

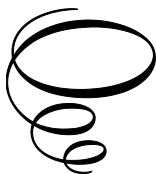
A Homiletical Praxeology on the Persuasiveness of Literary Forms

A Homiletical Praxeology on the Persuasiveness of Literary Forms

By

Ferdi P. Kruger

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



A Homiletical Praxeology on the Persuasiveness of Literary Forms

By Ferdi P. Kruger

This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2025 by Ferdi P. Kruger

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN: 978-1-0364-4748-9

ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-4749-6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Figures.....	xiv
Preface.....	xv
Acknowledgements	xviii
Research Justification.....	xix
Chapter 1	1
Introduction and Conceptualization	
1.1. Introduction: Understanding the performative essence of preaching	1
1.1.1. Persuasion and the literary forms of the gospel.....	3
1.1.2. Persuasion is viewed from the literary forms of the five preaching blocks of Matthew's Gospel and the Hebrews' sermon	9
1.1.3. Positioning of the current book in the field of homiletics..	13
1.1.4. Purpose of the book	16
1.2. Delineation of the research problem	18
1.3. Methodology.....	20
1.3.1. Descriptive-empirical perspectives.....	22
1.3.2. Historical-systematic perspectives on persuasiveness and literary forms	25
1.3.3. Normative perspectives on persuasion viewed from the preaching blocks in the Gospel of Matthew and the Hebrews sermon	25
1.3.4. Strategic-practical perspectives on persuasive preaching from the literary forms of the gospel	29
1.4. Outline of the book	29

Section 1: Descriptive-empirical perspectives on attitude, attitude change, persuasion, and the rhetorical influence of literary forms

Chapter 2	32
Descriptive perspectives on mirroring attitudes, persuasion, and rhetorical influence of literary forms	
2.1. Introduction	32
2.1.1. Methodological framework for Chapter 2	32
2.1.2. Descriptive perspectives on the prevalence of attitude functioning	34
2.1.3. Descriptive perspectives on the exposing nature of attitudes	38
2.1.3.1. Descriptive perspectives on the functioning of preachers' attitudes	38
2.1.3.2. Descriptive perspectives from social psychology on the functioning of listeners' attitudes	46
2.2. Conclusion	59
Chapter 3	61
Empirical perspectives on listeners' attitudes on active listening and the persuasiveness of literary forms	
3.1. Introduction	61
3.1.1. Methodological framework	61
3.1.2. Pinpointing the essence of attitude functioning.....	62
3.2. The second and exploratory phase of empirical work	63
3.2.1. Selection of respondents.....	63
3.2.2. Measuring instrument.....	63
3.2.3. Data capturing	63
3.2.3.1. The preacher's attitude influences my attitude	63
3.2.3.2. Long-winded and incoherent sermons complicate attentive and active listening to preaching	64
3.2.3.3. A good sermon explains the literary form and applies it imaginatively to my life.....	64
3.2.3.4. Preaching that communicates the emotional appeal of the literary form and addresses wrong attitudes on my side makes me feel uncomfortable.....	65
3.2.4. Second phase – Empirical perspectives on resonant listening allude to listeners' attitudes and meaning-making exertions	65
3.2.4.1. Brief overview of the directedness and penetrative essence of attitudes	65

3.2.4.2.	The listeners' attitudes on resonant listening	66
3.2.4.3.	Method.....	67
3.2.4.4.	Biographical data	67
3.2.4.5.	Capturing of data analysis.....	67
3.3.	Interpretation of data.....	74
3.3.1.	Types of attitudes and categories.....	74
3.3.2.	Deductions from empirical perspectives	77
3.4.	Conclusion	80

Section 2: Systematic perspectives on attitude change and persuasive communication

Chapter 4	84
Systematic perspectives on attitude change and persuasive communication	
4.1. Introduction	84
4.1.1. Methodological framework	84
4.1.2. Browning's approach as critical correlation	84
4.2. Historical-systematic perspectives on Aristotle's understanding of persuasion according to logos, ethos and pathos.	85
4.3. Interdisciplinary perspectives from social psychology on persuasion and attitude change	88
4.3.1. Attitude functioning, attitude change and persuasion.....	88
4.3.2. The vital role of cognitive dissonance as a liminal experience between resonance and dissonance	92
4.4. Perspectives from the literary theory on persuasion	94
4.4.1. Literary form sensitive preaching.....	94
4.4.2. Literary forms and listeners' responses	96
4.4.3. Literary genres and speech making	97
4.4.3.1. Literary genres as a contract between communicators and listeners.....	97
4.4.3.2. Utilization of literary forms and genres in everyday communication	98
4.4.3.3. Perspectives on the tone and mood of a literary text	101
4.4.3.4. Rhetorical interpretation and identification of literary forms and genres in the gospel	103
4.5. Conclusion	106

Section 3: Normative perspectives on attitude change through the persuasiveness of literary forms

Chapter 5	108
Literary perspectives on the five narrativeS or preaching blocks according to Matthew's Gospel.....	108
5.1. Introduction	108
5.1.1. The normative methodological framework	108
5.1.2. The structure of the five preaching blocks in Matthew's Gospel and their focus on attitude change.....	109
5.2. Chiastic structuring of Matthew's Gospel and its persuasive appeal	111
5.3. A kaleidoscope of words for preaching in Matthew's Gospel intertwined with active listening and the functioning of the listener's attitude.....	116
5.3.1. Five words related to preaching.....	116
5.3.2. Matthew's portrayal of Jesus' preaching	117
5.3.2.1. The meaning of ῥηθέν (saying).....	117
5.3.2.2. Saying-said (λεγων-εἶπεν-ἐλαλήσεν)	118
5.3.2.3. The word λαλοῦντος	118
5.3.2.4. Preaching (κηρυσσων)	119
5.3.2.5. Teach (διδασκων).....	121
5.3.2.6. Gospel/Good News (εὐαγγέλιον)	122
5.3.3. Perspectives on Jesus's preaching aimed at active and resonant hearing (ἀκούω)	123
5.3.4. The explicit attitude of being amazed in hearing Jesus's preaching in Matthew's Gospel (ἐκπλήσσεσθαι)	124
5.4. Homiletical perspectives on the first preaching block: Preaching of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7)	125
5.4.1. Attitude change in Matthew 5–7 closely interwoven with the structure of the Gospel of Matthew	125
5.4.2. Preaching on the Beatitudes	130
5.4.2.1. Central place of the Beatitudes as an introduction and at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount	130
5.4.2.2. The beatitudes as a sub-literary form (Gattung) and their unique structure as an introduction to the Sermon on the Mount.....	132
5.4.2.3. Development of the rhetoric and contextualization in the Beatitudes.....	134

5.4.2.4. Homiletical perspectives on the preaching of the literary form of the Beatitudes	137
5.5. Conclusion	138
Chapter 6	140
Normative perspectives on the five preaching blocks according to the Gospel of Matthew	
6.1. Introduction	140
6.2. Preaching of the first preaching block according to Matthew's Gospel 142	
6.2.1. Addressing the attitude of Jewish leaders in Matthew 5:17-20 and emphasizing the fulfilment of the law	142
6.2.2. Preaching the six antithetical statements as applied in Matthew 5:21-48	147
6.2.3. Preaching of the Sermon on the Mount according to the unique structure and compelling essence of Matthew 6-7	151
6.2.3.1. Preaching on the three aspects related to a liturgical outlook on life (Matt 6:1-18)	151
6.3. Perspectives on the rhetoric appeal in Matthew 6:19-7:6	157
6.3.1. Perspectives on Matthew 6:24-34	157
6.3.2. Perspectives on attitudes towards relationships according to Matthew 7:1-12 and the vital influence of humility and prayer	160
6.4. Homiletical perspectives on preaching the rhetorical appeal of the Mount Sermon	163
6.5. Conclusion	165
Chapter 7	169
Normative perspectives on the compelling essence of the preaching blocks in Matthew 10 (mission sermon) and 13 (parable sermon) according to their literary appeal	
7.1. Introduction	169
7.2. Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 10 (second preaching block) dealing with the missional charge of the Twelve	172
7.2.1. Chiastic structuring of Matthew 10 necessitates a comprehensive understanding of coherence between the parables in Matthew 13	172
7.2.2. Homiletical perspectives on Jesus' approach in Matthew 10	173

7.2.2.1.	Homiletical perspectives on Jesus drawing His disciples nearer and giving them the mandate to preach.....	173
7.2.2.2.	The mandate to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven.....	174
7.3.	Homiletical perspectives on the third preaching block (Matt 13) concerning the parable genre	178
7.3.1.	Chiastic structure of Matthew 13 and understanding of the literary context considering Matthew's bigger narrative.....	178
7.3.2.	Perspectives on the kingdom parables according to Matthew 13.....	182
7.3.2.1.	A coherent preaching line dealing with telling vivid images and consequent explanation.....	182
7.3.2.2.	Homiletical perspectives on the parables aimed at attitude change and persuasion in Matthew 13	184
7.4.	Concluding perspectives on preaching the literary appeal of the mission sermon (Matt 10) and the parable genre (Matt 13)....	196
Chapter 8		199
Normative perspectives on preaching blocks four (Matt 18) and five (Matt 24–25): The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven and signs of the end of the age		
8.1.	Introduction	199
8.2.	Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 18 aimed at attitude change 201	
8.2.1.	Rhetorical appeal and functioning of cognitive dissonance in Matthew 18.....	201
8.2.1.1.	The emphasis on an attitude of humility and being a little one	201
8.2.1.2.	The ripple effect of becoming like little ones: Be kind and welcome the little ones in My name....	203
8.2.2.	Homiletical perspectives on the parable of the Lost Sheep (Matt 18:10-14) touching on an attitude of looking, seeking, finding, and joy	206
8.2.3.	Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 18:15-20 touching on responsibility when someone is harmed by people sinning against them.....	207
8.2.4.	Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 18:21-35 and the parable of the Unmerciful Servant's attitude	210

8.3. Preaching of the fifth preaching block, the prophetic sermon (Matt 24–25).....	212
8.3.1. The literary form of Matthew 24 and 25 with its rhetorical appeal 212	
8.3.2. Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 24:1-14 and its interplay between paraenesis and consolation.....	216
8.3.3. Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 24:15-28: Occurrence of signs and not the time is essential – Stay at your post until the end.....	221
8.3.4. Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 24:29-51 on the certainty about Jesus’ coming.....	223
8.4. Homiletical perspectives on the vigilance parables in Matthew 25.....	224
8.4.1. Preaching that acknowledges the structure of Matthew 25.....	224
8.4.2. Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 25:1-13 with an emphasis on <i>phronesis</i>	225
8.4.3. Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 25:14-30 and responsible engagement with talents.....	226
8.4.4. Homiletical perspectives on Matthew 25:31-46 and the climactic essence of the prophetic sermon’s conclusion.....	227
8.5. Concluding homiletical perspectives on Matthew 18 and 24–25.....	228
8.6. Conclusion.....	232
Chapter 9.....	234
Normative perspectives on the literary form of the Hebrews sermon	
9.1. Introduction.....	234
9.2. The Hebrews sermon is a purposeful edification of listeners struggling with the meaningfulness of life.....	237
9.2.1. Profile of the listeners and the sermon’s outcome.....	237
9.2.2. The thoughtful literary structure of the Hebrews sermon in persuading listeners toward attitude change.....	239
9.2.2.1. Thought pattern of the Hebrews sermon.....	239
9.2.2.2. The Hebrews sermon with an intimate interplay between exposition and application.....	243
9.2.2.3. The structure of the Hebrews sermon strengthened the persuasiveness towards an attitude of willingness to persevere.....	245

9.3. The Hebrews sermon focuses on the attitude of listeners hearing God's voice	247
9.3.1. Specific concepts dealing with the interplay between attitude functioning and the persuasiveness of preaching	247
9.3.2. The Hebrews sermon listeners' challenges related to their attitude.....	251
9.4. Conclusion	255
Chapter 10	256
Normative perspectives on the Hebrews sermon and its persuasive essence contribution to SHAPING attitude change	
10.1. Introduction	256
10.2. Hebrews 5:11–6:3: A persuasive argument on solid food and training oneself to hear God's voice.....	258
10.2.1. The rhetorical appeal of Hebrews.....	258
10.2.2. Homiletical perspectives on Hebrews 5:11–6:3 as a persuasive argument	260
10.3. Homiletical perspectives on Hebrews 11's portrayal of Old Testament figures concerning faith	267
10.3.1. Homiletical perspectives on perseverance, anchored in our memory of the treasure in heaven, as an introduction to Hebrews 11	267
10.3.2. Chiasmic structure and rhetorical appeal of Hebrews 11... ..	268
10.3.3. Homiletical perspectives on the portrayal of the faithful lives of historical and Old Testament figures	271
10.4. Conclusion	278
Chapter 11	279
The hermeneutic interplay between chapters 1–10 and homiletical praxeology dealing with the persuasive essence of literary forms in changing listeners' attitudes	
11.1. Introduction	279
11.2. Hermeneutical interplay between Chapters 1–10	280
11.3. Homiletical praxeology on the persuasive essence of the literary forms of the five preaching blocks in Matthew's Gospel and the Hebrews sermon	285
References	291
Index	314

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Literary devices in daily life.....	99
Table 2: Interplay between exposition and application	244
Table 3: Contrast between Old and New Testament	250
Table 4: Difference between old and new dispensations.....	274
Table 5: Widening effect of attitude functioning in Hebrews	276

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Literary form preference	23
Figure 2: Reason for literary form preference	24
Figure 3: Hebrews as a three-dimensional sermon	28
Figure 4: Interplay between descriptive and empirical voices.....	34
Figure 5: Interplay between the preacher's attitudes and experiences.....	43
Figure 6: Three pillars of attitude functioning.....	47
Figure 7: Challenges for one's listening attitude	54
Figure 8: Attitude change and habit disruption	56
Figure 9: Categories of attitudes and literary forms	76
Figure 10: Resonance and cognitive dissonance	94
Figure 11: Differences and similarities between tone and mood.....	102
Figure 12: Chiastic structure of Matthew's Gospel.....	113
Figure 13: The ripple effect of the sermon on the mount	168
Figure 14: Eschatological tension between the 'yet-but-not-yet'	185

PREFACE

The literary form of books in the Gospel is not only about the arrangement of arguments but also denotes a deliberate way of expressing the persuasiveness of its message. It touches on both the what and the why of a passage. One could say that the message is moulded in a specific form. My argument in this book touches on how preaching according to the literary form of the five preaching blocks according to Matthew's Gospel and the Hebrews sermon enables preachers to work with the Gospel itself. The literary form helps us understand the passage's order and appeal.

Luther,¹ once said, preaching concerned with the message of the Gospel is what preachers do and who they are. Hence, Luther's emphasis on the church as *Mundhaus* starts to make sense. For Luther², two senses, namely seeing and hearing, stand tall when it comes to appropriating the message of the Kingdom of Heaven. One can't agree more with Maarten Luther, mainly when he pinpoints listeners' attitudes that could become skewed, meaning they listen to a sermon expecting an expert speaking about the Gospel. It is, after all, the Gospel that speaks with the preacher as the mouthpiece. Beach³ builds on Luther's and Calvin's insights, emphasising the need for the mouthpiece to understand the performative essence of preaching as bringing the Gospel to life. Preaching, like in the case of John the Baptist, which declares there is the Lamb of God, points to Someone. The Gospel should be spoken as a living voice, resonating with the listeners and stirring their spirits within the framework of a homiletical triangular. As a result, preaching could be described as deliberate persuasive communication but as the opposite of manipulation. In this book, I argue that the five preaching blocks, according to Matthew's Gospel and the Hebrews sermon, establish cognitive dissonance in listeners' minds, which is addressed in an enabling manner through the sermons' content. The six

¹ See Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe—and Started the Protestant Reformation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015).

² Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Vol. 10/1.2* (Weimar: Bohlau, 1883), pp. 1–5.

³ J. Mark Beach, "The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999): 84.

sermons are scrutinised as counterintuitive to listeners' minds, emotions and actions, and based on this idea, persuasion to respond to this living voice is pivotal.⁴

Calvin's⁵ words surface when he connects worship, of which preaching is integral, with the Second Commandment, underscoring that it is all about worshipping God mindfully without formal repetition of words and customs without honouring Him. This book will focus on the mindfulness and persuasiveness of preaching according to a specific passage's literary form and rhetorical appeal, which immediately brings the functioning of attitudes to the fore. On the face of it, one could say that persuasion entails inducing one by words to believe or causing self-persuasion to do something. Persuasive preaching remains faithful to what the Gospel aims to communicate to listeners, so the appeal of a literary form with its characteristics should be preached. Based on the research offered in this book, preaching according to the meaning of a passage's literary form is focused, among other aspects, on eliciting attitude change in listeners' lives.⁶ The influence of logical argumentation and emotional or rhetorical appeal surface as ways to change attitudes in listeners' lives. However, we should acknowledge that persuasive preaching could inevitably lead to resistance from listeners. The Gospel of Matthew denotes Jesus later withdrawing Himself from the multitudes to present His sermons to the disciples. The Hebrews sermon is adamant that listeners in the today of their lives should mix the hearing of the sermon with faith to become obedient to God's will for their lives. This book repeatedly discovers the paramount place of the kingdom of Heaven, which is surrounded by a different understanding of values, attitudes, and outlook on life. The Kingdom's interest establishes a cognitive dissonance but could also reinforce listeners' attitudes. Hence, persuasive preaching could meaningfully reinforce and re-assure listeners of beliefs, attitudes and Kingdom values.⁷

⁴ See Lee Eclov's (2020:2) intriguing arguments in favour of the persuasive essence of preaching.

⁵ John Calvin, "The Necessity of Reforming the Church," *Selected Works of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 128. This was written in 1544, after he had been in Strasbourg for a few years (1538-1541) and had returned to Geneva (1541).

⁶ Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), p.33.

⁷ Steven Beebe, and Susan Beebe, *Public Speaking: An Audience-Centered Approach. 2nd ed* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994), p.41.

This book aims to contribute to a homiletical praxeology, enabling preachers and academics to realise that the text and its literary form should substantiate arguments made in a sermon. The book further reminds us that the sermon's form should convey the passage's rhetorical and emotional appeal so as not to fall into the trap of oversimplifying or making life more complex than it is. My plea with this book is that homiletical praxeology and theological training should embrace the opportunity to not one-sidedly help preachers learn how to preach and neglect what to preach according to the literary forms of the Gospel. After all, the Gospel reveals the work of a dynamic Spirit through a dynamic Word that persuades listeners. It then only makes sense to admit that a homiletical praxeology should take each passage's literary form and rhetorical appeal seriously.

Ferdinand Kruger
Potchefstroom
2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing a book on the persuasiveness of the Gospel's literary forms, one quickly realises that multiple dimensions should be addressed. In my research, I was privileged to immerse myself in the insightful literature written by scholars in this field. I was once again astonished by the multi-dimensional contours of homiletics. I want to make the following acknowledgements:

- I am deeply grateful to the Lord for guiding me and enabling me to grow in my insight while writing this book. His presence was felt in the fantastic literature of homiletics and the preaching awareness I encountered daily. It enabled me to look anew at my teaching responsibilities and help scholars and students become aware of the treasury encapsulated in literary forms,
- All my colleagues in this field for encouragement and for reviewing my research over the years.
- Thank you to the reviewers of this book for the time you allocated to reading it.
- Lee-Anne Roux for undertaking the language editing of this book. Thank you for enabling me to express myself and for your valuable comments. She has walked the extra mile in the editing process.
- Celia Kruger is responsible for formatting the manuscript.

RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION

This book is meant for academics in theology and liturgics reflecting on liturgy that should enable its participants to explore the meaningfulness of a homiletical praxeology. The author aims to stimulate an ongoing discourse within theological research of scholars interested in the dynamic divulgements that preaching of the literary forms of the five preaching blocks, according to Matthew' should promote. The emphasis on a praxeology that deals with attitudes, attitude change and the rhetorical appeal is emerging. This book roots theological research and reflection in the real life of people looking for the meaningfulness of preaching in the performative worship event.

Based on the previously mentioned concepts, divulgements in active listening to the rhetorical appeal of a text should lead to a practice of rehearsing attitudes.

The rehearsing of attitudes could be seen as a building block in enhancing everyday liturgy. Consequently, a homiletical praxeology should deal with the uniqueness of literary forms and the literary devices. This book intends to offer interdisciplinary perspectives with an eye on how other disciplines could enrich the discipline of homiletics.

The publisher certifies that this book was evaluated according to a review process. An initial election process by the editorial board has reviewed the proposed research to determine whether it could be published.

An in-depth peer review process was adhered to where a specialist had participated in the peer review process. The reviewers' comments were integrated, revised by the authors, and eventually verified by the editor. We can certify that the recommendations made and responded to by the author have improved the quality of this manuscript.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Conceptualization

Persuasive preaching according to the literary forms of the Gospel of Matthew and the Hebrews sermon

1.1. Introduction: Understanding the performative essence of preaching

“I can forgive a man a lousy sermon, and I can forgive the preacher almost anything if he gives me a sense of God and something for my soul. If he gives me the sense that though he is inadequate in himself, he is handling something great and glorious... If he does that, I am his debtor and profoundly grateful to him.”⁸

Understanding the persuasiveness or compelling essence of preaching is central to this book’s approach. What sets this book apart is its homiletical perspective, which explores this matter through the lens of the functioning of literary forms in the gospel. This approach challenges the notion of a single sermon form, as numerous literary forms presuppose various sermon forms.⁹ Preaching, or sermonic discourse, is not merely the recitation of lifeless words but a living speech intended to move the mind, evoke thoughts and feelings, and inspire listeners. We aim to explore this dynamic preaching nature within the literary form framework.

God equips listeners in two ways: first, by allowing us to hear His voice through human words, and second, by internally moving us through His Spirit.¹⁰ Preaching thus names God and illuminates the reality of a living

⁸ See J. Robinson, *The Lesser-Known Lloyd Jones* (Kentucky: Gospel Coalition Press, 2015), 2.

⁹ F.B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1985), 172. The author elaborates on the interplay between literary and sermon forms that should be aligned.

¹⁰ O.C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2014), 211-213.

God, encouraging people to see life anew.¹¹ Based on the sermon, which is connected to a gospel passage and its interpretation, listeners are not passive recipients but active participants, engaging in making the message their own. A sermon, therefore, not only involves the exposition of a passage but also sheds light on current realities for the listeners.¹²

Drawing from one's faith experience and the gospel's focus on imparting meaning, listeners can feel the sacred touch.¹³ Consequently, their faith and everyday experiences—highly significant and deeply valued—become an integral part of the performative event of preaching. The notion of performance accentuates the vigorous interplay between divine and human involvement in preaching, resulting in profound discoveries through one's participation in active listening.¹⁴

Brug¹⁵ highlights the intricate interplay between a preacher's responsibility and identity, drawing attention to Luther's emphasis on preaching. For Luther, preaching the gospel is not solely about the preacher's duties but fundamentally about who they are. Preaching involves revealing the profound aspects of the living God's voice. Pietsch,¹⁶ addressing this, uses the term “*Unding*” to describe an unreached gospel, a term denoting a deep and significant concept. This “*Unding*” represents the vital and essential elements of the gospel that remain unexpressed or unexplored. Luther believed that when preachers are true to their identity and faithfully convey

¹¹ Gerrit Immink, *Over God Gesproken. Preken in Theorie en Praktijk* (Utrecht: Boekencentrum, 2018), 4-5, denotes that preaching is a dynamic speech directed at all dimensions of human life. Preaching as a performative event is aimed at helping listeners to see life in a different light.

¹² J. Mark Beach, “The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching”, *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, 10 (1999): 84.

¹³ G. Immink, *The Touch of the Sacred* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014), 186, discusses the essence of worship and preaching as contributing to people's experiencing a touch of the sacred.

¹⁴ G.B. Wilson, *Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 37.

¹⁵ J.F. Brug, “Luther's Doctrine of the Word: The Incarnate Word in the Written Word, *Logia*, 22 No. 1 (2013): 4, touches on the responsibility of preachers to realize their identity in voicing the living voice.

¹⁶ See S. Pietsch, “Luther's ‘Rhetoric of the Heart’ for Lutheran Preaching,” *Lutheran Forum*, 47 No. 3 (2013): 36-41, on how essential it is that preachers preach the meaning of a text. Hence, it is about not preaching about the gospel but the gospel itself.

the gospel, it is as though God Himself speaks. Through the liturgy, God audibly addresses listeners who engage with it.¹⁷

For Luther, it was clear that the test of preaching lies in whether it is grounded in the gospel and whether God Himself has called for an attitude change in the listeners. Naturally, the importance of context emerges, though perhaps framed slightly differently; our primary focus is on the interplay between text and context. It boils down to the determination of literary context in the persuasiveness of preaching. The mutual interplay between understanding the Gospel's essential literary purpose and recognizing listeners within the concreteness of their context is critical.

Kolb¹⁸ echoes Luther's view that the sermon not only conveys a religious truth but aims to enable listeners to comprehend the text actively. The preacher's task is to discern the central or dominant message within the gospel passage and convey it with clarity. The gospel text should ultimately guide the sermon's progression, encouraging active audience engagement. This emphasis on the listeners' active role in understanding the gospel enhances their sense of involvement and underscores their importance in the passage's exposition. However, the key element here is not primarily the rhetorical skills of the preacher; rather, I advocate for the rhetorical power or persuasiveness inherent in the gospel's literary forms.

1.1.1. Persuasion and the literary forms of the gospel

*"The literary form or genre of the Biblical text aids in communicating the passage's message."*¹⁹

As mentioned above, Smith highlights two crucial aspects of the communicative dimension of preaching. First, it is not enough for listeners to passively absorb the intellectual nuances of a text; their active, participatory listening is essential. Their role in understanding the sermon's message is not only beneficial but pivotal, underscoring the value of their active engagement in the process. Second, preachers should guide listeners to realize that sermons are intended to deepen their understanding of the literary purpose of the biblical passage. This understanding stems from

¹⁷ F.W. Meuser, *Luther the Preacher* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1983), 30, elaborates on preaching's immediate liturgical context concerning Luther's insights.

¹⁸ Robert Kolb, "Called to Milk Cows and Govern Kingdoms Martin Luther's Teaching on the Christian's Vocations", *Concordia*, 2 No. 1 (2013): 133-147.

¹⁹ S.S. Smith, *Why Genre Matters in Preaching* (New York: Fortress Press, 2016), 2.

recognizing that meaning is uniquely conveyed through the way God initially communicated with people in the gospel. Thus, the tone of the biblical text should be both understood and felt by the listeners, allowing it to become the tone of the sermon.²⁰

On this note, Thomas Long²¹ suggests that the sermon's movement should naturally and organically follow the movement of the text. Greidanus's²² insight that each literary form contains rhetorical dynamics designed to produce a distinct effect on listeners' minds also becomes particularly relevant. However, a tension emerges within the field of homiletics training for ministers, beginning at the very genesis of this praxis. In theological training, there is often an excessive emphasis on *how* to preach, which can overshadow the equally crucial task of teaching *what* to preach.²³ This imbalance is not merely a concern but a pressing issue. Preachers are rarely exposed to rigorous testing of the literary forms, which is essential for understanding the rhetorical effects inherent in each genre.

This tension is a source of unease for the author, and this book aims to address it by exploring the persuasiveness of preaching and emphasizing the importance of considering the literary forms of the gospel.

Ward's emphasis on preaching as a communicative act underscores its nature as a performative experience rather than mere sermon delivery.²⁴

²⁰ H. Tomesch, *Genre and Outline: The Key to the Literary Structure of Hebrews* (New York: Concordia Press, 1996), 22, elaborates on the feeling of the text that should guide the mood of the sermon.

²¹ Thomas Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (New York: Fortress, 1989), posits that this process should be seen as organic, and that careful exposition of the passage should determine the outcome.

²² See the extensive work on literary forms and their characteristics by Sydney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and Ancient Texts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1989), 4-6.

²³ B. Chapell, *Christ-Centred Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (2nd ed.) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 50-51, provides interesting thoughts on preaching 'the what' but supplemented by 'the how.' It is about preaching that should become concrete.

²⁴ R.F. Ward, "Preaching as a Communicative Act: The Birth of a Performance", *Reformed Liturgy, and Music*, 30 No. 2, (1996): 1-12. In addition to Ward's insights, A. Meskin, "Scrutinizing the Art of Theatre", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 43 No. 3 (2009): 55, touches on audiences attending to actors' expressive and non-expressive actions to observe stories, images, and symbolic acts from everyday life. The concept of performance goes further, as M. Josuttis, "Der Prediger in der

Ward reminds us that preaching, as an integral part of the liturgy, is embedded within the framework of an encounter with the living God. Preachers, therefore, lead their listeners into an experience with the gospel through this performative act. However, any exploration of the performative essence of preaching should remain conscious of the pneumatological dynamics underlying our understanding. Bohren²⁵ contributes significantly here, emphasizing the concept of “*Wirkungslosigkeit*,” or ineffectiveness, if the illumination of the Holy Spirit is not recognized. From this, Bohren introduces the idea of “*theonome Reziprozität*,” highlighting the dynamic interplay between the Spirit’s work and human responsibility.

The work of the Holy Spirit, which encompasses the performative event of preaching, does not negate the human responsibility of preachers to listen to the gospel’s voice, nor does it lessen the listeners’ responsibility of active participation in the listening process. In this vein, Tyagi²⁶ elucidates the intricacies of preaching intertwined with attitudes, closely connected with active listening, and unfolding in five stages: hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding. Between the initial hearing and the ultimate response, understanding (cognition) and remembrance harmonize the performative act of active listening. Thomas Long²⁷ further reminds us that preachers are mindful of listeners who engage meaningfully, exercising their imagination to interpret the text. Still, listeners also exercise

Predigt. Sündiger Mensch oder mündiger Zeuge?” In *Praxis des Evangeliums zwischen Politik und Religion. Grundprobleme der Praktischen Theologie* (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1996), 90, suggests, emphasizing a dual process at work in the performative act of preaching within the liturgy. This involves listeners as active participants, engaging them in a dynamic experience. However, this engagement is only meaningful when it acknowledges the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. Liturgical acts play a crucial role in re-presenting and re-enacting the Christ event, indicating that performative preaching is purpose-driven, with a specific outcome or effect in mind.

²⁵ Rudolf Bohren, *Predigtlehre* (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1993), 33.

²⁶ Babita Tyagi, “Listening: An Important Skill and Its Various Aspects”, *The Criterion*, 1 No. 2 (2013): 12, touches on the interplay between numerous phases in the active listening process that can become skewed.

²⁷ Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster Press, 2005), 39-40, connects imagination to the listening process. Within Tyagi’s interpretation, it dovetails with remembrance.

their creativity by actively listening to sermons. However, the literary form²⁸ of the text provides imaginary potential.

Hence, Karl Barth's²⁹ emphasis on preaching that should responsibly explain the Scriptures, and the importance of expounding the meaning of a passage, aligns well with the current research interest in persuasive preaching. This reflects Barth's argument for the essential need for biblical preaching in a world subject to shifting tides of thought. However, while Buttrick³⁰ agrees on the importance of biblical preaching, he cautions against merely reciting lectionary texts without making them resonate with everyday life. Piper³¹ emphasizes the necessity of proclaiming the supremacy of the living God, but he insists this must be central to the realities of people's lives.

Building on these views, Jonathan Edwards argues that preaching should stir up holy affections, enabled by the Spirit's illumination of a gospel passage. Consequently, preaching should not only draw from Scripture but be entirely saturated with it. Each sermon should embody a biblical passage, functioning like beams radiating from the sun's light.³² Preaching, therefore, should lead to transformation in listeners' lives, as Johnson³³

²⁸ Immink, *The Touch*, 189-190, provides an insightful explanation of the passage from the gospel as a liturgical script in the performative event. Listeners always engage with Scripture based on their own understanding, bringing responses such as curiosity, expectations, or even tensions with their lived reality. They seek to connect what they hear with their lives, which W. Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, Westminster: John Knox Press, 2003), 160-161, describes as a testimony of faith focused on discerning the Shepherd's voice. In this process, the preacher serves as a scribe, guiding listeners to re-textualize and uncover the depth and richness of the gospel.

²⁹ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York: Harper, 1957), 51, reiterates the need for biblical preaching, meaning preachers must take the text seriously.

³⁰ David Buttrick, "Preaching Today: The Loss of a Public Voice." In *The Folly of Preaching*, ed. M.P. Knowles (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 3-14.

³¹ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching – Make God Supreme: The Preaching of Edwards* (Minneapolis: Bethlehem College, 2006), 90, connects explication of the gospel to reality in life with the emphasis on God's supremacy.

³² Ibid, 93.

³³ D.E. Johnson, "Hebrews." In *ESV Expository Commentary*, ed. I.M. Duguid, J.M. Hamilton Jr and J. Sklar (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 65.

asserts. To foster meaningful change, Thomas Long's³⁴ approach comes to mind: discerning the literary dynamics encapsulated in a biblical text.

A literary approach³⁵ to preaching involves not only the text itself but also the listeners' responses and their ability to recreate the experience it evokes. The literary form in which a Scripture passage is presented is far from a meaningless shell for contemporary listeners; it is a vital tool that enables preachers to grasp how a biblical text conveys its message. As Ryken reminds us, the literary form is inseparable from the meaning it conveys. Understanding a passage's literary form allows everyone engaged in the performative act of preaching to consider both the what and the how of its meaning. This emphasis on the role of literary forms in conveying the sense of a biblical text is essential, as it enriches and informs listeners, revealing the depth and richness of the Scriptures.

We have explored what and how a literary form of a text conveys meaning—whether by persuading, informing, demanding, or inviting.³⁶ Preaching, by its very nature, can thus be described as persuasive communication. Put differently, the compelling essence of preaching aims to move or touch listeners, aligning them with the Gospel's purpose. The Greek word **πειθω** touches on the purpose of preaching: to persuade, convince, or inspire belief. It can also imply gaining a listener's goodwill.³⁷ Bromiley³⁸ rightly notes the negative connotation associated with persuasion, which can suggest seduction. However, in the New Testament, **πειθω**, in the context of preaching, conveys a profound meaning: *to be convinced, to follow, to obey, and ultimately, to believe*. Persuasive preaching, therefore, seeks to reorient human life, inviting listeners to experience the

³⁴ Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms*, 34, discusses the dynamic interplay provided by literary forms.

³⁵ The focus on biblical interpretation shifted from what the text can teach us about the past to including what the text can teach us about the text (and ourselves). See D. Douglas and D. Estes, *Literary Approaches to the Bible* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 1-2. Increasingly, scholars began to view and read the Bible as a religious or historical document and literary text. Bible scholars speak broadly of this shift as being from a *historical-critical method* of biblical interpretation toward a *literary-critical method* of biblical interpretation.

³⁶ G.D. Fee and D. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth* (4th ed.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 51.

³⁷ E. Smith and J. Smith, *Peitho: Faith that is Pleasing to God* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2017), 2-3.

³⁸ G.W. Bromiley, *Peithoo, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985), 819).

meaningfulness of thinking and confidently embracing the sermon's message.

In 1983, Graham Shaw published *The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament*, a book that explored the dynamics of oppressive authority from a historical perspective. The book refers to Paul's manipulation strategy, threats, and even eschatological arguments to persuade or seduce his listeners to take his authority seriously.³⁹ Shaw presents Paul as an example of someone who manipulates people for his own benefit, often at the cost of restricting their autonomy. Paul reinforces his listeners' sense of guilt and fear of death to instill shame, sometimes with an eye on financial gain.⁴⁰ Above all, Shaw contends that Paul employs flattery and intimidation to compensate for his waning authority among his congregations. Shaw⁴¹ further notes that Paul, as a manipulator, is not hesitant to use military imagery, exposing an aggressive and emotional tone in his communications.

The author of this book could readily critique Shaw's perspective, yet offers only one essential observation: this book's approach underscores why the persuasiveness of preaching, shaped by the meaning within literary forms, is essential. While it refrains from extensively evaluating Shaw's critical study, it draws a valuable lesson on the ease with which persuasion can be misinterpreted. Preaching, therefore, extends beyond mere manipulation or information delivery; it seeks to captivate listeners, directing their attention to the gospel's meaning.⁴² One could argue that the ultimate goal of preaching is grounded in the preacher's sincere desire to inspire change, leading listeners to affirmatively say "amen" to the sermon's message.⁴³

³⁹ G. Shaw, *The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 107-120. Shaw argues that the Synoptic Gospels are preoccupied with the rhetoric of describing Jesus's death at the cost of the resurrection. Shaw is mistaken in comparing the Gospels with Pauline literature. Matthew, for example, engages in a purposeful process of persuasion that Jesus is the King of the Kingdom. Shaw argues that it is a destructive process of manipulation.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 107.

⁴¹ Ibid, 205.

⁴² Larry Overstreet, *Biographical Preaching: Bringing Bible Characters to Life* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 27.

⁴³ M. Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 18-19.

Recognizing the communicative essence of preaching naturally brings rhetoric—the art of persuasion—into focus. On this footprint, Wendland⁴⁴ reiterates that persuasive preaching could have a threefold aim: response-shaping, response-reinforcing, and or response-changing in listeners' lives. If this threefold aim serves as our starting point, then persuasive communication, grounded in the literary form of a passage, ultimately seeks to influence how biblical discourse affects listeners' behavior.

Perloff⁴⁵ underscores that persuasive preaching is a symbolic process in which listeners' attitudes are transformed through sermons delivered in an atmosphere free from coercion, aligning with the earlier concept of *theonomy reciprocity*. As Herrick⁴⁶ notes, listeners naturally engage in an internal rhetoric, constantly debating with themselves. Robinson⁴⁷ adds that the mood of a biblical passage's literary form should shape the mood of the sermon. Some passages brim with hope, some warn, others inspire joy, some blaze with anger at injustice, and some resound with triumph; it is the preacher's task to help listeners see and feel these emotions. The emotional appeal of the biblical text should thus be mirrored in the sermon. A choice was made to engage with this discourse but with the elucidation of the preaching blocks in Matthew's Gospel and the Hebrews' sermon.

1.1.2. Persuasion is viewed from the literary forms of the five preaching blocks of Matthew's Gospel and the Hebrews' sermon

Earlier, we discussed the challenging nature of persuasion, particularly as an integral aspect of the performative event of preaching. Bitzer⁴⁸ argues that every rhetorical situation aimed at persuasion involves three elements: an exigence or urgency, an audience that can be persuaded, and constraints

⁴⁴ E.R. Wendland, "A Comparative Study of Rhetorical Criticism, Ancient and Modern with Particular Reference to the Larger Structure and Function of Passages", *Neotestamentica*, 28, No. 1 (1999): 193-203, on preaching as response-shaping, response-reinforcing, and or response-changing.

⁴⁵ R.M. Perloff, *The Dynamics of Persuasion. Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 8-10.

⁴⁶ J.A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction* (4th ed) (Boston: Pearson, 2009), 8.

⁴⁷ Robinson, *The Lesser-Known*, 41.

⁴⁸ L.F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation." In *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Carl R. Burgchardt (Washington, PA: Strata Publishing, 2010), 29-30, on effective communication aimed at persuasion. Preaching as a communicative act should also be focused on persuasion.

shaped by that exigence. In Bitzer's argument, preachers constantly seek approaches that enhance effective communication and clarify their sermons' purpose. He concludes that a preacher's rhetorical approach is ultimately shaped by the specific context or situation in the listeners' lives that the sermon addresses.

In contrast, Keller⁴⁹ advocates for preaching that unfolds the gospel to listeners rather than merely presenting a one-sided rhetoric encapsulating the preacher's thoughts. Keller's guiding question is this: *How could faith be communicated via preaching in an age of skepticism?* In his book, he argues that both the listeners' context and the preacher's rhetorical style should work toward reframing contemporary cultural questions and addressing the concerns of a skeptical age, all while redirecting its hopes.

O'Keefe⁵⁰ enables us to navigate the seeming contradiction between Bitzer and Keller's arguments, touching on preaching that deals with attitude change saturated by realities in the here and now of listeners' lives while also offering the gospel's reasoning for why lives should be transformed. Effective persuasion, then, can only occur if listeners experience the persuasive essence of the rhetorical and literary purpose of the gospel passage, which in turn should shape the form and mood of the sermon.

Hence, preaching that creates new perspectives for listeners begins with the eyes of faith, attuned to the majesty of God as He reveals Himself through the gospel. However, one of the primary reasons why preaching can feel sterile, mechanical, and lifeless to listeners is due to a homiletic praxis where the sermon is mechanically cast into the same unimaginative mold—one that is foreign to the dynamic way the biblical text was originally shaped. In this approach, the preacher develops a generic form of preaching, relying on a few standard formulas that hold significance for the preacher, but not necessarily for the text itself. These formulas are often delivered in two to three points, with only a passing reference to the actual passage being preached. Allen⁵¹ compares the form of a biblical text to the structure of a building:

The form of the biblical text and the form of preaching from that text is much like that of a building. Some texts are lofty spires, others are geodesic

⁴⁹ D. Keller, *If the Medium is the Message, how is the Preacher the Sermon?* (Chicago: Evangelical Homiletical Society, 2002), 34.

⁵⁰ D.J. O'Keefe, *Persuasion: Theory & Research* (2nd ed.) (New York: Sage, 2002), 11-12.

⁵¹ L.L. Allen, *The Preacher's Catechism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 29-30.