

When Men of God Go Wild: A Study of Flaming in Sermonic Discourse on a Ghanaian Radio Network

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Abstract

Studies in sermonic discourse have increasingly shown that preachers are alive to face and politeness dynamics of communication as they seek to be persuasive to their audiences, thereby promoting an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consequently peace in the Christian community. In this paper, however, we shift attention from persuasive strategies used in sermonic discourse in order to examine proclivities of verbal abuse by a prophet of God in self defence of an alleged accusation leveled against him by a supposedly rival clergyman on a live radio dawn broadcast in Ghana. Based on Becker's (1978) mosaic model of communication, the analysis showed three key findings. First, the prophet used a high voltage of invectives, threats and profanity to express his disgust at the conduct of the other rival clergyman. Secondly, the verbal aggression in the interaction was accentuated by the associate pastors who used a number of interruptions that were indicative of their total support of the prophet in his use of "dirty" language. Finally, the utterances culminated in a challenge to a physical brawl to win the fight for supremacy over each camp. The study bears implications for future research into impoliteness, conflict resolution in the Church and training of men and women of God.

Keywords: *Flaming, sermonic discourse, mosaic model of communication, motif*