learning. Shared images carry meaning to listeners because of collective identity, common word meanings, and joint cultural nuances.

⁴⁰ For example, the importance of the journey tale as an “important organizing metaphor” can be seen in Yoruba storytelling; see Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 33.

⁴¹ Alison Jones, *Larousse Dictionary of World Folklore* (Edinburgh: Larousse, 1995), vii.

⁴² Cathy Spagnoli, *Asian Tales and Tellers* (Little Rock: August House Publishers Inc., 1998), 27.

Images are shared in the linguistic/cultural commonalities within a house, neighborhood, town, city, state, country, or continent. Spagnoli cites a few examples: Koreans identify immediately with the ripe grain of rice or the wild goose, the Indian with jasmine, the Pakistani with large eyes, the Cambodian with an ax, the Hmong with a dragon, the Filipino with a boat, the Vietnamese with a bamboo thicket, and the Burmese with a bird.⁴³ Similar principles are active in the Muslim faith. “The Islamic sermon is a rhetorical form, that is, an argument whose elements are linked images and symbols composed in such a way as to express an underlying message through the organizing metaphor of kinship.”⁴⁴

Story as a cultural framing device is also often used in the corporate setting. Large businesses produce change through an orchestrated plan of modeling the transformation of an average employee by means of a story. Stephen Denning in *The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations* writes about motivation in the business world. He explains how employees in businesses need strong paradigmatic stories to motivate them for action, and that the best type of story is prototypical of the employee herself, showing how positive results are possible by one who implements organizational directives.⁴⁵ In its essence, the springboard story is a parable with the typical characteristics of a narrative, containing among other things: a plot that is “brief and textureless,” a hook that draws the reader/listener in, a “predicament,” and the physical “embod[iment of a] change idea” in the form of a “prototypical protagonist.”⁴⁶ Motivation becomes a key theme in organizational storytelling, where the values or the “corporate code” are embodied in the

⁴³ Ibid., 27-29.

⁴⁴ Richard T. Antoun, *Muslim Preacher in the Modern World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 106.

⁴⁵ Stephen Denning, *The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2001), 198-99.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 197-99.

narrative.⁴⁷

In a Christian sense, stories motivate the congregation. The value system of the church is communicated in the illustrative material of the preacher. Jesus did this. He taught behavioral expectations by teaching in parables. The Samaritan became a model for mercy, the prodigal's father a model for forgiveness. This type of illustrative modeling builds upon the premise that people need clear objectives and motivation. They need to know where they are going and encouragement to get there. A paradigmatic story works by means of shared cultural image to frame structurally the behavioral outcomes desired by the preacher.

Poetic Extension in an Impromptu Context

Most structured communication is based on preparation and memorization. However, in this thesis, we are particularly concerned with circumstantial delivery. In looking more closely at the situational aspects of engagement, there are some types of communicators who specialize in designing material during delivery. It is important to survey a few examples where individuals develop formal discourse within the very communication setting itself according to a given audience or context. It then becomes essential to know what particular aspects of that speaking practice, if any, are transferable and teachable within the target context of Martinique.

The study of living oral epic poets is one of the most important starting points for evaluating circumstantial verbal image technique in verse form. Poetic delivery and rhythm is still practiced in many cultures around the world. Historically speaking, a study of epic poets, in which I would also include lyrical black preachers in the Americas and the Caribbean, has already revealed much about the oral mechanism in the creation of material in verse format. Because of the widespread use of poetically based delivery systems, its chief

⁴⁷ Richard Raspa, "Organizational Storytelling," *Traditional Storytelling Today: An International Sourcebook*, ed. Margaret Read MacDonald (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 544.

features are worth noting because they contribute precise elements to our understanding of circumstantial engagement.

The classical precursors to living, western epic poets viewed poetry as *imitation*. This oral picturing manifested itself in the play, in epic verse, or in some other reproduction art. At the core of oral imitation was the verbal capacity to picture and reproduce common visual and aural realities.⁴⁸ *Imitation* in the classical spoken disciplines was *oral imaging*. The cultural medium was verse. Image production in the classical Greco-Roman world in particular was carried out primarily by the poet,⁴⁹ although prosody and poetic method were also taught to others, particularly children.⁵⁰

Oral epic poetry was decisively analyzed by Albert B. Lord in his *The Singer of Tales*, a comparative study of Homer that drew conclusions about epic verse from 20th century singing heroic poets of Yugoslavia.⁵¹ Based on the work of Milman Perry, Lord significantly altered some basic assumptions of Homeric studies by establishing the oral nature of Greek epic poetry via living oral epic poets.⁵² The principal concern of Lord was *poiesis*, the

⁴⁸ Aristotle's use of the term "imitation" (μιμῆσαι; μίμημα; μίμησις) in the *Poetica* can frequently be translated as "picturing" when referring to oral arts. As he discusses in *Poetica* IV, imitation flows out of who we are as children and people. We enjoy mimicking or reproducing the funny, the tragic, the absurd.

⁴⁹ Aristotle said that not everyone who wrote in verse should be considered a poet (*Poetica* 1.1447a.36ff). For example, scientists wrote in verse and practiced a form of image production. Early classical Greek culture did not differentiate the central figures of poet and prophet; however, the development of language brought on clear distinctions between the "singer/poet" (ᾄδιδός), the "seer" (μαντις) and "herald" (κρυβύξ). Gregory Nagy, "Ancient Greek Poetry, Prophecy, and Concepts of Theory," in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 56-57. Eventually, the prophet (προφητής) became "the recomposer of the inspired message in poetic form" while the μαντις was the intermediary with the divine world, and the τηροπος, the individual "who consults the oracle," was the one who reported the results (ibid., 61-63). Even common individuals were disposed to talk about dreams, images, and their prophetic meanings (Aristotle, *Divinatione* 464.a.28ff). Aristotle saw the imagination as one of the four inner senses; cf. Mary Michael Spangler, O.P., *Aristotle on Teaching* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998), 53. The imagination grasps the internal, non-sensory images. See Aristotle *De Anima* 3.2.428a.6-7.

⁵⁰ Donald Lemen Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (Morning Side Heights, N. Y.: Columbia University Press, 1957), 177.

⁵¹ Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

⁵² Ibid., 3.

classical creation of poetry, and how the production and oral composition practices of the Yugoslavian *guslars*, with their improvisation, memory, and “epithets and ornamental formulas,” could shed light on “oral narrative poetry” in general, and more specifically on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁵³ His work is especially helpful for this study in that it clarifies how people learned to deliver extended poetic speeches with spontaneous creation of material.

Although the work of Perry and Lord concerned itself with formulaic generation of poetry including its metrical considerations, what classicists would call *schemes*, this study extracts from their work the principles of verbal creation that are helpful in designing engagement pedagogy for preachers. “His [the epic poet’s] art consists not so much in learning through repetition the time-worn formulas as in the ability to compose and recompose the phrases for the idea of the moment on the pattern established by the basic formulas.”⁵⁴ Within this contextual immediacy, the poet was forced to create a new presentation at the instant of delivery by delivering the story through learned inventive formulae. He made use of the constructive mechanisms of formulae “*during* oral performance.”⁵⁵ As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, this is the same mechanism active in some forms of black preaching in English. From these mechanisms one can extract principles of “oral composition” and detail a process that takes place at a continuous pace during utterance as the poet keeps singing. This is distinct from “oral learning” and “oral transmission,” separate spheres of analysis not treated in this dissertation.⁵⁶

An oral poet must accumulate enough rhythmic “formulas to facilitate composition”

⁵³ *Ibid.*, viii, xiv, 3, 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, (italics his). Lord discounts his own use of the term “performer” later in his evaluation (page 13), because it carries with it the false sense that the epic poet is “reproducing” when in fact he is creating and “composing.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5, 22.

and keep the story moving without interruption.⁵⁷ After he learns “the rhythms of epic” that consist in the “length of phrase, the partial cadences, the full stops,” accentuation, pause, “patterns of meter, word boundary, melody,” and the essence of the songs he wants to sing, he moves along the continuum of becoming an accomplished bard.⁵⁸ In particular, the epic poet learns to construct spontaneously: 1) syntactic peculiarities that produce wanted results in the language; 2) parallelisms based on the repetitions of words across consecutive lyrical elements; 3) “instinctive . . . alliterations and assonances”; 4) “melodic, metric, syntactic, and acoustic patterns”; 5) a “substitution [methodology] in the framework of grammar.”⁵⁹ This list demonstrates that it is possible to analyze *how the poet learns and progresses* in these disciplines.

The following is a functional description of the basic elements of Yugoslavian poet singer formation: 1) The poet first learns basic formulas and then learns substitution patterns that function within those formulas; 2) He then practices substituting and modifying the formulas by adjusting phrases and creating sentence modifications by analogy; 3) Lastly, he learns to sustain consistent syllabic pattern, accented meter, and progress of ideas to develop the theme over an extended period of delivery.⁶⁰

Yugoslavian narrative poets compose episodically, what Lord calls *theme* development.⁶¹ The construction of the poem and its logical succession of ideas are based on

⁵⁷ Ibid., 22. The rhythmical patterns of a poet are different from the rhythmical patterns of prose. For a discussion of the issues involved, see Cicero, *Orator*, 50.168-61.238.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 32-35. The whole issue of analogous sounds is part of this study in that the audience is constantly searching for connections to form meaning in discourse. Verbal assonance, “translating of words, that is repetition of root syllables,” rhyme, and alliteration to name a few, create phonic ties that help the listener construct sense (William G. Crane, *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: The Formal Basis of Elizabethan Prose Style* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964), 21).

⁶⁰ This enumeration is a descriptive summary of Lord’s detailed account of the training of a *guslar* (*The Singer of Tales*, 36-38, 69).

⁶¹ Ibid., 68-98.

an arrangement of episodes, grouped by subject or function. Those ideas are built one on top of the other into a unified whole through the formula, sometimes continuing over a period of days. For example, the continuum might look like this: “(1) tale of capture, (2) shouting and release, (3) return home, and (4) sequel.”⁶² The storied tension is built and resolved through episodic structures, larger frameworks that contain the smaller formulaic units of the actual delivery. The delivery is done with musical accompaniment that acts as a prompt and also a rhythmic control to the formulaic mechanism.⁶³

One sees that Lord does not deal with critical elements of formula acquisition and trigger mechanisms. Although he deals with how a young poet learns the formulas, namely via mentoring, imitation, modification, personalization, and practice, he does not give detailed cataloging of typical types of verbal formulas, how they might be ordered according to complexity, what their substitution tendencies are, etc. He addresses instead mostly thematic issues. The following basic principles, nevertheless, emerge from Lord’s study and provide a framework for a new type of preaching pedagogy.

If illiterate poets learn formulas by ear, the question poses itself whether or not preachers can or should learn image generative technique by ear also? I believe they must, but in my teaching experiment in particular, putting in place an oral generative model was slow to develop for a number of reasons. It required extensive contact with students. There was also a lack of model curriculum and an absence of oral pedagogical examples. My own personal speaking limitations in French and Creole contributed to the sheer difficulty of doing something that I had neither seen done nor read about.

In spite of all the barriers, however, during the eleven training sessions detailed in

⁶² Ibid., 121.

⁶³ Epic poets in Yugoslavia depend on the gusle for rhythm and invention even to the point that they cannot produce without it (ibid., 127).

Part III, the changes in student communication were remarkable. So remarkable were the results that they were more than enough to validate the approach and even justify a sequentialized, spoken apprenticeship model for training preachers. The overall structure would involve the following three elements.

TABLE 10
SKILLS NEEDED FOR IMPROMPTU ‘PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT’

-
1. The accumulation of basic figured engagement techniques
 2. The internalization of and development of an engagement reflex
 3. The skill of spontaneous modification of material based on the physical context and observable phenomena
-

A student who is learning to generate images and find formulaic ways to produce visual pictures in communication must begin by *hearing* image production via an apprenticeship of some kind. Second, she must internalize the formulas by habitual use so they become owned, like a tennis student learning the swing but modifying the stroke according to personal abilities and tendencies. Third, the formulas must be graduated according to complexity, and should be acquired in order from simple to complex. Fourth, the student needs to engage in enough substitution exercises to develop an unconscious reflex in possible uses. Fifth, the student must learn to assess whether or not the image, if made into a story during preaching, will create cohesion across the sermon as a whole. Sixth, she must learn how to take biblical words or ideas and produce standard communicative verbal devices that are powerful and visual. Seventh, she must learn the art of spoken rhythm.

Moving From Extension to Audience

The result of the oral apprenticeship process is that students learn the capacity to create impromptu extensions. If sermons are shaped in the immediate physical setting, the realities of preaching require the ability of spontaneous narrative development. Moreover,

when circumstantial expansion of material also takes into consideration specific audience factors, the product is a unique and forceful communication of ideas. Ultimately, it is nearly impossible to create a suitable delivery without modification and application of sermonic material to a specific group of listeners. The final step in preaching is, after all, speaking to people.

As I have stated throughout this thesis, the heart of imaged engagement is a listener orientation. A person who stories to the visual understanding of his audience is attempting an appeal that is concrete and experientially based. His narrative is grounded outside himself. “If the average listener is to be interested, he must see how the subject touches his job, the welfare of his family and friends, or his basic beliefs Most individuals will make great personal and material sacrifices if they believe their ideas and principles are at stake.”⁶⁴

If, as I am saying, listener realities exert significant control over the construction, delivery, and reception of narrative material, parabolic engagement must establish concise principles of audience evaluation. Classical methods of audience analysis and argumentative training were codified during the period of decline of Latin oratory when Quintilian wrote his *Institutio Oratoria*, the most thorough elaboration of the systematic training of a classical orator among extant classical works.⁶⁵ Quintilian functioned under a training model that involved a long-term apprenticeship where student orators were attached to a mentor for years to prepare them for the work of declamation. In his Book XI, the perspective on *suitability* of style yields the following condensed audience-interpretive principles. They provide guidelines for how extensions might be suitably created or modified:

⁶⁴ Henry Lee Ewbank and J. Jeffery Auer., *Discussion and Debate: Tools of a Democracy* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1941), 424.

⁶⁵ John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray, *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, “The Arts of Prose: The Early Empire,” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 657.

1. Normally, content will yield the appropriate style or posture a speaker should take (11.1.7); yet based on one's aim (conciliating, instructing, or moving), one should choose style considerations appropriate to purpose also (11.1.5).
2. Audience listening capacities dictate style (11.1.6).
3. The *expediency* of something that is true must overcome *rules of decorum* if the two conflict (11.1.9).⁶⁶
4. The context of the oration demands choice of tone: during impersonation (11.1.41); when considering the power and rank of the audience (11.1.43); when considering the size of the audience and the openness of the room (11.1.45-47); the gravity of his subject matter (11.1.49-50); during grief (11.1.54-56); during times demanding restraint and moderation as in highly volatile and sensitive issues (11.1.57-74); by reluctance to address issues that cause pain (11.1.87).
5. The speaker should appeal to the integrity and discernment of the audience (11.1.75).
6. The speaker should not make content choices based on the applause of the audience (12.9.1).

In Cicero's counsel about propriety of speech for certain audiences when using Attic style, he makes some other generalizations that can be added to those of Quintilian. 1) The grandeur or baseness of an image must be appropriate to the hearer; 2) In terms of verbal quantity, "too much is more offensive than too little"; 3) The occasion as much as the people will define propriety; 4) Verbal rhythms must be appropriate to the audience.⁶⁷ He also states that there should be general style adaptations based on the setting, and that the speech should reflect the affective motive, whether it is pity, goodwill, sympathy, or persuasion.⁶⁸ It is even advisable for the speaker to consult with the audience or the opponent during the discourse, warn them to be on guard, plead with them, entreat them, soothe them, get intimate with them, and "make the scene live before their eyes."⁶⁹ A helpful general reminder about audience is given by "Gregory in his Pastoral Rule (Part III, Prologue) [who] asked the

⁶⁶ If there is something critical at stake, the truth should be spoken even if it violates implicit communicative expectations.

⁶⁷ Cicero, *Orator*, xx.70.

⁶⁸ Cicero, *Orator*, xxxv.123, xxxvii.128ff.

⁶⁹ Cicero *Orator*, xl.137ff. In this section of *Orator*, he develops the qualities of interactive discourse.

preacher to remember, when weighing the condition of his hearers, that some herbs nourish some animals and kill others.”⁷⁰

In taking audience considerations seriously, there is a decisive shift away from the typical practices learned from rhetorical traditions of Campbell, Whately, Bain and others, as well as the schools that they represented or spawned.⁷¹ Modern communication models in English-speaking religious institutions often follow a pattern of verbal construction from rhetorical methods lingering since the seventeenth century.⁷² These trends emphasize constructing discourse around the *aim* of the *speaker* without serious consideration to how the *audience* thinks.⁷³ This practice affects discourse invention and construction in that it focuses on the mind of the speaker/writer. It relies upon certain constructive formulas for discourse that make assumptions, often wrong ones, about the ways in which audiences receive information. It also ignores important contextual elements. By contrast, a careful consideration of audiences and settings changes engagement style significantly. The speaker must reckon with audience members, their capacity to decode, their power, rank, size, emotive baggage, intellectual competence, receptive disposition, distractibility, and a myriad of other considerations.

Although an extensive method of audience analysis was not implemented in this experiment, certain critical aspects were nonetheless incorporated into the training. Student preparation involved teaching principles for observing listeners. This took place during the session on impromptu delivery described below. Students were instructed to survey certain

⁷⁰ Harry Caplan, *Of Eloquence: Studies in Ancient and Mediaeval Rhetoric*, Anne King and Helen North, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 130-31.

⁷¹ Sharon Crowley, *The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric*, Preface (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), xi.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 11-16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 16.

aspects of the audience behavior and outlook, namely: interpersonal dynamics, attitudinal elements, audience expectations, education, age, social status, and receptivity. I found there was not time to teach more complicated and advanced aspects of listener scrutiny and interaction. A full-orbed engagement pedagogy where extensive teacher/student contact is possible should, however, require broad instruction in the observation, analysis, and response to audience dynamics. This is especially true with respect to creating narrative extensions, since much of the volume and content of sermons is taken up by storied delivery. In an ideal teaching arrangement, it would also be helpful to have on-site training in audience assessment where the instructor would visit the delivery setting with the student speaker to discuss observations before sermonic delivery.

Generally speaking, a visual audience assessment and revision of sermonic material is among the last steps before spoken delivery. Engagement is possible when the speaker links his material with the actual audience itself, not the fictitious audience he created in his mind when he engineered his basic sermon content. His analysis of the text, his analogous correspondences to the concrete world, and his extended narratives all become subject to the precise realities of his delivery setting. The message is for those people who are present amid the myriad of circumstantial factors of the physical context. Whether or not his message is engaging and will create encounter with God will be based, among other things, on whether or not he properly isolated the communicative idea, found suitable analogous material, and ultimately, whether or not his choice of imaged or narrative delivery form was appropriate for his audience.

PART III

ASSESSMENT OF THE 'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT' EXPERIMENT

CHAPTER NINE

THE MISSIONARY SETTING FOR AN EXPERIMENT IN TEACHING
'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT'

En general le peuple est un enfant. Il faut surtout lui parler en images.
C'est pourquoi Jésus *image sa pensée*.
Abbé Louis Picard

French Theory of Rhetorical Figures

There are some subtle differences between the French and English use and perception of figures of speech, and a discussion of those differences is in order since almost the entire experimental aspect of this dissertation was conducted in French-speaking missionary settings. French rhetorical theory, like its English counterpart, developed out of classical and medieval rhetoric.¹ There are not many extreme dissimilarities between French and English approaches to the subject. Nevertheless, there are some essential differences that are worth noting because they defined to some extent the pedagogical approach used to teach image generative methods among Creole and European students educated under the French governmental system of education.

Apart from the French philosophic analysis of tropes and stories that follow postmodern views of language,² there are basic differences in the French approach to speech-use that have direct bearing on this study and its outcomes. Often when reading French texts dealing with rhetorical figures, one is struck by the implied superiority of writing over oral

¹ See Catherine Détrie, *Du sens dans le processus métaphorique* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2001). The French rhetorical tradition is replete with texts developed from a classical perspective: Dumarsais, *Des tropes ou des différents sens, figure et vingt autres articles de l'Encyclopédie, suivis de abrégé des tropes de l'abbé Ducros*, (Provence: Critiques Flammarion, 1988); Pierre Fontainier, *Les figures du discours*, Introduction by Gérard Genette (Flammarion: 1977); Charles Bally, *Traité de stylistique française* (Genève: Librairie Georg & C^{ie} S. A., 1951); Catherine Fromilhague, *Les figures de style* (Paris: Nathan, 1995).

² Michele Prandi, *Grammaire philosophique des tropes : Mise en forme et interprétation discursive des conflits conceptuels* (Les éditions de minuit, 1992) treats tropes as a conceptual conflict. Figures of speech are not simply grammatical or syntactical anomalies, they communicate semantic ambivalence. See also Guy Denhière on interpretive ambiguity in *Il était une fois . . .* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1984), 19.

expression.³ Auber, in writing about the classical attitude to religious symbolism, concluded that writing was art and that “la parole . . . demeurerait insuffisante.”⁴ In saying that “the spoken word . . . would remain insufficient,” he does not express so much the French relegation of oral expression to a lesser status as much as their longstanding preference for the superiority of writing.

Although the secondary nature of orality is not really argued overtly in the French rhetorical-critical treatises, the implications of the primacy of written texts are everywhere. French critical thought and writing is highly analytic, and without media or transcribed speeches, oral delivery cannot be “controlled.” There are too many variables. Discussions about image use and development invariably dissolve into a discussion of classical stylistics and extremely rarely, oral presentation.⁵ It is not that English approaches to figures are more oral, but the French rigor for exactness lends itself even less than Anglophone approaches to oral image-generative technique. Moreover, observable, oral language patterns are highly influenced by written forms of delivery.

When analysis becomes a societal strong point, spoken creativity is at risk. Christian communicative patterns in the French Overseas Departments have a textual quality, probably because nearly all teachers and ordained church workers are schooled in France. While this analytic skill helps in teaching the Bible through textual explanation, it fails to encourage the creation of analogous narrative.

One might fairly assess French thinking by saying that when speech becomes figured,

³ Often, a contemporary French view of language, particularly that associated with Jacques Derrida, advances “the primacy of writing over speech” (George Aichele, Jr., *The Limits of Story* (Chico, CA: Fortress Press, 1985), 103).

⁴ M. l’Abbé Auber, *Histoire et Théorie du Symbolisme Religieux Avant et Depuis le Christianisme* (Paris: Librairie de Féchoz et Letouzey, 1884), 2.

⁵ In Marcel Cressot’s *Le style et ses techniques : Précis d’analyse stylistique* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), the “precise analysis” is one of dismantling and comparing written figures to explain how they work.

it moves into the domain of “aesthetics.”⁶ This subtle shift does not exist to the same extreme in the English-speaking world. An English speaker, when using a figure or analogy such as “God is a fire,” would be inclined to think that she is making his language more concrete through physical example. French thinking would view the metaphor as abstract and appealing to the beauty of the language and its sensual quality.

French grammar and labeling are such a part of standard communication practices that extensive use of figures of speech is non-standard writing; it is art. When a French person speaks, he analyses and explains, and although he might use figures with similar frequencies to speakers of other languages, he does not view them as conforming to the empirical standard. As a result, imaged expression is not normal but is raised to the level of creative sentiment. What results in practice is that the teacher who teaches figures or a student who learns them is dealing with art, the French language and “sa beauté.”⁷

A gap develops between the scientific division of tropic and stylistic figures⁸ and the capacity to learn the oral arts. Stated in another way, the French student is caught between pigeonholing literacy and creative oral delivery. Joining the two is not a tendency traditionally associated with scholastic communication patterns in general or speech in French Caribbean church life.

There is distance between how the French or Creole speaker views the communicative

⁶ Remy de Gourmont, *Esthétique de la langue française* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1955) and Yves Le Hir, *Esthétique et structure du vers français* (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1956). In the words of Prandi summarizing Carnap, “Irréversiblement prisonnier de sa contradiction, l’énoncé tropique serait prédéfini à l’expression de la sphere intrinsèquement contradictoire des sentiments et des émotions . . . , et donc essentiellement limité à l’expérience esthétique” (*Grammaire philosophique des tropes*, 187).

⁷ Ibid., Preface, n.p.

⁸ Modern French stylistics is more classical in the sense that one still finds excellent style manuals that enumerate in detail written trope and figure creation. See for example, Jean Kokelberg, *Les techniques du style : vocabulaire, figures de rhétorique, syntaxe, rythme* (Paris: Nathan, 1993) and Micheline Joyeux, *Les figures de style* (Paris: Hatier, 1997).

task and how the English speaker views his. In the French worldview, there is a much greater sense that comprehension is possible through explained analysis. The emotive force normally exerted in communication is logical sequence and passionate scrutiny. Figured expression is suitable communication practice, but it is out of the ordinary.

When I as an English speaker entered into the French culture as a teacher of image invention, I took the approach that I was a Christian pastor teaching the oral arts in the same way that Jesus wanted His hearers to enter into the sublimity of simple concrete images. This persona served well among participants who were growing to value the beauty of the communicative task, and not just its logical force. This training posture is vastly different from that of an English preaching instructor who might view his purpose among students as teaching illustrative technique as support material to the exegetical main idea.

This point could be expressed another way. My students embraced a parabolic mindset. They did not simply learn techniques. In fact, they were not very good at retaining invention method. Nevertheless, their ongoing desire to communicate in parables was, at times, remarkable. Even in ordinary speech, their communication patterns changed. They would say, "I have a parable," or "That was a good spontaneous image."

Since French people appreciate verbal beauty, the students took quickly to a communication practice that would bring oral aesthetics into the church. It was not difficult for them to accept the idea that theological language should be imaged and appealing. They rarely viewed what they were doing as technique, but rather as a mode of viewing reality. It was never rhetorical embellishment or illustration; it was usually seen as a way of conceptualizing and communicating in general.

Language Contexts in the French Antilles

Without rehearsing in detail all the complexities of Caribbean Creole origins, it is nonetheless necessary to clarify the contextual setting of Martinique Creole language and

culture. Most Caribbean Creoles are both developing and fighting for survival amid politicking and displacement by globally recognized languages of higher learning, in our case the French language and all its imported linguistic imperialism.⁹ It will be important for the reader to understand some of these subtleties of culture and language to grasp the nuancing of engagement strategies adopted by the two principal groups taking part in the experimental portion of this study detailed in Part III.

The coexistence of the French Creole languages adjacent with standard French differs from island to island and from regional commune to regional commune. In Martinique, where most of this study was conducted, Creole is learned simultaneously with French, the former usually being the language of informal communication at all levels.

The people of Martinique speak a form of Lesser Antillean Creole that developed in the Windward and Leeward Islands after the year 1627, and after 1635 on Martinique in particular.¹⁰ Martinique Creole is one of four *major* French Creole dialects.¹¹ French Creoles, like all Creoles, are contact languages that arose out of “multilingual communities” where more than two languages converged.¹² The people who adopt the new tongue (the “superstratum language”) abandon their native languages (“the substratum languages”) out of

⁹ Mühlhäusler states that the leaving behind of indigenous languages in education, especially pidgins and their lexical limitations and to a lesser extent Creoles, is due to the desire on the part of a culture for social advancement, a reality that is thought to be possible only through the mastery of the more standard language from which the Creole is derived (Peter Mühlhäusler, *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics (Expanded and revised edition)*, Westminster Creolistics Series – 3 (University of Westminster Press, 1997), 279-302). Creoles have “little or no literary tradition” (ibid., 335). It becomes almost impossible to develop an educational literacy around a language that has no written literature.

¹⁰ John Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles: Volume II, Reference Survey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 362-64.

¹¹ David Decamp, “Introduction: The Study of Pidgin and Creole Languages,” *Creolization of Languages*, Dell Hymes ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 17. The others are Haitian, French Guianese, and Louisiana Cajun.

¹² Claire Lefebvre, *Creole Genesis and the Acquisition of Grammar: The Case of Haitian Creole* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

communicative necessity.¹³ In the case of the history of French Creoles, French vocabulary was embraced, but the grammar was essentially that of the native African tongues of transported slaves.¹⁴

Creole grammars are also simplified to a great extent and are viewed by speakers of the lexical loan language as being inferior. For example, Creole simplification is evidenced by the fact that “le verbe créole ne comporte pas de voix et sa conjugaison repose plutôt sur la distinction de l’accompli et de l’inaccompli que sur celle du present, du passé et du future.”¹⁵ In addition, Creole verbs do not conjugate for person or number and nouns do not have gender indicators. The language as a whole is often seen, by way of contrast, as being complicated by an endless compounding of articles and particles that function grammatically as demonstratives,¹⁶ as indicators of number, or as pronouns. There is also a significant absence of the copula in French Creoles, a quality of syntactic reduction common in many Creoles.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid. This lexical abandonment is sometimes called “language shift” and is the result of an “unstable contact situation” (Sarah G. Thomason, *Language Contact* (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 5).

¹⁴ “. . . while the forms of lexical entries of a radical creole [sic] are derived from the superstratum language, the syntactic and semantic properties of the lexical entries follow the pattern of the substratum languages” (Lefebvre, *Creole Genesis and the Acquisition of Grammar*, 3-4). In a plantation census showing ethnicity among slaves in Martinique in 1680, it was shown that the principal substratum languages at that time were the West African languages of Kwa, Atlantic, Delto-Benuic, and Bantu (Mikael Parkvall, *Out of Africa: African influences in Atlantic Creoles* (London: Battlebridge Publications, 2000), 131). It was during “the late 17th century” that the solidification of Martinique Creole took place (Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles*, 365). It is for these reasons of mutation and lexical adaptation that “many linguists would hotly deny that French-based Creole is “genetically” related to French in the same sense that French is related to Italian” (Decamp, “Introduction: The Study of Pidgin and Creole Languages,” 15).

¹⁵ Pradel Pompilus “De quelques influences du créole sur le Français officiel d’Haïti,” *Proceedings of the Conference on Creole Language Studies*, Creole Language Studies, No. 2 (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1961), 92.

¹⁶ See for example, Pierre Pinalie and Jean Bernabé, *Grammaire du Créole Martiniquais en 50 leçons* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), 29.

¹⁷ John Holm et. al., “Copula Patterns in Atlantic and Non-Atlantic Creoles,” *Creole Genesis, Attitudes and Discourse*, John R. Rickford and Suzanne Romaine, eds. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1999), 98ff. The absence of the copula is part of the movement toward “grammatical simplicity” evident in

French European attitudes toward the French Creoles have been highly negative for hundreds of years. It is a well-known fact that there has been “an unfavourable atmosphere for literary activities” in the French controlled Departments.¹⁸ Creole French is viewed as a secondary means of communication even though one study showed that 82.5% of the population verified its common communicative value in daily life.¹⁹

Édouard Glissant put it this way, “Because Creole is not strong in particular areas of knowledge, parents fear (and they are partly right) that a child speaking Creole in his formative years would be disadvantaged in comparison with another who only spoke French.”²⁰ In Martinique, in particular, in order to counter this attitude, there has been a resurgence of Creole language and culture over the past forty years. Much of this, however, has been by Creole novelists who have intentionally used French, not Creole, to influence public opinion.²¹

Language choice and usage is a racially charged issue in Martinique. An essentially Creole people have been forced to use French as a means of communication. Because of European control and the influence of the Béké white minority, colonization is still viewed as an ongoing problem, both at the language and the economic levels.²² French supremacy is

Creole genesis (Charles A. Ferguson, “Absence of Copula and the Notion of Simplicity: A Study of Normal Speech, Baby Talk, Foreigner Talk, and Pidgins,” *Creolization of Languages*, Dell Hymes ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 141).

¹⁸ Mühlhäusler, *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics*, 321.

¹⁹ Georg Kremnitz, *Français et créole: ce qu'en pensent les enseignants : Le conflit linguistique à la Martinique* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1983), 287.

²⁰ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, J. Michael Dash, trans. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 182.

²¹ Mühlhäusler, *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics*, 322.

²² Békés (a corrupted term derived from “blond du quai,” or “the white person of the wharf”) are essentially the post-colonial white Creoles of the French Departments (Howard Johnson and Karl Watson, *The White Minority in the Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998), “Introduction” x). One view of Béké power even goes so far as to “considering them modern-day *négriers* (slave holders)” (Fred Constant, “French

accepted at the surface level, but the concession to adopt French culture and use the French language is often still made with protest, primarily because it reinforces the idea that the Creole language is not suitable for precision, for advancement, or for formal communication in general. It underpins what Jardel calls “un rapport de domination-subordination.”²³ Creole, as viewed by one historian, is a “jargon imbecile, imaginé en faveur d’une espèce d’homme que l’on a cru mal à propos trop peu intelligent pour en apprendre un autre.”²⁴ With this sort of attitude toward Creole language and identity, it is not hard to understand why there is deep resentment for what Condé calls “un système castrateur.”²⁵

Jardel’s model of emergent hybridization of African and European cultures into the Antillean culture serves very well to explain Martinican and Creole paradoxes in general.²⁶ Within this mixing, what in French is referred to as *métissage* or racial cross-breeding, there appears as broad a range of Creolization and Franconization at the language level as there is at the racial level.

Dialect variety in Martinique was analyzed by Lefebvre who found two dialect codes (French and Creole) as well as several grammatically identifiable intermediaries.²⁷ To simplify for the reader the grounds on which language choices are made, it might be said that

Republicanism under Challenge: White Minority (Béké) Power in Martinique and Guadeloupe,” in Howard Johnson and Karl Watson, *The White Minority in the Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998), 169).

²³ Jean-Pierre Jardel, *Les idioms français et Creole dans le conflit interculturel à la Martinique* (Paris: Centre mondial d’information sur l’éducation bilingue (CMIEB), 1978), 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15, Jardel quoting Girod-Chantrons without citation.

²⁵ Maryse Condé, *La civilisation du bossale : Réflexions sur la littérature orale de la Guadeloupe et de la Martinique* (Paris: Librairie—Editions L’Harmattan, 1978), 9.

²⁶ Jardel, *Les idioms français et Creole*, 29ff.

²⁷ Claire Lefebvre, “Discreteness and the Linguistic Continuum in Martinique,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 16(1974): 47-78

French is chosen in settings of respect or where education and social norms are important.²⁸

Beneath the surface of the Antillean who speaks French with a Caribbean accent, is the ever-lingering Creole culture that forms the foundation of linguistic structures and thought patterns in evangelical churches. Hélène Migerel put it this way when referring to the French of the people of Guadeloupe, the neighboring French Department with very similar cultural-linguistic roots: “[L]e Guadeloupéen ne parlait pas le français de France, il s’exprimait en un français accommodé à sa structure mentale dont les bases de construction étaient la manière de penser créole.”²⁹ In other words, Creole speakers who use French, fluent French, are really just using French grammar and language to express Creole thought.

The unfortunate consequence of these realities in church settings is that Creole peoples have chosen the official language at the expense of a culturally imaged one. At its base, French is a precise language and demands clarity, appropriate subordination, and logical connections. When a speaker chooses to develop French storied imagery over Creole forms, what is gained in clarity and narrative progression is lost in passion. What comes naturally to Creole peoples is juxtapositioning of ideas, suspense, and explosive force. French is a highly measured language, always reviewed by listeners for correctness. This propensity for exactness and precision has unfortunate consequences for imaged discourse in ecclesiastic settings. When a preference for accurate language is tied to the notion that the French language is also the language of advancement and liberty, the speaker in church contexts is almost obliged to make a language choice that reflects the cultural wave away from Creole.³⁰ The rather grave consequence is a culturally deformed verbal engagement.

²⁸ Ibid., 52, 67.

²⁹ Hélène Migerel, “Le parler, l’écrite, l’imaginaire,” *Créoles de la Caraïbe*, Alain Yacou, ed. (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1996), 95.

Language Choices in Church Settings

The view of French Creole as a substandard language, non-employable in formal or educational settings, accounts for the almost wholesale abandonment of Creole in church environments in French overseas Departments. The non-use of Creole in church locales is further aggravated by several theological factors. Nearly all Christian books are written in French. In addition, a very high percentage of pastors are educated in French schools in Europe or English schools in North America or the Caribbean and return to their Creole culture of origin significantly de-creolized. Even those who are educated locally still use textbooks prepared by French publishers.

The resulting church culture in the French Overseas Departments maintains a formal French learning environment. Although the people are bilingual and use their Creole in friendly conversation, home contexts, arguments, and jokes, French is the language of formal communication. The language choices of church leaders are made, therefore, based on educational advancement and clarity, and not spiritual heart issues or passionate engagement.

The typical cultural performance of Creole stories outside church settings complicates preacher delivery forms even further. Creole stories are normally sung. In Creole one says, “chanté en kont ba mwen,” literally, “sing me a story.”³¹ The call and response method of Martinican storytellers is similar to other black forms of interactive performance in the Caribbean and North America. It does not, however, exist in the church.

Based on my observations and analysis of professional storytellers in Martinique, it

³⁰ In the words of Fairclough: “. . . language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation” Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (Harlow: Longman, 1989), 193. French Caribbean Creole peoples embrace the import of Continental ideas and willfully abandon the advantages and linguistic emancipation that would take place if they chose to preach in the language of their heart, their respective French Creole.

³¹ Vocal technique involving “singing a story” was given by master-storyteller, Serge Bazas, in response to the paper: “Reflexion : Thème les fonctions du conte animé par l’écrivain Patrick Chamoiseau,” at “Les nuits du conte,” Centre culturel du bourg, Lamentin, Martinique, 30 mars 2004.

would be difficult to transfer the presentation habits found in the secular storytelling milieu into the pulpit, particularly because there are extremely rigid preaching delivery forms now in place in church settings in the Antilles. Creole story form involves irreverent call and response behaviors, jerky storyteller movement, a fast performance cadence, and a sung delivery, none of which are present to any extent within existing churches.³² The unfortunate consequence of preachers using non-Creole forms and the dominant French language in church environments is the loss of linguistic proximity and culturally localized speech forms.

Image Structures in the French Caribbean

It is only recently that Creole poetic analysis has become available in print. As of 1980, Robert Germain wrote, “Aucun traité de versification créole n’existe encore.”³³ As national pride has grown, however, there has also been a movement to publish indigenous Creole material. This has given rise to quite differing views of the nature of Creole poetry. “Or, la mélodie du vers créole ne jaillit point de la scansion, monotone à la longue et plutôt appauvrissante, mais de l’allongement des notes bien déterminées que sont le voyelles.”³⁴ By contrast, Édouard Glissant, the most celebrated Martinican novelist, states that “Caribbean speech is always excited, it ignores silence, softness, sentiment. The body follows suit. It does not know pause, rest, smooth continuity. It is jerked along.”³⁵ However, Glissant approaches the view of Germain when he says the Creole communicates sense by means of

³² Chaudenson lists six types of Creole stories: “récits étiologiques,” “récits mimologiques,” “récits réalistes,” “legends,” “anecdotes,” et “contes avec des animaux” (Robert Chaudenson, *Des îles, des hommes, des langues* (Paris: Éditions L’Harmattan, 1992), 268). Commonly recurring elements in Creole stories are tricksters, powerful evil people, talking animals, tests to overcome the impossible, and resurrected people or spirits (Ibid., 266-77).

³³ Robert Germain, *Grammaire Creole* (Paris: Editions L’Harmattan, 1980), 146.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 123.

“pitch” and “intensity,” which he summarizes by the terms “blast of sound.”³⁶ This is important for our study in that “it is a constant feature of the popular use of Creole in Martinique. Not only in the delivery of folktales and songs, but even and often in daily speech.”³⁷ Speakers converse and “punctuate” their exchange with what Glissant calls the “embryonic rhythm of the drum.”³⁸

Because the Creole language originated in the “plantation system,” and that national productive milieu that gave rise to the language no longer exists, the imaged speech that found its rhythmic framework in production of rum, bananas, and sugar no longer finds a functional reference point.³⁹ French is in the process of supplanting Creole as a means of poetic expression throughout the French Caribbean, even in spite of nationalistic endeavors to propagate indigenous literature. In the realm of song, however, Creole orality lives on. Unfortunately for church work in Martinique, music does not easily translate into story structures. It does, nevertheless, provide contemporary examples of Creole image use in an oral domain. Although Creole vocabulary is diminishing from lack of use, Creole poetic structures are developing in specific poetic genres such as song and chant.

In Martinique church settings, believers have an identity that is grounded in the eternal verities of the French Bible. Consequently, the Creole language does not help much in creating an ongoing Christian identity. Spiritual ideas that define Creole society are addressed in French and, thereby, are always one linguistic step removed from the heart that engenders them. Simply put, church leadership uses French language to address problems

³⁶ Ibid., 124.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 125-127.

that are essentially Creole in nature.

To this author's knowledge, there are no studies of language habits of French Creole peoples in evangelical churches in the Caribbean.⁴⁰ This study is unique in that it attempts to address oral figure-production mechanisms in the French/Creole context of Martinique. Hence, the value in the ensuing chapters results from its distinctive setting and the universality of certain metaphoric engagement processes that work in spite of very real linguistic problems. It will also become clear that the figure formation practices and image-interpretive structures that exist in evangelical church contexts in Martinique show paradigmatic value for other missionary settings as well.

The usefulness of the employed method emerges from its ability to create appropriate language choices based on listener realities in the setting, and not on the judgments of educated preachers who have a clear preference for preaching in French. Since the preaching setting drives the selection of figured media in the engagement model, parabolic pedagogy helps valorize specific language choices, especially Creole forms, for image and story delivery in church settings.

⁴⁰ However, Phillippe Chanson published a series of sermons addressing the issues of liberty and slavery as illustrated by a few highly recurring expressions among Creoles in French Guiana (*Kouraj di kré lò nou kréol : L'audace du croire en culture créole* (Cayenne: Atelier Guyanais de théologie, 1996)).

CHAPTER TEN

DESIGNING AN EXPERIMENT IN 'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT' PEDAGOGY

Would not a man be ridiculous, then, if in a trial or in a domestic procedure he should contest the issue on the basis of his own personal testimony? For an example is used just like testimony to prove a point.
[Cicero] *Ad Herennium* IV.I.2

Introduction to the Project

The purpose of this experimental study was to create and validate a parabolic preaching model appropriate for missiological contexts where literacy levels were low.¹ The individual aspects of the pedagogy were designed around the cultural elements of seminar participants as well as the speaking conditions that preachers encounter during circumstantial delivery. The curriculum content included the following key concepts and techniques: parabolic engagement, contextual sensitivity, cultural appropriateness, isolating the illustrative crux, incorporating moral force, detailing an appropriate correspondence through careful analogy, creating narrative extension, and applying the figured idea to the physical context through planned and impromptu development.

The preaching pedagogy was specifically designed to teach students how to cultivate human interest via the grammatical construction of verbal figures. In other words, preachers were taught the interpersonal communicative aspects of preaching images and stories. The experiment proceeded on the assumption that it is possible to create successful engagement with an audience by focusing the listener on God through a figured explanation of the biblical text.

The complexities of the theoretical development explained in Part One were condensed for a series of clear, figure-constructive exercises, and the intricacies of the invention techniques explained in Part Two were reduced to their most essential elements.

¹ The statement of the research topic is based upon the model provided by L. R. Gay and Peter Airasian in *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, 2000), 42.

There was a minimal use of technical terminology, and only the simplest of generative procedures were practiced in the classroom setting. The result was a modular format consisting of 11 core skills explained in detail below.

I found that the capacity of a student to assimilate and execute a generative technique successfully was inversely proportional to the complexity of the training material. When the materials were simplified down to a child-like quality, students learned quickly. Most participants without university education could be trained to use most methods with about fifteen minutes of instruction.

The overall project consisted of developing, teaching, and testing a simplified, contextual proclamation method using specific figure-based invention techniques. After teaching those skills to select Creole and French church leaders, I measured student implementation and effectiveness through quantitative and qualitative assessment. The experiment demonstrated that a simple way of teaching people to preach using figures was attainable through modeling, repetition, and oral exercises.

Needs Assessment

Discovering the need for a figure-based communication methodology in mission settings was initially the result of personal observations. I began developing a new concept because literacy issues were constantly emerging, and I discovered that the Haitians with whom I was working at the time received imaged communication with much more facility. There also appeared to be a rather large discrepancy between what semi-literate pastors were practicing, namely a poorly implemented exegetical preaching method, and their native capacity as storytellers. It was also difficult for less-literate audiences to follow word-for-word explanations of the biblical text. There was an obvious need for a more straightforward delivery system using indigenous speech forms and local talking patterns.

In her work on *Occupation-oriented Training and Education for Target Groups from*

the Informal Sector, Cornelia Lohmar-Kuhnle describes the importance of locating “target groups” before defining objectives and strategies.² Consequently, at the outset of the study, I examined the vocational needs of groupings within the missionary context, particularly bi-vocational preachers and volunteer church workers whose ability to work in abstract categories was minimal.

In a people-centered approach to designing vocational needs, “the objectives orientation as well as the design of development measures are essentially determined by the specific assistance needs of the respective target groups.”³ The design of a communication training within the targeted, semi-literate church sub-groups was determined first by the observational conclusions made by the author in the context of his missionary work and then by the distribution and collection of the needs assessment survey located in Appendix 2.

Actual course content for parabolic engagement flowed out of a 35-question needs assessment survey distributed to 32 active church members and church workers.⁴ The results are found in Appendix 2. The instrument used “Likert scaling,” and demonstrated significant differences between the practices of speakers and the desires of listeners in the local assemblies.⁵ The survey measured knowledge of images, feelings about their use, and the

² Cornelia Lohmar-Kuhnle, *Occupation-oriented Training and Education for Target Groups from the Informal Sector*, trans. by Mike Brookman and Cornelia Lohmar-Kuhnle (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1994), 30.

³ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴ “An important aspect of the development of learner-centered activities is the identification of learners’ needs” (Anna Garry and John Cowan, *Continuing Professional Development: A Learner Centered Strategy* (Edinburgh: FEU/Pickup, 1986), 28). The curriculum in this study, however, was not constructed solely around “perceived needs,” but rather around “prescribed needs,” those I determined church preachers and teachers should have (Derek Rowntree, *Making Materials-Based Learning Work: Principles, Politics and Practicalities* (London: Stirling, 1997), 86).

⁵ Rensis Likert invented a five-part scale of attitude ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” (Mike Procter, “Measuring Attitudes,” in Nigel Gilbert, ed., *Researching Social Life*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 111). This survey as well as the other surveys in this study used a standard 5-1 numbering system where the number 3 was neutral. Anything above a 3 was a positive response, and scores below the number 3 showed negative response.

practice of figured delivery in church settings. It evaluated image creation and storytelling in particular. Overall, the response to image and story use in church settings was decidedly positive, even overwhelmingly so. I discovered that there was virtually no need to convince church leaders and members of the value or impact of storytelling, or a need to brief them on the affective and motivational sides of using images.

The needs assessment showed, among other things, that the fundamental issue in image and story production was not a lack of time as I suspected, but a lack of training. People responded that they had enough time to create stories but struggled with a lack of training. Most respondents disagreed with the statement: “I do not need a course in teaching using stories.”

Among those surveyed, preachers were generally seen as not having good skills in engagement. They were generally viewed as not interacting well with their context, not adequately taught how to use stories to improve their teaching, not experienced at how to invent figures during preaching, and not that strong at putting their notes aside. By contrast, listeners remarked that they were more attentive, more comfortable, understood better, and liked it when the speaker used a figure. Listeners also thought that preachers should use more illustrations and spend less time explaining the text in a traditional discursive fashion. Some of the strongest responses on the questionnaire were those that pertained to the audience’s desire for good sensory detail and captivating suspense.

The reality was that people believed their church teachers needed to use more illustrations but were inadequately trained. Teachers viewed themselves as being able to invent stories but as also not having adequate training. They indicated that they needed a course that explained how to use stories and illustrations in their teaching, and that they were ready to be taught how to invent and tell stories at church.

In summary, stories and images were highly valued as teaching tools but vastly

under-used and under-taught. They were seen as simpler and more forceful. The assessment also showed that people wanted to use and hear more imaged communication, but they and their leaders were not trained in that area.

Due in part to these results, the course curriculum was constructed around the essential conclusions of the survey, namely: 1) That there was a technical/how-to demand for image-construction content; 2) That divergent knowledge levels required a curriculum that started from the most basic elements of image production, but was technically complicated enough to challenge those who had prior knowledge and experience; 3) That teaching practice and knowledge of construction of stories and images had to be brought up to the same level as their positive feelings about the practical value of figures; 4) That most survey participants did not know how to interact with their contextual setting while they spoke. The outcomes of the survey convinced me that the teaching aspect of this study needed to focus on communicator skill acquisition. It needed to consist primarily of easily reproducible figure generative methods.

From an assessment standpoint, it became critical to measure if and how increased delivery skill in image and story production were possible to teach, and whether or not the quality of the preaching showed satisfactory levels of engagement. It was not enough simply to produce image and narrative. I had to demonstrate that the newly invented image and narrative possessed a simple contextualized engagement quality.

In order to accomplish this type of assessment, it was necessary to focus the curriculum into three general areas upon which the pedagogy and student acquisition could be measured. These areas were: the student's ability to analyze the textual subject, the student's capacity to express analogous correspondence through image invention, and the suitability of the student's extended narrative within a particular context.

These three ideas were also evaluated from the perspective of audience reception.

Listeners were asked questions in structured probing concerning their perception of the communication. Those written assessments and interviews concerned a detailed questioning of the listener's observations about the preached textual idea, the listener's evaluation of the analogous delivery medium, and the listener's judgment of how appropriate the extended sermonic components were to the cultural setting.

Experimental Parameters and Curriculum Design

The formal parabolic engagement experiment that demonstrated the feasibility of a simplified figured preaching model suitable for French Antillean contexts was conducted from 1/2003 – 12/2003 among select Creoles and French Europeans living in Martinique. Some aspects of the curriculum development and initial discoveries were also dependent upon pilot seminars taught to Haitians in Cayenne, French Guiana, and Georgetown, Maryland, as well as to thirty-five Canadians in Montreal, Quebec. I make no decisive claims about other ethnic groups or about other French peoples living in Europe or other parts of the world. While the investigation has particular indebtedness to educational research method, the conclusions concern missiological preaching theory and practice.

The examination qualifies as “transnational research.”⁶ It involved “spatially dispersed” peoples, “multisited” fieldwork,⁷ and used quantitative data collection as well as various types of ethnographic interview techniques.⁸ In the case of the latter, I attempted to

⁶ See Ulf Hannerz, “Transnational Research,” *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, H. Russell Bernard, ed. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1998), 235.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 247. Other variables included extensive cultural variation and several bilingual combinations typical of transnational fieldwork among Diaspora communities (249). As a result of cultural diversity, ethnographic conclusions were more superficial, a fact typical of this genre of study (250). “Data quality control” was an issue with respect to some informants and resulted in “underreporting” (Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember, “Cross-Cultural Research,” *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, H. Russell Bernard, ed. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1998), 672). I followed the techniques for valid “rapid scanning” during “rapid ethnographic assessment” as outlined by Robert T. Trotter, II and Jean J. Schensul, in “Methods in Applied Anthropology,” *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, H. Russell Bernard, ed. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1998), 717.

use qualitative interviews to refine the quantitative instruments in order to assure that I was getting good results for key variables.

The study began with a piloting project that lasted from 07/2001 - 12/2002. Ideas gleaned from the initial classes in French Guiana were developed, refined, and simplified in seminars given in Quebec and the United States. The methods developed during the pilot period were later taught in the formal experiment from 1/2003 through 12/2003 to 18 European French and Martinique Creoles preaching students who agreed to be part of the research. Of the 67 people trained during the pilot period in the four countries listed above, 53 were trained in the first module, 26 also were trained in the second module, and 15 completed up to the third module (see totals in Table 11).

Of the 11 sessions taught during the piloting phase of the training, not one session was taught in the same manner as the previous one. Each teaching period lasted from one to two hours and nearly always demanded the simplification of materials from previous formats in order to suit better the purposes of the overall course objective of engagement skill acquisition.

During the pilot period, there was significant revision of the approach. In the early stages of the experiment, some methods were dropped immediately after being tested in the classroom. Most notable were: 1) my teaching of rhetorical terms and figure types (dropped in Guyane, 8/2001); 2) the teaching of tension by means of the Ciceronian periodic sentence (dropped after Maryland teaching, 4/2002); and 3) complex written assessment (dropped in Martinique, 2/2003). Another important modification to the modular aspect of the curriculum was the early discovery in Montreal (7/2002) that the image-generative technique was

⁸ Jeffrey C. Johnson in his article "Research Design and Research Studies" calls the use of variety in data collection "multi-method ethnography" (*Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, H. Russell Bernard, ed. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1998), 235).

unquestionably the most important foundation-building component.⁹ Table 11 demonstrates the statistical aspects of the core teaching/learning dynamics during the pilot period.

TABLE 11
OVERVIEW OF THE TEACHING PROGRAM DURING THE PILOT PERIOD

Location	Total Number of Participants	Ethnic Breakdown	Number of Pastors	Number of Church Leaders Who Were Not Pastors	Number of Lay People Not in Leadership	Average No. of Years Experience Teaching in Church	Story Module Participants	Image Module Participants	Episode Module Participants	Assessment Documents Collected	Personal, Written Interviews
Guyane	10	Haitian Creoles	0	10	0	?	0	10	0	1	1
Georgetown, Maryland	5	Haitian Creoles	2	3	0	?	5	0	0	0	1
Montreal	35	27 Anglophones 8 Francophones	7	23	5	18	25	10	1	19	
Gondeau, Martinique	5	Martinican Creoles	0	5	0	8	5	4	3	4	1
St. Anne, Martinique	12	3 Martinican Creoles 7 French 2 Belgians	0	1	11	0	9	12	11	8	8
Totals	67		9	42	16		44	36	15	32	11

Following this piloting stage, there were 18 regular participants and a few other periodic attendees who agreed to be a part of the formal training during 2003. Of these 18 people, there were almost an equal number of students from European and Antillean origin. Not all were preachers, but all taught regularly in some church capacity. There were two distinct teaching settings for the 11 engagement modules. The two groups did not have the

⁹ The fundamental nature of image is born out in Eslinger's assessment of the imagination in preaching (Richard L. Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching: New Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 246ff). His evaluation concerns the facility of a "Homiletics of Imagery" (ibid., 246).

same level of participation. The 12 students living in the south of Martinique came regularly to meetings, wrote out assignments, made themselves available for interviews, and were integral in the development and refining of the curriculum. There were also six faithful Martinican Creole leaders from three churches in the Fort de France area who completed the training in a second location but who had difficulty turning in written materials.¹⁰

During the initial teaching sessions, I was particularly interested in barriers and aids to figure creation. It was important to know as quickly as possible the major hindrances to the acquisition of a simple, engagement paradigm. In 8 early interviews, the following helpful observations came to light: 1) None of the 8 people interviewed wrote anything down by way of a story or image planning, but instead had a tendency to write their material after basic elements were developed in their heads; 2) Only 2 of 8 consciously used the course techniques to aid them in creation; 3) Those people who had apprehensions about their personal ability to create figures took longer to create material; 4) Of the 12 participants total, there was one who categorically refused to invent anything; 5) Motivation was a greater causal agent in success than was skill development, and those more driven to invent a good story achieved higher levels of success based on evaluative factors like detail, contextual relevance, and some subjectively measured factors such as plot tension/resolution.

These early observations aided me to construct a simple pedagogical approach that focused on oral repetition and motivation. Written assessments were thereafter not very complex. I designed them so that they could be completed in a short period of time. They required almost no extensive written sentence development on the part of the student.

¹⁰ Writing apprehension proved to be a significant problem among members of the Gondeau group. By contrast, 8 of the St. Anne students were able to construct parables with fairly complex content by the end of the third module and even responded in writing about the process. The parables were manuscripted and distributed for evaluation and improvement in subsequent sessions. 5 of the 14 parables were compiled on a CD for an audience assessment detailed in Appendices 7-13. The CD instrument was modeled after the audio cassette study done by John Waite Bowers and Michael Osborn, "Attitudinal Effects of Selected Types of Concluding Metaphors in Persuasive Speeches," *Speech Monographs* 33 (June 1966): 147-55.

During the early stages of the experimental research and apprenticing, the idea of engagement became much clearer. I came to realize that images and stories themselves were constructed not just with persuasive and cognitive results. It was often the emotional and spiritual quality of the imaged correspondence that created good understanding and significant contact between speaker and listener. This idea greatly helped in measuring the value of teaching a context-friendly preaching model to multi-ethnic French speakers.

The ultimate value of this study in the world of missiology and homiletics was that it examined the acquisition and effectiveness of a simple preaching technique that was based on orality principles and circumstantial delivery. It did so by measuring student performance as well as audience reception.

It was helpful to have an “open learning” type of educational approach where there was a high degree of learner-latitude in the implementation of the image invention teaching.¹¹ Every student had a choice of environment to implement the image and story creation strategies. What resulted was a broad “range of contexts,” a location strategy fully consistent with the objectives of informal learning where access is a central value.¹² Five of the students preached periodically in more traditional church settings, the remainder taught in Sunday School, in home group settings, or in pioneer church planting venues.

Since assessment involved both the constructive side of sermonic invention and the interpretive side of audience engagement, the two-fold appraisal involved measuring how students learned and used production methods as well as how listeners received what students

¹¹ Alan Clarke and Joyce Walmsley, *Open Learning Materials and Learning Centers* (Leicester: NIACE, 1999), 33. See also Clive Jeffries, *A-Z of Open Learning* (Cambridge: National Extension College, 1990), 65.

¹² McGivney, *Informal Learning in the Community*, xi. She also says: “*Non formal education is life, environment and learner oriented. It is diversified in content and method; it is built on learner participation*” (italics hers, 1). See also Phil Race, *How to Win as an Open Learner* (Coventry: National Council for Educational Technology, 1986), 37.

produced. When it was possible to assess certain variables quantitatively, I designed tests to evaluate those elements statistically. This resulted in 9 quantitative assessments that measured the principal aspects of the preaching experiment.

TABLE 12
OVERVIEW OF QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Subject of Assessment	Number of individuals Participating	Written Surveys Examined	Group Completing the Assessment
1. General Story/Image Needs Assessment	32	32	Church Members
2. Piloted Listener Assessment of Story	25	14	Seminar Participants ¹³
3. Piloted Listener Assessment of Image	10	5	Seminar Participants
4. Episodic Recognition Assessment	12	4	Students
5. Plot Movement Assessment	12	8	Students
6. Parable CD Listener Assessment	62	56	French & Creole General Public
7. Assessment of the Success or Failure of Spontaneous Images and Stories	18	11	Audience Listeners
8. Creation of Detail	6	6	Students
9. Final Student Survey	13	13	Students

Table 12 shows the evolution of the program from needs assessment (1), to project piloting (2-3), to student assessment (4-5), to audience response evaluation (6), to the assessment of technique refinement (7-8), to exit testing (9). Although these quantitative instruments were not the focal aspect of the evaluation process, the sustained administration of statistical measures throughout the process kept the study focused and provided numerical evaluation in precise areas.¹⁴ These short surveys also afforded aid to learners in that they

¹³ The term “Seminar Participants” reflects those who were present in early pilot classes. They were not the “Students” who followed the extended preaching instruction in Martinique.

¹⁴ See Harry Ayers, Don Clarke, and Alastair Ross, *Assessing Individual Needs: A Practical Approach* (London: David Fulton Publishers, 1993), 9.

gave immediate feedback on important elements of learner performance. While the quantification of speaker/listener data is not typical in preaching studies, I found these assessment instruments to be invaluable, especially their utility in focusing the face-to-face interview process on core research elements.

When speaking with informants during post-preaching qualitative assessment, I found that the carefully designed questions contained in the quantitative questionnaires created a starting point for clearly focused interview structure. In addition, the fact that the quantitative and qualitative processes addressed the same key elements helped to make generalization easier. Both numerical measures and interviews were drawing data on the same key issues.

The development of assessment instruments at the beginning of the experimental examination greatly helped clarify the 35 listener-based criteria I found to be of chief importance in evaluating the engagement quality of narrative and image.¹⁵ I often found myself returning to these same issues over and over again as I questioned student and audience members. I discovered that engagement quality frequently pivoted on the detailed aspects of certain key elements: the affective power of the figure to move and identify with the listener, the figure's capacity to bring about cognitive change, the constructive choices for good analogy and coherence, the quality and method of cultural linkages, and basic voice/delivery mechanics.

Action Research Method

After the initial piloting period, I developed a two-part field experiment¹⁶ using a participatory action research model.¹⁷ It involved a built-in "continuation strategy" that

¹⁵ Most of these are detailed in Appendix 5.

¹⁶ David K. Wiles, *Changing Perspectives in Educational Research* (Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Company, 1972), 97.

¹⁷ In participatory action research there is "continuous interaction of research with the action through joint research/actor data collection, analysis, reflection, and use . . . [T]he means is the end, and the conduct of

measured progress over time.¹⁸ The two stages of the experiment were as follows:

1) A teaching stage that measured student acquisition of the figure generation concepts; 2)

The field-testing of the concepts by the students that included the measuring of audience reception of created figures. These two stages were often conducted simultaneously during the experimentation period. In other words, the speaker and audience evaluation processes were repeated over and over again, and were at times overlapping and happening simultaneously. Both the teaching stage and the student implementation stage were evaluated during the entire twelve-month period, appraising eleven figure and contextualizing techniques one after another in a cyclical fashion.

When measuring student aspects in the field experiment, the assessments were set up according to a “correlational design”¹⁹ that tested the relationship of education and cultural origin to the implementation and mastery of the parabolic engagement method. The results showed that a simplified preaching model based on image and narrative construction was attainable for all students, even those with limited education. It did so by monitoring two distinct samplings. The first was a “panel of knowledgeable informants” who learned and executed the concept, while the second was a “sample of representatives” who responded to and evaluated the imaged delivery.²⁰

The field of educational research provided the most appropriate framework for an assessment of this type, one that involved a teacher, students, audiences, curriculum, and performance. In educational investigation, the teacher is often a researching participant

the research is embedded in the process of introducing or generating change” (Trotter and Schensul, “Methods in Applied Anthropology,” 693).

¹⁸ Veronica McGivney, *Informal Learning in the Community: A Trigger for Change and Development* (Leicester: NIACE, 1999), vi-ix.

¹⁹ Robert E. Slavin, *Research Methods in Education* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), 63.

²⁰ Robert S. Weiss, *Learning from Strangers* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 17-18.

wherein she creates an ethnography based on observations and evaluations within educational culture. The research is not directed at the wider societal context.²¹

The investigative model chosen for this study was that of “action research[,] . . . a strategy of educational research in the “Teacher as Researcher” movement headed by Lawrence Stenhouse.”²² Action research is primarily concerned with progress and cooperation. “The purpose is always to improve practice, rather than find truths, universal or particular.”²³ Its methods are often qualitative, subjective, and sometimes are viewed as not scientific in that they involve intervention or even “emancipation.”²⁴ Participative qualities of the teacher-as-researcher model not only are possible but also provide a framework for collecting data that would otherwise be impossible.²⁵

Action research functions on a “cyclical approach” to action and analysis, and involves “identification of a problem, collecting information, analyzing, planning action/intervention, and implementing and monitoring the outcomes.”²⁶ In this study, the pedagogy and assessments attempted to strike a balance between cooperation, reflection,

²¹ Graham Hitchcock and David Hughes, *Research and the Teacher: A qualitative introduction to school-based research*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 25.

²² Ibid., 27. “Action Research . . . has an extremely long and illustrious pedigree in education including such names as: Lawrence Stenhouse, Chris Argyris, Donald Schon, Jürgen Habermas and the Frankfurt school, the ‘Deakin’ school in Australia (Carr, Kemmis, McTaggart), and (arguably) Paulo Freire” (Helen Beetham, IFETS-Discuss Digest, 19 October 1999, http://ifets.ieee.org/past_archives/archiv_260899_250200/0362.html (1 February 2004)). For the contribution of Kurt Lewin see (Kathrine P. McFarland and John C. Stansell, “Historical Perspectives” in *Teachers Are Researchers: Reflection and Action*, Leslie Patterson, et al., eds. (Newark: International Reading Association, 1993)).

²³ Hitchcock and Hughes, *Research and the Teacher*, 28.

²⁴ Ibid., 29. The literature analyzing action research is often critical of its non-positivistic approach. See also, William A. Firestone and Judith A. Dawson, “Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis: Intuitive, Procedural, and Intersubjective,” *Qualitative Approaches to Evaluation in Education: The Silent Scientific Revolution*, David M. Fetterman, ed. (New York: Praeger, 1988), 209ff.

²⁵ Leslie Patterson and Patrick Shannon, “Reflection, Inquiry, Action,” *Teachers Are Researchers: Reflection and Action*, Leslie Patterson, et al., eds. (Newark: International Reading Association, 1993), 9.

²⁶ Hitchcock and Hughes, *Research and the Teacher*, 28. Patterson and Shannon offer a similar cycle, calling it “Reflection, Inquiry, and Action,” (*Teachers Are Researchers* (7-11)).

change, and evaluation. It was “applied research” that evaluated process and “facilitate[d] change.”²⁷

Participatory action research fits well in the milieu of church adult education where there are not only unique learning motivations on the part of students but also non-traditional settings and curriculum. Communication development within Christian teaching environments parallels workplace and skills-training in the secular world. The local context in Martinique involved adults already active in their “workplace” who desired specific skill *improvement*.²⁸

Since nearly all of the students who participated in the communication apprenticeship were educated under the French method of instruction, they were familiar with a “teacher-dominated knowledge delivery method.”²⁹ I tried, however, to model my communication patterns according to the group dynamics more typical to social settings in French culture. I attempted the “resuscitation of dormant indigenous media as the basic communication infrastructure for village [i.e. church] communication.”³⁰ Consequently, the techniques were more informal and appropriate for mission settings.

Sampling and Validity

There were 18 adults who followed the one-year student apprenticeship. They were a gender-mixed group from various denominations. Since sample size in quantitative studies

²⁷ Hitchcock and Hughes, *Research and the Teacher*, 32-34.

²⁸ Calder and McCollum cite four types of training need: 1) *Induction/preparation for a specific job using a specific skill*; 2) *Updating/improving performance of a specific skill*; 3) *Induction/preparation for a job using generic skills*; and 4) *Updating/improving performance of generic skills* (Judith Calder and Ann McCollum, *Open and Flexible Learning in Vocational Education Training* (London: Kogan Page, 1998), 54-55). This study was within the bounds of the second category.

²⁹ Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh, *Communication, Education and Development: Exploring an African Cultural Setting*, 2nd ed. (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1997), 66.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

depends on the objectives, our study has a good “range” in lieu of random sampling.³¹ What was pivotal in the experiment was obtaining student samplings with “significant variation.”³² I wanted those: 1) From different ethnic groups; 2) With high/low literacy levels; 3) With/without preaching experience; 4) With/without teaching experience; 5) With/without prior training.

From an audience perspective, there were various samplings during different stages of the study. Audience samples were also not randomized. More often than not, they were chosen through convenience sampling from among the personal friends of the student who could evaluate and give observational comments about figure implementation.

The implications of choosing personal friends and acquaintances to do evaluation were diverse. Evaluative honesty was sometimes a problem, but the sustained connection between speaker and auditor often corrected some of the skewing of the sample. Distortion of the evaluation because of the personal connections was often present among Creole participants where social hierarchies discouraged open criticism.

The purpose of this study was not to create a classical experimental design study with control groups; nevertheless, it was possible to make very clear comparisons between samplings of the participants in a “contrasted group design.”³³ Creole and European French participants became grouped for ethnic contrasting. Since the experiment was attempting to measure enhancement in figured delivery of speakers and improvement of audience

³¹ When sample sizes are smaller, it is important to select respondents with “all the important dissimilar forms present in the larger population” (Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, 23). In our case, it was based on the issues of significant variation listed above. An adequate number of respondents for the quantifiable assessment instruments is usually “at least 50 to 100 cases” among the smallest subgroup (David de Vaus, *Surveys in Social Research*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 83).

³² Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, 24.

³³ David Nachmias and Chava Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 111. It is also called a “cross-sectional or correlation design,” where one “collects measures from at least two groups of people at one point of time and compare[s] the extent to which the two groups differ on the dependent variable” (deVaus, *Surveys in Social Research*, 36).

comprehension through qualitative measures, contrasted groups provided clear comparative measures over the course of the training.³⁴ At times these groups were also subdivided by other demographic characteristics, for example, educational attainment and literacy level.

The two groups were, for the most part, taught separately. It was not my intention to divide the students on ethnic grounds, but geographical distance made it impossible to mix them. There was one group of 6 Creole Antilleans and a second group composed of 3 Antilleans, 7 French Europeans, and 2 Belgians.³⁵

Randomization is often not possible in contrasted group design, and such was the case in my assembling the sub-groups of French and Creole church leaders. There was, however, significant mixing of the sample in the study as a whole, the participants coming from multiple churches, multiple teaching levels within the churches, and from varying ethnic groups in different geographical areas.³⁶

The geographical diversity of participants aids the study in that it highlights common or distinct traits. Whether or not people were born in Martinique or Europe made little difference to the core conclusions if in fact diverse peoples possessed similar communication qualities regardless of their country of origin or mother tongue. By the same token, if there were interpretive trends on the part of *audience* members, the diversity of ethnic origin only served to prove the universality of my conclusions about the suitability of the method.

Student Assessment

The assessment process was conducted along two separate lines. The first measured

³⁴ “Rigor in teacher research comes . . . from an explicit and well-developed philosophical point of view that guides reflection, creativity and responsiveness in gathering information and refining inquiry, and the quality of action taken” (Patterson and Shannon, “Reflection, Inquiry, Action,” 9-10).

³⁵ Except where indicated, the French Europeans and French-speaking Belgians are grouped together in the ensuing analysis and are both referred to as “French.”

³⁶ “Thus, if the same finding is obtained in other settings, and comparisons are made on a number of measures concerning the dependent variables, then such supplementary evidence can increase the inferential powers of a Contrasted Groups Design” (Nachmias and Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 112).

the long-term progression of students in figure-producing skills, both at the psychomotor level and the knowledge level. The second assessed the student's success in image and story delivery from the audience's point of view. Measuring the viability of a parabolic engagement method of preaching in the Antilles required measuring both the acquisition and delivery use of all eleven skills.

TABLE 13

DOMAINS OF MEASUREMENT OF PARABOLIC CONSTRUCTION AND DELIVERY

Measured Domain	Analysis	Analogy	Extension	Contextual Engagement
Student Constructive Strategies	Ability to assess the figured aspects of the textual idea	Ability to analogize a text into an image or story	Ability to appropriately expand analogous ideas	Ability to perceive and assess the setting and culture
Student Delivery Skills	Ability to communicate the textual idea by means of a figure	Ability in crisp, oral compression with appropriate correspondence	Ability to develop plot, suspense, and detail before an audience	Ability to integrate the figure into the physical context and engage an audience

Assessment instruments and interviews were administered to monitor speaker development over time in the domains of analysis, analogy, extension, and contextual delivery. Most of the skill development modules followed a teaching pattern that moved from explanation to example to creation. Students were taught a technique of image or story invention, then shown by the teacher how to reproduce it orally, and were ultimately expected to imitate a similar use themselves. There was an in-class practice regimen of "discursive exploration"³⁷ similar to oral methods in the language classroom. Students were expected to

³⁷ Eunice Fisher, "Distinctive Features of Pupil-Pupil Classroom Talk and Their Relationship to Learning: How Discursive Exploration Might be Encouraged," *Language, Literacy and Learning in Educational Practice* Barry Stierer and Janet Maybin, eds. (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, Ltd. and The Open University, 1994), 157ff.

implement generation methods at the spoken level immediately after those strategies were taught and demonstrated.

Testing in the classroom was often immediate. This practice produced regular experimental results through “continuous assessment.”³⁸ Skill acquisition was analyzed over time and was accomplished through self-assessment³⁹ and qualitative interviews.

Most of the references for evaluation were a mixture of “criterion-referenced” and not “norm-referenced” standards, because in fact no norms had yet been developed.⁴⁰ The criterion referencing was done according to the teaching objectives stated in the lesson plans. More specifically, the achievement of each individual lesson plan objective was evaluated through one of the stated assessment avenues that measured “competences.”⁴¹ For example, a session on creating detail was evaluated through a simple exercise in developing specifics for incomplete images and stories, followed by an interview process with students about the method and its results.

Postulating Hypotheses

The point of view of the study was decidedly prescriptive, one in which I attempted to control the teaching and objectives of the program implementation.⁴² In order to test the

³⁸ Vivienne E. Cree, “The Challenge of Assessment,” in *Transfer of Learning in Professional and Vocational Education*, Vivienne E. Cree and Cathlin Macaulay, eds. (London: Routledge, 2001), 30.

³⁹ Self-assessment is subject to credibility problems (Lynn Lyons Morris and Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, *How to Measure Program Implementation* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978), 52ff). Data validity is best assured by the concurrence of “converging data,” namely, through the agreement of multiple types of assessment (53).

⁴⁰ Cree, “The Challenge of Assessment,” 47.

⁴¹ Urban Whitaker defines competences as “knowledge,” “skills,” and “what the individual should be able to do.” *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures*, Forward by Morris Keeton (Philadelphia: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 1989), 29.

⁴² Often in experimental studies, the environment is not controlled but simply evaluated or measured. However, in educational research, variables are highly controlled in order to measure precise outcomes (Morris and Fitz-Gibbon, *How to Measure Program Implementation*, 38).

utility of the engagement pedagogy in the target setting, I posited and tested two entirely different hypotheses. The first measured *student implementation* of the image generation concepts, the second considered *listener reception* of parabolic engagement delivery.

Student Acquisition and Implementation

In measuring this first object of student acquisition and employment, I determined that the usefulness of the pedagogical method was tied to both the amount of time it took to learn the process and how easy it was to use. Consequently, the postulated assumption was that: *The utility of parabolic pedagogy can be determined by the participant's speed of acquisition and dexterity of employment of the figured engagement techniques.*

It was important to use select engagement techniques that could be measured as indicators of acquisition and employment. They included: the defining and divisioning of the subject, finding correspondences, storying the meaning of a particular biblical text, incorporation of detail, employing narrative tension, assessing the contextual audience, and adjusting delivery to a particular context. Students were given simple oral and written exercises to determine the acquirement of each technique. Students were also individually interviewed periodically throughout the learning process to hear their opinions and reflections about the learning process.

At times, I set up some specific student profiling instruments to measure certain secondary variables against the stated behavioral outcomes of acquisition and employment, but these tests only provided clarity to the general hypothesis that a simple, figured pedagogy was viable in the French Antilles because it was easy to learn and contextually useful.⁴³ For example, at times the instruments or interviews revealed that student results varied according

⁴³ Sociological testing often concerns beliefs, knowledge, behavior, or attributes, the first three coinciding with the three major domains: the affective, the cognitive, and the behavioral (see de Vaus, *Surveys in Social Research*, 95). This study consistently uses the vocabulary addressing the knowledge, emotion, behavior trichotomy associated with Bloom's taxonomy (David Gray, Colin Griffin, and Tony Nasta, *Training to Teach in Further and Adult Education* (Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes Publishers, 2000), 73).

to precise factors such as educational levels or previously acquired delivery habits in church settings. When these issues arose, I usually attempted to understand the connection but kept the focus on testing the overall viability of the techniques across all the variables. I endeavored to do this without entering excessively into the complexities of *causes* for success and failure of acquisition and employment within subgroupings.⁴⁴

After I began teaching, for example, it was almost immediately observable that people who had long tenures in churches had difficulty in changing their communication patterns. Tenure was largely a negative factor in parabolic engagement acquisition. It was obvious. In assuming that progress in interacting with the audience would be affected by tenure in a church, however, I wrongly postulated that it would be possible to prove a causal link between previously acquired communication habits in churches and learning new skills in oral audience interaction. What I discovered was that in reality, many other unidentifiable factors affected the acquisition of audience interaction skills, not simply tenure.

While it was nearly impossible to link facility of acquisition and dexterity of employment to any precise issue, I discovered certain generalizations were possible based on interviews and observations. One such observation was that acquisition was tied to motivation. I thought that the key issues in acquisition and employment would be education, experience, and audience size. As a result, at times I tested specifically for these variables. Yet, while these demographic characteristics factored into the results, success was almost always a byproduct of personal desire on the part of the student. When the student was motivated, adaptation toward parabolic engagement technique was obvious. I also discovered that much more practical issues determined student capacity and outcomes, namely work restraints and church responsibilities. Individuals who were less busy, less

⁴⁴ Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember differentiate consequential-type research from causal research, frequency/descriptive questions, and relational research in cross-cultural studies (“Cross-Cultural Research,” 647). Robert E. Slavin warns against the difficulty in drawing causal conclusions when one is testing simply for correlation (*Research Methods in Education*, 63).

preoccupied by family responsibilities, and who lived a simpler lifestyle, caught on quicker than did others with full schedules, more education, and more raw intellectual skill.

Nevertheless, in order to say that the pedagogy was useful, people of varying educational and literacy levels had to be able to use the methods with comparable effectiveness. In measuring for correlation between educational level and acquisition, I ran into problems with discrepancies among people who possessed the same number of years of education but who had vastly different literacy levels. Education was not a good measure of a person's capacity to read, analyze, or communicate a text. Educated people often had reading problems. Nor was schooling a measure of a more important skill, namely, oral proficiency. I found that oral proficiency had very little to do with education but had more to do with learned communicative tendencies. Although education was easy to measure, all one had to do was ask the participant to state his or her last year of formal schooling, correlating education to acquisition and employment of parabolic method was only partially helpful in measuring utility. I found I also had to be sensitive to literacy levels and tendencies, both among student preachers and audience members.

At the outset of this study, I had a personal interest in knowing if literacy had a negative effect on acquisition of figured delivery techniques. It was possible to imagine that the greater the student's literacy level might be, the greater would be her *inability* to see concrete environmental elements that spawned images. She would be more concerned about textual issues than the physical setting. In addition, I was almost certain at the beginning that the utilization of contextual methods and elements from the physical setting, would vary according to audience size as well. I assumed that the larger an audience was, the harder it would be to find appropriate ways to interact with the people in that audience. What I came to realize very quickly, however, was that literacy and audience size were not nearly as important as the acquired habits of the speaker.

My hopes at discovering links between literacy and acquisition or between tenure and acquisition could be written up only as qualified observations. I discovered in the process of administering detailed assessments involving variables affecting acquisition, that in any learning setting, impediments or advantages are always present, and they cannot be adequately isolated to draw causal connections to skill attainment. As a result, the real value in the pedagogical experiment lies in the conclusions about the usefulness of parabolic engagement method, not in causal or correlational links between demographic breakdowns of acquisition and implementation.

Utility in teaching parabolic preaching to Christian leaders in French settings was ultimately validated through qualitative interviews and observations of student change. The particular worth in the method was in its power to alter student perception and communication. Personal evaluation, interview, and the measurement of overall pedagogical outcomes showed radical changes in: 1) how students observed the communication of others; 2) how they themselves presented material, and; 3) how they learned to tie conceptual/textual ideas to everyday life through the analogous use of images and extended stories.

Listener Reception

In order to achieve the second assessment objective of the experimental study, measuring the effectiveness of figure engagement strategies based on listener reception, I needed to field-test *student implementation of parabolic methods in church settings*. Student performance demanded testing on a secondary level, namely the moving and persuading of the audience. As a result, those students who participated in the training process were given the chance to deliver figured material and receive an evaluation of their attempts at figure construction and reception. Although this element of the experiment is treated in detail in the next chapter, a brief outline of the rationale for the hypothesis is in order.

In part, the utility of the engagement pedagogy had to be based on the audience's

emotive response and intellectual comprehension of specific images. A typical audience member had to feel the emotional export and be capable of decoding the meaning of invented images and figures in order to say that the pedagogy was useful as an engagement tool. The tested assumption was constructed as follows: *A listener will be moved and persuaded more by a properly employed, contextual figure than by a discursive delivery on the same text.*

Unlike the student assessments, which often measured employment of precise technique, the listener reception assessments were more holistic in that they attempted the evaluation of images and stories in the context of a sermon or teaching before an audience. A sermon would often have several images and stories that reflected differing aspects of the pedagogy. Audience evaluations of figured delivery were, consequently, not sequentially parallel to the training modules. In other words, students would often use imaging or story creation methods from prior weeks, and rarely did the figured aspects of sermons reflect the most recently taught technique of the pedagogy.

Contextual implementation of figures proved difficult to evaluate since it involved measuring listener response to images and stories that were produced or modified around the moment of delivery. Also, students themselves were not adequately trained in interview technique and lacked motivation to question listeners about their own delivery.

I discovered that many aspects of figure reception could not be measured at the time of delivery. For example, it was very difficult to question people about the comparative aspects of the hypothesis, namely, how figured delivery was received differently from discursive delivery. Some of the barriers to this comparative aspect of the evaluation were remedied by a supplemental audio compact disc tool and questionnaire, which measured listener responses to carefully selected types of story and discourse. The CD assessment instrument was designed to compare key variables through quantitative data collection and to provide a platform for personal follow-up interviews that focused on specific aspects of

listener reception.

In the extensive qualitative questions probing listener reception, I attempted to appraise audience response to parables and images by means of personal interviews. I was nearly always in attendance to hear the material at the time of delivery. During the listening process, I had made my own evaluative assessment before asking others their opinion and could thereby have some comparative framework for assessment. For example, if I thought that the image was too short, lacked detail, or was inappropriately introduced into an environment that was not ready to receive it, I could then ask other listeners how they perceived the same aspects of the figure. Most of the interviews conducted in the second half of the apprenticing year were structured around extensive questionnaires located in Appendices 3 and 4.

Listeners were interviewed for 7 emotional factors, 13 cognitive factors, 12 contextual issues, 3 grammatical factors, 2 factors involving speaker delivery, and 3 factors involving applicative or behavioral change. In order to evaluate the interview data, I constructed indicators around several contingent assumptions.

At a general level, I presupposed that if the parabolic engagement method increased the attention span of an audience toward the speaker, raised the argumentative force of the main idea as perceived by the audience, and enlarged the use of physically contextual elements to the point that they would have a greater effect on the memory of the listener, I could make qualified conclusions about its utility. In addition, the assessment and interview process had to focus on a few additional key indicators that I discovered to be of critical importance in measuring the viability of the pedagogy. They were the adequate use of detail, the appropriateness of the length of the figure, and the identifiable causes of figure failure.

Major Elements of the Student Training

The original training sequence was intended to involve fifteen sequentialized

modules. Ultimately, it was reduced to eleven after the pilot period. They are listed in Table 14.

TABLE 14

THE MODULES OF THE 'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT' PEDAGOGY

Session Topic	Focal Discipline	Number of participants
1. Image invention	Analysis & Analogy	26
2. Story creation	Analysis & Extension	53
3. Episodic development	Extension	15
4. Pictorial exegesis of a text involving movement and fixed objects	Analysis	12
5. Cultural reinforcement	Analogy	10
6. Creating non-realistic stories (non-human characters) and fables	Extension	15
7. Using the context	Analogy	4
8. French and Creole language choices in church settings	Analogy	2
9. Creating images and stories in an impromptu setting	Analogy	18
10. Use of detail and sensory elements	Analogy	6
11. Springboard stories and controlling metaphors	Extension	7

Before explaining in detail the measurement practices and validation procedure, an explanation of the 11 sessions of the training process is in order. The eleven steps were not taught sequentially according to the ordered development of the focal disciplines of analysis, analogy, and extension. There were two reasons for this. First, the three-part scheme had not been totally worked out in my own thinking until the end of the apprenticeship process. Second, from a motivational perspective, I found it better to enter quickly into story construction and extension in order to increase student motivation.

Some of my original reasoning for this decision was also based on the educational capacity of the students. Many of the seminar participants did not have extensive education or public speaking experience. Therefore, I thought it best to vary the pedagogy early with a presentation of story and image creation technique, rather than begin in the first few sessions

with a heavy curriculum of textual analysis.

The deliberate choice during the early meetings not to spend more time explaining techniques of analysis and dissection of the textual subject resulted in difficulties later on. By linking the introductory aspects of analysis to advanced techniques of figure creation, the curriculum became more holistic but lost both its systematic logic and foundational base. As a result of these choices, participants showed a consistent lack of textual prudence throughout the study as well as regular trouble linking precise subjects of the biblical text with analogous elements in their stories.

While teaching inventive technique, I discovered ultimately that a simplified three-part progression reflected not only the mechanical process of figure analysis to creation but also demonstrated the evolution of student thinking. Mature student thinking was demonstrated in a three-stage figure creation reflex: 1) analysis; 2) searching for correspondence; 3) creating/modifying the figure.

During the training, some disciplines were found to be more foundational in creating this reflex than others. They were: practicing pictorial exegesis of ideas and texts, cultivating imaged analogy, recognizing subject movement, developing episodic structures, using realistic and non-realistic stories, and filling in the figure with detail from the setting. The relative importance and clarity of these principal areas and how they fit together emerged *during* and *after* the teaching sessions and unfortunately were not always perceived ahead of time.

Several other critical changes in the overall curriculum were unavoidable. I had originally intended to present the last two subjects earlier, but the CD parable project forced alterations in my teaching plans. One of these sessions, the issue of detail (#10), proved to be among the most important and neglected aspects of story creation. It was by far the most significant reason for failed effectiveness in figures. In my projections about typical reasons

for figure failure, I expected that people would have construction failures and trouble *creating* spontaneous figures, but in reality they had *delivery* problems. Most often students did not use adequate and precise detail, even though they had a solid basis for creating a figure. Consequently, the fact that the teaching session on detail appears late in the pedagogical sequence does not reflect its importance for building a sequentially developed curriculum.

Analysis Through Pictorial Exegesis of Biblical Material (Sessions 1, 2, and 4)

Since most of the participants in the apprenticeship program were being trained for teaching and preaching in evangelical church settings, I consistently tried to develop skills in pictorial exegesis of the biblical text. In order to validate the utility of the pedagogy, it was necessary for the student to be capable of analyzing biblical words, phrases, and sentences for their imaged value. Skills in analysis were taught throughout the eleven sessions, but I gave special focus on this proficiency during the early classes.

Session 1 was constructed around evaluating a series of texts⁴⁵ wherein the students were expected to appraise and mimic biblical images.⁴⁶ They were taught to examine the text to find the ‘essence’ of ideas, people, and actions as well as the ‘degree’ of things. Students usually found essential qualities in scriptural passages and could move without too much difficulty to associating discovered qualities to other concrete items with similar attributes.⁴⁷ Although the theoretical aspect of the material was totally new to most students, abundant use of examples by the teacher facilitated student creation of original images.

Beyond the skills of noun and verb analysis detailed in Chapter Five involving the

⁴⁵ Jam. 3:2-12; Ps. 1; Is. 1:8; 1:3, 5:13; Lk. 13:31-32; Eph. 6:11, 14; Neh. 1:1.

⁴⁶ Students would move from “the tongue” being a “fire” to similar images of destruction. “The tongue is a hurricane that ravishes the island.”

⁴⁷ After reading Isaiah 1:3, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib,” students were asked to find analogous parallels to the essential idea of recognition: “The doctor knows his patient, and the sick person his own hospital bed.”

location of fixed qualities or movement based on individual words or syntax, students participating in Session 2 were taught how to recognize dramatic tension.⁴⁸ The skill of tension-recognition was cultivated by giving five biblical examples of stories and asking students to identify the type of suspense or conflict presented in the biblical material based on Cupitt's suspense categories explained in Chapter 8.

Since one of the major distinctions between narrative and discursive explanation lies in the types of decoding demanded of the listener, it was necessary to teach students how to *recognize as a reader and listener* some fundamental differences between figured meaning and informational content. Students were taught that a story is concrete and offers precise analogous meaning and chronological affinities with the listener's past. This detail was very important. It was surprising how often students confused abstraction and concretization. It was frequently observed that students had difficulty grasping the idea that didactic discourse leaves the listener to a random concretization of details and that abstraction is not linked to time and space.

In attempting to teach the discovery of pictorial aspects of biblical material, I found that it was helpful for students to visualize story structures and plot movement graphically as either ascent or decline (see Table 8). I explained in Session 4 that plots could be oversimplified for teaching purposes into either schemes that ascend or schemes that descend. This sensitized the student to the progress of circumstances.

In narrative, it is important to know if ideas go from a good quality to a bad, or by contrast, from bad to good. In other words, does the story move toward improvement or toward deterioration? If a person is able to analyze the emotional, situational, and movement qualities in a verse or pericope, it will be easier for that individual to create a story that

⁴⁸ For teaching storied conflict and suspense, the texts were: Lk. 10:30-35; Mt. 22:1-10; Jud. 9:8-15; 2 Sam. 12:1-4; Is. 5:1-7.

reflects the essence of an idea as having positive or negative progress.

Tsougui's fundamental structures explained in Chapter 8 were used to teach types of plot tension as well as story development.⁴⁹ The five major paradigms were ascension, decline, return, reciprocation, and divergence. It was very simple for new learners to see how stories, Bible verses, and text selections could be reflected in visual plot structures using the graphics in Table 8.

To test the ability of students to recognize inherent qualities in biblical verses, students were asked to represent sixteen sets of verses according to the graphical diagrams.⁵⁰ Seven students participated in my second attempt at teaching the material, and the evaluation was made into a written exercise.

Each student was given a sheet of paper with the verses printed out. They were asked to identify the plot structure of verses based on the diagrams in Table 8. The results were mixed. The average number of guesses/responses was 12.4 out of 15. The average number of correct responses was 9.7. Multiple movements were sometimes detected in the biblical verses, and the members of the class decided that it was possible to see varying graphical representations for the same text. Eight verses were seen as having two or three different graphical representations. The class recognized, nevertheless, that one type of plot development could best represent most verses, and nearly every response correctly reflected the textual movement as being ascending or descending, that is, improving or deteriorating. Students were not confused about whether verses expressed improvement or deterioration. The resulting benefit of the exercise was that it greatly aided the capacity of the student to create a story that reflected the inherent qualities of the verse as beginning positively and

⁴⁹ Françoise Tsougui, *Clés pour le conte africain et créole* (Paris: Conseil International de la Langue Française, 1986), 10-15.

⁵⁰ Ps. 117; Gen. 3:8; Jer. 23:22-23; John 3:16; Eph. 2:13-14; Is. 59:2; Eph. 2:1-9; John 4:19; John 1:1-5,14; Heb. 11:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 1:9; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 12:26; Eph. 5:18; John 15:15.

ending negatively or beginning negatively and ending positively.

The assumption of this evaluation was that if a speaker saw the emotional, situational, and movement qualities in scripture, it would be easier to create an original story that also reflected the essence of the textual idea.⁵¹ The effectiveness of this part of the pedagogy was validated by its ease of use. This simple exercise exhibited enduring qualities. Months later students were able to identify plot movements of verses and stories and talk about whether or not the biblical text had qualities of decline or improvement.

The skill of textual analysis, although being the basis for figured analogy and narrative, was vastly underdeveloped in the pedagogy. There was a constant battle and tension between building imaged analytical skills and the literacy limitations and tendencies of the participants. As students learned the methods, they often wrongly assumed that because they understood the basic meaning of the text that they could construct associated figures. In reality, however, constructing figures required the exact identification of an idea that could be pictured.

There was a vast difference between understanding the surface meaning of a text and being able to identify, for example, the function, use, or form of precise elements within the text. As a general rule, precise elements need to be analogized exactly, and correspondence is possible only when there is meticulousness in subject identification.

Due to literacy barriers, the curriculum should have taken several more sessions to develop analysis skills. As will be explained later, students showed remarkable skill in constructing images and stories, but often those stories did not associate clearly with a textual idea. Consequently, the power of the imaged meaning communicated during preaching and

⁵¹ For example, in Ephesians 2:13-14 we read: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [between us]." The passage has a positive, ascending cadence and lends itself to extending the ideas of overcoming distance and eliminating the alienating relational barriers between an authority and those who follow him. A created story, consequently, needs to move from separation to reconciliation in an improving-style plot theme.

teaching remained detached from the biblical material. This fault could have been remedied with a more comprehensive development of the analytical discipline within the teaching sequence.

Analogy to the Concrete World and Personal Experience (Sessions 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10)

Analogy was taught in almost every session because it was the heart of parabolic method. The connection-making faculties of students were almost always latent and just needed to be cultivated persistently. The fact that image creation faculties were dormant meant that it was simply necessary to awaken them. To bring about facility in skill development required the consistent encouragement of oral metaphoric capacities already resident in the speech-making of the students. This necessitated bringing each individual student through the step-by-step process of discovering their own way of constructing analogous images.

Part of the simplicity of the parabolic method lies in the fact that there already exists a vast pool of images, stories, and pictured relationships in the preacher's mind. They are tied to observations and past experiences. Teaching students to analogize correctly and forcefully to or from a biblical text involves moving the student from analytical observations of the biblical material to analogous correspondences in the concrete world.

In Session 1, after students learned to recognize the nature of ideas, people, and actions, they were asked to invent parallel images that expressed the same idea in the texts under consideration. They were taught the difference between a metaphor and a simile and asked to construct two figures of 'degree', one expressing a lack,⁵² the other abundance. Although I had planned to teach the major classes of metaphors, I did not have time to explain the differences of function, form, quality, and contrast. Neither did I have time to explain in any great detail the simple three-part moral progression of degree: good, better,

⁵² For example, see Is. 5:13.

best.

In class Sessions 5, 7, and 8, students were taught different aspects of cultural reinforcement in analogy. These sessions addressed the power and importance of contextualization. Members of the classes were asked through a series of examples to explain how social context effects reception. On the island of Martinique certain people, things, animals, and objects are viewed positively while others are viewed negatively. Hurricanes, European culture, insects, and governmental agencies are bad. Creole life, fruit trees, plants, drums, and hummingbirds are good.

Using corresponding items demands that students know where to search for analogous symbols. Consequently, they were taught the differences between cultural and sub-cultural factors, and how sub-groups or sub-locations can change message reception. For example, while drums are good, many Creole Christians view drums as part of pagan, African religion. Using a drum as an image or part of a story in the context of a Creole church would have to be done delicately, since drums are often associated with Carnival and immorality.

In addition, students were taught the universality of some ideas. Everyone has to eat, deal with family, respect authority, etc. Searching for analogous ideas, consequently, sometimes transcends culture and enters into the familiar experience of life and crosses nearly all cultural and sub-cultural boundaries. Detailing those universals, however, was not an easy thing.

Throughout the delivery aspect of this study, there were continual problems that surfaced around the subject of *detail*. It became apparent that not all detail was good. Students often lacked ability to perform what I thought was a relatively simple task, namely, to create oral specifics for things, scenarios, and ideas. Although Sessions 9 and 10 dealt extensively with the issue of detail in images, it was difficult for students to specify analogous features of images with precision, especially in impromptu settings.

Some students confused generalization with sensorial detail. Their tendency to conceptualize the concrete world was so great that their notion of detail was abstracted. They were virtually unable to focus and describe specifics about sights, sounds, smells, etc.

After doing a one-hour exercise in creating details to explain verses and illustrative images (Session 10), six students and I engaged in a discussion as to why many of the class participants failed to connect the main idea with a detailed image or story. The results were clear. Students confused two types of details: details that clarified the main idea and details that helped the “*ambiance*.” Students had a strong tendency to create “atmosphere” details with descriptive particulars; that is, details that made the narrative interesting and realistic but added nothing to the clarity of the main idea. Such details did not usually clarify the illustrative focus. When students were given five bare images with an illustrative subject, they immediately created superb detail, but the detail had very little connection to the principal idea. The class participants determined that both types of details were necessary, details that helped the *ambiance* and details that clarified the subject. The latter, however, were clearly more important than the former.

To help expose this idea by way of example, in giving a parable about God’s desire to wipe away human sin, one might use the image of waves washing away a passerby’s footprints in the sand. In talking about the beach, however, it makes little difference if the story describes a white sand beach or a black sand beach or if there are coconut palms all around. Those are *ambiance* details.

Students discovered that the addition of *ambiance* details created a higher degree of concealment because the main idea was harder to find amid all the specifics. There seemed to be an ideal balance for detailing a subject. There needed to be enough detail to capture the attention of the listener as well as enough detail to clarify the illustrative idea. There could not be so much detail, however, as to lose the main objective of the figure.

The issue of detail ultimately proved to be one of the pivotal skills in developing a parabolic engagement capacity. The reason for this is that analogous correspondence is tied intimately to concrete detail. The ability of a listener to decode properly is based on her capacity to associate the spoken detail with her personal experience. This identification of the speaker's concept with the listener's past happens more quickly and more forcefully when the subject is explained with vivid specifics. Both the depth of the analogy and the ultimate engagement are superficial and unsatisfying unless the figure is properly qualified by clearly detailing its features.

The posture of any speaker during the creation of figured material within a delivery setting should be one of supreme sensitivity to the observable, contextual phenomena. That is why the fundamental issue taught in Session 9 was the translation of emotive environmental factors into effective analogous images. The auditors, whether or not they are aware of it, observe a great number of contextual elements, just as a speaker does, perhaps more, since the listeners do not have to worry about delivery.⁵³ It is, therefore, critical that the speaker attempts to interpret audience variables and develop or alter presentation based on what the Spirit is teaching in the immediate setting.

Creating connections between ideas and the physical situation provides an entry into an evolving, interactive delivery, what I refer to as 'engagement.' In becoming sensitive to contextual phenomena, it is possible to see the new range of potential happenings in preaching settings. How does one develop the capacity for "symbolic extrication,"⁵⁴ or, in simpler, Christian terms, for finding amid the mass of contextual elements, those that are

⁵³ In the words of MacCormac, "...*interpréter consiste à donner un sens actuel et personnel au mythe que je suis en train d'écouter et à ma journée d'aujourd'hui*" (Earl R. MacCormac, "Semantic and Syntactic Meaning of Religious Metaphors," *Theolinguistics 1*, Brussels: Vrije Universiteit, ed. J. P. van Nopen, 341 (italics his)).

⁵⁴ George Whalley, *Poetic Process* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953), 116.

important to God, have teaching value to the audience, and possess a poetic, contextually-appropriate quality? One searches amid the experiences that are happening at the moment for phenomena that might inform or illuminate.⁵⁵

If there arises a profound issue from amid the various contexts, or if the speaker realizes that the material she has prepared needs to be modified based on observable issues in the immediate setting, there arises the predicament of whether or not to change the intended spoken material. She is faced with the need to alter the planned delivery and the contingent obligation to search for a suitable means to communicate it.

Although poetic process is rarely applied to the creation of sermonic material, the mechanics of translating observations of the delivery setting into figured material is similar to the poetic mechanism. “The technical problem for the artist then is to transmute a complex state of feeling into his chosen physical medium—in the case of the poet, into language.”⁵⁶ The movement from: 1) observation, to 2) capturing a key motif, to 3) finding a way of expressing it, is what Toynbee calls “Withdrawal-and-Return.”⁵⁷ The preacher does not usually reflect on this progression, but observes and modifies delivery without conscious thought of what he is doing. The beginning of this process of clothing an idea, especially metaphorically, starts by capturing its “feeling-tone.”⁵⁸ Table 15 clarifies how a speaker might begin to become sensitive to emotive issues within the environment and their importance in generating figured material for spoken delivery. A summary sheet containing the elements detailed in Table 15 was given to the students during Session 9 to aid in the creation of impromptu figures.

⁵⁵ Whalley calls this a “paradigmatic moment” (ibid., 104-115).

⁵⁶ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁷ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, III, (N.p.: n.d.), 248-63 quoted in Whalley, *Poetic Process*, 116, n. 1.

⁵⁸ Whalley, *Poetic Process*, 122.

TABLE 15

FACTORS AND TRIGGERS FOR THE CREATION OF FIGURES

Internal Feelings, Perceptions, or Disruptions that Constitute Reason for Identifying Possible Contextual Teaching Material	Some Concrete Examples of Triggers
An item “intrudes into consciousness.” ⁵⁹ The “imagination is stimulated” or “oriented.” ⁶⁰ There is “vivid perception.” ⁶¹ There is a flood of “intense feeling.” ⁶² There is a deep “conviction of value.” ⁶³ There is an arousal of “profound belief.” ⁶⁴ There is an unexplainable “paradox,” a need for “resolve.” ⁶⁵ “Everything chimes together,” and there is “clarity.” ⁶⁶ There is “disequilibrium.” ⁶⁷ There is a sense of “suffering.” ⁶⁸ There is a “commanding passion.” ⁶⁹ There are “images of memory.” ⁷⁰	A shocking or moving material object A positive feeling of joy from a smile A disturbing communication between two people A smell An emotionally moving cry A strange symbol, room arrangement, or ritual A deep, unmet or fulfilled expectation that is expressed An unfolding story A touch Cleanliness or filth

The translation of a feeling or observation into a figure is one aspect of training

⁵⁹ Ibid., 104.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 105.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

students in image creation. The student speaker first senses the importance of an observation to his communicative idea. He isolates the nuanced idea and then associates it with concrete experience. He concretizes his thought by grammatically constructing an analogous correspondence. While doing this, he attempts to understand ahead of time how the listener will receive the figured material and how it will organize thought. He then delivers the figured result in an appropriate way based on the series of instantaneous judgments he has made throughout the process. The emotive consequences among audience members are what Whalley calls “feeling-vectors,” the directive ideas that guide the listener in some way.⁷¹ The mind of the listener is engaged by the organizing principles and analogous material uttered by the speaker.

In order to measure the capacity of the pedagogy to teach impromptu invention, Session 9 was followed by one month of assessment. There were two student groups composed of individuals who regularly taught in church settings. There were 19 total participants, 11 men and 8 women, almost all of whom followed the story-apprenticeship over the previous year. Of the 19 students, 12 were Europeans and 7 were Martinican Creoles. Although 19 students were taught the material, only 12 ultimately produced and participated in the subsequent analysis.

Since the students had already been trained in narrative methods and had previously created images, stories, and fables, the next step was to see how students modified or invented material from within the delivery setting itself. This aspect of the research involved measuring how spoken material was altered or created in an impromptu manner.

Students were taught in the first session how to produce imaged teaching material by means of a five-step process. 1) Simple analysis of the biblical text and observation of the

⁷¹ Ibid., 141.

feelings present in the context; 2) The discovery of an appropriate contingent image or story; 3) Evaluating prior causes and subsequent effects (for example, the cause of someone crying or the effect on people looking on); 4) Assessing for invisible values of the audience that might control the delivery; 5) Evaluating gatekeepers (people in the room who may have extraordinary sensitivity to, control over, or opposition to the use of the emerging material).

One instance of practicing the prescribed methods involved the reading of Luke 10:1-20 and was followed by a five minute silence, during which time students were asked to evaluate contextual surroundings for material that might be turned into figures of speech in order to illustrate the text. After this period of analysis, students gave examples of analogies and extensions for evaluation. I frequently used this on-the-spot teaching method as a means of initiating them into a proposed idea. In this case, focus was contextual generation of figures without advanced preparation.

In the first location where the material was taught, three students and I offered impromptu-generated material for consideration by other students who, in this instance, served as the audience. The student listeners were handed the evaluative forms and were asked to critique the figures based on the pre-established criteria and some common aspects of figure failure found in Appendix 5. Three of the four items offered were stories generated from the physical setting; one was an image involving stars generated from the fact that we were meeting on the terrace of a home during the evening. Two of the stories did not take place in the context but were generated by contextual elements. The evaluation process took almost 30 minutes for the four items.

The importance of this initiatory procedure in my estimation was not simply in the mechanics of the teaching or the evaluative interview process, but in the prior and subsequent

discussions of the value of engagement. Both listeners and speakers recognized the power of context and the responsibility of the Christian to live “in the present.”⁷²

In three post-delivery interviews after the initial session, each involving 37 questions similar to those used in the other assessment instruments, some major issues emerged with respect to all four impromptu deliveries.⁷³ These issues are problems that might be expected in this type of invention and delivery.

The most common failure was lack of detail or, in technical terms, failure to qualify the analogy adequately. Participants did not take time to reflect on the level of specifics necessary to make themselves clearly understood. Due to the fact that students were uninitiated in this type of communication, they did not adequately slow their delivery process in order to integrate the necessary detail. They assumed that because there was a common textual base from the Gospel of Luke, the meanings of their images or stories would be clearly understood.

Inadequate detail development is linked with a failure to understand properly the contextual culture and how people interact with it. Proper meaning transfer and adequate decoding by listeners depend on slow and calculated delivery on the part of the speaker. Lack of detail is a symptom of the speaker’s being controlled by the pressure of circumstances and rushing his figure construction or his delivery. The loss is logical discontinuity and failed engagement.

The study showed that the ideas of spontaneity and calculated delivery are not mutually exclusive. The fact that an idea comes spontaneously to a speaker within a delivery setting does not forcibly imply a skeletal or rushed delivery. In fact, spontaneous discovery

⁷² Mt. 6:25-34.

⁷³ Carin Compte of St. Anne, interview by author, 29 October 2003, Lamentin, Martinique; Katy Giachino of St. Anne, interview by author, 29 October 2003, Lamentin, Martinique; Laurence Freccero of St. Anne, interview by author, 29 October 2003, Lamentin, Martinique.

demands detailed and slower speaking because the speaker needs time to construct his thoughts.

The pedagogical objectives in building analogous skills involved teaching how to parallel observable affective and concrete phenomena to analogous ideas through slow, detailed delivery. The habit of analogizing is normal to human speech. Similarly, listening involves the constant practice of decoding analogies. Parabolic engagement as a preaching methodology is thus both natural and relatively easy. The challenge in teaching figured delivery, however, is how systematically to construct public speech habits that exploit this innate facility to picture ideas. To talk about the *acquisition* of analogy-building skills for the preaching milieu is somewhat of a contradiction because, in fact, the skill is already there. It simply requires observation, practice, and development, especially in the area of student capacity to detail those aspects of the analogous connections that are common and recognizable to listeners.

Extension by Episode, Story Form, and Controlling Metaphor (Sessions 3, 6, and 11)

Often a simple image needs to be lengthened into a narrative. This is done by expanding the analogy. Parabolic engagement technique involves helping students learn to take a simple figured idea and protract it over several minutes or even over the entire sermon. In striving for simplicity, the pedagogy focused on three extension methods: episodic composition, story form, and controlling metaphor.

As explained in Chapter 8, the importance of storied rhythm to a listener is best taught through a demonstration of episode development. To illustrate this point during Session 3, I used the spiral form because it gave the clearest example of how a plot advances. Two biblical parables were used to teach episodic structure to our students: Mt. 13:4-8 (The Parable of the Sower) and Judges 9:8-15 (The Parable of Jotham). These parables demonstrate a spiral structure in that they have delineating markers between elements. Each

story advances by the clear introduction of new characters, types of plants in the case of Jotham's parable, and types of soil in the parable of the sower. Students were asked to read the passages and discern how many episodes were present in each story excluding the introduction and conclusion. 100% of the 7 students in one location identified that there were four episodes in the parable of the sower represented by four types of soil and that there were four episodes in the parable of Jotham represented by four species of trees.

Students were then asked to construct and outline a parable with episodes. They were given two model scenarios from which to construct their parable. All of the students succeeded in creating stories with clear divisioning. Two of the seven, however, failed to create a story with developed and coherent detail. The relative force of the stories varied, but all those participating were able clearly to delineate sub-episodes using the experience they had gained from fifteen minutes of instruction and practice. Three participants with university and technical degrees clearly were able to outperform on paper those without the same level of formal education. The poorer performance of those with less education may have been partly due to writing apprehension or some other non-measured variable. Because education develops the capacity to delineate, reconstruct, and transfer ideas into written text, the quality of the stories created by the more educated students in this exercise reflected their literate training and not necessarily their story creation ability.

A more advanced technique for expanding an analogy by means of narrative was done through the development of non-realistic stories and fables in Session 6. Students were asked to identify a biblical text as being ascending or descending. It was then explained that the progress of the fable needed to parallel the sense of the text, namely, evolve toward either stability or disequilibria. Creating a fable measured their integrative capacity to put all the preceding elements together into a coherent whole.

For our purposes, we defined a fable as a story with animal characters in which the

characters in the story learned a lesson by experience. A one-page explanation of fable construction was distributed to 9 people at one of the teaching locations. After being taught for approximately 15 minutes, they were divided into three groups and assigned a text.⁷⁴ Each group was asked to identify the ascending or descending movement of the biblical material and subsequently invent a fable that corresponded with the textual plot movement. Each group created a fable and then presented it to the class. The fables were of mediocre quality, but all three were later improved and reproduced on the audience assessment CD.

The third means of developing extensions from analogies is through the use of controlling images, namely, the repetition of a particular figure throughout the delivery in order to create a structural frame for the entire discourse. In addition to explaining controlling images in Session 11, I also clarified during the class time how “Springboard Stories” could help set the tone for entire sermons.⁷⁵

Although students understood the worth of unifying discourse through repeating certain images, in practice, this was far from their frame of reference. While they could cite memorable examples of sermons they had heard using this technique, their own success in implementing this delivery practice was limited. They were not in the habit of creating coherency through repeated figured elements. As a consequence, their ability to recognize the possibilities of framing preaching structures through controlling images, thematic metaphors, and springboard characters was minimal. The result was that students focused on the simpler techniques of episodic composition and story forms.

Summary

In attempting to construct a comprehensive preaching pedagogy that was sensitive to cultural factors and realities of circumstantial delivery, the result was a simple eleven-step

⁷⁴ John 3:16; Is. 59:2; Eph. 2:13.

⁷⁵ Stephen Denning, *The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2001), 198-99.

process that taught analysis, analogy, and extension. As in most action research, the researcher realized along the way that the experimental design was imperfect. Often the curriculum was too complicated or sequentially out of order. Students learned techniques, but sometimes they could not retain them easily. In addition, in spite of all instructor efforts at conducting an oral workshop with spoken practice sessions, both the students and teacher were frequently held captive by a print orientation and literate heritage. Yet in spite of problems with the approach, the material was found to be an excellent alternative to standard expository preaching instruction. Minor curriculum difficulties did not undermine the basic value of a simple parabolic delivery system teachable where educational levels were low.

Students consistently grasped both the theoretical rationale as well as the practical implementation of the generative techniques. Although the needs assessment did not protect the study from certain unforeseen design flaws, particularly with respect to the fact that some individual elements of the pedagogy were out of order or not logical in their progression, I discovered that an instructional sequence that teaches storied delivery could be fairly *modular* in its approach. Students moved easily from one aspect of invention to the next without being overly concerned about definitional distinctions or whether, for example, discussing cultural detail was more fundamental than the creation of figures in an impromptu setting.

In several respects, the curriculum is unique in the world of missiology and preaching theory. The pedagogy succeeded at constructing a comprehensive figure-based delivery system among people with no formal theological training. The building of a comprehensive parabolic engagement process using a broad range of image and story constructive techniques had hitherto not been done.

Another distinctive contribution of the curriculum lies in the fact that the preaching techniques were, to a large degree, based on listener realities in the French Antilles.

Measuring the acquisition and implementation of a parabolic model within a Creole mission

setting helped to confirm the merit of individual elements of pedagogy. By measuring student implementation of the image generation concepts within church audiences on the island of Martinique, I was able to validate the utility of the delivery aspect of figure-based pedagogy for Christian proclamation among the target peoples under consideration.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ASSESSING THE DELIVERY AND RECEPTION OF 'PARABOLIC ENGAGEMENT'
PREACHING

The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.
Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459 a 5-8.

Evaluating Parabolic Delivery and Reception

Much of what can be learned about the effectiveness or failure of parabolic communication is gleaned, not just from people who create engaging figures, but also from those who listen to the parables themselves. In the sections that follow, I present the results of extensive surveys and interviews with students and audience members who delivered and responded to various types of imaged speech created for church settings. Assessment instruments and interviews detailed in this chapter measure student dexterity in employment of parabolic methods as well as listener reception of the figured engagement techniques. Both the quantitative and qualitative results gauge the extent of the success of the pedagogy and its methodologies.

The difficulty in measuring these aspects of speech reception is that there are many additional variables at work in communicative exchange. Acquisition, dexterity, and reception are sometimes affected by delivery factors such as pause, accent, organizational elements, volume, flow, intonation, etc. In addition, there are the potential reception problems because of contextual interference, cultural conflict, variances in listener background, daydreaming, hearing problems, ideological conflict, theological conflict, personality conflict, subject distaste, and a host of other variables.

Yet, in spite of situational and circumstantial complexities, while trying to answer why some figured communication was effective and some was not or why some figures produced clear understanding and others did not, the study returned consistently to the basic principles elaborated in previous chapters: clear correspondence or analogy, cultural

appropriateness, correctly developed storied tension, and adequate sensory detail. In delivery setting measurement, it was found that the successful demonstration of the principal qualities just listed were very often the result of superior student capacity, successful teaching methodology, favorable contextual variables, and positive listener response.

The comprehensive evaluation described below assesses both delivery method and reception. It also tries to separate out different levels of contexts, and measure precise issues of circumstantial suitability, something I discovered to be of principal importance in good figured communication.

Most listeners decoded figures based on their understanding of society, backgrounds, and customs. Some figures, however, were more universal in that they appealed to a more general population and had little to do with local norms or customs. Furthermore, I found that the immediate listening culture created an environment that was shared by all the auditors, regardless of prior experience, language proficiencies, sex, age, or cultural background.

Because of differences between the immediate context and the larger groupings of contexts, it became necessary to differentiate types of variables and situations. The most important factors for circumstantial measurement were those variables immediately present amid the matrix of contexts in a single given location. These types of variables could be measured adequately only by being in the audience during delivery and by surveying and interviewing speakers as well as listeners.¹ The physical present often dictated language and delivery choices, and the spontaneous nature of engagement resulted in figure creation and modifications at the moment of the preaching.

In searching for a means to measure wider cultural factors not tied directly to the immediate setting, I found that they could be more adequately measured by means of a pre-

¹ See Appendices 3 and 4.

recorded, audio, compact disc instrument explained below and in Appendices 7-13. In brief, the compact disc instrument measured *broader* variables such as culture, language, and narrative structure. This is in contrast to the other assessments of student engagement within a physical setting that measured both the broader variables and the *immediate* situational factors. In creating and conducting this study, I reasoned that if preaching is circumstantial, it is important to discover how delivery is tied to the variety of local contexts. Clarifying the issue of contextual layering was, in part, done by differentiating the immediate setting from broader environmental elements in the culture at large.

Measuring Student Engagement within a Physical Setting

While traditional speech assessments often measure elements such as pause rates, intensity, volume, complexity, etc., this study was created to see how a story or image could be woven into the fabric of the setting and whether in a general way it touched the listener or changed his ideas.² Viability of a circumstantial model of preaching was dependent upon its usefulness in actual delivery settings.

The assessment of the production, modification, and reception of figures within a physical context required the measurement of the speaker's use of immediate and impromptu variables. It was necessary to analyze this spontaneous generation and delivery of figures from the hearer's point of view in order to get to the heart of circumstantial delivery and reception. I was particularly interested in the mechanics of how speakers interacted with their environment to create illustrative material and whether or not this material yielded cognitive and/or affective change in the listener. I also wanted to know who created

² In a very significant comment related to the comprehensive methodology I have employed in this study, Street and Hooper say this: "yet very little empirical research to date has simultaneously considered communicator attitudes, actual message characteristics and accommodation behaviors. To do this at once would be a massive undertaking, but even the modest combinations of the above could yield interesting data" (Richard L. Street, Jr. and Robert Hooper, "A model of speech style evaluation," *Attitudes Toward Language Variation: Social and Applied Contexts*, ed. Ellen Bouchard Ryan and Howard Giles (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), 188).

engaging figures and when. How were those figures received? What were the problems and advantages of spontaneously produced material over prepared figures? In addition, I also was curious about how prepared images were revised and changed at the time of delivery, the assumption being that some of the same mechanics observable in the *spontaneous invention* of completely new stories or images would also be present in *figure changes*.

In order to get to the heart of many of these issues, the assessment process attempted to detach individual elements from what was basically an integrative process. For example, measuring listener response demanded neglecting some aspects of speaker preparation. Detached elements were often analyzed individually as part of the listener reception study. Similarly, evaluating figure formation by a preacher required overlooking how the figure was ultimately delivered. Because assessments sometimes addressed one precise aspect of the overall delivery or reception, it was necessary to put together multiple assessments for a clear picture of the whole. Conclusions about the utility of the pedagogy, therefore, required an integrative analysis of the entire process and could not be based on any one particular aspect of student implementation or listener reception.

Since the time window for measurement of figured delivery within a context was extremely brief, evaluation had to be done immediately or shortly after delivery. When this was not done, it was almost impossible to recall the details of the physical setting and make an assessment as to the suitability of the preaching.

This pressure to do quick evaluation required simplicity in the written instruments. Rapid assessment was done by means of brief evaluation tools with clearly defined variables. Constant observation and appraisal of student capacity also contributed to consistent improvement of teaching technique.

When evaluating the listener's attitude as soon *after* the delivery of the image or story as possible, I was primarily interested in measuring emotive or cognitive response. With this

in mind, I invented measures that were convertible into quantitative questions addressed to hearers. The final form of the questionnaire is in Appendix 5. Questions were specifically designed to collect information about changes in knowledge and emotions as a result of a figured delivery. Table 16 represents the specific audience measures on the evaluative instruments that addressed affective and cognitive response.

TABLE 16

COMPARISON TABLE OF AFFECTIVE AND COGNITIVE FACTORS

Audience Affective Measures	Audience Cognitive Measures
Emotive changes in the acceptance or rejection of an idea.	Global and detailed understanding of the image or story.
Changes in feeling and emotion (e.g. joy, anger, reminiscing, etc.) toward the precise theological aspects of the story or image.	Understanding of the ramifications, morals, and extended meanings of the story or image based on the ability of the listener to retain detail and to put its meaning into his or her own words.
Changes in feeling and emotion toward the speaker.	Changes in knowledge about the speaker.
Changes in motivation toward a desired behavioral outcome.	Changes in thinking toward a desired behavioral outcome.
Measuring the affective value of the contextual delivery technique on the listener.	The examiner's measurement of the persuasive value of the contextual delivery technique on the listener.
Changes in attention span with respect to the length and power of the story or image.	How the length and power of a story or image relate to changes in thinking.
Feelings about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the image or story to context, to subject matter, to speaker.	Measuring the logical appropriateness or inappropriateness of the image or story to context, to subject matter, to speaker.

When audience members responded to questions concerning their understanding and emotional response to images and stories presented by students, I wanted to know if they could state a clear moral for the images and stories presented. To do this, listeners were asked how the story could be applied. Measuring listening skill by assessing an "outcome" is

standard in oral assessment tests that evaluate speech proficiency.³ By asking a question pertaining to message application, I was able to gather information about the usefulness of the pedagogy with respect to behavioral change.

The assessment process ultimately measured listener change in the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. To do this, evaluation of student delivery within a physical setting revolved around the examination of several principal aspects of engagement from the perspective of the audience. These included the following, each of which will be treated in detail: the ties between the production and reception of impromptu figures, the difficulty in achieving listener application of a preached idea, the importance of detailing an analogy, speaker anticipation of differences in listener reception, and the linking of figurative language to circumstantial contexts.

The Production and Reception of Impromptu Figures. In order to evaluate properly the viability of engagement pedagogy in general as well as student capacity for analogy and extension in particular, it was essential to assess certain aspects of speaker delivery from the hearer's perspective. Precise aspects of analysis included: 1) Impromptu delivery adjustment⁴; 2) Image relevance; 3) Effectiveness of narrative tension and suspense; and 4) Contextualization and appropriateness.

The evaluation of circumstantial figure *reception* is necessary because engagement takes place in the present and is based on the creation of immediate cognitive and emotional ties between speaker and listener. In evaluating how a figure is received, however, one cannot abandon how the figure was produced and delivered. A poorly thrown ball will be far more difficult to catch than a correctly thrown one, and a speaker cannot blame an auditor for

³ Tom Gorman, Project Director, *Speaking and Listening: Assessment at Age 15* (Windsor: Nfer-Nelson Pub. Co., 1987).

⁴ Contextual factors cause adjustments to figured delivery in the following ways: 1) The alteration of figures; 2) The negation of the intended use of figures; and/or 3) The combination of different figures.

not understanding something that was poorly communicated. There is an organic relationship of speaker and listener during the production and reception of impromptu figures. While the test of impromptu figure effectiveness is measurable only by talking to listeners, certain precise figure constructive qualities largely determine communicative success. Interviews with students and audience members following Session 9 showed that proper development of those qualities is a result of speaker management of impromptu pressures.

An idea that comes to a preacher from within his speaking context may have to be processed in his mind for delivery *while he is speaking*. He is battling to verbalize his new thoughts and feelings about the biblical text to those present in the physical context. This requires that he slow his communication to be certain that he is clearly detailing the correspondence for his hearers. This is a learned habit and is not natural because, among other reasons, a speaker often feels pressure when he has to insert an unforeseen thought into his planned outline. A slow rhythm is, therefore, advisable in impromptu communication because unhurried delivery can help the speaker clarify his engagement objectives even when he is under pressure.

Material that is discovered in a setting is undefined at the instant it is identified. It calls out for definition. The speaker asks himself, "How shall I construct this thought?" Speaker rhythm is disrupted by the fortuitous discovery of a critical idea. The search for adequate language, whether imaged or discursive, brings about something of a mental and verbal crisis. The emergency search for adequate language often fails to produce ample detail or logic. As a result, the listener is left searching for plausible connections that should have been clearly stated.

There is another two-fold danger in the discovery of material from within the setting. The first issue is that verbal material coming from the speaking milieu itself is fresh and may

be immediately verifiable to the audience. The listeners will have a tendency to judge more critically the adequacy of the idea or figure because the elements from which the subject is drawn are clearly before them. If verbal construction is poorly done, the idea can appear weak and unnatural. It can also result in confusion of the audience and deterioration of speaker ethos.

The second issue is that spontaneous development of an idea can result in premature delivery. Like biting into a green apple before it ripens, a listener may be dissatisfied with the speaker's presentation. Not being left to mature, the fruit of spontaneous discovery lacks a certain sweetness.

The common false assumption about material generated from the speaker's context is that the listener's physical proximity to elements used in the communication will clarify the speaker's thought. Speakers who participated in the student exercise on impromptu delivery also believed that the context would reveal meaning to listeners. Every figure spoken in the exercise lacked force, however, because the interpretive powers of the speaker did not adequately relate the spontaneously created image with either: 1) the sense found in the text; or 2) the contextual elements present in the room. There was a general lack of specifics.

Spontaneously produced narrative displays many of the same problematic characteristics that are present in prepared figured deliveries. Just how the spontaneous material differs from pre-planned narrative is a complex issue but can largely be reduced to items related to time constraints between the time the idea is discovered and the time it is delivered. When figured images or illustrations spring from the context, the problems of contextual adaptation, sense of argumentation, story length, and detailed delivery are all intensified by time restrictions. Problems already present in the person's communicative habits may manifest themselves in more extreme forms when that person is placed under the compulsion to produce something on the spot.

To deliver adequately a figure that is invented immediately before or during delivery, it is imperative that the figure possesses clear correspondence between the precise communicative nuance of the subject and whatever else to which the figure points. As has already been demonstrated, adequate development of an idea is not necessarily dependent upon length. Figures can be brief and well developed. In fact, images must have clear correspondence *because* they are brief. Narratives, by contrast, require more reflection and detail because they are a series of sequenced images.

When a narrative idea comes to a preacher in his speaking setting, the imaged succession must have both a clear objective and a series of clearly identifiable correspondences. A spontaneously created narrative must not only fit into the overall logic of the sermon, but it also has to have properly developed internal sequence in order to make sense as a complete story.

Interview sessions with students revealed some interesting findings with respect to spontaneously created figures and the need for adequacy of detail. In one post-delivery interview concerning a spontaneous illustration, a listener, when asked about the adequacy of detail to a plant illustration, stated: "I added detail from my personal experience."⁵ She explained that the agricultural context of the illustration was similar to her own knowledge about aloe plants. The implication was that listeners furnish particulars based on their own experience. This listener process of interpreting detail is facilitated by a slow delivery rhythm. Relaxed, detailed speaking helps auditors avoid the puzzlement that results from a speaker's failure to give adequate specifics.

Interpretation problems involving puzzlement existed in the delivery and reception of the great majority of spontaneous images made during the evaluation period. In interviewing

⁵ Marie Josée Remy of Marin, interview by author, 1 November 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

three people about two different figures spontaneously created on the same evening, all three people expressed problems about the details of both figures.

One story was of a child who returned to his rubber pacifier after a four-year reprieve. It was associated with Hebrews 6:1-3 and the importance of not laying again the foundation, but moving on to maturity. One interviewee found the story touching and personally applicable, but when asked about the delivery, she said it “had no emotion” and did not convince her of anything.⁶ In probing for the reasons for what to me seemed a contradiction, that it touched her but at the same time seemed to be delivered without emotion, I discovered it was a lack of detailing that kept her from fully grasping the nature of the story. The story in itself was clear but the delivery was “too rapid” and “poorly adapted” to make any real change in the hearer’s life.⁷ When I explained to her how I viewed the force of the story, she immediately understood the complete meaning, but told me she had not fully comprehended the story when it was initially delivered. The same experience was repeated by a second informant who, although receiving the story and its meaning, had to make a correspondence himself with the text because the speaker had inadequately detailed the scriptural rapport.

Highlighting Differences Between Reception and Personal Application. Over the course of the qualitative evaluation, it became apparent that there was a significant difference between a person experiencing a satisfying reception of a figure and a person who was moved to the point of personal change. Emotional gratification by the hearer did not guarantee the behavioral application of the speaker’s idea by that same listener.

Interviews showed that a speaker could create an appropriate story, one that was even moving and personally appropriate, but that it could simultaneously lack the force necessary to bring about change. The text-story-application movement sometimes broke down at the

⁶ Mihàela Jonescu of Robert, interview by author, 11 November 2003, Lamentin, Martinique.

⁷ Ibid.

level of personal relevance. Although it was difficult to say exactly why this breakdown took place, several reasons were apparent. One major reason that stories lacked force was because they were not related to the biblical text with precision or detail that resonated with the life of the listener. The application of the story to the listener's life was frequently not expanded with enough specifics to challenge the auditor's belief or behavior.

Although it was stated in the opening chapters that the force of a story or image lay in the fact that the hearer is drawn into the sermon because of personal experience, the reality is that "the drawing in" is only half the battle. An auditor may follow a speaker step by step and may even be emotionally or intellectually attentive, but that same person may still fail to take to heart the meaning implied in the figure. The interviews revealed that people do not necessarily apply image and narrative to their life, even if they understand them. The reality of people's hearing a message but not applying it raises the question of whether or not it is the speaker's job to relate adequately the exact sense of the figure. The extent to which a preacher interprets the meaning of his image or story depends to some degree on the audience, his personal objectives, allotted time, and the clarity of the figure itself.

The satisfactory nature of a story or image is partly dependent upon the speaker's ability to cast the figure in a setting with adequate specifics to be clearly understood. A listener with immediate understanding of a symbol or a setting of a story will usually have greater and quicker access to the underlying sense and meaning of the figure. If a speaker uses an illustration from the world of agriculture, a listener who likes to garden will likely furnish unstated details and identify quickly with the communicative purpose of the illustration.

At some point, the speaker has to assess the capacity of her hearers to interpret the figure. What constitutes adequate detail is a judgment the speaker makes based on a general assessment of the audience's knowledge of the figure's setting. This may be difficult to do,

but the speaker must take some responsibility for bringing the hearer easily through the decoding process.

Most often during this part of the preaching experiment, the failure of the figure to communicate its intention was not based on the speaker's lack of emotive language, lack of knowledge, or lack of understanding of the physical setting. It was instead a failure to communicate enough detail *for the listener*. The person delivering the illustration usually could have imagined those details but often failed to incorporate them adequately.

The force of the figure to convince, challenge, express, touch, move, etc. was usually not dependent on well-thought-out development, but on instinctual delivery that was slow enough for the speaker to choose the appropriate details necessary to communicate the central idea. When the listener was more experienced in the subject matter, be it church life, the biblical text, or familiarity with the setting of the figure, she often supplied the details to make full sense of the figure even if the speaker did not furnish them.

Dynamics such as listener attentiveness, acquaintance with the subject matter of the figure, and distractibility factors all play on the capacity of a hearer to decode and apply the illustration properly. The more innate the listening skills of the auditor, the more controlled the speaking environment, the more clearly the figured analogy corresponds to reality, the less the speaker has to give details to make himself clearly understood. Most communication settings, however, demand a high degree of furnished detail because the listeners are usually hindered in some way in their ability to decode. The setting is also usually filled with distractions, and the figure is typically not captivating in and of itself. The people I interviewed were most satisfied when the delivery was more fully constructed with clear and precise analogy. What appeared enough to the speaker was almost never sufficient for the listener to make full sense of the image.

An Excursus on the Importance of Properly Detailing an Analogy. As has been already stated, analogies require enough detail to be clearly grasped by a listener. However, not all detail is appropriate. Some specifics can serve as a distraction to the main meaning of the text.

The employment of adequate use of detail was taught in Session 10. The subsequent interview process revealed important information about the value of *appropriate* detail in figure use. Interviews confirmed that not all specifics were helpful. Listeners were often confused because the speaker chose to introduce particulars into the figured delivery that were not relevant in the decoding process. As a consequence, many ambient details served to distract and hinder speaker objectives.

In interviewing a young man about an image spontaneously constructed by a speaker during a church service, the interviewee was captivated by an inappropriate use of detail. The context for the illustration was a discussion of Psalm 13 and the fact that David was often discouraged by the success of his enemies. Another contributing member of the audience who shared took up the image and related that 99 enemies might hypothetically surround the Christian, but if he trusted in God, God would deal with those enemies. When I interviewed the young man who was baffled by the inappropriate use of detail, he clarified his confusion. He stated that the image was “incomplete.”⁸ He communicated that the number 99 had no rapport with the text; further, the fact that the numbers 99 and 1 had a certain charm hindered him from entering into a deeper understanding. The force of the details became the object of focus, even to the point that the interviewee communicated that he failed to listen to the rest of the illustration because he was trying to make sense of the speaker’s use of numbers.

⁸ Joackim Renouf of Marin, interview by author, 11 November 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

In another meeting, a man discouraging the use of the French word *leader* to describe a small group organizer because the word *leader* implied too much of an authority system, insisted that the image the church needed to create was one of a team (*équipe*) led by a *coach* (also a French/English word). This provoked hot debate about details and the exact implications of specific words and word pictures. What I discovered in post-meeting interviews with two people was that images often imply too much analogous correspondence. This was especially true for these controlling images. One woman told me, “The coach is passive and does not play the game.”⁹ Another woman, when commenting on the same idea said, “I think that [Bob] likes the fact that he would be the coach. He does not engage with people the way he should.”¹⁰

The power of images to produce structural frames is extensive, usually more than people realize. The *leader/coach* vocabulary problem for this cell church is a perfect example of the power of detail to export nuance. Images that are foreign to a context or that have poorly constructed correspondence may provoke a reaction because the implications of the figure supplant the existing structural frame. The lesson is clear. Poorly qualified analogy can undermine reception because the preacher risks being misunderstood or perceived as someone imposing a value system without permission. If an image is used to create structure, either for a sermon or for a church organization, the purpose and details must be precise.

Anticipating Differences in Figure Reception. As has been previously stated, each hearer constructs meaning based on personal factors during the decoding process. These include aspects like: past experience, vocabulary, language, cultural issues, hearing ability, accent, etc. In a church setting, a speaker is often faced with the same people week after

⁹ Mihàèla Jonescu of Robert, interview by author, 18 November 2003, Marin, Martinique.

¹⁰ Marie José Remy of Marin, interview by author, 18 November 2003, Marin, Martinique.

week, namely, a group of individuals possessing a similar Christian worldview. While there are particular differences among listeners, there are also common cultural values held by nearly everyone present. The result is that the speaker can never be completely sure if individuals within any setting are construing the delivered figured speech according to shared worldview perspectives or if they are interpreting it according to personal peculiarities or private qualifiers.

A repeated issue in the interview process was the fact that some interviewees told me that the illustration added nothing to their comprehension of the Bible. Two questions addressed precisely this issue: 1) The story (helped/did not help) you understand the idea found in the text; 2) The story (helped/did not help) you accept the idea found in the text. Mature Christians frequently answered that the illustration did not help them either understand or accept the textual idea. This troubled me. I questioned the value of using figures of speech if they did not help comprehension. What I discovered, however, was that textual understanding among Christians, especially more mature Christians, was much more real and more subtle than the categorical denial the interviewees offered when they said that figures did not contribute to their understanding of the biblical material. Moreover, I found that affective purpose such as giving comfort had value, even if intellectually a story made no significant cognitive change.

In asking the 37 questions about the success or failure of the spontaneous figures to a 27 year old woman after a meeting, she told me as many others had, that the images did not help her understand the text. I asked her to explain herself because I was troubled by her response. She replied, "I already understand the text. The illustration did not help me." Then, however, she added this: "It added nothing to my comprehension, but it helped me understand the implications ["les implications" i.e. application] for me personally. It is like a painting. When a painter puts the paint on, it is flat. But if he builds up the paint with layers,

it begins to have a relief and depth. The color does not change, but the thick paint adds another dimension.”¹¹ It is possible to assume from this comment that for Christians, images do not give entry into the Bible, especially common texts, but they do give depth.

After this interview I added two questions to the interview process: 1) How did the story/image help you apply the text to your life? 2) How did the story/image confront you with the implications of the text for your life personally? In this way I was able to discern whether or not images and story had applicative value, even if they had little cognitive value. If mature Christians are more apt to receive the *applicative value* of images based on texts with which they are familiar, then the speaker should be aware that it is best not to use them as *explanatory* tools.

Connecting Figurative Language to Circumstantial Contexts. Every speaker reads his context and adjusts his delivery based on observations. This is the essence of circumstantial delivery. The speaker assesses an audience and a setting by looking at physically observable phenomena as well as examining important non-visible values. The pedagogy was very useful in training students in the observation of, the intrusion into, and the use of circumstantial contexts.

This study showed that it is particularly important for speakers to assess the belief systems and the expectations of listeners. What people already believe is usually more important to the speaker than the physical context. The two are linked, however. Before a preacher can properly employ a verbal image, use objects, or manipulate her speaking environment, it is very important for her to assess delivery possibilities that can be drawn from the *observable values* already held by the audience. In other words, she must understand the ideological context.

¹¹ Mara Meex of St. Anne, interview by author, 1 November 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

Speakers have innate abilities in varying degrees to discern values.¹² To some extent, the value systems of people are immediately apparent by the way they communicate, their word choices, their dress, their ways of greeting one another, their physical proximity, their listening habits, their respect for other opinions, etc. When a speaker enters a context to speak, she identifies, responds to, and constructs her material based on the contextual variables, even if she is not aware of it. When she speaks, she ultimately creates a new context. People respond, laugh, sleep, ask questions, etc. Actually, one might say that in fact, she manipulates the context, and in so doing creates a new one. This is no small fact. Speaking alters the immediate context. To what extent the at-the-present context changes, depends on a level of *intrusion*.¹³

Speaker intrusion into the context is something everyone senses unconsciously. It is as though there are established or expected norms, some defined by the crowd, some by more invisible forces such as ethnic culture and language protocol. When narrative or verbal figures are used, the intrusion can, in many instances, be deeper than discursive explanation. This is because the experiential past is charged with emotions. If the speaker moves beyond verbal intrusion and actually physically enters into the audience, touches a participant, or manifests some concrete object, the contextual culture changes drastically. Generally speaking, intrusion can be ideological, verbal, spiritual, psychological, physical, divine, or

¹² For example, during a church meeting comprised of young parents, a student speaker spontaneously created an image of how young Christians are like babies who are forced to drink different brands of milk and vomit up what they drink. He likened this to new Christians receiving divergent doctrines and practices from different pastors and churches during their formative years in the faith. The image corresponded with the value system of the audience and was received very well.

¹³ By contrast to the human intrusion of which I am speaking, William H. Willimon addresses the issue of God intruding into a context to call the unbaptized to Himself in *The Intrusive Word* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994). “We are here because we have been encountered, assaulted, intruded upon” (ibid., 34).

any of a combination of these and other elements.¹⁴

A speaker normally has enormous power to create a speaking/listening culture but many times does not use it. The harsh reality is that contextual culture is under constant manipulation and can vary drastically from minute to minute. Each moment brings a new physical context. There is a sort of continual contextual renewal.

Most pastors preach in relatively stable, homogeneous contextual environments. What I found when I became a missionary was that the physical context was far more dynamic, even at times astonishing. Because I came from outside the Creole culture, I noticed that culture shock was a regular experience in church. In Lowry's jargon, my equilibrium was upset.¹⁵ I discovered that the preacher, although being the main participant in the speaking process, was not the only player.

The power of the context to determine the immediate culture is, by and large, only unconsciously grasped by many preachers. It is even less the object of conscious manipulation by those same people. There is a tendency to assume that meaning is constructed in the ideological realm of the speaker's mind, rather than believing the obvious, that interpretation is molded by a complex of variables, not the least of which is the ensemble of factors present in the room at the moment of delivery. Speakers are hesitant for a multitude of reasons to use the leverage of the immediate context to increase their capacity

¹⁴ In November 2003, I attempted to interpret the symbolism of church overgrowth by use of a mint plant. I consciously altered the immediate culture by the introduction of an object lesson and *created a context* that suited my purposes. I deformed and infused the context with a physical reality emblematic of the meaning I wanted to communicate.

In interviewing 3 people immediately after the meeting, all perceived the physical plant in their midst as a living example. "The plant added life," one respondent said (Mara Meex of St. Anne, interview by author, 1 November 2003, St. Anne, Martinique). The applicative value of an overgrown plant spoke for itself. The contextual culture was molded by the presence of the plant. In assessing the modification the figure, I examined how the context changed the existing figure (see Appendix 4). One man stretched out the runners toward individual people. I also took a knife from my pocket and cut off six runners and gave them to different individuals. In the words of one man, "You made them responsible" (*responsabiliser*) for the application (Nicholas Meex of St. Anne, interview by author, 1 November 2003, St. Anne, Martinique).

¹⁵ Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 28.

for intrusion.

Figures are normally understood or reinforced by a setting. When cognitive distance might exist between the figure and the average listener, the speaker looks for qualification to clarify meaning. That qualification usually comes from the larger cultural context and is communicated verbally. Intrusion and manipulation of immediate culture is a fertile ground for the generation of such support material because it is contextually close to everyone in the setting.

Physical intrusion into the context, however, does not always have a positive effect. Failed image delivery is on occasion the result of a misuse of the setting.¹⁶ If the listener is not in agreement about the sense of the message, she feels violated in some sense by physical intrusion. The reaction can be so strong that she senses her beliefs are being “put in danger.”¹⁷ There is the reality of contextual impropriety.

The questioning process revealed that, in the same way, verbal images can have inappropriate implications. The physical use of the context can be in bad taste. Beyond this, because the speaker chooses to use a visual medium, the force of the success or failure is compounded by the additional sense stimuli of the physical manipulation of the context.

¹⁶ In one study session treating the "plateau reality", a student speaker illustrated a lack of faith by the actual hesitation in mounting a chair. The physical example was not well received. One woman stated that the man's intrusion was personal and that he tried to use his own feelings to speak for the group. In her words, "I felt this was dangerous" (Carin Comte of St. Anne, interview by author, 5 November 2003, Lamentin, Martinique). In questioning another participant, I discovered that the use of a chair was too intrusive. "I told him that he had no reason to climb up the chair. It bothered me" (Katy Giachino of St. Anne, interview by author, 5 November 2003, Lamentin, Martinique). The contextual manipulation seemed to enter into the spirit of the meeting with brutal force. However, when asked if the image challenged a belief or placed it in danger, the answer was affirmative. It was also perceived as convincing. The image was seen as not coming from the heart, not logical, not simple enough, not well adapted to the setting, and in poor taste. Nevertheless, the respondents saw it as clear, forceful, convincing, challenging, and personally applicable. They saw it as powerful but powerfully negative. The fact that the speaker intruded into the context and forced an ideological confrontation by his use of the chair, created an "unsafe" communication experience.

¹⁷ These are the exact words (*mis en danger*) used in the question process. Almost always, however, the question was answered in the negative. Images and stories did not put a belief in danger. In this instance where the speaker was intrusive, the auditor felt her beliefs were in danger in a negative way.

There is also an intimacy factor at work. As the audience size increases, the intimacy level decreases. What works in smaller settings may not work in larger settings, and vice versa. This is because people associate physical closeness and distance with emotional intimacy.

At another level, intrusion is most effective when it is engineered with a subtle respect for held values.¹⁸ There may be people in the audience who are virtual gatekeepers of certain beliefs, institutions, or doctrines. This must be kept in mind when communicating to people who consider themselves stakeholders of certain principles or ways of thinking.

When constructing an argument to confront opposing ideas, normally the speaker should create common ground or consent to truth existent in the idea he wants to contradict *before* he states his reasons for disagreement. There should be consent by a speaker to the pre-established truth. Speakers need to be aware of both the political export of their words and their responsibility to identify with the audience before they attempt to influence the value system of a group of people. If a speaker wishes to enter into a culture and challenge already accepted norms by means of figures, she should possess a subtlety and care that shows understanding, otherwise listeners might view the communicative experience as brutal and haphazard. This is especially true when addressing behavioral issues.

When a speaker employs a figure that illustrates behavioral change, she chooses an even deeper level of intrusion and risks further misinterpretation. In my original 37-question post-delivery assessment instrument used to analyze the success or failure of spontaneous images, there were no behavioral questions. In constructing the instrument, I conceived

¹⁸ One student speaker managed to find a suitable image that reflected the audience's thinking on the subject of the "plateau reality." After the meeting, an audience member detailed her response to me. "I saw the image [of the staircase] clearly. It spoke to me. It spoke to everyone. When he said, "I see the church like a staircase," everyone stopped. I watched the heads rise up" (Katy Giachino of St. Anne, interview by author, 5 November 2003, Lamentin, Martinique). Another told me, "We were speaking of the same values. I agreed exactly with what he said" (Carin Comte of St. Anne, interview by author, 5 November 2003, Lamentin, Martinique).

wrongly that it would not be possible to assess behavioral change. Church settings are highly controlled environments that do not usually involve physical or behavior response, so I presumed that the applicative force of a preacher's words was almost impossible to measure. Yet during the interview process, sometimes I found that imaged speech was largely intended to create behavioral change by appealing to the will. Several times, respondents were absolutely clear in their statements that the image did not move them to behavioral change. One woman told me: "The image was not personal. It was not deep. It did not speak about emotions. It reminded us about a responsibility and not a feeling."¹⁹

In the French view of social intercourse, the importance of tying the emotions to the will is strong. It became clear during the interview process that behavioral appeals via figures in the French Caribbean setting, and doubtlessly elsewhere as well, are more easily accepted when they are positively tied to human desire in some way.

The danger in applicatory images that address behavior is that they can be interpreted as cold. French people are particularly sensitive at this level. Speakers in any culture who use images and stories to motivate their people for behavioral change, however, need to compensate for resistance found in the recipient. Most people do not want to change and do not desire more responsibility. Consequently, there should be adequate appeal to the heart to create passion for change when that change involves behavior. Appeals to responsibility in French and Creole cultures are perceived as "not deep" as the above interview revealed. Emotions are *deep*. Responsibility is surface, *shallow*. If a speaker seeks deep change, she should make some sort of compensation by means of positive emotional content in the image.

Some Tentative Conclusions About the Circumstantial Aspects of Parabolic Delivery. In attempting a summary of the important aspects of parabolic engagement

¹⁹ Marie Josée Remy of Marin, interview by author, 1 November 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

delivery within physical settings, it is possible to clarify the major results of this study from the vantage point of audience reception of analogous image and narrative. The study revealed that the success of any given figure was highly dependent upon the appropriate use of circumstantial and cultural detail. Assessing the mechanics of the *speaker's* figure creation process by means of audience interviews, however, was almost impossible. Listeners responded to the speaker's use of the figure itself, not the mechanical connections to the text or how it was constructed. Consequently, audience qualitative assessment addressed circumstantial aspects such as emotional reception, detailing, aptness, application, and other larger issues.

In the measurement of select spoken figures within delivery settings, it was found that listener response was more positive when speakers' figures exemplified a good understanding of the cultural issues, circumstantial factors, and the larger groupings of contexts in the speaking environment. With respect to these central elements, the pedagogy was found to be particularly effective. It helped motivate students toward engaging people by culturally appropriate analogous figures, regardless of their prior experience in circumstantial delivery and contextual interaction.

Because the physical present often dictated language and delivery choices, the spontaneous nature of figured engagements resulted in modifications at the moment of the preaching. It was clear that speakers needed to avoid skeletal or rushed delivery of spontaneously created or modified material. Some speakers overcame the mental or verbal crisis of contextually appropriate delivery by detailing for narrative continuity and engagement. Those who avoided circumstantial pressures and carefully calculated their speaking to avoid premature delivery or underdevelopment received a clearer and more positive response from the audience. Time restrictions and the pressures of the setting were

found to interfere with careful contextual adaptation and adequate presentation of fully developed analogies.

The careful tying of the sense of the text to the circumstantial setting by means of appropriate analogy produced more satisfying communication. Figures were found to need a clear correspondence between the precise communicative nuance of the subject and whatever else to which the figure pointed. When the correspondence of the figure was plain, listeners could furnish particulars based on their own experience.

This listener process of decoding was facilitated by the slow delivery rhythm of the speaker. Listener acceptance of a delivered idea was more probable when common details of analogous truth confronted him in a personal way. The force of the extension to convince, challenge, express, touch, and move was often a byproduct of slow, instinctual delivery of a carefully analogized central idea. Not all specifics were helpful, however, and it was clear that speakers who introduced too many ambient details into their figures risked being misunderstood.

Finally, speakers who based their parabolic engagement on observations of the audience and their values, usually received positive listener evaluations. The study showed that preachers should avoid excessive intrusion into, or misuse of, the setting and its contexts, especially when their preaching confronts established listener beliefs. Contextual impropriety took place when speaker intrusion failed to respect held values and unwritten intimacy factors.

Measuring Parabolic Engagement by Means of a Compact Disc Assessment Instrument

The notion of brevity is at the heart of parabolic engagement. Jesus' parables were relatively short and were not sermons as one might define them. In reflecting upon parabolic conciseness detailed in Chapter Three, I decided to measure the reception of original parables that approximated the length of the biblical examples. Short parables, while not reflecting the

same communication dynamics of longer, more fully developed sermons, do nonetheless compress certain aspects of good figured communication. The results gleaned from this feature of the study reflect directly upon the suitability of parabolic principles useable at the sermonic level.

A number of students contributed stories for inclusion in an audio compact disc assessment instrument. These stories varied in delivery form, in plot structure, and in language according to the teaching content of seminar sessions dealing with narrative extension. The final seven tracks varied from 1 to 2.5 minutes in length, approximately the same amount of time it would take a preacher to recount verbatim one of Jesus' longer parables.²⁰ The compact disc survey also served as the basis for extensive follow-up interviews about culturally appropriate delivery preferences.

The study measured the effectiveness of short parables within a larger setting and did not measure immediate circumstantial factors. The assessment tool permitted the appraisal of variables not tied to the physical context. With it, I was able to control key elements, particularly those that measured cognitive and affective changes, while at the same time make it available to diverse audiences and listeners. The speaker traits never changed, and everyone had the potential to listen to exactly the same delivery, barring individual differences in equipment and playback.

Questionnaire results provided a unique platform to interview a large number of people with diverse religious beliefs concerning their reactions listening to stories and discourse. In addition, follow-up interviews possessed the advantage that the listeners came into the interview process already having reflected on the parabolic audio tracks.

Consequently, the interviews yielded clear and quality results because each respondent had

²⁰ For example, the parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt. 18:21-35), the workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16), the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30), and the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) all take about one to two minutes to narrate.

previously completed seven identical question sets pertaining to thought, feeling, setting, ethos, detail, and complexity for each audio track.

The CD survey was a 156-question instrument delivered to participants with an accompanying compact disc containing 6 parables and one discursive delivery. The chief measurement domains on the questionnaire were those identified in earlier chapters as being integral to engagement method: the cognitive acceptance or rejection of ideas, affective change, ethos perceptions, appropriateness to the physical setting, satisfaction with details, simplicity, and completeness. In addition to some traditional demographic factors, the survey also attempted to measure the results based on specific independent variables important to this study, namely education and literacy. In order for a preaching methodology to be effective on a wide scale, it had to be suitable across literacy levels and accessible to people at differing learning stages.

From the vantage point of the three part pedagogical process of analysis, analogy, and extension, the seven audio tracks represented relatively good examples of extended analogies that could be clearly related to precise biblical passages. The instrument could then be used to evaluate the parable reception among diverse audiences without excessive concern about developmental issues of the stories themselves.

The analysis of audience reception of parables posed some unique challenges. According to the work of Street and Hopper, it is important to be clear in speech style assessment, being careful not to confuse the testing of “perceptual constructs and biases (e.g. stereotypes, information processing, role and normative expectations, personality variables) with message characteristics (e.g. accent, dialect, and vocal behaviors such as rate, pauses, intensity, quality, and pitch), or with communicator goals and motivations.”²¹ A similar

²¹ Street and Hooper, “A model of speech style evaluation,” 175.

study by Cacioppo and Petty found that arguments can be accepted or rejected based on how “recipients respond to various non-content cues.”²² It was thus important to isolate potential problems in the analysis because of non-content items such as French and Creole accents.

The type of idealistic measurement detailed by Street and Hooper is very difficult to achieve in reality, however, especially when dealing with a holistic story medium like a parable. It is often impossible to make comparative judgments if in fact one mistrusts interpretations based on differences in vocal patterns between parables or between speakers. One could negate almost any conclusion of speech comparison because, for example, vocal patterns are never the same.

To avoid assessment confusion based on variances in vocal behaviors, seven original audio tracks were put on compact discs and distributed with the questionnaire. Of the seven tracks, there were six parables, each with a different plot structure (see Appendix 7). The parables were designed and recorded specifically to measure diverse elements of engagement theory. It was important to determine if listeners could identify the biblical theme of the parable and agree with the appropriateness of the analogy. It was also critical to measure how variances in delivery form and plot structure changed reception. The study also measured several aspects of narrator ethos as perceived by the listener.

The assessment instrument consisted of 23 “attribute”²³ questions and 7 sets of 19 attitude and belief questions. Each respondent completed seven sets of questions for a grand total of 392 sets of responses. There were 22 uncompleted sets, however. At the recommendation of a statistician, I constructed the instrument so that each set of 19 questions

²² John T. Cacioppo and Richard E. Petty, “Language variables, attitudes, and persuasion,” in *Attitudes toward Language Variation: Social and Applied Contexts*, Ellen Bouchard Ryan and Howard Giles, eds. (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), 206.

²³ “Attribute questions are designed to obtain information about the respondent’s characteristics” (David de Vaus, *Surveys in Social Research*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 95).

was identical and measured the same variable for each story/discourse.²⁴ This repetition permitted me: 1) to analyze each track individually; 2) to make a comparison of each story with respect to the other stories; and 3) to group variables for comparisons between stories.

Gathering personal and demographic information involved questioning respondents about their sex, age, mother tongue, religion, and educational level. There was careful distribution of questionnaires to assure balance between Europeans and people from Martinique. Details of the coding framework and statistical evaluation of the compact disc questionnaire are given in Appendix 8.

The survey contained seven cognitive or belief-type questions, four affective questions, and four questions related to appropriateness within the physical context. These questions were treated individually as well as grouped and collapsed for analysis. Each completed questionnaire contained 49 responses that were cognitive in nature, measuring whether or not the story had the power to change someone's ideas. This number was later reduced to 28 for specific reasons explained later. Similarly, each completed instrument contained 28 responses measuring affective change, and 28 responses measuring some simple aspects of localization.

Although each story was analyzed with the same set of questions, the sixth question set was modified slightly in order to correspond to the "discursive" or "deductive" delivery.²⁵ The sixth element on the CD was a three-point explanation of 1 John 1:9. The only substantive, non-grammatical change in the printed assessment instrument was that the word "l'histoire" was replaced by the words "le discours" for the obvious reason that it was not a story. However, the content of the questions remained the same and the question instrument

²⁴ Dr. Samuel Barclay, Université René Descartes, Paris V, interview by author, 3 September 2003, Lamentin, Martinique, telephone interview.

²⁵ "Craddock labels this discursive approach ["in which propositions and subthemes organize the material"] deductive preaching . . ." (Richard L. Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 46).

measured the same variables.

The use of identical question sets was practical in that it was possible to group or compare variables during data analysis. For example, I could analyze how the audience responded differently to a Creole parable (#4) in comparison to the identical French one (#3), or between the discursive message on forgiveness (#6) and the parable on forgiveness (#7). In these two instances, the biblical text was the same for each audio track. In spite of the fact that some other aspects of the oral delivery changed, such as changes in narrators, the value of measuring cognitive or affective differences in individuals or between people groups was obvious.

The authenticity of the conclusions I drew from the data and its interpretation was confirmed by personal interview. It might, for example, be leveled against my conclusions that people found the Creole fable #6 more convincing because a male spoke it, while two women did the French version #7. In interviewing people, however, I found that was not the case. Creoles preferred to hear Creole to French, and the fact that the speaker was male had little bearing on their overwhelming positive response to the Creole story by Creole speakers. Similar arguments might be made against my conclusions about discourse #6 and story #7 where the narrators were also different. Qualitative interviews revealed, however, that in spite of the fact that most people found the woman narrator used in story #7 (also in stories 1, 3, and 5) to be the best storyteller, those people who preferred the discursive delivery #6 were clear that it was not because of the force of the speaker but because of the delivery format.

It was typical in the interview process for individuals to express diverse opinions but to use identical vocabulary for opposing ideas. In interviews with three different people, the word “concrete” was used to describe both the discursive delivery #6 and the beach story #7. A middle-aged French teacher said that although she liked the discursive delivery style, she

thought that the beach illustration was “concrete” and “where people lived.”²⁶ In an interview three days later with two Antilleans who had the habit of studying the Bible for years, they said that the discursive delivery was “concrete” and “direct” while the imaged beach illustration “hid” and “removed the spiritual meaning.”²⁷ According to these latter individuals, images were “*ludique*” (“playful”), while textual explanation in a didactic manner was direct.

Similar problems arose with the term “abstract.” One interview I had with a woman revealed that in her opinion, parables were too “abstract.”²⁸ Finding her use of terminology interesting, I asked her to clarify her thinking for me. She said, “The parable does not specify (*préciser*) its sense. There is always the mystery.” In saying that a parable was abstract, she correctly identified the reality that in a parable the moral is hidden. In this sense, the meaning is veiled, not clearly specified as in discursive delivery. What is interesting is that for her, abstract meaning was something far away, a “mystery.” The textual explanation that was done in a discursive delivery was clear and close, not abstract. In other words, what scholarship identifies as categorically abstract in a technical sense, namely that discursive delivery makes use of categorical abstraction more than does the narrative form, is considered more concrete to some because of its use of certain types of explanatory method. Conversely, when the meaning is concealed in a story, the true sense of the delivery is viewed by some as abstract and far away even if there is not categorical abstraction.

It seemed that depending on the educational background or listening habits of the hearer, concreteness could relate to either abstraction or physical objects/circumstances. For someone schooled in textual analysis, categorical abstraction was tangible. Others who were

²⁶ Pascale Iman of St. Anne, interview by author, 25 October 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

²⁷ Felix and Juanita Barty of Robert, interview by author, 28 October 2003, Robert, Martinique.

²⁸ Laurence Freccero of St. Anne, interview by author, 18 November 2003, Lamentin, telephone interview.

less trained or who had less of a preference for conceptualizing found stories and images to be more concrete. The reason for this is relatively clear. If someone placed greater value on the physical concreteness of the *scenario*, they viewed the story as concrete. If they viewed the *meaning* of the oral delivery as the “*thing*” to be valued, a refined abstract principle was considered concrete. The converse was also true. People who valued communicative concreteness in terms of real-life settings as in a story, saw more abstract discursive delivery as stultified and far away. Those who valued boiled-down, principled explanation of a text, saw the stories as “dangerously emotionally-based” and removed from the real meaning of the text.²⁹ What I was left with was the age-old issue of the power and danger of stories to communicate clearly or to hide truth.³⁰

Having said this, however, it can also be said that there are some universal qualities about the survey results; namely, that diverse peoples from diverse cultures with diverse language tendencies generally liked the stories. In spite of the fact that the sampling was not random, when diverse quotas produced similar results, it was obvious that there was some congruence among respondents. When diverse samplings produced survey response uniformity, I was able to make some qualified conclusions about the universal force of parabolic delivery.

Evaluating the Utility of Parabolic Delivery by Means of Statistical Assessment and Follow-up Interviews. The assessment instrument was designed to evaluate the utility of parabolic engagement method by measuring certain listener-centered variables: cognitive and affective change, contextual relevance, understanding across literacy levels, perception of speaker credibility, the adequate use of detail, and the simplicity of overall delivery. While some qualified conclusions can be based on the descriptive statistics, the clearest value of the

²⁹ Felix and Juanita Barty of Robert, interview by author, 28 October 2003, Robert, Martinique.

³⁰ Mt. 11:25; 13:10-17, 51; Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 3.3.1406b.5ff.

CD project and its accompanying results was in the extensive follow-up interviews. After listening to the stories and filling out the assessment form, about half of the informants were questioned about the listening process. From those interviews, I was able to probe some of the important aspects of engagement process. The instrument provided a questioning framework for precise qualitative assessment.

The overall figures for the survey are detailed in the chart in Appendix 12, and a few correlations and important results are worth noting. First, the surveys showed interesting aspects of how stories bring about affective and cognitive change. The most remarkable result of the survey responses detailed in Appendix 11 is that the survey demonstrated that the parables had more effect on the cognitive domain than on the affective domain. The data showed that parabolic engagement methodology was useful in changing listener beliefs and ideas.

Historically, it has been stated from classical times that images are embellishment and tied to the emotive aspects of argument. As was quoted earlier with respect to the affective power of stories, the listener “comes to take his feelings for premises, and to let passion draw the conclusion.”³¹ This study seriously raises questions to the assertion that stories play primarily on the emotions.

Only 9 out of 56 people taking the survey had a combined negative response for all the cognitive questions. 17 people showed negative responses for their affective mean, denoting that for a substantial percentage of the sample, the stories did not move them. Respondents generally were intellectually confronted by the stories more than they were moved by the same stories. This is even more remarkable based on comments gleaned from the interview procedure in which a number of people said that the process of listening to

³¹ Stephen J. Brown, S.J., *The World of Imagery: Metaphor and Kindred Imagery* (New York: Haskell House, 1965), 91.

stories was childish. What the instrument revealed was that even though people may have been critical of various aspects of the whole procedure, they numerically stated that their mind was active even if their emotions were not engaged or less engaged. Stories seem to affect thinking more than people were willing to admit.³²

When asked if the stories put their beliefs in danger, however, the answer was overwhelmingly negative. Based on the survey results, the conclusion was that people do not let go of their value system easily. Consequently, it might be concluded that leaders who speak in church settings should not expect their teaching to affect radically the belief structure of an audience. From a positive standpoint, if a speaker wants to affect radically the belief structure of an audience, he should somehow seek to overcome the hold that audience members have on their values.³³

The second more predictable result of the survey was the affirmation that discursive delivery lacks emotion and does not touch the heart as much as story forms. The questionnaire responses to the discursively delivered text received the lowest overall scores for all seven tracks, and received particularly low scores in the affective domain.

The third interesting grouping of results was the generally positive reception toward the contextual appropriateness of the stories. Audience response to questions about this was supportive overall, but was especially affirmative with respect to the setting of the parables. For question number 15, "The context and the setting of the story pleased me," the mean score was well above neutral. People seemed to appreciate the fact that the stories were well placed, even though they found less identification with the characters (question 17) or the

³² It is entirely possible that the lack of affectivity in the statistical results could be a consequence of the physical absence of a speaker. It may be that people were less moved because they did not have a person or a context with which to relate. However, other voice media such as radio and audiotapes are normally not considered less emotionally based because they lack a visual engagement.

³³ The fact that a significant number of respondents did not believe that their beliefs were in danger might also simply imply that the 'Christian' portion of the sample was already in agreement with the sense of the story and the text it represented.

story's parallels to society at large (questions 11 and 14). For whatever reason, the individuals taking the questionnaire found the story applicable to real life, but less applicable to them individually.

The fourth issue in measuring utility was the evaluation of the engagement method across literacy levels. The correlation of literacy with story delivery and reception directly affected the issue of usefulness of the overall program. As a result, the data from these variables were scrutinized closely. I postulated that if parabolic engagement method was found to be inaccessible to less educated peoples, this would seriously undermine the assumption that the pedagogy was practical in missionary settings.

For those listeners completing the questionnaire, the average number of years of formal schooling was 12.6. Consequently, 13 became the logical mean since it represented the year that most French people completed their BAC before entering university or other studies. Those with less than 13 years of education were placed in one group; those with 13 and above were placed in another.

The general results show that there was a slight tendency for scores to decrease as education increased. This means that the more educated a person was, the more he was inclined to respond negatively or critically. The margin is quite small for most categories, averaging just over .1 of difference between those below and those above the educational norm of the group taking the questionnaire. Although the overall averages demonstrate differences in responses of those with differing educational levels, the close evaluation of person-by-person analysis demonstrates that there was not consistency in response. People with more education often responded like people with less education and vice versa.

The messages emerging from an assessment of the survey results can be reduced to several key ideas. First, a speaker should expect to influence the listener at the cognitive level when she tells a story. Second, a contextually *close* story that uses local images and

personages improves understanding and satisfaction in the listener, even if the listener is not strongly moved emotionally. Third, the Creole language has more force in Martinique than is popularly accepted, even to the extent that it shows the strongest overall figures between the seven stories.

There are some secondary generalizations that are less forceful because of the size of the sample but are nonetheless worth detailing. As a desire to read decreases, interest in discursive explanation of texts also decreases, but affective sensitivity to stories increases. French Europeans who seem to be less exposed to preaching, teaching, and biblical material also appear to be less interested in an imaged delivery of religious discourse.

Having said this, as a general rule people like parables, especially evangelicals. Even unchurched people who admitted having mistrust for religious things had scores higher than neutral in their responses.³⁴ The same could be said for respondents who answered in the survey that stories did not help them believe or reflect on religious ideas. The cumulative scores of the response data showed the opposite.

Along similar lines and in some ways even more remarkable is that those who said they preferred an explanation to an image actually showed numerically that they preferred the opposite. The subtle teaching underlying this result may be that people, even skeptical people, do not know how much they like storied engagement.

As a side note, the positive response to the Creole story among the youth who took the survey raises some initial questions about youth orality and the de-Creolization of the young, a particularly politically charged subject in the contemporary life of French Overseas Departments. The favorable response to the Creole parable seems to be a positive step in the legitimization of Creole as a whole. One public school teacher I interviewed, after hearing

³⁴ Evangelicals, who in this study comprised 54% of the total sample, show a great deal of skepticism toward religion because they believe they are in relationship and not religion. Hence, it may be that those who responded that they distrust religion also liked religious parables.

about the positive response to the Creole parable by Creole speakers, stated that the acceptance of Creole as a *legitimate* language for formal communication is a step in the right direction.³⁵ This is because Creole has historically been viewed as a language of informal intercourse.

An Analysis of Ethos, Detail, and Simplicity. In an analysis of listener perception with respect to ethos, details, and simplicity,³⁶ it was found that ethnic origin and education had some bearing on how the parables and discourse were received with respect to these three variables. The conclusions showed that parabolic engagement method might be more useful among Creole audiences and among listeners with less education. The numerical results are detailed in Appendix 13. Those with less than their BAC (12 or less years of education) had across the board more positive responses and higher cumulative scores in every category of analysis than those with more education. The former perceived the speaker as more intelligent, and their responses showed they had more satisfaction with details. They also believed that the story was simpler than the textual idea.³⁷

By contrast, those with more education had lower scores in almost every respect. They were more critical of the speaker's intelligence, were less satisfied with the details, and were less likely to state that the idea advanced by the story/discourse was simpler than the text itself. The more educated the informants were, the less they were moved cognitively and affectively. Based on these results, it is very clear statistically that education had a negative impact on total satisfaction as compared with the entire population taking the survey. This reality was even more pronounced in the responses concerning the details of the discursive delivery. Those more educated were far less satisfied with the level of detail in the

³⁵ Pascale Iman of St. Anne, interview by author, 30 November 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

³⁶ These qualities correspond to questions 12, 16, and 18 of Appendix 13.

³⁷ See Appendix 13.

discursive explanation (discourse #6) than those who were less educated.

We cannot postulate with certainty the causal reasons for the negative effect that education had on certain results. It is possible, however, that education produces higher expectations and a greater capacity to criticize. The ability to conceptualize may bring with it an intellectual distancing from the concrete world, and the ability to abstract conceptually may replace appreciation for figured delivery that is based on real life objects and people.

The survey results with respect to education are not strong enough to bring into question the utility of the parabolic method among the educated, however. The reason for this is that people with more education than their BAC were also more dissatisfied with the discursive delivery. In other words, they were generally more critical of the entire process, not just the stories.

The tie between education and expectations raises the contingent question of whether or not discursive delivery creates dissatisfaction at certain levels of listener experience. The discursive delivery #6, although liked by some, had an affective mean below neutral. Its ability to satisfy the listener emotionally was quite low. It seems discursive explanation does not satisfy the listener in the same way as imaged delivery. The low score raises the question of whether or not length requirements to reach satisfaction would be different between storied and discursive methods.

The cultural origin of the listeners also had a noticeable bearing on their response to ethos and details. People from Martinique scored the European speaker of discourse #6 to be more intelligent than did those outside Martinique. Those from Martinique also found the speaker of discourse #6 to be more intelligent than the Creole speaker of parable #4.³⁸ This perception may be because of the discourse form, not necessarily the language choice. The

³⁸ It may be interesting to the reader that the Creole storyteller had the highest level of education, a BAC +5, while the other European storytellers had a combined average education of three years short of their BAC.

perceived intelligence level of the speaker by the audience may have risen because the speaker used a form that is commonly employed by educated people in explaining texts. Yet the numbers run the risk of reinforcing the racially-charged ideas that people from France perceive Creoles as less intelligent and that Creoles take European forms as standards for evaluating intelligence.

Specifically with respect to the Creole parable, people from Martinique were very satisfied with the adequacy of detail. This figure is to be expected in some respects. Yet even though the French and Creole parables (#3 and #4) were exactly the same story simply spoken in two different languages, Antilleans found the Creole parable to be higher in detail than the French version. Contrastingly, Europeans stated the opposite. While the European figures are predictable, the Creole ones are not. Creole speakers in Martinique are almost all totally fluent in both languages and often speak French better than Creole. Yet in evaluating two parables that were nearly exactly the same, they perceived the Creole parable to have significantly more detail.

In evaluating the results of this part of the survey, one must ask whether or not the preference for one language over another when a story is told, bears significantly on reception for bilingual listeners. It appears that it does. A person who is completely bilingual and who hears identical stories in two different languages will not necessarily receive the stories identically. Their preference for one language will color their reception. The fact that the Creole story was recounted in the contextually local language positively changed how the story was perceived. The usefulness of local dialects in circumstantial discourse is clear.

The overall satisfaction of listeners with respect to the level of detail in the stories is strikingly positive when compared with the dissatisfaction with detail levels in the study of impromptu, circumstantially generated images. The issue of satisfaction with detail is important because stories and images created impromptu often suffer for lack of adequate

development. In this CD study, where original stories reached a fairly significant level of compression, the overall level of detail in the delivery satisfied the listener, even though the stories were only from 1 to 2 minutes in length.

As a general rule, the closer the story's details, physical context, and language were to the listener's cultural preferences, the higher the scores. Close proximity of a parable to a familiar setting usually sent the listener away more satisfied. It also appeared that if a person knew the subtleties of the language, she was more apt to grasp the underlying meanings of the story.

There are experiential structures in the listener that correspond more or less with the concrete details of the story. This seems to also be true with respect to people within educational culture. Discursive delivery and exposition are common in the educational realm. As a result, those who are familiar with that culture identify favorably with a discursive medium.

The surveys also showed that delivery form altered perceptions of complexity and simplicity. While people perceived the speaker of the discursive delivery to be more intelligent, they did not perceive that same delivery as being as simple as storied delivery with respect to the textual idea found in the Bible passage. Stated another way, discursive delivery was more complicated than storied delivery with respect to clarifying the textual idea. As an educated Westerner, I might think that exposition gets to the heart of the text, but in fact, listeners perceive the genre of exposition as more complicated than figured delivery. When calculating the cumulative means of all the responses to the question, "The story expressed an idea that was simpler than the text that it illustrated," 26 out of 56 people had higher totals for storied deliveries in comparison to the discursive delivery.

What these evaluations of ethos, details, and simplicity teach the preacher is quite clear. The utility of a parabolic approach to engagement is validated by the positive results in

listener reception. Listeners are more apt to be challenged and satisfied with a narrative medium that has qualities close to their cultural origins and communicative preferences, even if that narrative is only one or two minutes in length. While sermons that are constructed with knowledge of cultural inclinations do not ensure listener *acceptance* of an idea, they certainly help listener *understanding*. A storied delivery that is tied ideologically with the listener's roots advances reception significantly even if it does not produce change or agreement. While the listener may perceive a storytelling speaker to be less intelligent than the speaker of a discursive delivery, this study found that the storied delivery form is perceived as less complex. In addition, the listener leaves the narrative listening experience more satisfied with the details of the speaker's message than with an explanation delivered in a discursive medium.

In addition, it appears that listeners grasp the biblical idea more easily when the text is explained by means of a story. If auditor understanding is the goal, figured delivery seems to be a valuable medium. Responses to both the instrument and the interviews implied that discursive delivery was less effective in communicating the meaning of the biblical text than was figured delivery. The discursive medium also appeared further removed from the detailed life experience of the listener.

An Assessment of How Subject and Language Choices Affect Parabolic Engagement Utility. As has already been stated, the quantitative aspects of the study were consistently matched with qualitative interviews throughout this research.³⁹ Qualitative interviews of respondents completing the CD assessment centered around precise questions that could be consistently asked among all participants regardless of ethnic group or

³⁹ “[M]ultiple tests of a theory, increased chances for various types of validity, triangulation, and the potential for high levels of innovation and creativity” (Jeffrey C. Johnson, “Research Design and Research Studies” in *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, H. Russell Bernard, ed. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1998), 143). What I have constructed is a multi-community comparative design (ibid., 157) that involved “multi-method ethnography” (ibid., 166).

educational level.⁴⁰ A combination of “structured” and “unstructured” question and answer interviews⁴¹ demonstrated some very precise results about how language choices affect localization. Some of the most productive and interesting investigation into the viability of a parabolic model in French Creole settings involved unstructured “probes” subsequent to the CD questionnaire process.⁴²

My original objective during this questioning procedure was to investigate the viability of parabolic engagement method by measuring if literacy, education, experience, and select audience factors had an influence on the reception of figures. In interviewing listeners, however, they were much more open to giving their opinion about the reception process than they were about discussing, for example, links to past education or experience.

Often they would quickly identify that they liked or disliked a story. Listeners usually had volumes to say about the delivered figures themselves, and why they thought an image or story was successful or not. From these comments, I was able to produce a profile of the more common reasons for figure success and ultimately measure the usefulness of some aspects of the pedagogy.

During the unstructured interview process, I took an interpretive approach.⁴³ Consequently, I was not necessarily trying to validate or invalidate my hypotheses, but to interpret “differences” with “coherence.”⁴⁴ The focus involved constructing inferences and

⁴⁰ These questions are listed in Appendices 3 and 4.

⁴¹ Lynn Lyons Morris and Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, *How to Measure Program Implementation* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978), 120.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴³ Michael H. Agar, *Speaking of Ethnography*, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Vol. 2 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1986), 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-22.

conclusions.⁴⁵ For example, in my attempt to find out if figures appealed to the less literate, I inevitably found myself talking with informants about how they received the figures themselves, not about their educational background or reading habits.

In comparing the implementation of the engagement strategies among various ethnic groups with varying literacy levels, there were a tremendous number of “differences” or “breakdowns” that called for explanation.⁴⁶ People in the same audience often understood a story differently. Sometimes two people were moved by the same image but only one really understood its meaning. These differences of reception were important because they revealed how audiences decoded or did not decode figured and discursive meaning.

Certain important themes emerged from interviewing people who completed the questionnaire. Often the interviewees’ insights into their own cultural practices were not measured in the quantitative analysis. The force of the stories, for example, did not convince many people, particularly Europeans, even though they liked them. In trying to assess why this was so, two major reasons surfaced. Some of the most vocal respondents felt that the stories were juvenile, while others seemed to be blocked by the fact that Bible verses should not be linked to fables in a teaching methodology.

In probing deeper, I found a significant dislike among listeners for the use of animals in tales to communicate biblical truth. When comparing their opinions about fables to their opinions about non-animal tales, interviewees clearly affirmed the adult quality of some of the stories but reiterated that they were specifically referring to the animal tales when they said that the process was juvenile (*infantile*). One woman, after criticizing the story method, reflected on her statement and then added that perhaps she herself had lost the ability to

⁴⁵ Ibid., 32-33 and Johnson, “Research Design,” 145. Johnson describes the differences between “statistical inferences,” inferences made from the numerical analysis of quantitative instruments, and “descriptive inferences,” inferences made from non-numerical factors (ibid., 157).

⁴⁶ Agar, *Speaking of Ethnography*, 20.

recover truth in simple narrative.⁴⁷ This phenomenon may be a reality for many French people who are taught that the Bible is a sacred book and, as a text, needs to be interpreted with reverence. Stories, it seemed, tended to lack some kind of expected communicative respect.

In a different interview almost two months later, one woman told me “fables were difficult to capture. I did not get the moral because I was too focused on the animal. I identified with the human figures. Jesus was incarnate, a human who came to us.”⁴⁸ She further explained that parables which employed humans as main characters provided a spiritual sense to the text that the animals did not. “The animal is further away,” she insisted.⁴⁹ She was categorical that even if the moral of the fable was clear, the spiritual import was removed to some extent.

The communicative usefulness of analogized ideas was clearly influenced by the subject choice in the story development. An idea adequately developed by means of clear correspondence does not guarantee that the story will be well received by a listener. For the fables in point, the texture of the storied material did not match the dignity of the ideas they were communicating. For some listeners who believed that animal stories should not be used to communicate spiritual ideas, the spiritual content of the moral was above the chosen medium. While the pedagogy produced a corresponding analogous story, the story’s *appropriateness* fell under question because of content choices.

The sacrosanct value attributed to non-storied, discursive French, by contrast, was at times surprising, among both Creoles and French Europeans. Even though the discursive track received low scores on the CD assessment instrument, interviews revealed that people

⁴⁷ Anonymous female of St. Luce, interview by author, 10 October 2003, St. Luce, Martinique.

⁴⁸ Laurence Freccero of St. Anne, interview by author, 18 November 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

had an almost hallowed appreciation for traditional explanatory method.

Similarly, the same high valorization of Creole by Martinicans with respect to biblical ideas virtually nullifies the supposed non-communicative value of the language in formal church settings. Although most European French people understand the cultural importance of Creole and do not enter into the colonial idea that Creole is not a language but a deformation of French, their true feelings are seen in their silence, what they did not say about the Creole story. Interviews of French Europeans living and working in Martinique revealed that the Creole story was incomprehensible or less than appealing. In the words of one Creole man, whites see the Creole language as something “vulgar.”⁵⁰ This tone of thought spills over even into the minds of Creole Antilleans, who to some extent have adopted the idea that Creole is not a language in which to communicate spiritual truth in formal settings.

The interviews revealed that cultural proximity and contextual relevance were relative ideas, and that the utility of parabolic engagement method was dependent upon certain subject and language choices as well as listener origin. Culturally local figures, for example, sometimes created negative effects in people not native to Martinique. One bilingual Romanian woman told me that the cultural stories were shocking because she had a dislike for the country.⁵¹ What evolved in the interview process was the discovery that cultural proximity to Creole people was in some respects cultural distance to French Metropolitans, even though they lived on the same island. Crabs and chickens are a part of everyday living in Martinique, but for people not typically close to agricultural life, the stories raised comprehension barriers or cultural distance. The transcultural quality of ideas depends on a lot of factors not easily defined. Chickens and land crabs have cultural charm if you do not

⁵⁰ Alain Calcin of Lamentin, interview by author, 23 October 2003, Gondeau, Martinique.

⁵¹ Lucia Revue of Rivière Salée, interview by author, 4 September 2003, Rivière Salée, Martinique.

live with the fear of being bit or pecked by one.

The phenomena of cultural distance and proximity can also be applied to the issue of delivery mediums. It is interesting to note that the beach story, which was told as a similitude, had universal appeal. A man walking on the beach worked as a transcultural symbol and was generally given favorable scores by everyone. The subject and language choice possessed a broad enough appeal to make the figure communicate its intended meaning.

By contrast, the resounding affirmation among Creole Antilleans was that the French language did not “touch their roots,” as some were fond of saying.⁵² The comparison between the French and Creole stories was, in some respects, numerically remarkable, but even more astonishing was the interview commentary that revealed why this was so. Creole interviewees stated that when the French language was used to describe local ideas it created *emotional* distance for them. This emotional distance existed even in spite of the fact that the respondents were totally bilingual. The implication reemerged that thought structures and even theological structures were in some sense ‘Creole’. This meant that language choices and speech styles greatly affected engagement mechanics and ultimately the practicality of story mediums.

The ramifications of this idea are immense for Martinique in particular. Worship and preaching in Antillean assemblies in Martinique are done about 95% in French and 5% in Creole. Based on a visual study I made of 12 Baptist churches in September and October of 2002 in which I physically counted the number of whites in each church on random visits, Baptist assemblies which were fairly typical of evangelical churches as a whole, were about 99% Creole and 1% white, but conducted their services almost entirely in French.

⁵² Henry Lucien of Lamentin, interview by author, 23 October 2003, Gondeau, Martinique.

Preaching and teaching are rarely done in Creole because the language of spoken theology, of books, and of serious thought is French. Theology and preaching are seen as cognitive disciplines and learned subjects. They are not habits that spring from the heart or from everyday life. If they were, they would be communicated in Creole. Theological communication is impersonal and resembles the communication domains of education and formal intercourse.

As a result of the tension between the desire of Creole people to hear Creole on one hand and the ideological dominance of French on the other, there is often a mixing of Creole and French in the sermon, with Creole being relegated to the place of storytelling or quipping. One man expressed his frustration well by saying that sermons need to be in French or in Creole, because if they are mixed there is an unfortunate Franconization of Creole and a bizarre Creolization of French.⁵³

The clearest reason for the force of Creole is contextual relevance. We return ultimately to the question of the value of circumstantial delivery. The interviews demonstrated that Creole is adapted to the people and to the context. It is a language that was born in the French Antilles. If a man wants to work on a motor produced in Japan under the metric system, he had better not have a toolbox filled with English standard tools calibrated in inches. In the same way, if a preacher wants to touch the heart of the Creole peoples, he had better use the culturally appropriate language, not the imported one. French is a European language with a technically refined grammar; it is not well adapted to Antillean life. It lacks contextually charged idioms and syntax.

Language and accent in themselves reflect cultural distance and are either near to, or far from, the heart and everyday life of the listener, depending on which language is chosen.

⁵³ Calcin interview, 23 October 2003.

The average person in Martinique speaks fluent French, albeit with an Antillean accent. Yet in terms of reception, the force of ideas communicated in Creole holds no equal. The language born in the local context, namely Martinique Creole, contains the DNA of communicative transference among Creole peoples.

Immediacy and situational relevance is again brought to the forefront. For example, a culturally appropriate and well-developed idea conceived in the pastor's study, if it is communicated in French to bilingual Antilleans, lands on the ears as something foreign, one step removed from the contextual present. The accent is wrong. The vocabulary is not culturally adapted. The Creole idea is European-ized, though the original thought process may have been essentially Afro-Creole. In stark contrast to this, one Creole woman told me that when her pastor starts speaking in Creole, "I am already interested in listening. When we speak Creole, we hit the bull's-eye. We say exactly what we want to say."⁵⁴

In Martinique, the issue of contextual engagement is immediately defined or delimited by language choice, whether the speaker wants to admit it or not. This is seen most clearly in the response to the Martinique land crab story. The land crab of Martinique is a cultural symbol. The story, however, was spoken in French. While the story was well done and contextually relevant, it lacked culturally appropriate linguistic force. On the CD, the actions of the crab were described in French, but there exists in Creole an entire repertoire of vocabulary, rhythms, and symbols to describe Creole people looking for crabs to make an ethnic meal called Matoutou. In the words of one critic, while the story was contextual, it was not "culturally rhythmic."⁵⁵

What these results show is that the usefulness of parabolic engagement can be aided by its circumstantial factors and contextually sensitive language or subject choices. Any

⁵⁴ Maurice Vigilante of Lamentin, interview by author, 7 October 2003, Lamentin, Martinique.

⁵⁵ Arnel Maville of Lamentin, interview by author, 14 October 2003, Lamentin, Martinique.

figure produced to communicate a textual idea will likely be more powerful if it is localized at the level of oral syntax. The viability of the parabolic model is dependent upon the skill of the preacher to choose delivery language and style appropriate for the immediate culture. The preaching model is useful only if in fact the parables themselves communicate to the local culture and conceptual framework. A speaker must be sure that the language and content of the analogous figure possess appropriate correspondence for those who will receive and decode the message. Of course, a good communication model in and of itself does not guarantee a connection with the audience. It remains the speaker's job to identify fitting analogies that will dynamically articulate his idea to a diverse audience of listeners.

Summary

The experimental interviews and assessments have attempted to gauge the positive value of parabolic engagement from the perspective of listener reception and circumstantial utility. The evaluative process pursued two lines of measurement, one that evaluated figure formation, delivery, and reception with respect to immediate, circumstantial issues and one that appraised the suitability of analogous figures within the broader contextual questions of culturally appropriate subject matter and language choices. The study clarified how parabolic pedagogy aided speakers in producing fitting analogy, clarified communicative focus of textual ideas, helped in avoiding communicative failure resulting from poor analogy, boosted speaker ethos, simplified textual correlations to the concrete world, and assisted in appropriate intrusion. In addition, the study helped clarify precise communication qualities for the evaluation of circumstantial delivery in general.

This study concluded that the circumstantial aspect of preaching is tied to a variety of skills that can be individually applied to local contexts. The contexts themselves need to be adequately sorted out by the preacher who wishes to use analogous figures that are appropriate to his audience. Subtlety in understanding the contextual layering existent in any

delivery setting requires differentiating the factors present in the immediate setting from broader environmental elements in the culture at large. It also requires the implementation of proper image generative technique and delivery. Because the spontaneous nature of engagement demands that the preacher create and modify his delivery at the moment of the preaching, the physical circumstances dictate a host of delivery choices.

The overall value of the pedagogy was affirmed throughout the interview and questionnaire processes. The extensive written instruments and subsequent face-to-face qualitative assessments clarified the mechanics of certain aspects of the engagement methodology. Across literacy scales, engagement technique was shown to be a learnable method for preachers, one that has significant value as a communication process among listeners of varying educational levels.

In assessing the entire process of spontaneous figure invention and delivery, it was determined that the chances of figure failure could be greatly reduced when the speaker established a slow, oral rhythm. Calculated delivery nearly always helped establish clear analogous logic. Impromptu delivery was found to be most effective when it was not premature or rushed, but carefully detailed. Students learned that the force of the narrative extension to convince, challenge, express, touch, and move was a byproduct of slow, instinctual delivery of a carefully analogized central idea.

In general, the proper management of analogous details in extended stories increased the chances that reception of the figured idea became appropriately applied in the listener's life. Underdeveloped figures resulted in a greater loss of illustrative force, and behavioral change was less likely.

In analyzing the adequacy of the pedagogy in teaching applicable circumstantial delivery, it would be fair to say that the training was appropriate but insufficient. In order to teach a student a slow and detailed delivery rhythm for material discovered or modified from

within the physical setting, more class sessions would be necessary. The interviews confirmed that the basic assumptions about circumstantial engagement were correct, but the apprenticeship process was too brief. It was impossible within the allotted class time to refine methods and practice of organizing circumstantial factors, particularly the student's ability to manage detail. The consequence of inadequate skill development was underdeveloped figures and ultimately the loss of illustrative force. When the force was gone, the power of the image or story to change ideas or behavior was minimal.

In addition, the study found that detailing for illustrative precision was weakened by excessive use of ambient vocabulary. The compression value of the figure became compromised when too many superfluous details were added to the illustration.

In terms of ideological intrusion into a setting, interviews showed that construction of figures needed to be done with sensitivity to observable values already held by the audience. In spite of the training, some students lacked subtlety when intruding into the ideological realm by means of figures. They were not aware just how intimacy factors varied with different audiences or how audience characteristics changed with size, context, and previously held beliefs. Because some people associated proximity and size with emotional closeness and distance, the idea of appropriateness of analogy was shown to be relative to certain precise contextual issues of intrusion.

In terms of measuring the usefulness of the pedagogy to address broader contextual questions of culturally apt subject matter and language choices, the compact disc assessment instrument confirmed to some extent a generally positive capacity of stories to communicate scriptural meaning to both Creoles and European French on the island of Martinique. In particular, it showed that figured communication had significant advantages over discursive delivery, particularly at the cognitive level.

Interviews helped clarify the pivotal definition of 'abstraction' with respect to

analogous story. Assessing the responses and correlating them with educational background and listening habits of the hearer elucidated that concreteness could relate to either categorical abstraction or physical objects/circumstances. Some listeners with a lot of experience in listening to discursive speech found that categorical abstraction was more tangible than analogized ideas, even when figured ideas were explained by means of material things or circumstances. It was clear from the surveys, however, that contextually appropriate analogy helped listeners capture text-based ideas more than did the discursive delivery, and the story medium was found to be highly useful in communicating biblical material.

Qualitative and quantitative assessment across literacy levels affirmed the value of the pedagogy's capacity to create relevant extended figures, especially for those with less than 12 years of formal education. This group perceived the speakers of the stories as more intelligent than those respondents with more than 12 years of formal schooling. The former group also indicated greater satisfaction with the details of the stories and believed that, in general, the story was simpler than the textual idea.

While the eleven-part teaching sequence was able to aid preachers create figures, often success was relative to individual speaker competence. Listener satisfaction toward stories was often linked, for example, to the speaker's choice of story setting and language. The auditor's personal experience and language ability clarified or hindered her capacity to relate to concrete details in the story. When a biblical idea was explained with appropriate localized analogy, the listener grasped the meaning more easily than when the text was explained with a discursive medium. When biblical ideas were contextualized through suitable language and subject choices, listener understanding was significantly higher. Teaching students to draw from the local pool of contextually appropriate symbols and settings was relatively easy when they saw how local metaphors and stories seemed to be

received by listeners with extraordinary facility.

Although more time was needed to produce mastery of engagement principles, each element of the pedagogy proved useful for circumstantial delivery of biblical ideas in select delivery contexts by the students under consideration. Qualitative and quantitative results showed the value of teaching preachers to observe and use contextually appropriate methodologies in their spoken figure production.

Techniques used to create and tie parables to concrete speaking situations validated that contextually sensitive pedagogy was effective in bringing about understanding between speaker and listener. The experiment demonstrated that parabolic engagement process was an effective start to learning how to produce figures in concrete physical settings and select delivery contexts.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSIONS AND GENERALIZATIONS

I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:
 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.
 We will not hide [them] from their children,
 Showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
 And his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.¹

A Summary of Parabolic Engagement Pedagogy and Practice

Preaching is about people. It is about a relational event orchestrated by the Holy Spirit in a precise physical context. Listeners have come to meet God. They are looking for an encounter. They want to find it in the apocalyptic localization of the preacher's message. They are looking for engagement.

In the foregoing chapters, this thesis has argued how the preacher can build rapport and emotional connection of people with their God through a biblically-centered message developed by means of a parabolic communication model. This entire idea needed to be contextually validated if it were to have force as a homiletical paradigm.

Pedagogy for teaching a parabolic style of preaching suitable for people across literacy levels involved a careful distancing from discursive and propositional style sermonic development. This thesis, consequently, weighed the value and applicability of teaching poetic structures of analogous correspondence for producing an engagement mindset and delivery system. It attempted to cast the preacher's communication of the biblical text into the form of sacred, figured exchange.

Since all sermons are constructed at the time of delivery, they are oral and immediate, regardless of whether or not they are prepared in advance. The sermon is essentially a now-product, a circumstantial interchange shaped by the context and the speaker's connection with the audience.

¹ Ps. 78:2-4

The parabolic form preserves the elements of immediacy and engagement between the speaker and listener, and it does so regardless of the size of the audience. The study showed that most listeners could construct the biblical message out of his or her own personal experience through identification with a carefully designed parabolic story. While recent preaching theory has moved closer to using the force of storied genres to connect people with their God, it still lacks specific pedagogy for the invention of parables and short figured delivery vehicles.

The early chapters of this document constructed a rationale for parabolic engagement based on biblical examples of imaged delivery. The figured vehicles from scriptural authors out of which this model was drawn included precise engagement qualities. The principle qualities and practices synthesized from the biblical witness included: a prophetic messaging in the immediate, a tendency to interpret the presence of God via proclamation, the situational dynamic of the parable, the compressed comparison of aphoristic literature, and imaged deliveries of New Testament prophetic speech forms.

Bringing these elements together into a teachable format required developing a means to instruct students both how to capture the controlling metaphor of the moment and how to clothe that metaphor verbally for a particular audience using a step-by-step process. Since the immediate culture of a delivery setting drives listener perception, our speakers had to be sensitive to situational phenomena and be able to construct messages that were suitable to reception frameworks. This required skill in circumstantial accommodation and context interpretive adjustment.

Contextually sensitive delivery exploits listener anticipation, expectation, and local value systems. It is for this reason that parabolic pedagogy required teaching episodic structure, culturally sensitive delivery, and storytelling as a conceptual change agent. Exposition by means of a contextually appropriate story helped the listener identify more

intimately with the biblical material.

While verbal picturing by means of parables created ambiguity in listener interpretation, individual differences in decoding were tempered when the speaker had suitably qualified the figure. The carefully designed parable became an invitation to meet God. The parable was never viewed as a propositional analysis of the text. It rather was found to encourage the listener to improve relationship and experience God in the common things of life.

Developing a means of teaching engagement pedagogy required breaking down image invention technique and making it both simple and culturally adaptable. Appropriate parabolic engagement demanded teachable ways to find the illustrative crux of a biblical text through *analysis*. This analysis required isolating: the movement or state in the subject, the communicative nuance of the concept, and the moral ramifications and emotions of the textual idea. After specifying ways of finding the illustrative crux of the preachable thought, it was necessary to detail how to analogize from the illustratable concept.

Methods of correspondence were cataloged and simplified to teach engagement through practical analogy-production techniques. Developing methodology that was capable of creating figures with vividness, beauty, tension, friction, ideological surprise, clarity, energy, inferential force all at the same time was not as difficult as one might expect. The pedagogy attempted to cultivate simply, over the year of training, the intuitive capacities of speakers. In the utilization of the formulated techniques, aptness in analogy was seen over and over again to be a product of appropriate qualification and proper detailing.

Moving beyond analogy to narrative required developing the learnable skills for culturally appropriate extension. These consisted of the mastery of standard plot paradigms, development of sensual detail, use of a suitable disclosure rhythm, and the exploitation of the tension-resolution cycle. Because narratives are structural framing devices, it was also

important to have pedagogy for teaching the concept of controlling type metaphors.

A final version of the training framework for the parabolic pedagogy was structured around the principles gleaned from the analysis of training sequences of oral epic poets. A succession of graduated oral practices was found to be effective in creating trigger mechanisms whereby students could turn naturally to imaged ways of communication when needed.

The practical pedagogy was the natural outworking of both the conceptual design as well as biblical examples of figured discourse. The thesis reasoned that preaching theory lacked tested models of parabolic delivery and that the utility of the method could not be proven if it were not examined in preaching contexts. In addition, the study addressed the validation process through ethnographic interview, a discipline highly useful in gathering information from people about communication exchange. In that the experimental portion of the study tested the feasibility of an expositional, generative method that could produce images and brief parabolic stories for precise settings, it provides an example for future preaching research and opens the door for exploration of other figure generation methods within church contexts.

Experimental Conclusions and Generalizations

The results acquired from testing the concepts and methodologies within this experimental study demonstrate both the utility and limitations of learning a parabolic engagement process. The testing revealed that since localization requires skill at handling the simultaneous layering of multiple contexts, there are significant advantages to having preaching pedagogy capable of dealing with the subtleties of cultural contextualization and circumstantial phenomena in general. Validation of the viability of engagement techniques lies not just in the theoretical basis of the concepts but also in the positive results gleaned from interviews and instruments taken from hearers who actually heard concrete examples of

images and stories created from parabolic method.

As a result of this research there is improved pedagogy for teaching preaching to Christian leaders in French settings. The framework provides a way to train students in oral poetic delivery and offers a new preaching methodology available to missionaries who need to train nationals in less-discursive methods of sermon development.

The study revealed that it is fairly easy to instruct people how to create and implement fitting cultural analogy, regardless of their educational level. By testing the assumption that *the utility of parabolic pedagogy can be determined by the participant's speed of acquisition and dexterity of employment of the figured engagement techniques*, I was able to validate the worth of the pedagogy through the significantly positive results drawn from interviews and other data.

The greatest value of engagement method was found to lie in the force of appropriate, circumstantial communication. Certain speaker aptitudes were clearly more integral in this figured preaching model: skill in creating simple analogous correspondence between ideas and the concrete world, extension of narrative image, capacity for value system assessment, ability to survey stakeholders in an audience, correct judgment in ideological or physical intrusion, care in developing a slow delivery rhythm, facility in exploiting verbal tension and suspense, and capacity for introducing appropriate detail when qualifying figures.

The causal factors I originally assumed would be more influential for learning or not learning the process, namely education, literacy, teaching experience, and audience size seemed to be far less important than personal motivation, acquired speaking habits, established value systems, and the social calendar. Among those involved in this study, individuals who were personally motivated, who saw the relevance in the communication method, who had not previously developed discursive ways of communicating in public, and who were simply not so busy to come to class, learned better than those who tacitly saw the

value in the process, who already had the habit of preaching or teaching a certain way, and whose time was taken up with work or family responsibilities.

Education and literacy were significant factors in class exercises that demanded written and sequential development, but ultimately, those who were highly motivated to employ figures developed a greater oral capacity to engage by means of parabolic speech. Throughout this process, personal observations confirmed, in part, my initial assumptions about untrained students and their greater capacity to learn a new paradigm. Education and reading practices may or may not have had something to do with how those communication habits were or were not developed, but I did not prove any causal links between literacy variables and the ability to learn or employ a parabolic engagement model.

Originally, I thought that literacy would impede parabolic engagement in preachers. It was, however, not just literacy that created problems in learners, but it was the entire collection of acquired habits of traditional patterns of communication in church settings that posed significant barriers to assimilating the taught techniques. I observed among more mature Christians that habits of discursive delivery were a result of years of cultural immersion and dependence on print media.

By contrast, people with natural tendencies toward storytelling and verbal picturing moved easily into a figure-based model for teaching the biblical text. There were fewer acquired behaviors to displace. Also, those for to whom logic and deduction were less a tendency were more apt to embrace an imaged model that seemed to be, to some extent, natural to them. We return to Aristotle's exclusive dictum that "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a

sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.”²

When I began this study, I thought that Aristotle’s statement was extreme because it was restrictive, implying that some people cannot learn to master metaphor. It implied that intuitive perception was something possessed by the few. I have found Aristotle’s judgment, however, to be somewhat correct. Certain people exhibit traits that are more suitable for figured engagement. They have a natural tendency to associate and teach by analogy rather than explain ideas by subordination and logical connection. People participating in this study who had an innate ability to draw correspondences had greater success at parabolic engagement. The knack for drawing connections was by and large independent of educational attainment.

This reality raises a question about the usefulness of the method as a whole. The viability of a model may be brought into question if it is accessible only to people with certain intuitive capacity for drawing analogy. This criticism could be levied, however, against discursive methods as well, saying that only people with a natural capacity for abstraction are able to make good use of discursive preaching method. Ultimately, imaged delivery is natural to human language use and decoding; therefore, it is to some extent accessible to everyone. In a French/Creole missionary context among both educated and less educated speakers, the parabolic homiletical method was found to be not only useful, but in many ways, preferable to a discursive delivery process, even if only a small percentage of the students had a natural facility to employ images and parables.

The second major assumption of the study, that *a listener will be moved and persuaded more by a properly employed, contextual figure than by a discursive delivery on the same text* was only partially confirmed. The reasons for this were several. Often a

² Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459 a 5-8.

comparative analysis was not possible. During the interview process it was almost impossible to isolate indiscriminately other parts of the sermon with which to compare the contextual figure. Was the figure being compared to select discursive aspects of the sermon or to all the non-imaged portions? Moreover, the missiological preaching settings where the hypothesis was tested lacked the necessary control of a 30-minute homily typical in some western churches. Because of the dynamic interchange of speaker and audience that is often present in missionary preaching settings, the differing parts of sermons were often obscured by interaction and disruption. This made comparison between ‘parts’ of a sermon extremely difficult. In spite of these barriers, however, parabolic stories were compared to discursive delivery in the CD study, and the former were found to have wider appeal.

The study as a whole yielded an enormous amount of relevant material about what constitutes a properly employed contextual figure. Assessment interviews and data yielded a clearer understanding of engagement delivery mechanics as well as reasons for differing levels of affective and cognitive change during imaged delivery. Audience readiness to speak about the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of particular figures generated highly informative material for defining the useful limits of parabolic engagement.

Amid all the testing, the hypotheses did not account for the most radical consequence of the apprenticeship process, that of changes in student perception. At the outset of this research, I assumed that figured engagement was simply “a part of the sermon,” a technique to engage people. During the course of teaching the material, however, I realized there was much more going on in the minds of the students. The teaching seemed to be changing the way students perceived communication. As a consequence, the delivery of messages shifted from discursive to more analogous impregnated delivery without mastery of generative technique.

Students were poor at retaining technique, but very good at adapting to a change in

perception. My hypotheses were not constructed to measure a radical change in thinking or communication but were established to measure correlation between figure use and certain variables, the most important of which I deemed were acquisition and employment. I attempted to assess the usefulness of the method by measuring mastery of technique across literacy scales. As a consequence, I was not prepared to measure changes in perception or motivation, realities that were, in some respects, ultimately more important than performance and skill.

In interview after interview at the end of the course, there were very few students who wanted to talk in detail about techniques learned during the year. Yet nearly every student had a significant change in his or her way of preaching and searching for figured material. In spite of a general inability to label precise techniques such as episode development, suspense, ascending or descending plot structures, or detail formation, students nonetheless had a fundamental change in their perception of speech and their communicative habits. *Parabolic pedagogy proved to be highly effective as an orientation tool for an image mindset.* Embracing a figured approach to teaching and learning seemed to be natural for everyone, without exception. Some excelled because of specific innate ability, but everyone demonstrated a natural tendency toward imaged speech. Learning specific techniques, by contrast, was not natural.

One student I interviewed told me, “I practice it, but I can’t remember the methods, the precise technique.”³ He continued to explain to me that his education in school was technical, learning images was natural. He said, “We all go to the cinema. We know what suspense is.”⁴ Quite ironically, the implication was that the techniques taught during the course did not stick because they required non-imaged memory. Another student who had

³ Joackim Renouf of Marin, interview by author, 9 December 2003, Marin, Martinique.

⁴ Ibid.

followed the classes faithfully was able to tell me only one technique that he retained, the spiraling episodic development. Yet, he interpreted this one method in a very narrow way. “I use the spiral method,” he said. “What I was, what I am, what I shall be.”⁵ Although he grasped the method, he defined it according to a chronological framework for human experience when in fact it is much larger and can be used for any type of spiraling structure. Still other students could not name a single precise technique, let alone explain various uses.

During these post-course interviews, it was very clear that the fundamental benefit of the program was how people had changed their way of perceiving and communicating reality without becoming proficient in parabolic method. There was a consistently poor learning of detailed techniques and an extremely high motivation for using figured engagement.

One woman was able to articulate the learning process in its entirety. Her story demonstrates change in thought process without mentioning techniques or methods. Her experience was typical of most students. “It [parabolic method] was not conscious a year ago. It is still not yet automatic. I don’t think about it before making an image. The process was very progressive, but I assimilated it without realizing it. I thought I had not learned it, but all of a sudden, I realized I was creating an image or parable. I recognized that I assimilated it more than I thought Now I can address people precisely [*interpeller*] with things that are closer to their life. It is hard to talk about the gospel, and it [parabolic engagement] helps enter into conversation.”⁶

In explaining this evolutionary change in perception over the course of the year, one man told me, “I start from a different base. With respect to parables I see differently. I observe differently. I explain by means of an image The people [of Israel] in the desert

⁵ Alain Calcin of Lamentin, interview by author, 11 December 2003, Lamentin, Martinique.

⁶ Joanna Garres of St. Anne, interview by author, 29 November, St. Anne, Martinique.

ate manna every day. It's good to eat something different.”⁷ These perception changes ultimately led to radical changes in delivery technique, even if invention methods were for the most part forgotten. “It [the course] showed me that the classic way is not the only way to teach I try to use more images now, and stories A story attracts attention by using details from their life I take objects from life, computers, etc. and I have their [university students'] attention.”⁸

Attempting to weigh the level of assimilation of parabolic engagement ideas and techniques by each student in particular demanded exit measuring according to some prescribed indicators. Basic indicators that I thought important for the figure creation process were put into the form of a 26-question instrument found in Appendix 6. This final questionnaire asked the students to rate themselves in overall changes with respect to figure skills as well as aptitude in the principal parts of the study. The technical indicators in the instrument were the major skills taught in each class session. The results were grouped into four major areas: general improvement/figure reflexes (questions 1-9), image construction (10-14), narrative creation (15-21), and interaction with immediate contexts (22-26). A summary of the questionnaire results is detailed in Table 17 where the neutral mean is 3.0.

TABLE 17

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF FINAL STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Grouped Questions	Mean
General improvement and figure reflexes (questions 1-9)	4.1
Image construction (10-14)	4.0
Narrative creation (15-21)	3.6
Interaction with the immediate contexts (22-26)	3.6
Mean for All Questions (1-26)	3.9

⁷ Alain Calcin interview, 11 December 2003.

⁸ Mark Pulvar of St. Joseph, interview by author, 10 December 2003, Lamentin, Martinique.

By way of general analysis, most of the 13 class participants who completed the questionnaire viewed themselves as having improved in their overall ability to create figured communication. The students saw the greatest improvement with respect to creating verbal images. This is in contrast to creating narrative or interacting with the context. This difference in achievement levels for differing skills was also confirmed by the interviews, which reinforced my early discovery in Montreal that images are more fundamental and easier to produce than narrative. The question receiving the highest score was: "I now look for analogies in real life settings." It had a very low standard deviation and indicates an across-the-board change in behavior with respect to searching for observable correspondence.

Categories showing narrative creation ability and contextual interaction saw less improvement. It was clear during the yearlong teaching that narrative development was a difficult discipline to learn. Whereas images require very little structure and possess innate argumentative force by means of their analogous correspondence, a narrative requires the construction of a disclosure sequence wherein the argument is tied to the *deroulement*. Putting a subject or argumentative idea into a chronological framework whereby the listener experiences disclosure is a discipline not easily grasped. Although not verifiable, it appeared to me that narrative in itself was not difficult for students, but the ability to weave an intended meaning into a narrative presented some problems. To this was added the contingent discipline of properly adding detail. The ability to unfold an idea with sequence, episodes, and rhythm was more complex than the simple presentation of an idea by means of an image. This fact was verified by question #18, "I know how to use episodes," which received the lowest overall score on the assessment instrument.

Students also found contextual interaction equally as difficult. Although they said they knew how to use the Martinican context to create images and stories, they said they were

less apt to create images or stories spontaneously or to interact physically with their context during preaching. Almost without fail during the apprenticeship process, students were significantly limited when it came to contextual interaction. Based on the questionnaire results, the interview process, and observation conclusions, it is evident that the ability to integrate the context into the message delivery was a discipline only partially learned.

When students were asked in interviews to explain their journey over the previous year, the responses clarified certain aspects of their development. For example, they were asked to specify which techniques they used habitually to create figures. Only 3 students could name one or more generative method. The others could not consciously label a single technique without help. Although students did not retain labels of creation and expansion methods, in a wider sense, they had a greater ability to produce imaged and storied speech because they had developed some incipient figure-producing reflexes. These reflexes existed even if the ability to articulate them did not.

Training in the workplace aims at skill improvement. It was clear in the evaluation process that students had much higher skill levels even though technical understanding was limited. Students regretted not being able to manage specific techniques and saw their personal limitations because they did not adequately learn figure formation methods.

The figure reflex, as I have come to define it, was something that was undeniable in the life of the students. It was the tendency to search for a figured manner to explain something as opposed to turning to a discursive method. Overall, the students' figure reflexes were highly developed after one year, both in listening habits and in creative capacity to invent images and stories. This was without having thoroughly learned figure creation techniques.

It was very apparent that student listening habits were radically changed as a result of this apprenticeship. In the course of the year, although I do not consciously remember ever

teaching on listening habits, this aspect of the student interviews was remarkable. Nearly all the students stated during their closing interview that they were more attentive to others' use of figured communication. Although I had not set out specifically to change the way people listen, it was a significant side benefit to the whole process. What I conclude from this is that teaching people to create images and stories will change their conscious listening habits, even to the point of becoming highly perceptive about the issue of appropriateness or aptness of figures. "When listening, I listen for illustration. I try to remember the illustration. Some illustrations do not reflect the text."⁹ For this man to say that some illustrations do not reflect the text means that he had developed the capacity to measure whether or not the analogous correspondence was appropriate to the biblical idea.

A similar factor surfaced during some of the final interviews, namely, that imaged communication is often the way God speaks to us. Not only did students change their listening habits toward others but also their listening habits toward God. One youth leader told me, "God gives me stories and images. He speaks to me this way I am more attentive to the way in which God speaks to me by means of images and stories All things were made by Him and for Him. Nature teaches us of Christ. You see?"¹⁰ This revelatory aspect of figured communion is a study in itself, and it needs to be more clearly addressed if one is to explain adequately the phenomenon of communicative change among the Christians who adopt a parabolic engagement model in their way of speaking and listening. "At the beginning of my conversion, I had this communion, but I lost it. Now I look for Him to speak to me in this way."¹¹ Often during the interview process, interviewees

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ David Renouf of Rivière Pilote, interview by author, 12 December 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

¹¹ Ibid.

would employ the words, “God gave me a story,” “God gave me this image,” or “It just came to me.”

The question of source for figured communication was at times a difficult one and rests partially unevaluated in this study. I set out initially to teach and measure technique acquisition and employment. When figures were a result of method, evaluation was easier. Often, however, the origin of images and stories was not easily cataloged. At times, their inception seemed not to be the result of conscious manipulation of method, but simply some kind of spiritual inspiration. “Sometimes I don’t have a *flash*. When it does not come, I continue the discussion until the Spirit gives me a word.”¹²

In addressing the reflex to seek an image, the fundamental question of *when* individuals look for figured material remains a crucial one. Finding someone with the desire as well as the ability to look consistently for this at-the-moment “flash” is rare. Nevertheless, it seems that the lack of desire and the existence of fear are more the result of conditioning and past training than of incapacity.

When speakers interact with the context, they have uncertainties and worries that the material they have discovered is not good enough, not well thought out, or inappropriate in some way. They sometimes believe that the use of the context will be offensive. They generally have unwarranted fears because they have not been taught appropriate uses of their speaking environment. As people in this study became sensitive to situational issues, there were typical crises of whether or not some spontaneously generated teaching material warranted immediate delivery.

There is often nothing wrong with the figured material that is created in an impromptu environment. It is simply more difficult than usual to deliver because the speaker

¹² Marie Josée Remy of Marin, interview by author, 13 December 2003, Marin, Martinique.

is not used to circumstantial engagement. Most teachers and preachers have not seen consistent intrusion into the setting in this way and have never developed good reflexes.

From among all the closing interviews of students, only one person was able to state clearly that she developed a *reflex* for contextual figure employment in the immediate. “When I explain something to others—family, friends—I try to find out what they like, and I put the meaning in a form of something from their life It necessitates knowing what the person loves. I feel more at ease. It gives me a trajectory. When I know a direction, I try to find an image with respect to that.”¹³ Another man who expressed an ease of figure invention said, “Considering the time in which we live, we have to use stories. It helps people understand better. I use examples from the garden, banana trees, drugs, and cigarettes Using the context is not difficult at all.”¹⁴

Most speakers participating in this study, however, hesitated to use spontaneously created figures. This reticence seemed to be a consequence of traditional speaking habits in which conditioning created apprehension for using material that was imperfectly developed.

In the examination as a whole, speakers revealed a fear that images were not precise and were too open to interpretation. One student told me, “I have a lack of confidence [in my ability to use imaged methods]. I fear deviating from the principal idea [of the biblical text]. An image influences people, even poorly. You really have to know how to use the images.”¹⁵ The student’s fear was based on the potentially poor management of speaker influence.

Contextual communication places new burdens on the speaker and on the listener. The burdens, however, are different. For the speaker, the burden is how to make a careful and accurate intrusion using relevant analogy. Designing and implementing ways into the

¹³ Carin Comte of St. Anne, interview by author, 13 December 2003, St. Anne, Martinique.

¹⁴ Henry Lucien of Lamentin, interview by author, 13 December 2003, Lamentin, Martinique.

¹⁵ Joackim Renouf, 9 December 2003.

consciousness of the hearer should be a careful process. When the speaker engages a hearer, she intrudes into the thought world of that person. This is not a simple task for many communicators, either at the point of word/figure choice or at the interpersonal level. The speaker knows that her words will either embrace or clash with listener ideologies.

For the listener, the burden is confrontation. The speaker may throw the listener into conflict with himself. The speaker's figure creates truth based on the listener's past experience, and the listener is forced to deal with a new reality that he knows to be true or right. The common ground created by the speaker involves a certain tension brought on by unexpected intimacy with the material. Personal engagement becomes a byproduct of the shared experience introduced by the figure.

One returns finally to the meaning of a parable, a notion cast alongside the experience of everyone present. The listener struggles to reconcile his own values with new ones introduced by the speaker's figure. The listener, however, discovers that the values are not new. They were simply hidden in the familiarity of everyday life. They were just brought to the surface by a speaker who dared to engage.

In measuring the serviceability of parabolic engagement pedagogy in French missionary settings, it became clear through the course of this study that the figured methods provided decisive benefits for circumstantial delivery. Engagement practice was useful for three principal reasons.

First, it was easy for students to learn. The speed of acquisition of a parabolic mindset came quickly, within the first few sessions. Students could often learn illustrative techniques within a few minutes. Even in spite of the fact that students had trouble retaining specific methodologies over the course of the year, perhaps because there were too many, these preachers very quickly began to turn toward figured ways of communicating biblical material.

Second, the contextual quality of the parabolic medium made its employment easy. Preachers taking part in this experimental apprenticeship learned processes that not only paralleled their own tendency toward imaged thinking but that were also close to their living experience. They were quickly drawn to the circumstantial quality of good communication and the type of speaking that made use of elements from the surrounding physical and cultural settings.

Third, listeners verified the value of engagement practice when they stated it was an aid to personal reception. As stated early in this thesis, the viability of the pedagogy had to be validated by audience response. Both listener-oriented statistical instruments as well as personal interviews have confirmed the engagement quality of parables, especially when those parables were correctly engineered for a particular delivery milieu.

Considerations for Future Research

In spite of considerable theoretical testing and extensive interviewing, there are many interesting questions left unanswered. It is now easy to see that there are large gaps in preaching research that cry out for consideration. The near wholesale absence of statistical studies in the field of homiletics demonstrates that preaching research remains basically a theoretical discipline. Homiletical study is badly in need of audience ethnographies, principles of audience analysis, sociological approaches to audiences under certain preaching styles and conditions, qualitative studies, and statistical evaluations in general. The lack of original thinking with respect to innovative ways of *validating* sermon method, delivery styles, affective acceptance of ideas, and informational transfer presents an open door for someone skilled in sociological theory and preaching dynamics.

As was stated earlier, the adjacent imaginative world of poetic homilies, chanted sermons, parabolic deliveries, role-plays, extended similitudes, riddle sermons, synecdochic examples, metonymic sermons, extended personifications, dramatized allegory, prophetic

discourse, visionary and apocalyptic deliveries, extended ironies or hyperboles, anecdotal tales, sermons for one person, and a host of other possibilities for creative delivery are almost totally without pedagogy. There remains a great need to move beyond traditional narrative preaching style into teaching structures that establish new approaches to delivery interaction.

At the micro level, there are still unanswered questions related directly to the foregoing research. For example, what factors determine durability of a figure in the mind of a listener? How does audience size affect engagement technique? How do different delivery contexts effect engagement? There remain issues concerning speed of student acquisition of certain imaging methods, differences in figure generation under different environmental conditions, reversion tendencies, and advantages or disadvantages of image complexity and simplicity. How preaching technique and delivery affect ethos is also an area of research that shows promise.

There are certain critical ramifications for the impromptu creation of sermonic material yet to be analyzed. Breaking down issues related to interacting with precise elements of the physical context, sermonic content changes resulting from environmental factors, and how engagement is altered by specific audience factors are all questions that would provide fruitful fields of research.

Within the pool of scholarly literature, statistical assessment and validation of oral preaching methodologies are rare. Organizationally driven ways of creating and assessing the sermon are still the norm. Apprenticeship methodologies with sequenced progressions in image and story invention would be highly helpful and would turn the tide of teaching preaching toward oral methods of delivery rather than the information management techniques now in use in institutions around the world. The value of employing diverse oral poetic processes shows promise as an inventive delivery system for preachers.

During this study, the close analysis of discursive discourse showed that explanatory-

type delivery does not emotionally satisfy the listener in the same way as imaged delivery.¹⁶ It raised the question of whether or not length requirements to reach affective or cognitive approval would be different between storied and discursive methods. A contingent issue involves the kinds of satisfaction that are accomplished in these two respective methods.

As for preaching studies in the Caribbean, the scholarly field is wide open. In Martinique in particular, a study worthy of consideration would be to evaluate what appears to be a correlation between age and appreciation for Creole storied engagement. How does advancement in the French educational system negatively affect reception of Creole stories? With the political hotbed of French Creole identity still in the balance, someone should empirically demonstrate the exact value of Martinican Creole sermons among a church people who appear to be limited by an imposed French theological imperialism.

There also remains the need to validate the most critical aspect of the research conclusions stated in Chapter 10. Storied method had statistically greater change effect in the cognitive realm than in the affective realm. This should be verified in and of itself through extensive research. The fact that stories showed a greater capacity to touch the mind than the emotions is a result that would have far reaching ramifications if validated by an extensive study specifically designed to test that assumption. An interesting contingent question is whether or not replicating the compact disc assessment under the same conditions using images instead of stories would yield helpful results.

The Verbal Embrace

In struggling to understand verbal engagement by means of parabolic delivery, I have come to appreciate the French as a people who have learned to embrace. Both in a metaphorical and physical sense, they appreciate connection. They are a people who value

¹⁶ The idea of receptor satisfaction is not intended to be a commentary on the ultimate communicative goal of the preacher. It is simply an observation on experimental breakdowns emerging from interviews and findings.

language and consider the value of words and their meanings.

Throughout this study interacting with the peoples of France, Martinique, Quebec, Haiti, and French Guiana, I have learned that engagement is verbal love contextually defined. The French notion of connection is very clear at this point. Respect means total engagement, *d’embrasser*.¹⁷

How this relates to preaching can now be described more clearly. The first and greatest commandment does not change when the preacher rises and straightens his suit to preach. The communicative motive must be the heartfelt desire to bring the engaging presence of God to people. The contexts determine not only how that divine engagement of love can take place, but also with whom. The matrix of cultural details defines unforeseen rules that guide engagement and assure its success or failure. Verbal delivery is, in reality, someone extending an invitation to participate, a metaphorical handshake. These relational facts in and of themselves validate the pedagogy, for in fact, engagement is a communicative method of loving people.

The engagement process breathes its life from the at-the-moment happenings, and never leaves the present. It feeds on the dynamic of the immediate and dances in the propriety of cultural balance. It opens the doors of acceptance and walks across the bridges of shared values. It begins with “homiletic empathy”¹⁸ and ends with poetical, passionate love to reach out and verbally embrace the wounded, confront the arrogant, and heal the sick. It does not fear to launch into the deep, foreboding waters of personal intrusion by means of images, stories, or representation. It finds at its disposal anything relevant within the

¹⁷ The French term *embrasser* not only means “prendre, serrer dans ses bras,” “donner un, des baisers à” but also “s’engager dans une voie,” “saisir par la pensée; appréhender” and “voir dans son ensemble” (*Le petit Larousse Illustré*, s.v. “embrasser” (Paris: Larousse, 2003), 372).

¹⁸ Richard L. Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching: New Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 104.

immediate context to communicate the message of God. It calls the preacher to value personal encounter with the audience by means of parabolic words in the *hear* and now.¹⁹

¹⁹ “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me” John 17:8.

APPENDIX 1

RELEASE FORM FOR AN EXPERIMENT USING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Spurgeon's College

South Norwood Hill

London SE25 6DJ

In consideration of the work of Daniel Sheard as a research student of Spurgeon's College, London in his collection and preservation of material of value for the study of French Creole culture, I allow him to collect and compile the results of my use and creation of images in church contexts. My participation in this project is with my voluntary consent. I understand that other individuals and scholars may read and benefit from the data and verbatim examples and interviews.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 2

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Mean	Standard Deviation	1	I am a pastor.
		4	I am a teacher.
		2	I am a leader.
		13	I am a man.
		19	I am a woman.
How Church Members View Their Pastor			
3.5	1.1	1.	My pastor knows how to invent stories or tales.
3.9	0.8	2.	Preachers need to use more illustrations and spend less time explaining the text.
3.0	1.0	3.	Preachers do not use stories or tales because stories and tales take time way from their teaching of the word of God.
3.1	0.8	4.	In seminary, pastors receive very good teaching on how to use images and stories in their preaching.
2.8	1.2	5.	The preacher invents stories, tales, and illustrations during the preaching.
2.8	1.1	6.	We teach preachers how to use stories and tales in order to help their teaching method.
2.6	1.0	7.	The preacher uses people and objects from inside the church in order to illustrate his preaching.
2.9	1.2	8.	The preacher puts his written notes aside in order to explain a point of his sermon by using a spontaneously created illustration.
How Church Members View Their Teachers			
4.0	0.7	9.	Sunday School teachers need to use more illustrations and spend less time explaining the text.
2.8	1.0	10.	Sunday School teachers at church do not use stories or tales because they take time away from their teaching of the word of God.
2.8	1.1	11.	Sunday School teachers have received teaching on how to illustrate their remarks.
3.2	1.0	12.	My Sunday School leader knows how to tell stories or tales from his life.
How Church Members View Themselves			
3.6	0.9	13.	I understand the sermon better when the preacher uses a lot of illustrations.
1.6	0.7	14.	I do not feel comfortable when the preacher or Sunday School teacher uses a story.
4.3	0.9	15.	When I speak before a crowd, the audience is attentive when I use stories or tales.
3.6	0.6	16.	I know how to use stories, images, and tales when I teach the Bible.
4.0	0.8	17.	I am ready to be taught how to invent and tell stories at church.
3.4	1.4	18.	I know the difference between an illustration, story, fable, parable, image, and allegory.
2.5	1.1	19.	I have an adequate training in using illustrations in my teaching in church.
2.2	0.9	20.	I do not have the time to use illustrations, stories, and tales during class.
2.2	1.0	21.	I do not use stories, tales, or illustrations because I do not have the books, the Internet, or other resources.
2.6	0.8	22.	I cannot think up stories or tales when I teach.
3.7	1.0	23.	I know how to invent stories and tales.
3.2	1.3	24.	I prefer a good illustration, story, or tale to a clear explanation of a biblical text.
3.9	0.9	25.	I understand better when the preaching is illustrated.
4.1	0.8	26.	I am more attentive when the preacher or Sunday School teacher uses a story.
2.0	0.9	27.	I do not feel comfortable when the speaker uses an image.
2.3	1.0	28.	At church, the congregation does not like stories, tales, and illustrations.
3.8	0.7	29.	At church, stories and tales touch the audience.
4.0	0.7	30.	At church, the audience understands the speaker better when he uses illustrations.
2.2	0.9	31.	I do not need a course that explains how to use stories, illustrations, and tales in my teaching.
3.0	0.7	32.	I know how to arrange the room to tell a story.
4.2	0.7	33.	I love stories and tales with lots of good, sensory detail where I can see, feel, and hear the story.
4.3	1.0	34.	I love the type of story that captivates me so that I have to hold my breath right to the end.
3.9	0.9	35.	Jesus used stories and tales when He taught.

APPENDIX 3
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PROBING STUDENT STORY AND IMAGE
FORMATION

1. Tell me the story of how you created your parable, image, story, etc.
2. Take me through the process of using _____ method.
3. What did you find difficult? When did you get stuck?
4. Precisely, how did you get started?
5. Did you write anything down? What?
6. Did you analyze the biblical text? How?
7. What feelings did you have during this process?
8. How did you find your story, image, idea, etc.?
9. What pressures did you feel during the process?
10. Is there something that you tried that did not work?
11. What was taught in the course that helped you?
12. Did you use _____ technique (i.e. suspense, plot suspension, etc.)?
13. What cultural elements did you find for your story?
14. Were there subsequent successes after the initial learning? Did they come easier?

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PROBING STUDENT INVENTION AND USE OF
SPONTANEOUSLY CREATED FIGURES

1. Did a feeling provoke the figure? Explain.
2. Did an observation provoke the figure? Explain.
3. Was the story that was used something that took place shortly before its delivery?
4. Was the image discovered shortly before its delivery?
5. Who were the gatekeepers of the meaning of the figure?
6. What were the cultural factors that controlled the sense of the figure?
7. Did the expectations of the audience control the way in which the figure was manipulated?
8. What causal issues were involved in the figure?
9. If the figure was prepared in advance, what spontaneous *changes* were made in the way in which the figure was delivered?
 - a. Did the context provoke the figure?
 - b. Did the context change the figure?
 - c. Did the context nullify the intended use of a figure?
 - d. Did the context cause a combination of figures?

APPENDIX 5

EXAMINATION OF THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF FIGURES

The Affective Causes for Success or Failure of a Figure

1. The story or image (did / did not) spring from the heart.
2. The story or image (did / did not) touch me.
3. The story or image (made / did not make) me laugh or (did / did not) sadden me.
4. The story or image (succeeded / did not succeed) in moving me.
5. The story or image (did / did not) captivate me.
6. The storyteller (was / was not) interesting and (did / did not) touch my heart.
7. There were (enough / not enough) details in the story to make it complete.

Logical Causes for Success or Failure of a Figure

1. The story or image (helped me / did not help me) accept the textual idea.
2. The story or image was a (fresh / dead) metaphor.¹
3. I (understood / did not understand) the true spiritual sense of the story or image.
4. The story or image (helped me / did not help me) understand the textual idea.
5. The story or image (convinced me / did not convince me) of something.
6. The story or image (had / did not have) a good argument.
7. The story or image (challenged / did not challenge) my belief or put it in danger.
8. The story or image was (clear / obscure).
9. The idea (should / should not have) been made into a story.²
10. There (was / was not) a good number and mix of stories or images.³

¹ “[I]ts frequent use serves merely to obscure our language and weary our audience.” Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, H. E. Butler, trans. (London: William Heinemann, 1922), 8.6.14.

² It was “too great for its subject or, as is more frequently the case, too little” (Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 8.6.16).

³ Granville Kleiser, ed. *Guide to Public Speaking* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1915), 191.

11. The story or image was (a logical use of material / based on a logical error).
12. The facts in the story (were / were not) real or verifiable.
13. The story or image (expressed / did not express) an idea simpler than the textual idea that it illustrated.

Construction Choices that Cause the Success or Failure of a Figure

1. The story or image had an (appropriate / inappropriate) length.
2. The story or image was (well adapted / poorly adapted) to the main idea.
3. The story or image (had / lacked) a coherent dramatic suspense or intrigue.

Culturally Related Causes for the Success or Failure of a Figure

1. Generally, the story or image (was / was not) appropriate to the audience.
2. The story or image was (appropriate / inappropriate) for the context.
3. The story or image was in (good / bad) taste.⁴
4. The story or image had (enough / a lack of) appropriate force in the cultural context.
5. The story or image was used (appropriately / inappropriately) in the immediate context.
6. The story or image (was / was not) delivered according to unseen cultural norms.
7. The story or image (was / was not) appropriate to the educational level of the audience.
8. The main character of the story (resembled / did not resemble) a member of society.
9. The context or the setting of the story (pleased / did not please) me.
10. The main character (resembled / did not resemble) me.

⁴ Among other things, it could be “mean,” “coarse,” or “foul” (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 8.6.15).

11. I (have lived / have not lived) the reality of this story in my work, among my family, among my friends, or in my convictions.

12. I (identified / did not identify) with this story.

Success or Failure of a Figure Because of a Chosen Method of Delivery

1. The delivery was done (correctly / too slowly or rapidly).

2. The resolution of the story and its suspense was (appropriate / poorly resolved).

APPENDIX 6
FINAL STUDENT SURVEY

0	I am a pastor.						
6	I am a teacher in church.						
1	I am a leader in a church.						
8	I am a man.						
5	I am a woman.						
7	My mother tongue is French.						
6	My mother tongue is Creole (and French).						
							Because of this course:
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Do Not Agree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Standard Deviation
5	5	2	1	0	4.1	1.0	1. My preaching or teaching has improved.
4	3	5	1	0	3.8	1.0	2. I perceive life differently.
7	4	1	1	0	4.3	0.9	3. I listen more for stories and images when others talk.
6	7	0	0	0	4.5	0.5	4. I now look for analogies in real life settings.
5	6	0	2	0	4.1	1.0	5. I now have a reflex to develop an image to explain something.
5	6	0	2	0	3.9	1.0	6. I use more images and stories when I talk to people.
4	6	1	2	0	4.0	0.9	7. Others listen to me more when I use stories and images.
3	8	1	1	0	4.0	0.8	8. I am more at ease when I use an image or story.
4	7	1	1	0	4.1	0.9	9. I can explain the Bible using a story or an image.
Responses Concerning Images							
6	3	3	0	1	4.0	1.2	10. I know when someone's image is poorly constructed.
4	6	3	0	0	4.1	0.8	11. I see images in life settings more.
3	8	2	0	0	4.1	0.6	12. I can create an image easier.
5	5	3	0	0	4.2	0.8	13. I know how to see images in the text easier.
4	4	3	0	1	3.8	1.2	14. I know what a controlling image is.
Responses Concerning Narrative							
3	7	2	0	1	3.8	1.1	15. I can create a parable easier.
3	7	2	0	1	3.8	1.1	16. I can create a story easier.
2	6	3	1	1	3.5	1.1	17. I can create a fable easier.
0	5	3	4	1	2.9	1.0	18. I know how to use episodes.
1	8	3	1	0	3.7	0.8	19. I know about different story structures.
1	9	0	2	1	3.5	1.1	20. I know why stories and images do not work sometimes.
4	8	0	1	0	4.2	0.8	21. I now can add details to a story easier.
Responses Concerning the Physical Context							
1	9	1	2	0	3.7	0.9	22. I know how to use the context to create stories and images.
1	6	5	0	1	3.5	1.0	23. I know how to physically interact with the context.
1	7	2	2	1	3.4	1.1	24. I can spontaneously create an image.
3	6	1	3	0	3.7	1.1	25. I can explain the Bible by using an image or story.
4	6	1	2	0	3.9	1.0	26. I can use the cultural context here in Martinique to create stories and images.

APPENDIX 7

BREAKDOWN OF THE STORY COMPACT DISC

#	Biblical Text Base	Principle Idea	Cultural Element or Subject	Delivery Form	Tsongui Plot Structure	Narrator
1	1 John 4:19	We love Him because He first loved us.	Martinique Land Crab	Fable	Cyclical—positive	2 French women
2	Romans 8:1	There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.	Coconut and BMW	Example Story	Mirrored—positive	1 Creole man speaking French
3	Isaiah 59:2	Sin leads to separation.	Chickens/Rooster	Fable	Descending	2 French women
4	Isaiah 59:2	Sin leads to separation.	Chickens/Rooster	Fable	Descending	1 Creole man speaking Creole
5	Matthew 22:34-38	Love is the most important value.	Marriage	Example Story	Hourglass with parallel plots	1 French woman
6	1 John 1:9	Forgiveness	None	Discursive Delivery	Deductive--three points and conclusion	1 French man
7	1 John 1:9	Forgiveness	Beach	Similitude	Ascending	1 French woman

APPENDIX 8

CODING FRAMEWORK OF THE COMPACT DISC QUESTIONNAIRE

The data matrix for the 156 question instrument was coded as simply as possible for evaluation. 142 of the 156 questions were designed with Likert scaling and were numbered from 5 to 1. 11 of the remaining 14 questions were yes/no-type “dummy”¹ variables and were demographic in nature scaled as 1 or 0. These questions concerned sex, mother tongue, religion, and age. Two of the additional items, were “nominal-type”² questions asking for a mother tongue other than French or Creole and another religion other than evangelical or Catholic. The one remaining question was an “interval”³ coded question asking for the person’s completed educational level. Educational level was scaled from 6 to 18 to match completed years of formal education. Those completing the French system’s “terminal” year were scaled as a 12, while those passing their BAC after *terminale* were scaled as a 13. Each additional year was counted as one year.

There were 56 people who completed the 156-question instrument. Each person responded to 23 demographic questions and 133 questions about the story/discourse tracks. The raw results of the demographic questions are summarized in Table 16.

There were 7 discourse and story tracks in all, and each was followed by 19 questions. Each respondent completed seven sets of questions for a grand total of 392 sets of responses. However, there were 22 missing sets, 9 from a church group that chose not to listen to one parable (#3), 11 from French respondents who did not understand the Creole parable, and two non-completed question sets. There were, consequently, a total of 2,744 responses concerning the 7 audio tracks.

¹ Jane Fielding, “Coding and Managing Data,” in Nigel Gilbert, ed., *Researching Social Life*, 2nd ed., (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 231.

² Nominal questions are questions that do not have a numerical value and cannot be scaled (ibid.).

³ Ibid.

Due to the fact that I was looking for a certain number of cases from select sub groups, I controlled the distribution of questionnaires to assure balance between Europeans and people from Martinique. This “quota sampling”⁴ was especially necessary in a place like Martinique where it would be very easy to get a representative sample of the young, Creole population, for example, but not the white educated population.

The limitations of quota sampling are obvious. I do not make claims that my conclusions represent the general population, and, as de Vaus states, “it is impossible to ascertain the accuracy of any estimates from a quota sample.”⁵ The fact that most of the white respondents were transplanted, French citizens living in the south of Martinique means that I cannot make claims for all French Europeans, but only for the subgroup. Similarly, the term “evangelicals” generally refers to respondents who were either Baptists or from *La Mission Chrétien*, both theologically very conservative groups in Martinique.

⁴ David de Vaus, *Surveys in Social Research*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 90.

⁵ Ibid.

APPENDIX 9

SUMMARY OF PERSONAL TRAITS OF CD QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Question #	# of «YES» Responses	Question												
1.	22	I am a man.												
2.	34	I am a woman.												
3.	52	French is my mother tongue.												
4.	24	Creole is my mother tongue.												
5.	3	Indicate another mother tongue.												
6.	11	I am Catholic.												
7.	30	I am evangelical.												
8.	3	Another religion (please indicate).												
9.	33	I am a believer.												
10.	1	I am an athiest.												
11.	4	I am an agnostic (someone who does not know if God exists).												
12.	4	I am between 10 and 18.												
13.	51	I am more than 18 years old.												
14.		Circle the year indicating your last year of formal schooling.												
		6 5 4 3 2 1 Terminal BAC BAC+2 BAC+3 BAC+4 BAC+5 Doctorate												
French System Label	6	5	4	3	2	1	T	BAC	B+1	B+2	B+3	B+4	B+5	Doc
Years of schooling	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
# Responses	0	3	1	6	6	1	2	16	8	5	3	5	0	0

Question #	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	No opinion (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	Mean	Question
15.	34	16	4	1	0	4.5	I like to read.
16.	14	22	8	9	3	3.6	I have a good knowledge of the Bible.
17.	32	15	4	0	2	4.4	Images and stories can teach the truth.
18.	4	5	1	17	24	1.9	The only things that are true are the things that can be proven by science.
19.	7	13	13	8	14	2.8	I prefer to have an imaged approach to a text rather than a precise explanation of the same text.
20.	6	16	6	10	12	2.8	I have a tendency to mistrust religious things.
21.	12	12	16	6	8	3.3	I reflect more when religious ideas are presented by means of a tale.
22.	14	22	8	4	7	3.6	I listen more when religious ideas are presented by means of a tale.
23.	5	9	12	13	16	2.5	I believe more when religious ideas are presented by a tale.

APPENDIX 10

STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN QUESTIONING DOMAINS

Question #	Domain	Mean (5-1)	Standard Deviation	Question
1.	Cognitive	3.6	1.3	The story helped me accept the textual idea.
2.	Cognitive	4.2	1.1	I understood well the true spiritual sense of the story.
3.	Cognitive			The story helped me understand the text.¹
4.	Cognitive			The story convinced me of something.
5.	Cognitive	3.7	1.2	The story had a good argument.
6.	Cognitive/Affective	1.8	1.1	The story challenged my belief or put it in danger.
7.	Affective	3.5	1.3	The story touched me.
8.	Affective	2.9	1.2	The story made me laugh or saddened me.
9.	Affective	3.0	1.3	The story succeeded in moving me.
10.	Affective	3.4	1.3	The story captivated me.
11.	Context	3.5	1.5	I have lived the reality of this story either in my work, among my family, my friends, or in my belief. Or, I identified with this story.
12.	Ethos	3.6	1.0	The storyteller was intelligent.
13.	Ethos			The storyteller was interesting and touched my heart.
14.	Context	3.6	1.3	The main person or animal in the story resembled a member of society.
15.	Context	3.9	1.1	The context and the setting of the story pleased me.
16.	Details	4.0	1.2	There were enough details to make the story complete.
17.	Context	3.3	1.4	One of the main characters resembled me.
18.	Simplicity	3.6	1.3	The story expressed an idea that was simpler than the text that it illustrated.
19.	Cognitive			The story helped me understand the biblical text.

¹ Strikethrough lines represent questions eliminated from the study due to poor sentence construction or redundancy.

APPENDIX 11

COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE, AND CONTEXTUAL BREAKDOWN OF QUESTION SETS

On the compact disk questionnaire, the response set for each track was identical (Table 17). There were: 7 cognitive questions (1-6, 19), 4 affective questions (7-10), 4 contextual questions (11, 14, 15, 17), 2 ethos questions (12, 13), one question about adequacy of details (16), and one question asking the listener if the parable was simpler to understand than the text (18). Each question had a scaled response format from strongly agree to strongly disagree, numerically represented by the figures 5-1 respectively with the number 3 being neutral. Questions 3, 4, 13, and 19 were eliminated because of needless repetition or ambiguity in the wording of the question itself. Consequently, the data analysis consisted of 15 questions per set. A per-track breakdown according to cognitive, affective, and contextual questions is detailed in Table 18.

TABLE 18

COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE, AND CONTEXTUAL BREAKDOWN OF QUESTION SETS

Mean	All Parables	Parable #1	Parable #2	Parable #3	Parable #4	Parable #5	Discourse #6	Parable #7
<i>Cognitive Mean</i> (Omitting question 6)	3.8	4.3	3.8	3.1	4.0	3.6	4.0	4.2
Mean of Standard Deviation for Cognitive Questions	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.0
<i>Affective Mean</i>	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.3	2.9	3.1
Mean of Standard Deviation for Affective Questions	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3
Mean of <i>Contextual</i> Questions	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.4	3.7
Mean of Standard Deviation for Contextual Questions	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.3

This chart explains the overall response to the seven audio tracks in the three major areas specified. One sees immediately that the parables had much more effect on the cognitive domain than on the affective domain.

In developing the cognitive mean, there was an interpretive problem with question #6, “The story challenged my belief or put it in danger.” This question received a very low mean. A story of one minute in length will normally not challenge someone’s belief or put it in danger. Although the question is cognitive, it is also affective because it asks if the person’s beliefs are in danger. While the question might rightly be part of the cognitive evaluation figure in the grouping of the cognitive variables in the general summary statistics, it skews the data because it was poorly constructed with the use of the term “in danger.” If included in the cognitive mean, the question brings the cognitive¹ and affective domains much closer together and does not adequately represent the response of the cognitive figures.

The same type of clarity of cognitive effect was evident in the responses concerning the discursive delivery. The figures for the discursively delivered speech #6 were, in some respects, much more predictable and in line with what one might expect for less imaged delivery. The average response was 4.0 for cognitive questions and the affective measurement was negative, namely 2.9. This reinforces the idea that discursive delivery feeds the mind but does little to appeal to the emotions. The discursively delivered text received the lowest overall scores for all seven audio tracks.

¹ The mean for cognitive questions for all 7 parables would be 3.3 if the question were included in the summary statistics for all respondents.

APPENDIX 12

STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN OF CD QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Subgroup	Number in Subgroup	Total Mean	Parables Using Local Context	Parables Having a Universal Context	Cognitive Mean for All Parables	Affective Mean for All Parables	Parable #1 Matoutou Land	Parable #2 Coconut and BMW	Parable #3 Chicken Story	Parable #4 Chicken Story Creole	Parable #5 Married Couples	Discursive Delivery #6 Forgiveness	Parable #7 Beach Story
All Respondents	56	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.4	3.3	3.5
Men	22	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.9	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.3	3.5
Women	34	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.6
French Speakers	52	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.5
Creole Speakers	24	3.5	3.6	3.5	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.9	3.3	3.6	3.6
Origin: France	28	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.7	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.0	3.5
Origin: Martinique	25	3.5	3.6	3.4	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.2	3.5	3.6
Catholics	11	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.7	2.9	3.6	3.1	3.2	3.5	3.2	2.95	3.2
Evangelicals	30	3.6	3.6	3.6	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.8
Believers	33	3.5	3.6	3.5	4.0	3.2	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.6
Atheists	1	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.6	2	1.5	1.3	1.3	N.R.	1.3	1.3	1.3
Atheists and Agnostics	5	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.4	2.9	3.4	2.9	2.6	2.8	3.1	3	2.8
Youth	5	3.7	4	3.5	4.2	3.4	3.5	3.9	N.R.	4.3	3.7	3.2	3.4
Adults	51	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.1	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.5
Education Below BAC	19	3.5	3.6	3.5	4.0	3.3	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.5
Education BAC and Above	37	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.1	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.5
People Who Like to Read	50	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.6
Indifferent or Do Not Like to Read	5	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.7	4	3.3	3.0	4.0	3.7	3.4	2.9	3.4
High Bible Knowledge	36	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.9	3.2	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.7	3.4	3.2	3.7
Low Bible Knowledge ¹	20	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.6	3.1	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.2
Disagrees that Science Alone Establishes Truth	47	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.6
Only Science Can Establish Truth	9	3.0	3.4	3.1	3.5	2.9	3.3	2.8	3.0	3.3	3.3	2.9	2.9
Images Teach Truth	47	3.5	3.6	3.5	4.0	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.6

¹ Includes those who responded with a neutral answer (3) on the questionnaire.

APPENDIX 12—CONTINUED

Subgroup	Number in Subgroup	Total Mean	Parables Using Local Context	Parables Having a Universal Context	Cognitive Mean for All Parables	Affective Mean for All Parables	Parable #1	Matoutou Land	Parable #2	Coconut and BMW	Parable #3	Chicken Story	Parable #4	Chicken Story Creole	Parable #5	Married Couples	Discursive Delivery #6	Forgiveness	Parable #7	Beach Story
High Mistrust for Religion	22	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.4
Low Mistrust for Religion ²	28	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.9	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.6	3.6	3.6
Prefers an Image	21	3.6	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.2	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.8
Prefers an Explanation	22	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.8	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.5
Stories Don't Help Me Reflect	14	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.7	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.1	3.1
Stories Don't Help Me Listen	11	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.7	3	3.4	3.2	3	3.5	3.3	3	3.2	3.2	3.3	3	3	3.2	3.2	3.2
Stories Don't Help Me Believe	29	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.7	3	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3

The foregoing chart represents the breakdown of the entire study according to subgroups. The left two columns indicate the category and number of people who responded positively to the demographic questions. Each of the other columns represents an isolated focus for the subgroup listed to the left. For example, the five atheists who completed the CD questionnaire had a mean of 2.9 for all 133 questions, while the 30 evangelicals had an overall mean of 3.6. Since 3.0 is a neutral score, the atheists and agnostics had a significantly less overall numerical mean than did the evangelicals. This indicates that the former group was less moved/convinced than was the latter. As the reader moves to the right in the table, each story/discourse is attributed a numerical mean for the listed subgroup.

² Includes those who responded with a neutral answer (3) on the questionnaire.

APPENDIX 13

AUDIENCE VIEWS ON ETHOS, DETAILS, AND SIMPLICITY OF CD TRACKS

Breakdown of Audience with Respect to Speaker Ethos, Satisfaction with Details, and the Simplicity of the Story										
Audience		Ethos			Details			Simplicity		
	Total Count	Storyteller is Intelligent Totals	Storyteller is Intelligent Creole Parable #4	Speaker is Intelligent Discourse #6	Total Satisfaction with Details	Satisfaction with Details of Creole Parable #4	Satisfaction with Details of Discourse #6	Story is Simpler than the Textual Idea	Parable #4 is Simpler than the Textual Idea	Discourse #6 is Simpler than the Textual Idea
All Respondents	56	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.9	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.3
Origin Martinique	24	3.5	3.7	3.8	4.1	4.5	4.0	3.6	3.8	3.3
Origin Outside Martinique	32	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.3
Education Less than 13 Years	19	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.4
Education More than 12 Years	37	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.3

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