

A Pragma-Rhetorical Study of Christian Religious Pentecostal Sermons in Nigeria

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Abstract : Effectiveness in communication requires the deployment of pragmatic and rhetorical strategies in religious sermons. In spite of high volume of works in religious discourse, scholars have not adequately accounted for the persuasive and argumentation strategies employed in Christian religious Pentecostal sermons. This study examines communicative intentions and the pragma-rhetorical strategies deployed to maintain balance and effectiveness in selected sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye, Bishop D. Oyedepo and Pastor W. F. Kumuyi. Fifteen sermons, delivered orally and transcribed into the written mode, were selected and analysed using Jacob Mey's theory of pragmeme, Aristotle's rhetoric and the theory of argumentation by van Eemeren and Grootendorst. Speakers practise stating, encouraging, assuring, warning, condemning, directing, praising, thanking, etc. through rhetorical question, repetition, direct address, direct command and structural parallelism. They assume divine role by speaking authoritatively and they tactically and logically select words to legitimise their ideology. They also categorise and portray individuals and/or issues either as good or bad, sinner/sin or righteous/righteousness, etc. The study provides clearer insight into the pragmatic import and the communicative effectiveness of Christian Pentecostal sermons. Further research can juxtapose the pragma-rhetorical and argumentation strategies of preachers of two clearly differentiated movements within the Christian religion.

Keywords : argumentation, communicative intentions, pentecostal sermons, pragmeme, rhetoric

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