

“Rhetorical Appeals to Volition”

Introduction

The majority of texts about preaching place at least some emphasis on rhetoric. Most of these texts provide a scant overview of Aristotle’s three canons of rhetoric with some commentary to follow. The rhetorical appeals to volition are rarely addressed in these works. Wilfried Tappert states, “But all in all, very little stress has been laid on the actual volition, the will of the Christian, to subject his life to the will of God for salvation and life.”¹ It is difficult to surmise why such a valuable investigation is neglected in works that seek to develop a strategy to persuade an audience to make a decision for Christ. This paper seeks to examine the rhetorical elements that appeal to volition in expository preaching and that provide insights for developing a methodology, which is useful in persuading individuals to make a decision to change.

Section one defines terminology pertinent to the thesis. Rhetoric, volition, persuasion, decision, and expository preaching are defined in this section. Section two provides a closer examination of volition in regards to its psychological aspects and biblical examples. Section three investigates persuasion from its ethical implications to its motivational factors. This section also examines the decision making process. Section four addresses the issue of appealing to volition in preaching. Audience analysis, the point of decision, and elements to include in a methodology of persuading the will are included in this section. The research methodology for each of the above mentioned sections included biblical, psychological, ethical, and historical research.

¹Wilfried Tappert, “Volition in Christian Life and Doctrine,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 2 (1950): 382-395.

Terms Defined

This section provides more than a mere dictionary of terms. The content is valuable for the remainder of the paper in its attempt to clarify any preconceived ideas of the reader. However, the terms are presented for the purpose of establishing a foundation of argument for the primacy of appealing to volition in rhetoric. Richard Weaver notes that all terms in a rhetorical vocabulary are links in a chain that influence each stage in the persuasion process.² It is, therefore, necessary to clearly establish meaning in regards to the primary terms in this field.

Rhetoric is the first term under consideration. Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case, the available means of persuasion.”³ Aristotle’s methodology includes an appeal to reason, emotions, and character.⁴ While Aristotle focused on methods of persuasion, the Sophists were more concerned with the results of persuasion, which often led to a method that was questionable at best.⁵ Weaver states his definition as, “Rhetoric is persuasive speech in the service of truth” and it affects us “primarily by setting forth images which inform and attract.”⁶ Weaver’s approach to rhetoric emphasizes gaining the audience’s attention as much as leading them to make a decision. Everett Hunt’s definition is consistent with Weaver’s in emphasizing the decision element of rhetoric. He states that rhetoric is “the study of men

²Richard Weaver, *Language is Sermonic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 80.

³Charles U. Larson, *Persuasion: Reception and Responsibility*, 7th Edition (Boston: Wadsworth, 1995), 8.

⁴Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 2nd Edition (New York: Oxford, 1971), 50.

⁵Raymond W. McLaughlin, “The Ethics of Persuasive Preaching,” *JETS* 15 (Spring 1972), 95.

⁶Weaver, *Language is Sermonic*, 16. He further states, “Rhetoric seen in the whole conspectus of its function is an art of emphasis embodying an order of desire. Rhetoric is advisory; it has the office of advising men with reference to an independent order of goods and with reference to their particular situation as it relates to these” (17). He further states, “Rhetoric is anciently and properly defined as the art of persuasion. We may deduce from this that it is essentially concerned with producing movement, which may take the form of a change of attitude or the adoption of a course of action, or both” (140).

persuading men to make free choices.”⁷ The missing element from each of the above definitions of rhetoric is the process one takes in order to reach the various goals of persuading, informing, or attracting. Judith McDaniel’s contribution to defining rhetoric addresses this missing element. She states, “Rhetoric is concerned with the way one must think about material in order to present it, the attitude one must assume in order to make things intelligible.”⁸ Compiling elements from the above stated definitions, this paper, when referring to rhetoric, is stating that rhetoric is the art and science by which the Holy Spirit enables the preacher to research and arrange sermonic material in order to present it in a manner that ethically and effectively persuades a particular audience to change an attitude or adopt a course of action.⁹

Volition or will is the second term that must be defined.¹⁰ Presenting a definition of volition from a psychological perspective, Gerald May states, “Will has more to do with personal intention and how we decide to use our energies.”¹¹ These two elements of personal intention and decision are consistent in most definitions of volition. Roberto Assagioli, also a psychologist, states that the will not only stimulates actions, but also regulates all of man’s functions.¹² Further psychological studies lead to a definition of will as a means to do as one

⁷McLaughlin, “The Ethics of Persuasive Preaching,” 98.

⁸Judith M. McDaniel, “Rhetoric Reconsidered: Preaching as Persuasion,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 41 (1998): 249.

⁹ Vines and Shaddix’s contribution to this definition states, “Rhetoric, generally defined, is the art of using words effectively in speaking to influence and persuade others.” Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 229.

¹⁰The theological issues of limitations on man’s freedom to choose will not be addressed in this paper. It is the assumption that since man is made in the image of God, he can freely and willfully decide when confronted with choices. This paper’s emphasis is on the processes and influences by which man arrives at such a decision.

¹¹Gerald G. May, *Will and Spirit* (San Francisco: Harper, 1982), 3.

¹²Robert Assagioli, *The Act of Will* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 47.

pleases apart from any external or internal factors that would seek to compel an individual to act contrary to his freedom as a volitional agent.¹³

John Howie notes that without the will man could not make an individual decision nor have the capacity of refraining from an action that is morally wrong.¹⁴ Lynne Boughton states that while “other faculties are subject to outside compulsion, the will is autonomous.”¹⁵ Rollo May offers helpful components that are necessary to a definition of will. He notes that will requires consciousness, implies the possibility of a freedom to choose, and gives a person the freedom to dream of personal potential.¹⁶ Bourke refers to a school of philosophy that emphasizes freedom to express an action or decision as a primary characteristic of volition.¹⁷ Gerald May provides one additional element valuable to a definition of volition. He states that volition is how man manages his life.¹⁸ Compiling elements of the above stated components into a definition of volition, this paper, when referring to volition, is stating that volition is the autonomous will of man to freely decide upon a course of action for his life, regardless of external pressure.

The third term to examine is persuasion. It is not uncommon to make persuasion a synonym for rhetoric, but as seen in the definition of rhetoric, persuasion is just one element of

¹³Vernon J. Bourke, *Will in Western Thought* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 79. At the conclusion of this work, Bourke summarizes his definition of will as, “that psychic activity of man, whereby he tends toward or away from certain objectives reflectively adopted, whereby he sometimes achieves personal freedom of action, whereby he acts with some spontaneity or self initiative, and whereby he approves or loves what he deems good and disapproves or hates what he deems not good” (235).

¹⁴John Howie, “Is Effort of Will a Basis for Moral Freedom?” *Religious Studies* 8 (1972), 349.

¹⁵Lynne Courter Boughton, “Choice and Action: William Ames’s Concept of the Mind’s Operation in Moral Decisions,” *Church History* 56 (June 1987), 192.

¹⁶Rollo May, “The Problem of Will, Decision, and Responsibility in Psychological Health,” *The Christian Scholar* 46 (Fall 1963), 240.

¹⁷Bourke, *Will in Western Thought*, 11.

¹⁸Gerald May, *Will and Spirit*, 104.

rhetoric. Persuasion, as a basic definition, is defined as the “ongoing process in which verbal and nonverbal messages shape, reinforce, and change people’s responses.”¹⁹ William MacPherson, notes that a central element in persuasion’s definition is the effect it has on human conduct.²⁰ He further states that the fundamental purpose of persuasion is to “produce conviction by force of argument.”²¹ Robert Fortner offers a list of perspectives on persuasion’s definition that, when compiled, provides a valuable resource for formulating a definition for persuasion in expository preaching.²² A primary component in a definition of persuasion must include the speaker’s anticipation and expectation of affecting a person’s will to accept or reject the speaker’s prescribed mode of action or belief.²³

Daniel O’Keefe offers six elements that he believes must be included in a definition of persuasion. These elements are the notion of success on the part of the persuader; the presence of some goal that the speaker intends for the hearer to reach; an intent to reach that goal; the presence of freedom to choose or reject on the hearer’s part; a belief that the effects can be achieved through communication; and a successful persuasive argument producing a change in

¹⁹Judy Cornelia Pearson and Paul Edward Nelson, *Understanding and Sharing: An Introduction to Speech Communication*, 6th Edition (Madison: Brown and Benchmark, 1994), 410.

²⁰William MacPherson, *The Psychology of Persuasion* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 185.

²²Brembeck and Howell (1952) state that persuasion is “the conscious attempt to modify thought and action by manipulating the motives of men toward predetermined ends;” Thayer (1961) said persuasion is “a conscious effort made by people to affect other people’s behavior in a specific circumstance or at a specific time;” Wright and Warner (1962) said persuasion is “an active attempt to influence people to action or belief by an overt appeal to reason or emotion;” Robert T. Oliver (1957) said persuasion is “any form of discourse that influences thought, feelings or conduct . . . the fundamental basis for distinguishing persuasion from other forms of discourse is the conscious purpose of the speaker . . . His purpose in speaking would be to render the audience different . . . as a direct result of his speech;” Thomas M. Schiedel (1967) stated that persuasion is “that activity in which speaker and listener are conjoined and in which the speaker consciously attempts to influence the behavior or the listener.” See Robert S. Fortner, “Persuasion, Christianity, and Ethics: A Cultural Perspective,” *Christias Scholars Review* 7 (1977), 153-4.

²³Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion* (New Haven: Yale, 1953), 292.

the mental state of the hearer.²⁴ Robert T. Oliver represents most in the field of psychology with his definition of persuasion which states, “[persuasion] is the art of motivation, or of instilling, activating, or directing in another individual or other individuals a belief or a type of conduct recommended by the speaker.”²⁵ The elements of a definition of persuasion presented thus far are from a psychological perspective. Most of the elements are speaker dependent as far as the power to persuade is concerned. Little attention is given in psychological fields to the issue of the subject matter in one’s speech, but rather the primacy in persuasion is placed on the power of the persuader and the free will of the hearer.

Two authors in the field of homiletics offer helpful elements in forming a definition of persuasion. John Broadus notes that persuasion is the chief part of application.²⁶ It is in the application that the preacher seeks to persuade the hearer to believe and or act on the matter of the text. Jerry Vines states, “Persuasion involves all ethical methods the preacher may use to induce people to make the right decisions and do the right things.”²⁷ Vines also brings persuasion to the point of decision where the hearer must decide to believe and act. Again, as in the elements of a definition of persuasion offered by psychologists, the preachers also place the primacy of the persuasive power on the persuader’s abilities and the free will of the hearer.

²⁴Daniel J. O’Keefe, *Persuasion Theory and Research* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1990), 15-16. From these elements of persuasion, O’Keefe develops the following definition of persuasion: “a successful intentional effort at influencing another’s mental state through communication in a circumstance in which the persuadee has some measure of freedom” (17).

²⁵Robert T. Oliver, *The Psychology of Persuasive Speech* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1942), 10.

²⁶John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th Edition (San Francisco: Harper, 1979), 170.

²⁷Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 249.

D. W. D. Shaw indicates that persuasion is a mutual response between two or more people.²⁸ It is this mutual response that both psychologists and preachers seek between speaker and hearer.

It is apparent that elements of persuasion in preaching definitions have, at minimum, run parallel to those in psychology. A missing element in the definitions of persuasion noted above is the role of the Holy Spirit to convince the hearer of a new belief or course of action. Compiling elements of the above stated components into a definition of persuasion and adding the key element of the work of the Holy Spirit provides a definition for persuasion. This paper, when referring to persuasion, is stating that persuasion is that act in which the preacher makes a conscious effort in his sermon to influence the thoughts and conduct of the hearers with the goal of the Holy Spirit rendering the hearers different in their belief and action as a result of their encounter with the text.

The fourth term that must be defined is decision. In formulating a definition of decision it is valuable to differentiate between choice and decision. Dan-Cohen notes that, unlike choice, decision only requires attention to and value assignment of one item.²⁹ Philip Hughes states that the point of decision occurs when a person is aware of multiple alternatives and makes a choice without any outside interference.³⁰ Both of these psychologists are correct in their view of decision. At the point of decision all other choices are no longer a factor, thus the decision maker is focusing only on the decision to alter his actions or beliefs. Rollo May notes, “Decision in an individual takes into the picture the experiencing of all wishes, but it forms these into a way of

²⁸D. W. D. Shaw, “Providence and Persuasion,” *Duke Divinity School Review* 45 (1980), 22. He notes that persuasion is always an alternative force . . . “it is the agency whereby ideas are transmitted by reasonable presentation to reasonable reception” (17).

²⁹Meir Dan-Cohen, “Conceptions of Choice and Conceptions of Autonomy,” *Ethic* 102 (January 1992), 228. Cohen also notes, “Election is the application of a value to a given item and the determination of whether or not the item satisfies the value” (228).

³⁰Phillip Hughes in Neil Holm, “Volition and Imposition,” *Journal of Christian Education* (April 1987), 7.

acting which is consciously chosen.”³¹ Although May interchanges choice with decision, it is apparent that he intends to convey the message that a decision is the point at which all other choices are eliminated and there is only the step of acting or believing.

Consistency exists among psychologists in referring to decision as the conclusion of a process.³² Compiling elements of the above stated components into a definition of decision, this paper, when referring to decision, is stating that decision is the termination of a process by which the hearer has assigned value to multiple choices and concluded that only one choice is the most valuable belief or behavior, therefore making a faith choice to accept the belief or act on the behavior. Rollo May notes that decision always has some element that is unknown, therefore it involves “some taking of a chance.”³³ For the expositor, this taking of chance is the faith element in appealing to the hearer.

A final term to define, which has already been used in this paper, is expository preaching. A basic definition of expository preaching is a “sermon which faithfully brings a message out of Scripture and makes that message accessible to contemporary hearers.”³⁴ Broadus’ definition emphasizes the exposition of Scripture.³⁵ Vines’ definition seems to summarize that of Haddon Robinson. He notes that an expository sermon is one that exposes a given text in exposition and organization and applies the message of the text to the hearers.³⁶ Compiling elements of the above stated components into a definition of expository preaching is not necessary. This paper,

³¹Rollo May, 240.

³²David Miller and Martin K. Starr, *The Structure of Human Decisions* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 22.

³³Rollo May, 238.

³⁴William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer, eds., *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995), 131.

³⁵Broadus, 58.

³⁶Vines and Shaddix, 29.

when referring to expository preaching, intends the full definition as provided by Haddon Robinson. He states

Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.³⁷

Robinson's definition grounds the sermon in Scripture, depends on the agency of the Holy Spirit, but also allows for the use of the preacher's means of appealing to the will of the hearer in order to reach the goal of a decision.

Volition

Although volition is addressed in the definitional section of this paper, further attention is given to the subject in order for the preacher to develop a methodology of persuading the will. This section examines volition from the perspective of its use in psychology and in biblical examples. It should be noted that psychology does not necessarily need to eliminate Christ in its study of volition. Tappert notes, "Since Jesus embraced the whole man in His salvation and teaching, we must expect that He also concerned Himself with the human will."³⁸ The reader should briefly refer to the definition of volition in the above section before continuing in this section.

Volition in psychology is often viewed as a constant tension between the inner man and the outside forces that seek to alter his belief and course of action. The following psychologists warn against passivity in regards to one's freedom of will. Alyce Green notes that when a person fails to exercise their freedom of volition they are forced to accept their genetic predispositions

³⁷Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 20.

³⁸Tappert, "Volition in Christian Life and Doctrine," 384.

as well as become formed by their cultural and environmental influences.³⁹ P. D. Gosselin examines C. A. Campbell's "Effort of Will Argument," stating that as one exerts his will, he is acting "contrary to what, at that time, is one's strongest desire."⁴⁰ Howie concurs with this assertion noting that for a person to be conscious that he is exerting his will there must be a tension in the decision process.⁴¹ The preacher sees this tension as a crisis moment when one is forced to face the possibility that prior belief or behavior was held in error.

There is also a tension in the psychologist's analysis of the manner in which a person's will is evoked to action. Boughton notes that although understanding may bring light to will, it is the appeal to virtue that enables the will to direct itself to action.⁴² Narramore examines the methods of motivation based on guilt or constructive sorrow, which appeal to virtue from a negative approach. He notes that psychological guilt is not a biblical means of persuasion, but rather consists of "self condemning attitudes originating largely in childhood experiences through the psychological process of internalization."⁴³ Boughton agrees that will initiates the process of one dealing with moral issues and knowledge.⁴⁴

The influences upon the will in psychological studies are examined by Assagioli. He notes, "The centrality of the will allows it supremacy through its regulating power, but this

³⁹Alyce M. Green, "Biofeedback and Volition," *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 12 (Fall/Winter 1977-78), 7.

⁴⁰Phillip D. Gosselin, "C. A. Campbell's Effort of Will Argument," *Religious Studies* 13 (December 1977), 432.

⁴¹John Howie, "Is Effort of Will a Basis for Moral Freedom?" *Religious Studies* 8 (December 1972), 347.

⁴²Boughton, 192.

⁴³Narramore, 189. He notes that in constructive sorrow the person in focus is God or others not self; actions in focus are damage done to others not misdeeds; motivation for change is to help others or do God's will not to avoid bad feelings; attitude toward self is love and respect not anger and frustration; and the result is repentance and change not stagnation or further rebellion (188).

⁴⁴Boughton, 194.

power is in turn governed by psychological laws.”⁴⁵ Ten laws are presented, but Law Six is most pertinent to preaching. The law states, “Attention, interest, affirmations, and repetitions reinforce the ideas, images and psychological formations on which they are centered.”⁴⁶ This multifaceted approach to appealing to the will in psychological studies is also affirmed by Wilhelm Wundt.⁴⁷ Wundt believes the will was not a simplistic process, as had been previously thought, but a complex system of stimuli and feelings.⁴⁸ Gottlieb and Bailey concur with the concept of the complexity of the will noting that the will is stimulated by a concern with value, a perception of self, and a philosophy of life that serves as a stable guide.⁴⁹ These psychologists agree that the will is not stimulated in one manner alone, but by an approach to appealing to the whole man.

Moving away from psychological studies of the will and into a brief examination of biblical studies of the will allows the reader to see similarities that exist between the two disciplines. The multifaceted approach to understanding the will in psychology is also evident in Scripture. Du Toit states, “The writers of the New Testament had a message to convey and sought to persuade an audience to believe it and believe it more profoundly.”⁵⁰ This persuasion throughout both testaments is primarily accomplished through diverse appeals to the will.

⁴⁵Assagioli, 51.

⁴⁶Ibid., 56. He notes, “Attention renders images and ideas clearer and more exact, and enables new elements and details to be found; Interest increases the prominence of ideas and images; Affirming images and ideas gives them stronger force and effectiveness; Repetition acts like the blows of a hammer on a nail and brings about the penetration and fixation of an idea or image, until it becomes dominant and even obsessive” (56-57).

⁴⁷Bourke, 220. Bourke refers to Wundt as the “father of experimental psychology because he established the first specialized laboratory for psychology.”

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Janet Gottlieb and Stephen Bailey, “Transpersonal Moral Reasoning: A Proposed Measure of Motivation Underlying Religious Commitment,” *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 16 (Spring/Summer, 1981): 39.

⁵⁰A. B. du Toit, “Persuasion in Romans 1:1-17,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 33 (1989): 192.

Robinson provides insight that Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 underscores the fact that the teacher's approach to imparting knowledge was not just one dimensional in nature.⁵¹ Lane Cooper indicates that the Apostle Paul used enthymeme, sign, and appeal to witness, as well as negative expressions in his appeal to will.⁵² Paul also spoke of volition in regards to the mind of Christ, the renewing of one's mind, and the knowledge of the will of God.⁵³ Jesus appealed to the will of man through the various faculties of knowledge, sight, discernment, observation, and personal judgments.⁵⁴ There is a continuation of this multifaceted approach to the will in the Proverbs. George Schwab, indicating that the "heart" in Proverbs is a term used for volitional activity, notes, "One must open one's heart to understanding (2:2), wisdom (2:10), counsel (3:1, 4:4) . . . planning and intellectual activity (6:18, 16:1)."⁵⁵ Whether in psychological studies or biblical studies, the conclusion is that the will is not a shallow, reactionary mechanism in man, but is a synonym for the whole of man's faculties that results in him freely deciding a course of action or belief.

Persuasion

Continuing from the definition of persuasion in section one of this paper, this section addresses the ethical implications related to persuasion, motivational factors in persuasion, and the decision making process. As in the previous section, homileticians and psychologist agree

⁵¹Robinson, 175.

⁵²W. Harold Mare, "The Role of the Note-Taking Historian and His Emphasis on the Person and Work of Christ," *JETS* 15 (Spring 1972): 95. Mare notes the various appeals to the will, employed by Paul, in I Corinthians 13.

⁵³Tappert, 387.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 382.

⁵⁵George M. Schwab, "The Proverbs and the Art of Persuasion," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14 (Fall 1995): 8.

that there are certain forms of persuasion that cross over into manipulation. This section demonstrates some of those areas of commonality between the two disciplines.

Much writing, as noted below, in the area of ethical implications relating to persuasion addresses the ethical use of emotion. Aristotle initiated the standard by which rhetoricians consider the character of the speaker as a primary source of persuasion.⁵⁶ McLaughlin states that unethical arguments are “any persuasive method which aims at circumventing man’s reasoning process in order to elicit non-reflective, semiconscious, or unconscious responses.”⁵⁷ Robinson’s view concurs with that of the psychologist’s. He asserts that the preacher should never use emotion for any reason other than persuading one to take a certain course of action.⁵⁸ He also warns that preachers are to appeal to “worthy motives that are harmonious with Christian moral ideals.”⁵⁹ Both in preaching and in psychology unethical means of persuasion impinge upon the freedom of man to decide.

Ethical implications also address the limitations upon the preacher’s use of persuasive efforts. Edmund Steimle, commenting on the work of the Spirit, states, “if the preacher doesn’t stop soon enough, he’s in danger of attempting to manipulate the congregation to respond in ways that he thinks suitable and thus falls into blasphemy.”⁶⁰ The danger of such a continuation of persuasion is seen in psychologist James McConnell. He states, “The time has come when if you give me any normal human being and a couple of weeks . . . I can change his behavior from

⁵⁶McLaughlin, “The Ethics of Persuasive Preaching,” 99.

⁵⁷Ibid., 98.

⁵⁸Robinson, 174.

⁵⁹Ibid., 171.

⁶⁰Edmund A. Steimle, “The Problem of Motivation in the Contemporary Pulpit,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 17 (November 1961): 5.

what it is now to whatever you want it to be, if it's physically possible."⁶¹ McConnell asserts that through manipulative means a speaker can evoke action or belief in a person.⁶²

The means by which a speaker chooses to persuade an audience demonstrates much about the character of the speaker. As noted above, the ethos of the speaker, according to Aristotle, plays a significant role in one's ability to persuade. Greg Chirichigno states, "Ethics become not just a system that we follow but a display of our very relationship with God."⁶³ Unethical means of persuasion reflect an unethical heart towards God. There is a tendency in sinful man to pursue words that seek to control and manipulate rather than persuade through ethical means.⁶⁴ According to Gerald May, to will without the motivation of love is to manipulate.⁶⁵ Character is a tool that enables the speaker to lead and "enhances the leader's capacity to persuade others; and persuasion is a far more effective approach to leadership than control, trickery or manipulation."⁶⁶ Therefore, the preacher must guard against unethical means of persuasion by guarding his own heart from unethical intentions.

A debate continues over the legitimacy to persuade by any means, ethical or unethical. There is a branch of psychology that views the act of persuading as "psychological coercion."⁶⁷ Weaver notes,

⁶¹James McConnell in Duane Litfin, "The Perils of Persuasive Preaching," *Christianity Today* 21 (February 4, 1977): 15.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Greg Chirichigno, "A Theological Investigation of Motivation in Old Testament Law," *JETS* 24 (December 1981): 313.

⁶⁴Weaver, *Language is Sermonic*, 111.

⁶⁵Gerald May, 37.

⁶⁶William May, "Persuasion and Discernment: The Gifts of Leadership," *Christian Century* (March 10, 1999): 284.

⁶⁷Weaver, 178.

According to the followers of this movement, the duty of anyone using language is to express the facts and avoid studiously the use of emotional coloring. The very use of facts in this kind of context reveals an astonishing naïveté about the nature of language. Yet there can be no doubt that this doctrine carries a great danger in that it represents a new attempt of dialectic to discredit and displace rhetoric.⁶⁸

Vines, in addressing the issue of the legitimacy of persuasion in Scripture, states, “One of the most important elements in the preaching event was persuasion.”⁶⁹ A clarification in this debate is provided by Fred Smith who states that motivation is getting people to act out of an understanding of a legitimate advantage to all involved, while manipulation is getting people to act out of a hidden agenda where the action called for is primarily for the speaker’s advantage.⁷⁰ Vines agrees that the preacher should never use words to persuade for the purpose of personal gain or praise.⁷¹

Several principle oriented guidelines are offered from psychologist’s as well as preachers, which may prevent the unethical uses of persuasion noted above. Pearson and Nelson provide four ethical standards that govern persuasive speeches: accurate citation of sources, respect for sources of information, respect for your audience, and respect for your opponent.⁷² Out of these four guidelines the one particularly related to ethical persuasion in preaching is a respect for one’s audience. Oliver suggests that the speaker should seek to “win active support for a cause.”⁷³ This suggestion is in harmony with that of Vines and Smith’s, as stated above, which says that the speaker should seek the audience’s best interest as well as his own. Roy Eckardt

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Vines, 23. He notes, “The New Testament word *peitho* means to use words to persuade others to believe.” (See Acts 13:43, 18:4; II Co 5:11).

⁷⁰Fred Smith, “The Manipulation Game,” *Leadership* 6 (Fall 1985): 111.

⁷¹Vines, 73.

⁷²Judy Cornelia Pearson and Paul Edward Nelson, *Understanding and Sharing: An Introduction to Speech Communication*, 6th Edition (Madison: Brown and Benchmark, 1994), 422.

⁷³Oliver, *The Psychology of Persuasive Speech*, 10.

concludes that ethical persuasion should be guarded by dealing with problems of social and moral action.⁷⁴ Again, the primary guard against unethical modes of persuasion is the goal of benefiting the hearer through their active participation in a belief or action.

There are also methodologically oriented guidelines suggested to prevent the preacher from using unethical means of persuasion during the process of delivery. Litfin states that the preacher should avoid celebrity evangelism that centers around a popular person; preaching that caters to the emotion and neglects the rational capabilities of man; sad stories that lack biblical substance; repeated invitations that wear on the resolve of the hearer; and manipulative invitations such as asking for a raised hand and then appealing to all who raised a hand to come forward.⁷⁵ McLaughlin states some of the criticized methods of persuasion include distortion or falsification; confusion of the facts with inferences; and concealment of purpose.⁷⁶ Each of these can be avoided if the preacher handles well the text and keeps the best interest of the audience in mind.

There is also a positive side to guarding against ethical lapses in persuasive preaching. In order to persuade without compromising the character of the preacher, there must be an understanding of the manner in which people are motivated.⁷⁷ Bernard Schalm proposes three levels on which the motivation of man functions. The first is the organic level, which

⁷⁴Roy Eckardt, "The Ethical Motivation of the Christian," *Theology and Life* 3 (February 1960): 40.

⁷⁵Litfin, "The Perils of Persuasive Preaching," 17.

⁷⁶McLaughlin, "The Ethics of Persuasive Preaching," 100-101.

⁷⁷Ibid. McLaughlin states, "Man's prejudices, biases, social and emotional conduct do not always allow him to respond to discoursing a logical way. Man sometimes responds to emotion, social influences, suggestion, and other appeals when logic does not convince him. When this happens a speaker who refuses to use these appeals because he wants to perpetuate pure logic may be as unethical as a man who uses them" (103).

includes physiological drives such as hunger, thirst, pain, etc.⁷⁸ This level is that which David Brink refers to as Prudential motivation, which promotes action on the basis of meeting the person's own needs.⁷⁹ Steven Sverdlik, in consistency with this first level of motivation, notes that a central part of motivation is the justification of what is valuable to a person about his action.⁸⁰ Most of the actions in this level of motivation are for the purpose of serving self.

The second level of motivation offered by Schalm is the involuntary cognitive level, which stems from unresolved mental conflicts or established life patterns.⁸¹ Richard Gorsuch states, "One such motivation could be the desire to have the respect of one's parents when that respect can be earned from religious beliefs and participation."⁸² Gorlow and Schroeder label this type of person a comfort seeker, "whose motives involve seeking peace of mind"⁸³ This second level describes a person who may not be able to articulate that which motivates them to action.

The third motivational level is the voluntary cognitive level, which relates to more advanced forms of conduct such as worship and creative activity.⁸⁴ This type of person is also known as the autonomy seeker who seeks to learn God's Word and shares "a strong and

⁷⁸Bernard Schalm, "Motivation from a Theological Perspective," *Pastoral Psychology* (May 1971): 49.

⁷⁹David O. Brink, "Symposium on Michael Smith's: The Moral Problem," *Ethics* (October 1977): 12.

⁸⁰Steven Sverdlik, "Motive and Rightness," *Ethics* 106 (January 1996): 335. Sverdlik also notes that motives are psychological states or events; are part of the cause of an action or the decision to act; precede an action; and are most often in the form of emotion and desire such as jealousy, affection, or sympathy.

⁸¹ Schalm, 50.

⁸²Richard L. Gorsuch, "Toward Motivational Theories of Intrinsic Religious Commitment," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33 (December 1994): 318.

⁸³Leon Gorlow and Harol Schroeder, "Motives for Participating in the Religious Experience," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 7 (Fall 1968): 250.

⁸⁴Gorsuch, 318.

consistent desire for a submissive relationship to authority.”⁸⁵ The person motivated at this level would agree, “Motivation does not then become merely a human invention to produce obedience but a divine method seeking to display the full character of God in his requirements for sanctification.”⁸⁶ This person is one that willingly changes his mind or course of action because of the authority under which he exists.

On a more pragmatic level, three avenues of motivation are often addressed in psychological studies that relate well to persuasion in preaching. First, man is recognized as being emotional to the point that much of what he believes and does is determined by his feelings.⁸⁷ Steimle notes that man’s point of contact with God evokes an anxiety in man, which can only be answered by the gospel.⁸⁸ Second, man is a reasonable creature with the ability to cognitively work through issues.⁸⁹ Litfin notes that the listener “must be so clearly and powerfully confronted with the truth that he cannot evade or ignore it.”⁹⁰ Third, man determines many of his actions by rationalization.⁹¹ Robinson states that this process of rationalization is often one of the reasons that makes decision making difficult.⁹²

⁸⁵Gorlow and Schroeder, 250.

⁸⁶Chirichigno, 307.

⁸⁷Oliver, 163.

⁸⁸Steimle, 14.

⁸⁹Oliver, 163.

⁹⁰Litfin, “The Perils of Persuasive Preaching,” 17.

⁹¹Oliver, 163.

⁹²Haddon Robinson, *Decision Making By the Book* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 82.

The process of making a decision is necessary to briefly examine before formulating a methodology of persuading the will.⁹³ George Pugh presents a model, commonly used in psychological studies, to describe how decisions are made. Value driven systems begin with data input, followed by an update of the perception of one's environment, after which a classification of states and selection of alternatives follows, then one simulates or projects the possible outcome, after which an evaluation of the outcome occurs, then a decision is made, followed by implementation.⁹⁴ Another model attempting to explain the process of deciding is John Dewey's system, which provides four stages of making a decision: "the feeling of impulses, the effort to reflect consequences, the decision to act or refrain from acting, and the voluntary execution of the action."⁹⁵ Assagioli notes that stages of willed acts are purpose, deliberation, decision, affirmation, planning and the direction of the execution.⁹⁶ Josiah Royce's model of decision making includes desiring, attending to the issue, choosing the most valid option, and putting one's choice into action, which is the decision.⁹⁷

A primary work in the field of psychological studies relating to decision making suggests five stages of the cognitive process, which encapsulates the positives of the models mentioned in

⁹³Kathleen Galotti suggests seven criteria of effective decision making. "1) Thoroughly canvasses a wide range of alternative course of action; 2) Surveys the full range of objectives to be fulfilled and the values implicated by the choice; 3) Carefully weighs whatever he knows about the costs and risks of negative consequences, as well as the positive consequences, that could flow from each alternative; 4) Intensively searches for new information relevant to further evaluation of the alternatives; 5) Correctly assimilates and takes account of any new information or expert judgment to which he is exposed, even when the information or judgment does not support the course of action he initially prefers; 6) Reexamines the positive and negative consequences of all known alternatives, including those originally regarded as unacceptable, before making a final choice; 7) Makes detailed provisions for implementing or executing the chosen course of action, with special attention to contingency plans that might be required if various known risks were to materialize." See Kathleen M. Galotti, *Making Decisions that Matter* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 148.

⁹⁴George Edgin Pugh, "Values and The Theory of Motivation," *Zygon* 14 (March 1979): 67.

⁹⁵Bourke, *Will in Western Thought*, 234.

⁹⁶Assagioli, 20.

⁹⁷Bourke, 234.

the previous paragraph.⁹⁸ First, appraising the challenge states that a person will not seek to change belief or behavior until he is first challenged by information that disrupts his life. Second, surveying alternatives involves the hearer searching his memory and advice from friends for alternate actions and eventually becomes more open to new alternatives. Third, weighing the alternatives involves examining benefits and detriments of each choice and finally coming to a conclusion based on which one best meets his needs. Fourth, deliberating about commitment involves the decision maker telling his decision to those whom he believes will support him, and withholding his decision from those whom he believes will not support him. Fifth, adhering despite negative feedback involves the decision maker receiving negative feedback, yet remaining committed to his decision as well as finding new reasons to bolster his decision.⁹⁹ This model is a primary means by which the preacher can formulate a methodology of persuading the will.

Appealing to Volition in Expository Preaching

Before noting principles that may be used in developing a methodology of persuading the will, this paper first addresses the issues of audience analysis with a brief notation regarding the point of decision. Weaver notes, “Every speech which is designed to move is directed to a special audience in its unique situation.”¹⁰⁰ O’Keefe defines persuadability as how easily one is persuaded and includes the question of whether there is a difference in the persuadability among persons.¹⁰¹ The following issues relating to audience analysis demonstrate there are differences

⁹⁸Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann, *Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice, and Commitment* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 172.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Weaver, 206.

¹⁰¹ O’Keefe, 175.

in audiences, but common methods of persuasion can work in communicating to a diverse group. Steimle notes that the basic problem shared by all men is the failure to trust God as a result of doubting His control over all life.¹⁰²

The difficult task of audience analysis is developing a plan by which to measure an audience's ability to receive certain messages. Fred Smith states that the speaker must find the "thirsts" of the people and then ask "what kind of water do I have to satisfy that kind of thirst?"¹⁰³ There are several basic factors that are easily observable including average age, income, gender, religion, family size, political party and type of occupation.¹⁰⁴ This exercise may appear unnecessary to the preacher who believes in the power of the Word of God, as this writer does, however du Toit notes that Paul knew his audience in his epistle to the Romans and thus understood he had to gain their trust as a minister of the gospel before continuing to deliver his message.¹⁰⁵ Aristotle said, "Of the first three elements in speechmaking – the speaker, subject, and persons addressed – it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech's end and

¹⁰²Steimle, "The Problem of Motivation in the Contemporary Pulpit," 8. Pugh notes, "Human beings have desires, ambitions, objectives, and purposes; they experience pain and loneliness, joy and sorrow; they have disappointments, pleasures and creative inspirations; they make decisions and they make moral judgments. An adequate theory of human behavior should somehow incorporate and account for these important aspects of human experience" see Pugh, "Values and the Theory of Motivation," 59.

¹⁰³Fred Smith, "The Manipulation Game," *Leadership* 6 (Fall 1985): 116.

¹⁰⁴Charles U. Larson, *Persuasion: Reception and Responsibility*, 7th Edition (Boston: Wadsworth, 1995), 316.

¹⁰⁵du Toit, "Persuasion in Romans 1:1-17," 202. du Toit notes that persuasion is always socially conditioned and that an author always has the objective in mind, prior to writing. This objective is partly derived from audience analysis (198).

object.”¹⁰⁶ If the ultimate aim is to direct the audience to a new belief or new action, then the first step is to know their “stimulus possibilities.”¹⁰⁷

One of the most comprehensive guides to audience analysis is provided by Pearson and Nelson.¹⁰⁸ The authors offer three methods of audience analysis: observation of the audience’s behavior and characteristics; inference or drawing conclusions based on observed evidence; and questionnaire, which is designed to determine attitudinal and demographic information.¹⁰⁹

According to Schwab, a similar system of analysis must have been instituted by the authors of Proverbs who address four types of people: the simple, the young, the wise, and the fool.¹¹⁰ Paul also practiced audience analysis towards the church in Corinth. Bart Bruehler indicates that the reason Paul emphasized the volitional aspect of giving was as a result of his knowledge about the economic status of the Corinthian believers.¹¹¹ All this analysis is for the purpose of organizing “material in such a way as to gain the desired response.”¹¹² Preachers often demand responses from their parishioners without reflecting on their lifestyle, thus perpetuating a “do better” spirituality that does not produce genuine disciples.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶Aristotle in Duane Litfin, *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 37.

¹⁰⁷Oliver, 9. Oliver notes, “That the essence of persuasion lies in its relationship with its audience, rather than with its subject, seems to be agreed upon by all who have examined the problem.”

¹⁰⁸Judy Cornelian Pearson and Paul Edward Nelson, *Understanding and Sharing: An Introduction to Speech Communication* (Madison: Brown and Benchmark, 1994). Their analysis is divided into four levels: captive and voluptuary audiences; demographic analysis; audience interest and knowledge of a topic; and the audiences attitudes beliefs, and values.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 250-53.

¹¹⁰Schwab, 7.

¹¹¹Bart B. Bruehler, “Proverbs, Persuasion and People: A Three-Dimensional Investigation of 2 Cor 9:6-15,” *New Testament Studies* 48 (2002), 214.

¹¹²Litfin, “The Perils of Persuasive Preaching,” 15.

Audience analysis was not only practiced by biblical writers but is also a practice of psychology. Galotti notes

Psychologists who study people's reasoning and problem-solving skills have long known of the phenomena of content and context effects. Content effects are demonstrated when people show an inability to solve one version of a problem but solve it easily when it is described as being "about" something else.¹¹⁴

Vines notes that the preacher can learn much by observing the various ways the field of advertising adapts itself to different audiences in order to communicate the same message to a diverse audience.¹¹⁵ The preacher may find need to decide whether to place the major argument at the beginning of the message or save it for the end once he takes "into account the initial position of the audience."¹¹⁶ Litfin notes that in order for a speaker to adapt to his audience, he may have to adjust eight areas of speech: subject matter, statement of purpose, organization of message, supporting material, introduction and conclusion, language, delivery and length of message.¹¹⁷ A persuasive sermon achieves little if the preacher does not first consider how men are subjectively reacting to their situation in life.¹¹⁸

Although much is noted in the previous sections about the processes involved in persuading a person to make a decision, it is imperative, in speaking for a decision, that the persuader understand that a decision takes place at one point in time. Everding and Wilbanks underscore that perhaps the most difficult step in decision making is making the decision a

¹¹³J. C. Yates, "Christian Motivation," *Saint Marks Review* 123 (September – December 1985): 14.

¹¹⁴Galotti, *Making Decisions that Matter*, 75.

¹¹⁵Vines, *Power in the Pulpit*, 250-51.

¹¹⁶Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion*, 99.

¹¹⁷Litfin, *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians*, 67-70. This paper does not allow space for a section relating to the issue of adapting to the audience. It is obvious through the suggestions of Aristotle, Pearson, and Litfin that is necessary for the speaker to make adaptations without compromising the essential message of the text.

¹¹⁸Weaver, *Language is Sermonic*, 205.

concrete and final response.¹¹⁹ In his sermon, “Joshua’s Firm Resolve,” Spurgeon states, “Doubt had long ago vanished, debate was finally closed, resolve was taken, and taken without a grain of reserve, and consequently action was forcible and ardent.”¹²⁰ Vines notes that the proclamation of truth calls for a decision and that the invitation is the call for people to act on the truth.¹²¹ The great challenge in this call for decision is developing a methodology of persuading the will.

Examining elements that develop into a methodology for persuading the will in expository preaching allows the preacher to adapt himself, his message, and his rhetorical devices to his audience. This section does not prescribe a specific method, for there is not one method that applies to all situations. There are, however, principles of persuasion that allow the expositor to adapt to various preaching situations. Robinson states, “Apart from life-related, biblical content we have nothing worth communicating; but without skillful delivery, we will not get our content across to the congregation.”¹²² McLaughlin notes that the benefit of a sound methodology of speaking is a sound result.¹²³

Referring back to the definition of persuasion, it is underscored that persuasion does not occur apart from the work of the Spirit in one’s life. Steimle states that it is the Holy Spirit alone who can evoke a response.¹²⁴ A preacher’s work in the pulpit is the instrument God uses for the purpose of the hearer’s hearing, but the instrument who brings about change is God.¹²⁵ Vines

¹¹⁹H. Edward Everding and Dana W. Wilbanks, *Decision Making and the Bible* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1975), 50.

¹²⁰C. H. Spurgeon, *Twelve Sermons on Decision* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 35.

¹²¹Vines, *Power in the Pulpit*, 210.

¹²²Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 191.

¹²³McLaughlin, “The Ethics of Persuasive Speech,” 95-96.

¹²⁴Steimle, “The Problem of Motivation in the Contemporary Pulpit,” 4.

¹²⁵Litfin, “The Perils of Persuasive Preaching,” 16.

notes that, in applying the text to the hearer for a response, the Holy Spirit arouses deep desires, reveals the sinfulness of man, demonstrates the sufficiency of Christ, and creates the desire for salvation through Christ.¹²⁶ When appealing for a decision, in the sermon noted above, Spurgeon states, “May the Holy Ghost enable you to answer to the demand.”¹²⁷ There is a commonality among evangelicals that the Holy Spirit is the agent that brings about change. However, Spurgeon, Vines, Broadus, and Robinson encouraged the use and used, themselves, rhetorical devices to persuade their hearers.

Persuasion is not simply one part of a sermon, but rather the emphasis behind the entire preaching event. Broadus notes that persuasion is not just exhorting, but rather urging the hearer to act based on a specific motive.¹²⁸ Spurgeon said, “Put Christ in your heart and he will chase out sin.”¹²⁹ He used the rhetorical element of persuading to the specific motive of being free from sin. This method is also used in psychological methods of persuasion. Brink notes that in order for persuasion in the moral realm to occur there must be a belief that the action is rationally authoritative and that the action is morally required.¹³⁰ Yates believes that the most effective way to appeal to a specific motive is not to tell people what they should or should not do, but rather

¹²⁶Vines, 189.

¹²⁷Spurgeon, 41.

¹²⁸Broadus, 171. Broadus states, “He ought to hold up before his listeners the beauty of holiness, to educate the regenerate into doing right for its own sake and not merely for the sake of its rewards. The minister should stimulate and at the same time control that hatred of evil which is the natural and necessary counterpart to the love of holiness. And as regards the life after death, he should habitually point men not only to its happiness but still more earnestly to its purity and strive by God’s blessing to make them desire its freedom from all sin and from all fear of sinning. It is the preacher’s duty and privilege to cherish such noble and ennobling aspirations in his hearers by the very fact of appealing to them” (172).

¹²⁹Spurgeon, 43.

¹³⁰Brink, “Moral Motivation,” 15-16.

start with what God has already accomplished for them through His Son.¹³¹ This type of appeal lends way to Brink's call for authority and morality.

Most works on preaching or in psychology do not give a comprehensive method of persuasion, but merely suggest some principles for the process.¹³² There are, however, a few authors who present a complete methodology for persuading the will. Oliver's system of persuading the will includes a checklist of nine stages the speaker must employ in order to persuade:

Win attention to and interest in the proposal; show the audience how the proposal is in accord with their best interests, ethics, and judgment of experts; demonstrate the value of the proposal; present the proposal as a common goal sought by both speaker and audience; align the proposal with the partially realized needs of the hearers; state the proposal in words that the audience already uses; present the proposal under conditions that are physically and psychologically favorable to its acceptance; appeal through most acceptable avenues of persuasion for a given audience; adapt appeals to the mood, attitudes, and tensions of the audience.¹³³

Larson suggests, "Successful persuaders spend time finding out what the audience already believes, then they use various tactics to tie their points to audience beliefs."¹³⁴ He notes several tactics the speaker may employ to appeal to the will:

The *yes-yes* technique where the speaker leads the audience in a series of decisions knowing they will say yes to each, before he presents the controversial issue in the end; the *don't ask if, ask which* tactic does not leave the hearer with a choice of no, but only a choice of which option is best for them; the answering getting partial commitment tactic, such as what is used in many invitations where people are asked to bow their heads and close their eyes; the ask more, so they settle for less tactic involves setting a commitment

¹³¹Yates, "Christian Motivation," 14.

¹³²Pearson and Nelson note, "You can persuade an audience, however, by using motivational appeals, employing source credibility, using logical or emotional appeals, organizing your materials effectively, and observing ethical guidelines for persuasion" see Pearson and Nelson, *Understanding and Sharing*, 415. Corbett notes three kinds of persuasive discourses: the deliberative discourse where deliberation over an issue occurs; the forensic discourse; and the epideictic, which persuades the audience through pleasing or inspiring them. See Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 39-40.

¹³³Oliver, *The Psychology of Persuasive Speech*, 312.

¹³⁴Larson, *Persuasion: Reception and Responsibility*, 330.

level higher than what the audience is willing to perform, then reducing the appeal to a lower level, but higher than where they are living; and the planting tactic uses one of the five senses that opens the audience to connect with a favorable memory and associate that memory with the request of the speaker.¹³⁵

Most of these tactics are utilized in sales pitches and would need to be examined in light of the ethical issues before employed in preaching. They are provided in this paper in order to note the benefits and dangers of certain means of persuasion utilized in other areas, but often employed in expository preaching.

A primary principle of persuading the will is the clarity of the subject in the mind of the speaker. MacPherson notes, “The effectiveness of his persuasion will be proportionate to the clearness and fullness with which the belief has been defined, and the degree of conviction with which it is held.”¹³⁶ Vines’ work emphasizes that clarity within the mind of the speaker and in the sermon is essential to persuasion. He states, “Clarity is indispensable for the decisional end of preaching.”¹³⁷ Vines presents the expositor with the most comprehensive guidelines for developing an ethical methodology of persuading the will that depends on the work of the Holy Spirit and is adaptable to diverse audiences. He presents five techniques of persuasion:

The Word of God combines the need for authority with the essential rhetorical elements of explanation and argumentation; Personal character or ethos does not add to the substance of Scripture, but establishes credibility between the preacher and the congregation; Logical reasoning or logos answers the audience’s question, “What do you mean” and appeals to the audience’s need to understand the Scriptures; Emotional appeal or pathos answers the question “Is this significant” and is intended to communicate truth to the heart of the people; Fresh imagination allows the hearer to first imagine the new position or belief before making a decision to accept it or not.¹³⁸

¹³⁵Ibid., 330-332.

¹³⁶McPherson, *The Psychology of Persuasion*, 12.

¹³⁷Vines, *Power in the Pulpit*, 236.

¹³⁸Ibid., 252-53.

These techniques, presented by Vines, when employed in sermons, appeal to the will, but allow the preacher to utilize persuasive methods in an ethical manner while depending on the Holy Spirit to produce change in the hearer.

Conclusion

This paper examined the rhetorical elements that appeal to volition in expository preaching, which elements provide insights for developing a methodology that is useful in persuading individuals to make a decision to change. Fortner states, “To communicate the Gospel means putting it before the people so that they are able to decide for or against it.”¹³⁹ The preacher must depend on the Holy Spirit to evoke change in the heart and mind of individuals, but that does not eliminate the preacher’s responsibility to use the rhetorical skills that ethically appeal to the characteristics of man that are made in the image of God. God gives man an ability to reason, place value on right and wrong, and volitionally decide on a specific belief or course of action. Following the ethical guidelines of this paper enables the preacher to persuade man in the manner in which he was created to be persuaded.

In order to lead the hearer to the point of decision, the preacher must analyze his audience and adapt his message to the most effective manner of persuading the hearer. The goal of this effort is for the hearer to make a faith decision. Spurgeon said, “It is a safe thing for every Christian man to be habituated to judge for himself as to what is right, and then to adhere to it whether others do so or not.”¹⁴⁰ Spurgeon was not threatened in his preaching by the use of persuasive techniques to place the decision in the hands of his hearers. If we believe God created man with a freedom to choose, we must preach in a manner that appeals to man’s volitional

¹³⁹Fortner, “Persuasion, Christianity and Ethics,” 162.

¹⁴⁰Spurgeon, *12 Sermons on Decision*, 99.

ability. If we simply believe man is only a respondent to transferable information, we continue to preach sermons without any thought of techniques that are most useful for persuading the will of the audience. Man as a volitional creation of God is designed to change his belief and behavior, not by information alone, but by an appeal to his will, ethically persuaded to be like Jesus.

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