

PRESENCE IS PERSUASIVE

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Abstract: The mind functions as a vast filing system, storing thousands of images. Some are easily brought to consciousness. Others lie hidden from awareness. An effective preacher seeks to elevate latent images and emotions into the listener's consciousness. That is the essence of presence, and presence is persuasion. This paper explores how the preacher can create presence.

“We need words that will set an event before their eyes
so that they see the thing occurring now.”
(Aristotle 1932, 207–8)

Preachers know that illustrations work. Illustrations explain, prove, and apply sermon ideas (Reed 1998, 149). Illustrations also motivate life change at the deepest levels of their listeners' beings. Bryan Chapell affirms that, “When illustrations arouse emotions they do more than pass information on to the mind. They stimulate decision-making responses; they influence our will” (Chapell 2001, 39). He adds that illustrations “exegete Scripture in the terms of human experience to create a whole-person understanding of God's Word” (ibid., 14).

When the Lord's prophet, Nathan, wanted to move David to repentance, he offered up an illustration with which David would immediately identify.

There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him (2 Samuel 12:1–4, *NASB*).

That image went straight to David's heart and turned his life back to God's way. He identified with the experience and emotions of both men in the parable, having been both a poor shepherd and a rich, powerful king. The image changed his will, leading to repentance.

The question is not whether images work, but how they work and how preachers can access their power. By asserting that, “When you link a present message to a past experience, you take a direct path to a person's emotions” (Smalley and Trent 1991, 96) Gary Smalley and John Trent reveal what the great communicators have always known and practiced: presence is persuasive. If the preacher can make an idea, a biblical truth, “present” in the experience of his listeners, he can expect a dynamic response. As Haddon Robinson urges, “You don't really understand truth unless you can experience it.

Therefore, while I have to think in order to understand, I also have to experience ... for truth to really make a difference” (Robinson 2001b, 6). How does this process work? How can we preachers practice presence to the glory of God?

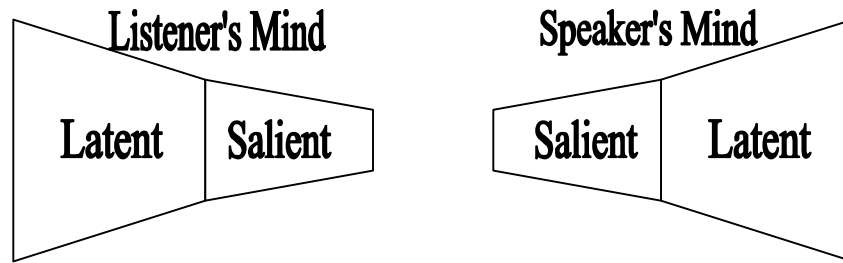
The human mind serves as a vast filing system storing thousands upon thousands of images. Some images are easily brought to consciousness. Others lie, sometimes for years and sometimes for lifetimes, unexploited and hidden from awareness. One function of an effective preacher is to elevate into his hearers’ immediate consciousness certain of these images for the sake of persuasion, resulting in spiritual life change. In so doing the preacher creates a “presence.” The image or images made present—that is, made immediate and therefore “real”—can aid the preacher’s efforts to convince his hearers. If, for example, a preacher can make present in the minds of his listeners a realistic image of sinners dangling in the hands of an angry God over the fires of eternal damnation, then he will be more likely to persuade them of their need to respond to God’s offer of salvation than if he is unable to make that image present. From a communication perspective, his ability to re-present so vivid an image may explain the response Jonathan Edwards received from his sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”

You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder ... nothing to keep off the flames of wrath [while] God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire ... looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire.

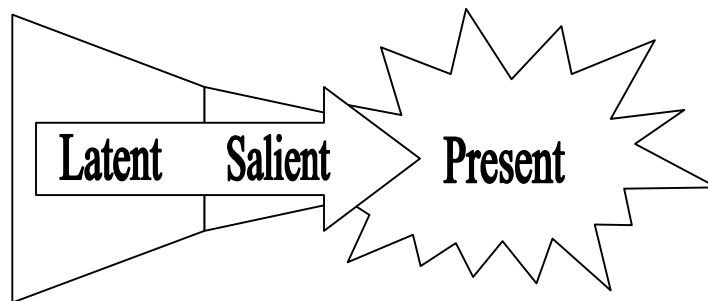
And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! ... How can you rest one moment in such a condition? (Edwards 1971, 63, 67).

The process of presence begins when images that have been stored in the speaker’s and listeners’ minds are once again accessed. Clevenger, while not immediately connecting these stored images with the goal of persuasion, identifies and classifies them.

For a given individual at a particular time, some images come to mind more readily than others. For each of us there are some images that leap to mind at the slightest provocation or the remotest association, and others that are dragged into awareness only by repeated stimulation. Those images that are, so to speak, in the forefront of a person’s mind are for him said to be *salient*, while those that are evoked with difficulty are said to be *latent* (Clevenger 1966, 85, my italics).



If the preacher is to enhance persuasion, he must pull both latent (dormant and undeveloped) and salient (near the surface, but not conscious) images into the present consciousness of his listeners.



Commenting that timing, a sense of “right now,” makes a difference in the salience factor of particular images, Richard Weaver emphasizes the necessity of creating an *omnipresent consciousness* in the minds of the audience. He argues that an *immediate awareness* of crisis prepares an audience to accept as rhetoric, arguments that otherwise would be unacceptable. Thus, he ties an image—in his example, a *vivid sense* of crisis—to persuasion.

Moments of great crisis do indeed encourage people to listen for awhile to a Churchill or a MacArthur, and this is proof of the indispensability of rhetoric when men feel great things are at stake. But today when the danger is past, they lapse again into their dislike of the rhetorical mode, labeling all discourse which has discernible emotional appeal “propaganda” (Weaver 1972, 293).

The speaker, therefore, brings a latent image—long tucked away in the mind of the listener—and/or a salient image—just back from the surface of consciousness—into the *immediate* or *present* consciousness of the audience. A recent (June, 2005) running shoe commercial worked this “magic” on me.

The commercial, for Nike’s new line of running shoe called Nike Free, begins with about twenty barefoot runners jogging in the sand along an overcast beach with the theme from *Chariots of Fire* in the background. The pack of runners makes its way down the beach while passing a man sitting on a park bench as a yellow taxi cab whizzes by. The sequence is then interrupted by a city bus chugging by and the scene cuts to a New York street with a runner

wearing the new Nike shoes. The idea is that if you wear the shoes you'll feel as if you are running barefoot (*Grand Rapids Press* May 27, 2005).

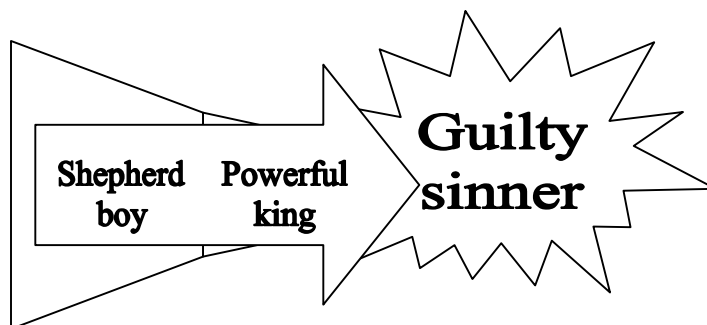
The emotions evoked by recalling the latent, or salient, image(s) of the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire* are transferred into the present for ESPN and MTV viewers. The latent (I haven't watched the film recently) images of struggle, courage, and joyful victory depicted in the film now sell shoes to those who feel, once again, the powerful emotions of the movie, yet apply those feelings to the present experience of running barefoot. To view the commercial the reader, as of this writing, will be able to log onto the following web site: http://www.nike.com/nikefree/usa/index.jhtml?ref=nike_running_usa.

Wayne Booth goes a step farther in developing the concept of presence by stating that an effective communicator

... engages us in the process of thinking—and feeling—it through. What makes the rhetoric of Milton and Burke and Churchill great is that each *presents us with a spectacle* of man passionately involved in thinking an important question through, in the company of an audience (Booth 1972, 224, my italics).

Generating that “spectacle” is the essence of presence. It is, as Booth notes, a speaker bringing into the present various images by which he “thinks and feels through ... in the company of an audience” the subject at hand. Persuasion is much more likely to occur when the listener is included in the rhetorical process, and the listener is much more likely to engage with the process, not only mentally, but also emotionally and volitionally, when he “connects” through familiar images.

Nathan made a present spectacle of David's latent (shepherd) and salient (king) roles/images, compelling the guilty sinner to “feel” and “think” his way to his own conviction: “Surely the man who has done this deserves to die.”



The process, as viewed above, depicts emerging presence from the perspective of the hearer. Of course, that exemplifies the latter portion of the entire communication process. Prior to evoking the listeners' mind, heart, and will, the preacher works his way, backwards, through a similar process. Once the sermon idea is grasped through exegetical and theological study, the preacher will seek to make the truth *present* for the potential listeners. He will journey back into his own experience, through salient and/or back into

latent images in order to recover an experience that will bring about a similar desired effect on the audience. Then he will represent those images to the audience.



More likely than not, when we preachers think of “image” we usually think of illustrations. And, although illustrations are not, as we will see, the only means of creating presence, they are probably the most common and effective means. That is because illustrations, or “emotional word pictures” (Smalley & Trent, 14), possess great power to evoke latent and salient images, bringing them into the present with all their clarifying and emotive power.

Others, from the ancient rhetoricians (see Aristotle 1932, 118–27, 206–9; Cicero 1959, 325–57; Quintilian, 1876 Vol. II, 163–4) to those of the modern era, comment on the notion of creating presence. Indeed, “presence” is the term that Perelman gives to this rhetorical undertaking. The Belgian philosopher maintains that the communicator must *show* the audience, from the images that are stored in their minds, whether latent or salient, those things that will persuade them. Perelman comments:

What an audience accepts forms a body of opinion, convictions, and commitments that is both vast and indeterminate. From this body, the orator must select certain elements on which he will focus attention by endowing them, as it were, with “presence” (Perelman 1978, 308).

In *The New Rhetoric*, Perelman defines presence as, “the displaying of certain elements [images] on which the speaker wishes to center attention in order that they may occupy the foreground of the hearer’s consciousness” (Perelman 1969, 142). This function of (re)focusing the images in the listener’s mental and emotional world plays an essential role in persuasion.

Effective presentation that impresses itself on the hearers’ consciousness is essential not only in all argumentation aiming at immediate action, but also in that which aspires to give the mind a certain orientation, to make certain schemes of interpretation prevail, to insert the elements of agreement into a framework that will give them significance and confer upon them the rank they deserve (ibid.).

As the images in the mind of the speaker run through the lens of our shared experiences and associations our consciousness is focused on a new present image. Thoughts, feelings, and commitments from the past become transferred into present mental,

emotional, and spiritual experience. The goal is that what is happening to the speaker will also be happening to the listener, right now, in the present. Latent images in the mind of the speaker had been made salient and, at the moment of speaking, *present* for both the preacher and the listeners (Reed, 150–2).

Having examined the essence of presence, I will now identify some of the means of producing it. Illustrations, though probably the most used and most effective way of evoking presence, are not the only way to stimulate the powerful experience. Each of the five canons of rhetoric will be surveyed in order to determine how each one affects or is affected by presence.

INVENTION

Aristotle’s classic definition of rhetoric, “The faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle 7), identifies the speaker’s role as, among others, a searcher for ideas. Once the preacher has “found” his idea, he must discover arguments that take the listener to the idea or, in another way of looking at it, bring the idea to the listener. In order to determine what kinds of arguments will bring the idea to the listener the preacher seeks to answer the following questions in regard to his exegetically/theologically derived idea: “What does it mean? Is it true? What difference does it make?” (Robinson 2001a, 77–96). These three developmental questions are rooted in Quintilian’s three questions regarding any subject matter: “Is it? What is it? And of what kind is it?” (Quintilian Vol. III, 181). If the speaker is able to create a “presence” for his argument in answering these questions, he will be fulfilling the role of an effective persuader. That, at least was Quintilian’s position when he spoke of

. . . images by which the representation of absent objects (or ideas) are so distinctly represented to the mind, that we seem to see them before our eyes and have them before us. Whoever shall best conceive such images, will have the greatest power in moving the feelings. (Quintilian Vol. I, 427).

This is the essence of presence in invention; making the evidence evident and making the reasoning apparent in the minds of the listeners. The logical, ethical, and emotional proofs, then, become potential carriers/creators of presence.

Logical proof

Simply mentioning an argument, whether a passage of Scripture or an illustration, creates presence. Perelman wrote that, “any argument, by its presence, draws the attention of the audience to certain facts and makes it give consideration to matters that it may not have previously thought about” (Perelman, 481). Speakers, he argued, too often ignore this technique.

By the very fact of selecting certain elements and presenting them to the audience, their importance and pertinency [sic] to the discussion are implied. Indeed, such a choice endows these elements with a presence, which is an

essential factor in argumentation and one that is far too much neglected in rationalistic conceptions of reasoning (ibid, 116).

On the other hand, certain arguments may go entirely unmentioned. They are kept from the conscious awareness of the audience.

A somewhat different technique consists in presenting a thesis as the answer to the hypothesis, all other hypotheses being tossed aside en bloc. Only the thesis which the speaker is developing is made present. Sometimes, after having set it forth, he asks his hearers if they have a better solution to offer. This appeal, known classically as the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*, derives its force essentially from its very urgency, for it excludes the possibility of pausing for thought (ibid., 238).

A recent example of this absence of presence may be witnessed in the November 2004, article, "Was Darwin Wrong?" in *National Geographic Magazine* (Quammen 2004). The article avoided any mention of the intelligent design movement. Even a passing reference to the design movement would have given some credence to its claims and allowed it space in the ongoing dialogue/debate between Darwinists and Biblicists (see Woodward 2003).

Since any argument actually stated creates a degree of presence, and since unstated arguments create no presence, the persuader must choose carefully those logical proofs that will most help and least hinder his cause. He must decide, on the basis of what he determines to be shared experiences and associations, what arguments will best evoke presence.

The time factor is always a concern in this decision. Choices must be made regarding the number of arguments and supporting materials to be employed in order to fit within the time limitations. Rather than add another argument, the preacher may choose to illustrate the existing argument, investing that single argument with an even greater presence.

Illustrations are particularly helpful tools for creating presence, since: "An illustration seeks to increase presence by making an abstract rule concrete by means of a particular case" (Perelman, 360). Bill Hybels practices this strategy in his sermon, "Christianity's Toughest Competitor: Moralism" (Hybels, tape #115). Hybels' big idea is that comparative religion, comparing oneself to another on a scale of morality, keeps people from seeing that they are sinners totally incapable of meeting God's demand of perfect holiness. The entire message revolves around this one concept. He translates his point into an emotional word picture by telling an extended story of his experience with the sport of racket ball. In so doing, he creates a vivid presence in the listeners' minds.

The preacher will always wrestle with the tension of having to choose between good and best arguments, arguments and supporting materials, and good and best supporting materials. This discovery and selection of the best means of creating presence and causing persuasion is at the heart of rhetoric. As a result, the communicator will not be

free from this tension when he seeks to elicit presence through ethical proofs. Choices must be made here as well, though the presence of the speaker in the speaking situation may be an even more effective tool than illustration. “Being there” creates presence.

Ethical proof

Since the individual communicator is part of the overall message, the fact that the preacher is present elicits a degree of ethical appeal. An acknowledged champion of a particular message or idea increases presence for that idea. Rick Warren, for example, lends presence to living with purpose, especially as he uses his newfound popularity as a platform for making God known in a lost, sick, and starving world. John Piper lends presence to worshipping a holy God. Elisabeth Elliot lends presence to devoted obedience and perseverance over a lifetime. James Dobson lends presence to family and moral/ethical issues affecting the family. Billy Graham lends presence to the simple gospel of salvation by grace through faith. Thus, the mere physical presence of a speaker often lends presence to an idea or event. The stronger the connection, in the eyes of the audience, between a preacher and the message or issue he represents, the more presence will be lent to that cause by his being present. Just so, Perelman suggests that in many cases a particular speaker symbolizes the cause.

Similarly, if an individual who is a member of a group has become a symbol of this group his behavior will be regarded as more important, because it is more representative, than that of other members of the same group. This symbolic person, representing the group, will sometimes be chosen to play this representative role either because he is the best in the field . . . or because he is an average person whom nothing, not even his name, distinguishes . . . (Perelman, 333–4).

Some groups would do well to listen to Perelman and seek new spokesmen for their causes. Democrats have been wondering whether Howard Dean is the best chairman and spokesman they can find to represent the Democratic Party. Indeed, groups often choose “no names”—Perelman’s “average person”—to uphold a particular platform or perspective. Other speakers, however, known for their particular passion(s), aid their cause through ethical presence. For example, Houston Peterson comments on the effect of William Wilberforce speaking against slavery before the House of Commons.

It was not alone the heart-rending subject, nor the manner of speaking, moving though it was, that counted. It was the man himself. In his lifetime struggle against slavery, Wilberforce was to become the conscience of England. In his person, piety and eloquence combined to make every reform respectable (Peterson 1965, 219).

How much presence a preacher can and should create before the sermon, through predetermined introduction, or during the speech in reference to his character, intelligence, and good will is a question that places the preacher in tension. It is the wise speaker who will create a presence of integrity, of knowledge and wisdom sufficient to

qualify him to speak on the subject at hand, of an attitude of wanting the best for his listeners. The images he evokes, however, must create the presence he desires rather than unfavorable or negative presence. If what the audience sees is a preacher trying too hard to “sell” himself, he may be hindered by the presence of pride in their minds. Essentially, just being there to represent his cause creates a presence for the speaker.

Emotional proof

Presence greatly aids the communicator in making emotional appeals. Cicero argued that

Men often form a judgment through the influence of hatred, love, desire, anger, grief, joy, hope, fear, mistake, or some emotion of the mind, rather than truth or precept, or any rule of law, or any form of judgment or statutes (Cicero, 325).

Compassion is moved, if the hearer can be brought to apply in his own case the afflicting circumstances that are deplored in another's; whether they are past or dreaded; or by looking upon another frequently to turn his eye into his own breast (Cicero, 353).

The task of the speaker, therefore, is to make these emotions present in the minds and feelings of the listeners. Missionary professor, Del Tarr, sought to persuade his listeners to act on their belief that as they sacrificially invested in Christ's Kingdom, they would ultimately, but only eventually, celebrate. They may well “sow in tears” before they “reap with joyful shouting.” He drew images from his childhood (latent) and his recent missions context (salient) to evoke similar images and accompanying emotions from his listeners' latent and salient memories.

I grew up in a preacher's home in the little towns of Minnesota and South Dakota. I spent most of my free time with the deacons' kids on John Deere tractors, International Harvesters, Cases, Minneapolis-Molines. I learned how to drill oats, plant corn, and cultivate. And never once did I see a deacon behave like Psalm 126 says. What was there to weep about at sowing time?

I was always perplexed by this Scripture . . . until I went to the Sahel, that vast stretch of savanna more than four thousand miles wide just under the Sahara Desert, with a climate much like the Bible lands. In the Sahel, all the moisture comes in a four-month period: May, June, July, and August. After that, not a drop of rain falls for eight months. The ground cracks from dryness, and so do your hands and feet. The winds off the Sahara pick up the dust and throw it thousands of feet into the air. It then comes slowly drifting across West Africa as a fine grit. It gets in your mouth. It gets inside your watch and stops it. It gets inside your refrigerator (if you have one).

The year's food, of course, must all be grown in four months. People grow sorghum or milo in fields not larger than this sanctuary. Their only tools are the strength of their backs and a short-handled hoe. No Massey-Fergusons here; the average annual income is between eighty-five and one hundred dollars per person.

October and November . . . these are beautiful months. The granaries are full—the harvest has come. People sing and dance. They eat two meals a day—one about ten in the morning, after they’ve been to the field awhile, and the other just after sundown. The sorghum is ground between two stones to make flour and then a mush with the consistency of yesterday’s cream of wheat. The sticky mush is eaten hot; they roll it into little balls between their fingers, drop it into a bit of sauce, and then pop it into their mouths. The meal lies heavy on their stomachs so they can sleep.

December comes, and the granaries start to recede. Many families omit the morning meal. Certainly by January not one family in fifty is still eating two meals a day.

By February, the evening meal diminishes. People feel the clutch of hunger once again. The meal shrinks even more during March, and children succumb to sickness. You don’t stay well on half a meal a day.

April is the month that haunts my memory. The African dusk is quiet, you see . . . no jet engines, no traffic noises to break the stillness. The dust filters down through the air, and sounds carry for long distances. April is the month you hear the babies crying in the twilight . . . from the village over here, from the village over there. Their mothers’ milk is now stopped.

Parents go at this time of year to the bush country, where they scrape bark from certain trees. They dig up roots as well, collect leaves, and grind it all together to make a thin gruel. They may pawn a chair, a cooking pit, or bicycle tires in order to buy a little more grain from those wealthy enough to have some remaining, but most often the days are passed with only an evening cup of gruel.

Then, inevitably, it happens. A six- or seven-year-old boy comes running to his father one day with sudden excitement. “Daddy! Daddy! We’ve got grain!” he shouts.

“Son, you know we haven’t had grain for weeks.”

“Yes, we have! The boy insists. “Out in the hut where we keep the goats—there’s a leather sack hanging up on the wall—and reached up and put my hand down in there—Daddy, there’s grain in there! Give it to Mommy so she can make flour, and tonight our tummies can sleep!”

The father stands motionless.

“That’s next year’s seed grain. It’s the only thing between us and starvation. We’re waiting for the rains, and then we must use it.”

The rains finally arrive in May, and when they do, the young boy watches as his father takes the sack from the wall . . . and does the most unreasonable thing imaginable. Instead of feeding his desperately weakened family, he goes to the field and—I’ve seen it—with tears streaming down his face, he takes the precious seed and *throws it away*. He scatters it in the dirt! Why? Because he believes in the harvest.

The seed is his; he owns it. He can do anything with it he wants. The act of sowing it hurts so much that he cries. But as the African pastors say when they preach on Psalm 126, “Brothers and sisters, this is God’s law of the harvest. Don’t expect to rejoice later on unless you have been willing to sow in tears.”

And I want to ask you: How much would it cost you to sow in tears? I don't mean just giving God something from your abundance, but finding a way to say, "I believe in the harvest, and therefore I will give what makes no sense. The world would call me unreasonable to do this—but I must sow regardless, in order that I may someday celebrate with songs of joy" (Tarr 1983, 66–7).

Quintilian was on target when he wrote:

The chief requisite, then, for moving the feelings of others, is, as far as I can judge, that we ourselves be moved, for the assumption of grief, and anger, and indignation, will be often ridiculous, if we adapt merely our words and looks, and not our minds, to those passions (Quintilian Vol. I, 427).

Two elements seem to evoke an emotional presence: sincere feeling on the part of the speaker and a forceful use of style. In their classic text, *Speech Criticism*, Thonssen and Baird argued that two communications might speak of the same event:

. . . yet one is more likely to have emotional value than the other because of the word selection and arrangement. The abundance of adjectives, the pictorial effect, and the appeal to imagery contribute in no small measure to its affective construction (Thonssen and Baird 1948, 372).

We may conclude that much of a speaker's emotional appeal rests in his use of language to create persuasive images. Thus, in our survey of the five canons of rhetoric we turn to style.

STYLE

When the classical rhetoricians write concerning what we are calling presence, they relate it, for the most part, to style. Aristotle notes that word choice affects presence when he writes, "One word may come closer than another to the thing described, may be more like it, and being more akin to it may set it more distinctly before our eyes" (Aristotle, 189). Quintilian agreed that the task of the orator included, "exciting the mind, giving character to things, and setting them before the eye" (Quintilian, 104). This was to be accomplished through stylistic devices such as metaphor through which the speaker may, "set forth the objects of which we may speak in lively colors, and so that they may, as it were, be seen" (ibid., 101). Aristotle argued in a similar manner for the use of metaphor, "for vividness" (Aristotle, 196, 212). An impressive use of this stylistic device is seen in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, speech on America's citizens of color coming to Washington to, "cash a check," when they gathered to support the passing of civil rights legislation in the summer of 1963:

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be

guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked “insufficient funds.” But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation (King 1965, 837).

Who in King’s audience could not draw from salient and latent images of being shamed by one’s “betters”? What deep feelings were made present by King’s metaphor of standing before a white establishment bank teller and being told that, “Your check is bogus, you fool!”?

Simile is another stylistic device that allows the preacher to set his case before the audience in clear, vivid images. Abstract concepts are made present through simile as Quintilian illustrates, using the following argument for capital punishment: “As surgeons amputate limbs rendered useless by disease, so base and mischievous persons, though intimately allied to us by blood, must be cut off from society” (Quintilian, 104).

Adding more than mere perspicuity, “representation” (ibid., 101) is a figure that goes beyond making an idea clear; it forces an image into the consciousness. Aristotle is suggesting this when he instructs, “Describe an object instead of naming it” (Aristotle, 196). Perelman identifies this as the figure called “hypotyposis” or “demonstration” (Perelman 1978, 308), and illustrates the effectiveness of evoking details.

Publicity agents know that, if they indicate in detail the necessary steps for placing an order, they get the idea of ordering into the customer’s consciousness and make it easier for him to decide. An impression of reality is similarly conveyed by piling up all the conditions preceding an act or by indicating all its consequences (Perelman 1969, 145).

The key element of this technique, then, is to create presence through a detailed representation or description of the issue at hand. Some words or ideas, according to Quintilian, need expansion (Quintilian Vol. II, 103). This is a strategy akin to description. To detail the fall of a city in the time of war, for instance, creates more presence than to say simply, “The city was taken.”

Quintilian argues that, “That chief power of an orator lies in extenuation” (ibid., 108). Perelman calls this amplification. Amplification is a figure of thought in which the theme is fully developed. He argues that this is “far more instrumental than mere repetition of words in obtaining the feeling of presence” (Perelman, 175). In other words the preacher must not rush over an important point, “For the dwelling on a single circumstance has often considerable effect, and a clear illustration, and exhibition of matters to the eye of the audience, almost as if it were transacted before them” (Quintilian, 160).

Perelman identifies a number of stylistic devices that result in the creation of presence. He writes of the use of the imperative (Perelman, 176) and imaginary direct address (ibid.). Shifting tenses, especially to the imperative (ibid., 158) and present (ibid., 160), builds presence. The singular used for the plural (ibid., 162), the use of an indefinite pronoun or adjective (ibid.), and unusual uses of the demonstrative (ibid.) are also effective uses of style.

Repetition, according to Perelman, is the simplest stylistic technique a speaker can use to evoke presence.

The simplest way is by repetition, accentuation of certain passages, either by tone of voice or by pausing before them, has the same purpose. Accumulating stories, even contradictory ones, on a given subject may create the impression that it is an important one (ibid., 144).

When, for instance, a minister speaks every week on the necessity of prayer, he creates a certain presence for prayer. Tony Campolo's message, "It's Friday, Sunday's Comin'" (Campolo 1982, tape C76) repeats the theme, "It's Friday," over and over, creating a sense of doom and defeat at the death of Jesus and the apparent victory of Satan, until the turning point comes and the theme is developed with, "Sunday's comin'." The effect is powerful.

There are many more specific stylistic techniques at the preacher's disposal that will increase his effectiveness in evoking presence, but the above seem to be among the more important ones. That style is perhaps the greatest aid to this process of stimulating vivid images in the mind may be argued by the following statement by Perelman: "What is required in argumentation is not so much the exactness of specific logical modalities attributed to what is asserted as the means of obtaining the adherence of the audience through variations in the way of expressing thought" (Perelman, 163).

Just as style is closely related to emotional appeal in that emotion is stimulated through vivid language, so are style and arrangement related closely. The figures of extenuation and repetition, as discussed above, could be included in a discussion of how to create presence through the orderly arrangement of materials. We turn our survey to that discussion.

ARRANGEMENT

In most cases, the preacher will realize effective persuasion only if the audience is able to leave the rhetorical situation (sermon) with the major theme or idea in its "present" mental and emotional states. This may be accomplished if vivid arguments are carefully placed, building toward a climax. It is essential to evoke presence in the introduction to gain a clear image of the felt need and subject of the sermon as well as in the conclusion to represent the idea in the consciousness of the audience and seal it there. The introduction and conclusion lend themselves to the use of pathos that makes ideas present with force (Thonssen and Baird, 365). Perelman notes that arrangement affects presence:

The effort to make something present to the consciousness can relate not only to real objects, but also to a judgment or an entire argumentative development. As far as possible, such an effort is directed to filling the whole field of consciousness with this presence so as to isolate it, as it were, from the hearer's overall mentality (Perelman, 118).

Joseph Fort Newton's sermon "The Presence" (Newton 1925, 253–64) illustrates Perelman's principle. The theme is so interwoven throughout the entire sermon that the listener or reader is constantly aware of that theme. One reviewer wrote that while most sermons employ a wide range of rhetorical technique, Newton's sermon

"while it does all of these, does not seem to do them, for it distributes its benefits over the whole area of my heart, bringing truth and strength and comfort and vision and trust and courage. But if you ask me what he said that brought these boons, I cannot answer by chapter and verse from the sermon, for it has not been his argument or his outline or his epigram that has quickened me. It is the sermon itself in the total appeal it has made to those innumerable springs of living water which lie below the surface of our hearts and which his words gently startle into action (*The Christian Century* 1925, 854).

By a constant dwelling on the subject a speaker increases presence in the minds of the audience. Quintilian confesses to following this tactic. "I made it a practice of extracting the points on which my opponent and I were in agreement . . . and of not only drawing out all the possible consequences of his admissions, but of multiplying them by a process of division" (Quintilian, 9). Perelman supports this policy of repeating the same arguments over again throughout the structure of the speech/sermon.

Amplitude in argument may be due, not to the use of different arguments which support and complete each other and are addressed to different audiences, but simply to the more or less exact reproduction of the same arguments. The purpose of this insistence is to make the arguments more present (Perelman, 478).

Martin Luther King, Jr. employs this technique in his "I Have a Dream" speech delivered August 28, 1963 (Peterson, 837–40). King's hopeful thesis is, "I have a dream." That idea is repeated nine times in succession. The concept is developed in different images ("I have a dream that . . ."), but the main point of the argument is made present in those same words throughout the second half of the speech. Then King moves to the climax of his message in the "application," "Let freedom ring." That point is repeated twelve times in the last two paragraphs of his speech.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, **let**

freedom ring.” And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So **let freedom ring** from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. **Let freedom ring** from the mighty mountains of New York. **Let freedom ring** from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! **Let freedom ring** from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado! **Let freedom ring** from the curvaceous peaks of California! But not only that; **let freedom ring** from Stone Mountain of Georgia! **Let freedom ring** from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee! **Let freedom ring** from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, **let freedom ring.**

When we **let freedom ring**, when we **let it ring** from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “Free at last! free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

The preacher enjoys the opportunity of arranging his materials in the fashion that he believes best benefits his cause. On some occasions that will mean that certain arguments are held off until the end. This would be true especially with a hostile or nonbelieving audience. Points of agreement or partial agreement are identified and secured before the point of disagreement is made present (Perelman, 493).

Step by step the line of argument emerges into the listener’s present awareness as the speaker selects an order to bring forward new premises, to confer presence on certain elements, and to “extract certain agreements” (ibid., 492). To make present the most effective arguments at the most effective juncture is the goal of the speaker, therefore, in arranging his material. Again, Campolo’s sermon holds off on the major and climatic point, “Sunday’s comin.” Only at the end of the message do the listeners hear the final, the “present,” resolution.

Some would say that a proper arrangement aids memory. An even better aid to memory is vivid imagery. We turn now to that “forgotten canon.”

MEMORY

Presence helps the preacher remember his sermon and enables the listener to recapture forgotten memories and retain fresh perceptions. Quintilian argues that the first step toward an ornamented style—not gaudy, but graceful—consists in a vivid conception, a presence, of what we wish to say (Quintilian, 101). Not only is it true that vibrant, active images add to an ornamented style; they also, by heightening one’s attention, aid the memory. Those lively, energy-packed images characteristic of an ornamented style are more effective both in evoking past memories and preserving new concepts than absent, obscure, and lifeless images. The phenomenon is true for both the speaker and the listener.

Simonides was able, by the aid of a vivid image in his mind, to recall the order in which guests had sat at a banquet (ibid., 335). When it became necessary to recall the exact seating arrangement, Simonides simply made present that image in his mind.

Memory is the ability to make present ideas or events that have been learned or experienced in the past. The mind constantly draws from its vast source of filed images. Memory occurs when, by some means of association, a particular image flashes onto the screen of our presence. Quintilian calls this association a symbol (ibid., 336). “These symbols are marks by which we distinguish particulars which we have to get by heart, so that, as Cicero says, ‘we use places as waxen tablets, and symbols as letters’” (ibid.). The preacher’s vivid, premeditated images keep the structure and concepts of the sermon present in his mind as he progresses through his message.

Other techniques that aid the preacher’s memory include writing out or drawing an idea so as to create an image that can be remembered by the eye and/or saying aloud an idea so as to create an audio “image” that can be remembered to the ear. It does not matter greatly how the mind is stimulated as long as the cue evokes the desired presence in the mind of speaker.

The listener will be more likely to remember the images and, hopefully, the concepts of the sermon when presence works its influence. If the preacher stimulates latent and/or salient memories, those “old” recollections are made fresh again and more easily recalled in the future. In addition through the use of a vivid presence new ideas become grounded in present images. These fresh images serve to evoke ongoing and memorable understandings, emotions, and experiences.

One does not use techniques of memory to evoke presence so much as use presence to stimulate memory. Since in the case of this particular canon presence is the cause rather than the effect, our survey has been brief. We examine next, the final canon, delivery.

DELIVERY

Every vocal and physical cue a communicator employs should assist him in stirring up those images, and only those images that will help him accomplish his purpose (Weaver and Ness 1967, 183). As Perelman states, “Effective presentation that impresses itself on the hearers’ consciousness is essential” (Perelman, 142).

Persuasion will be more easily accomplished when the use of the voice and body makes the idea and/or image concrete. Again, Perelman comments:

Certain masters of rhetoric, with a liking for quick results, advocate the use of concrete objects in order to move an audience The real thing is expected to induce an adherence that its mere description would be unable to secure; it is a precious aid, provided argumentation utilizes it to advantage (ibid., 117).

Visual aids, therefore, are one means of creating presence through delivery. A graph or chart may portray the message more forcefully than the words alone, for if it is clear and attractive, it may more effectively bring to consciousness the images that will aid persuasion in that particular case. A picture, or better yet, a video clip, creates an especially clear image. Yet, the speaker must use such aids with care. If I were to depict children starving in Africa in order to persuade listeners to provide aid, I might find some unable to cope with such vivid imagery. Rather than give, they may shut out of their minds the entire image and appeal or, worse yet, though understandable, walk out of my presentation.

Closely related to the use of visual aids, indeed another kind of visual aid, are symbols. Perelman explains.

Not only is the symbol easier to handle; it can impose itself with a presence that the thing symbolized cannot have: the flag which is seen or described can wave, flag in the wind, and unfurl. In spite of its bonds of participation, the symbol maintains a kind of individuality which makes possible a great variety of manipulations (ibid., 335).

The celebration of the Lord's Supper was given to the Church as a means of evoking images of the crucified and coming Savior. Some theologians would argue that there is an actual mystical "presence" in the bread and wine while others speak of a "presence" in their minds. A swastika or a burning cross are symbols that evoke a strong presence for many Americans, and thus, could be effective tools for persuasion in particular situations.

Another technique of delivery that lends itself to evoking presence is role-playing. During role-playing the speaker plays the part of someone else to help the audience visualize a particular image. This writer heard of an evangelist who, as the climax of a series of meetings, would dress in an asbestos suit and light himself afire. He assumed, for a few vivid moments, the role of a sinner in hell. This fiery preacher had a concept of creating presence in the minds of his listeners, though he would do well to take the advice of Quintilian on artificiality.

We must look to nature, and follow her. All eloquence relates to the transactions of human life; every man refers what he hears to himself; and the mind easily admits what it recognizes as true to nature (Quintilian, 103).

Still another method of creating presence through delivery, which if done convincingly will also contribute ethos, is to take on the character of another individual and "become" that other speaker through dramatic monologue or dialogue. Many preachers and teachers find this an effective and exciting way to present material. Obviously, much work is involved in this technique, but the dividends paid in presence can make the effort well worthwhile. Of course, the dramatic portrayal need not dominate the entire "sermon" for then it would not be a sermon, but a drama. A five-minute drama within the sermon may accomplish all that is necessary to evoke presence in the heads and hearts of the congregation.

Having surveyed the five canons of rhetoric, this study comes to its conclusion. It has been argued that presence is the process of making present in the minds of audience members certain vivid images which, in turn, aid persuasion. A survey of the classical canons of rhetoric identified techniques that consistently aid speakers in creating presence. Those who wish to be more effective preachers will do well to understand the process of and techniques for creating presence, for presence is persuasive.

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