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The Theory of Sermon Rhetoric in Puritan New England: Its Origins and Expression

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THE THEORY OF SERMON RHETORIC
IN PURITAN NEW ENGLAND:
ITS ORIGINS AND EXPRESSION

by
Charles Van Hof

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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VITA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 426 A.D., St. Augustine was struggling with the problem of whether it was allowable to use secular, pagan rhetorical arts in framing a Christian sermon. He finally concluded in De Doctrina Christiana that it was "no sin to enrich the people of the Hebrews with the spoils of the Egyptians." The people of God, said Augustine, are obliged to use whatever rhetorical skills are at their disposal in preaching the word of God. But the problem of the relationship between preaching and the arts of rhetoric was far from resolved in the fifth century--it has been a matter of concern in century upon century, and was a particularly pressing issue for the New England Puritans of the seventeenth century.

Along the way, two images stand in sharp contrast as emblems of the relationship between rhetoric and preaching. On the one hand there is a thirteenth-century sketch of a tree, used to illustrate a number of ars praedicandi, art-of-preaching, manuals.¹ It is called

¹Depicted in Thomas M. Charland, Artes praedicandi; contribution a l'histoire de la rhetorique au
the Arbor de Arte Sive Modo Praedicandi, the tree of the art or method of preaching. The tree consists of a thick, apparently strongly-rooted trunk with two large lower limbs and three upper limbs. The upper limbs each divide into three branches again, and from these nine curled branches grow a profusion of leaves and fruit. It is a highly stylized tree, but conveys a powerful impression of richness, abundance and completeness.

The other image is a verbal rather than a visual one. It comes from an English Puritan manifesto of the sixteenth century, the Second Admonition to Parliament. ² The author of the pamphlet has been urging the civil government to correct the deplorable abuses which attend the preaching of the word in the Church of England. In many parishes of the realm, the word is not preached at all. Where it is, preaching consists of either reading an official homily, or tricking out a shallow explication of an assigned Scripture lesson with an elaborate variety of rhetorical devices. The author states his solution with stark and eloquent simplicity: "There is none other helpe

I canne tell you, but plaine preaching which is God his plaine order."

What have these two images to do with one another? Is their relationship anything other than one of a study in stark contrasts between diametrical opposites? And what is the connection between either image, or both of them, and the plain style of the New England Puritans? It is easy to see how the sixteenth-century English Puritan statement relates to an American colonial rhetoric of preaching. But what about the medieval tree of preaching? What is the history of Augustine's spoils of the Egyptians that led to the theory of preaching rhetoric that was shared by the first generation of Puritan divines in the Massachusetts Bay Colony?

This dissertation is a study of those and related questions. The importance of sermons in American colonial literature has long been recognized. There was a tendency in earlier literary histories of the period to condescend to the Puritans. It would be noted that much of their "literature" was theological in nature. It would be further observed that while this was to be expected in a theocratic commonwealth, sermons and tracts were unfortunately not the stuff that literary studies explored, and the authors hastened on to the histories, journals, diaries and whatever poetry was known at the time, as the
true "literature" of the colonies. Any contemporary anthology of early American literature reflects the same bias. Sermons and other theological literature, while comprising the bulk of what the Puritans wrote, are given short shrift as editors try to snare whatever interest students may have in the Puritans with Bradstreet, Taylor, and ever-bawdier excerpts from Byrd and Sewall. Small wonder that most college sophomores, firm in the assurance that "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" was preached sometime between Plymouth Rock and the Revolutionary War, consider themselves reasonably knowledgeable experts on 150 years of Puritan sermon rhetoric.

Scholarly interest in New England Puritan sermons has come of age, however, with a volume and a sophistication that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago. This is partly the result of the pioneering interest of a few dedicated men and women, partly the result of a generally burgeoning interest in early American literature, and partly the acknowledgement that, by its sheer bulk, Puritan sermon literature demanded more attention. Whatever the reasons, colonial sermon literature is now recognized as not only a legitimate but as a vital component of a critical understanding of both colonial Puritan literature and subsequent American literary history. Accordingly there have been numerous studies made of Puritan
sermon style, both of the plain style in general and of individual preachers, including both sides of the Atlantic. There have been studies made of the origins of the plain style, of variations within it, and of its subsequent impact. There have been studies made of the rhetoric of the plain style as well, and some which examine some of the origins of its rhetorical theory.

There has never, however, been a detailed study made of the pronouncements made by that first generation of colonial Puritan preachers outlining the theoretical underpinnings of their rhetoric of preaching. Even more importantly, there has been a significant scholarly gap left in tracing the origins of that theory of sermon rhetoric. Several studies have observed the obvious ancestry of the English Puritan plain style, although a detailed and systematic analysis of the theory of English Puritan sermon rhetoric has not been provided as a point of comparison for specific similarities and shifts in the colonial theory. Some studies have examined the reformational roots of the plain style, although, once again, specific points of comparison between the New England preachers and the reformers have been scattered. And no significant study has been made which recognizes the theory of sermon rhetoric in New England as being a stage in the history of the rhetorical theory of preaching.
reaching back through the middle ages at least as far as Augustine. There have, in fact, been no studies which adequately account for the rhetorical theory that underlies the sermon literature which has become the focus of so much scholarly interest. This dissertation is an attempt to fill that gap.

In one sense, this dissertation is not so much a study of sources and influences as it is a genre study. The genre which is its focus is the body of literature which serves as instructional manuals and guides to the art of preaching—the ars praedicandi (in the generic sense, not referring only to the medieval preaching manuals by the same name). As a genre study, this dissertation is by no means exhaustive. It has selected only those preaching guides which contribute to the development of the colonial Puritan theory of sermon rhetoric. And as a genre study, it does not intend to establish direct lines of influence from one period to another. Rather, it examines the genre in different periods, and observes both similarities and contrasts between a given period and preceding or succeeding times. Thus it does not claim, for example, that the ars praedicandi tractates of the middle ages were a direct source for the preaching manuals of the English Puritans. It does, however, observe the relationship between Augustine and the medieval ars prae-
dicandi tradition, and the relationship at certain points between Augustine and the New England Puritans. It also analyzes the development that brought the ars praedicandi rhetoric into the Reformation period, and the relationship between the rhetoric of the reformers and that of the English Puritans, who were, in turn, the immediate source of colonial preaching rhetoric. It will be helpful, then, to think of the dissertation as a study of a particular literary genre, and not as an outline of immediate sources.

While there is a distinct genre of practical and theoretical manuals of preaching rhetoric, the dissertation is not limited to such materials. It examines as well a number of preachers who contributed greatly to the theory of sermon rhetoric without ever writing a preacher's manual which could be included in the genre. Indeed, the three New England preachers whose rhetoric of preaching is the focus of the study have left only scattered references to a theoretical rhetoric of preaching throughout their sermons and treatises. While it is useful to think of the dissertation as examining something like a genre of theoretical preacher's manuals, it must be recognized that it analyzes the theory of sermon rhetoric in sources that are not a part of any such actual body of literature. These sources are no less essential or valid for tracing the origins and expression of a particular theory of
sermon rhetoric; they are artes praedicandi, even though
they must be distinguished from tracts and treatises
which are solely guides to the art of preaching.

The historical scope of the dissertation, then, is
one of its unique features. The first chapter observes in
St. Augustine, who was the first writer to offer any de-
tailed observations on the nature of the rhetoric of
preaching, a number of themes which recur again and again
throughout the history of the theory of sermon rhetoric.
Augustine argues for the fundamental importance of the
preaching of the word. If there is one notion that per-
vades the thought of every subject in the dissertation, it
is this one. The importance of the word preached is, in
fact, increasingly emphasized by the preachers and writers
who appear in each succeeding period until the Reformation.
The absolute necessity of the preaching of the word as a
means of salvation was undiminished by the time of Cotton,
Hooker and Shepard. Augustine also links the preaching of
the word to the pastoral role of the minister; it is this
pastoral quality which characterizes the preaching rhetoric
of Hooker and Shepard, and distinguishes them from their
more immediate predecessors--while demonstrating their con-
nection with Augustine, twelve centuries earlier.

Augustine also played a significant role in connec-
tion with the theory of exegesis, a subject which must
always go hand in glove with the rhetoric of preaching. The means of exegesis to a large part determines the rhetorical style of the sermon. Augustine's endorsement of Alexandrian allegorical exegesis as opposed to Antiochene typological exegesis, along with his cautious acceptance of the "spoils of the Egyptians," set a course that was to lead to the medieval *ars praedicandi* method of amplifying a text—a method that the reformers and Puritans were to oppose strenuously.

Certain other recurring features of the theory of sermon rhetoric are examined in chapter one. There is, for example, the constant emphasis on invention in Augustine, Gregory the Great, Guibert de Nogent, and particularly in the authors of the *ars praedicandi* tractates. The process of invention is always a dominant focus of the rhetorical theory of preaching—indeed, it dominated the preaching rhetoric of the reformers and the English and American Puritans. Their rhetoric of preaching continually subordinates the *quo modo* to the *quid*, the manner to the content. The history of this emphasis on invention as a dominant characteristic of sermon rhetoric is established here for the first time.

In its examination of the *ars praedicandi* tradition and its development, the first chapter also makes possible other observations that have not previously been noted.
The insistence of the medieval artes praedicandi on the use of a single Scriptural text as the basis for a sermon sounds a note that the reformers and the Puritans afterwards were to insist on in their preaching. Here it can be seen that the doctrine of sola scriptura as an element of preaching rhetoric did not originate with the reformation, as has often been assumed, but was articulated already by Alain de Lille and the ars praedicandi authors.

Even more striking and significant is the observation, again made here for the first time, that, despite their vast differences, there was a fundamental similarity between the sermon prescribed by the ars praedicandi tractates and the plain style. Both rhetorics of preaching prescribed a highly structured format within which, however, there was a great deal of flexibility for the performance of the individual preacher. Both rhetorics required, moreover, that the style grow out of the rhetorical theory which underlay the structure. The result, in both the ars praedicandi sermon and the plain style sermon, was an organic unity of form and function. There was no distinction in either sermon between theology and rhetoric, or between rhetorical theory and rhetorical practice. Both the ars praedicandi sermon and the plain style sermon describe the means of production and the ultimate end of the sermon as part of the same process—the theology of
the word directs the substance, structure and style of the sermon. Sermon rhetoric is not an isolated science, but part of an organic process of an approach to the word, a means of opening it, and the fruit that the opening bears.

The second chapter examines the theory of the rhetoric of preaching of Wyclif, Luther and Calvin. None of these preachers left behind anything like the preacher's manuals of the ars praedicandi tradition, but the rhetoric of preaching played a key role in the careers of each. The method of this chapter provides us with an opportunity that is unique in two ways—in the first place, it gathers together a selection of the scattered but crucial references Wyclif, Luther and Calvin made regarding their theology of the word, concept of the office of the ministry, methods of exegesis, and theory of the rhetorical structure of the sermon, as well as their practical observations on all such matters. Having assembled this material, it is possible to engage in a comparative study which could not easily be achieved before. It is curious that in the case of Calvin, for instance, there had previously been no study which examined the relationship between his theology of the word and his rhetoric of preaching. While numerous studies examined those elements independently (although even in these, his rhetoric of preaching had received short-shrift), there had been little
serious effort to see the suggestions of his polemical writing in his rhetoric of preaching. The working out of Calvin's theology of the word in his theory of preaching, and hence in the theology and rhetoric of preaching of his followers, including, in part, the English Puritans, can be illuminated here.

This study of the pre-Reformation and Reformation era has a high significance that operates in two ways. In the first place, certain continuities with the *ars praedicondi* and even earlier traditions can be noted: the continuing emphasis on invention in the rhetoric of the sermon; the fundamental importance of preaching, and a corresponding concern for the office of the ministry; the content of the sermon itself, based as it is on a scriptural foundation. But there are important contrasts with the *ars praedicondi* method as well; beginning already with Wyclif we see the themes which the reformers will drive home—that, in conjunction with the pastoral role of preaching, its rhetoric ought to strive for simplicity rather than elegance. The principles of exegesis, of course, must follow suit, and so typology as a means of exegesis is rejuvenated. The application of these principles in a rhetoric of preaching, combined with the pastoral concern for the welfare of the souls of the congregation, results in Calvin's use of a simple exegetical analysis of the
text joined with a practical application to the life of the hearer—a prototype of the Puritan plain style.

The third chapter traces the development of this strain of the rhetoric of preaching through the English Reformation, collecting out of Tyndale’s works an implied rhetoric of preaching that is remarkably like that of the continental reformers, and that anticipates the development of the English Puritan plain style in both its theology (especially its principles of exegesis) and its practical rhetorical demands. Calvin’s influence plays a significant role in the framing of English Puritan thought, and it is traced in some detail. But once again, the major accomplishment of this portion of the study is to carefully delineate, out of the writings of the major English Puritans, and focusing especially on their preaching manuals in the art-of-preaching genre, a carefully detailed outline of their theology of the ministry and of the word (Pt. III) and their rhetorical theory of structure and style (Pt. IV).

In a sense, this outline of the English Puritan theology and theory of the plain style is the crucial focus of the dissertation. The New England theory of preaching rhetoric as articulated by Cotton, Hooker and Shepard was essentially that of these English Puritans, although with certain individual distinguishing features. All three of
the colonial preachers were trained at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and began their careers in England. Cotton had preached in an English parish for twenty years before he emigrated. The definition of the plain style that emerges from these pages, gleaned from the combined theological and rhetorical, practical and theoretical writings of representative English Puritans, precisely defines the basis for the New England plain style as well. It does so with a scope, and in a context, that such a definition has not enjoyed before.

In this context, the final chapter is able to examine the characteristics of the preaching rhetoric of the first generation New England Puritans that give the New England plain style the distinctive qualities that set it apart from its English ancestry and that ultimately contribute to the rhetoric of other forms of Puritan literature. Cotton's nearness to Calvin, Perkins and Ames is contrasted with Hooker and Shepard's shift in emphasis on the crucial point of the role of preaching in the conversion process. Preaching rhetoric plays a crucial role in the Anne Hutchinson crisis, and is an integral part of the "preparationist theology" that Hooker and Shepard introduce. The structure of the plain style, as it had developed from the time of Calvin, and in conjunction with the pastoral context that had accompanied its development since Augustine,
assumes an even more critical theological and rhetorical dimension as Hooker and Shepard place more insistent emphasis than ever before on the application of the message, "the "Uses" of the plain style. And finally, the "plain and perspicuous" style of the plain style begins to assume the characteristics associated with the jeremiad as the New England preachers include as a primary feature of their rhetoric the requirement that the sermon be "powerful." It is the same "power" that energizes the rhetoric of Wigglesworth, Mather and Edwards, as well as, in a sense, that of Taylor.

It is only in the context within which Cotton, Hooker and Shepard are here considered, a context that includes all the nuances of their theology of the word (and its origins) and their theory of rhetorical structure and style (and its antecedents) that such a critique is possible. Stylistic analyses of the plain style and its practitioners are stimulating and insightful, but they usually lack an appreciation of the forces that culminated in the very style they examine. To consider only the influence of English Puritanism on the New England plain style, or even to return to Calvin is not sufficient to fully comprehend the lines of development that culminated in the preaching rhetoric of the New England Puritans. One must also consider the contributions and reverbera-
tions, either directly or by way of contrast, of Augustine, Alain de Lille, Robert of Basevorn, Wyclif, Luther, and Tyndale, among many others. An examination of the historical origins of the theory of rhetoric underlying the New England plain style is essential to reveal the assumptions and presuppositions that, both philosophically and pragmatically, determine the sermons that rhetoric produced. The value of this study lies in the fact that those historical origins are for the first time linked to one another and to the sermons of the first generation of New England preachers. This will be of significant benefit to those engaged in the increasingly discriminating study of colonial literature by enabling scholars to perceive a theological and rhetorical tradition and direction that has previously been only partly understood.
CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF SERMON RHETORIC:

AUGUSTINE UNTIL THE MEDIEVAL ARTES PRAEDICANDI

The history of the theory of preaching fills only a slim chapter in the history of ideas. Preaching has traditionally been an art more analyzed after the fact than before. As a rule, the art of preaching is judged by the performance of the ecclesiastical orator; the quality of the art depends on the sermon as preached, not on the rhetorical study underlying its composition. Charles Sears Baldwin has observed that the sermons of the most renowned preachers of preceding centuries, preachers universally admired in their day for their vitality and ability to move an audience, seem to us as we read them so often lifeless and, quite frankly, dull. In trying to understand what all the fuss was about, Baldwin notes, "Oratory is typically the energizing of a message by a speaker for a specific audience. Its style depends on all three....Therefore of all the arts oratory is the most perishable."¹ The rhetorical theory of the message

¹Charles Sears Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959;
has usually been regarded as a less necessary element of preaching than the "energizing" of the message, and the interaction of speaker and audience.

Homiletical guides have always abounded, but these do not usually do much to expand our history of the theory of preaching. Such aids have always tended much more toward the practical than the theoretical. They consist of such things as suggested topics for specific occasions or audiences; concordances of appropriate quotations, Scriptural and otherwise; tips on pulpit demeanor, the use of gestures, effective vocal modulation, etc.; collections of illustrative material; or, perhaps most to the point, collections of Great Sermons from the Past. This is not merely the modern practice among homiletical aids; such forms of instruction on how to write and preach a sermon have been the bulk of the preacher's homiletical bookshelf since the patristic age, through the middle ages, and into modern times.

Yet those few works which have expounded, questioned, or even implied a rhetorical theory of preaching loom large in importance in the history of preaching far beyond what their numbers indicate. James J. Murphy observes, with only slight exaggeration, that in the twelve reprint of 1928 edition), p. 229.
centuries following the preaching practice of Christ and Paul, only one important treatise dealing with the theoretical foundation of preaching made an appearance—St. Augustine's De doctrina christiana (426).\(^2\) Augustine's treatise had a profound impact, not only on the practice of preaching and exegesis, but on the much later development of a more highly refined theory of preaching.

Perhaps one of the reasons that preaching received so little attention in early Church documents is that it was simply not a matter of critical concern for the church.\(^3\) That is not to say that it was not recognized as fundamental; on the contrary, the practice of preaching was so accepted as a fundamental Christian activity that the theory underlying it simply never became controversial in the sense that the great doctrinal and organizational disputes of the early church were. The Christian tradition of preaching had its roots in the oral Hebraic religious tradition which consisted, in part, of regular reading from Scripture followed by an exposition of the meaning of the passage to the congregation. Christ was trained in such a tradition, and naturally used its methods in his


\(^3\) Ibid., p. 285.
three year earthly ministry. His example, combined with his mandate that his followers preach his Gospel to all the nations, was the only justification needed for the important status afforded preaching from the very inception of the church. When the corporate body of believers was instituted as the Christian church at Pentecost, Peter's preaching played a central role. The early missionary activities of the apostles, most notably Paul, centered on preaching. Paul's epistles to the early churches were intended to be read aloud to the assembled congregations, thus underlining the importance of the spoken rhetoric in the corporate worship and instruction of the church.

The unquestioned acceptance of the fundamental importance and validity of preaching was reinforced as well by the cultural climate of the Gentile world as Christianity quickly spread beyond its Judaic origins. Centuries of Greek and Roman tradition had established the art of oratory as a highly regarded and necessary discipline; Christian preaching was not unlike this familiar legal and political practice, at least to most outward appearances. Paul's speech to the philosophers at the Aeropagus on Mars' Hill in Athens indicates the facility with which he could

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adopt his message to familiar, secular oratorical patterns.

By the second century A.D., however, a debate had arisen regarding the appropriateness of employing pagan rhetorical devices to preach Christianity. It was in this single detail that the first analysis of preaching theory focused. And it was in response to this question that Augustine wrote De doctrina christiana which formulated the first set of principles underlying the common Christian practice of preaching.

As the title indicates, De doctrina is not explicitly intended to be simply a preacher's manual. It purports to explain how the Christian ought to understand and interpret that which he believes (that is, the whole of Christian doctrine), and how he might best impart that understanding to others. It is written in four books, the first three begun around 396, and the fourth completed thirty years later, in 426. De doctrina is a seminal document for several reasons. First of all, in it Augustine


offers a convincing defense of the judicious use of classical rhetorical techniques. Augustine's defense would be cited as the authority to use pagan devices for centuries to come.

He begins cautiously enough. In Book I, he draws the distinction between things as things, and things as signs that represent or point to other things or meanings. This distinction is a crucial one for what it implies regarding exegesis, as we shall see. In Book II, he goes on to note that Scripture contains many passages that are obscure or ambiguous, in order to deter the casual reader (II.6.7). Further obstacles to our complete understanding of Scripture may arise in our uncertainty regarding the origins of the canon and the problems of accurate texts and translations. He significantly observes that some of our difficulty in understanding Scripture arises from the fact that we don't understand some of the things in Scripture which are, in fact, signs. If a passage in the Bible makes an allusion to a particular Hebrew musical skill, and the reader does not understand what that skill is, he will fail to recognize the significance of the allusion. Thus it is important for the Christian to understand something about the arts, and it does not matter if his knowledge comes from secular sources: "Rather, every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find
truth, it is his Lord's." (II.18.28).

Certain human institutions of knowledge (astrology, belief in omens, idol worship) are mere superstitions, and must be avoided. There are, however, other human institutions, such as sculpture, theater and music, which may be profitably discerned: "But all this part of human institution helpful to the conduct of life is not to be shunned by the Christian; rather, as such institutions are needed, they are to be given sufficient notice and remembered." (II.25.40). All such human institutions may be perverted to evil uses, but the fault then lies in the user, not in the skills themselves, which exist as aids to understanding truth independent of the use made of them:

There are, moreover, certain precepts for a more copious discourse which make up what are called the rules of eloquence, and these are very true, even though they may be used to make falsehoods persuasive. Since they can be used in connection with true principles as well as with false, they are not themselves culpable, but the perversity of ill using them is culpable (II.36.54).

The fact that eloquence can be used to make falsehood persuasive was often cited by later authors of preacher's manuals to urge preachers to understand and be excellent in the use of eloquence, so that truth can at least vie with falsehood on equal ground. Equally convincing was Augustine's argument that a thorough understanding of the Bible required an understanding of the devices used to write it, particularly "the laws of disputation,...because
that knowledge is interwoven throughout the text of Scripture like so many nerves" (II.39). This more or less pragmatic expediency is summed up in the famous "spoils of the Egyptians" passage of II.40.60. Augustine urges the Christian not to fear what the pagans possess when it can be useful to our cause; the Christian has an obligation to seize such treasures

as from unjust possessors....Just as the Egyptians had not only idols and grave burdens which the people of Israel detested and avoided, so also they had vases and ornaments of gold and silver and clothing which the Israelites took with them secretly when they fled, as if to put them to a better use.

Thus when we follow Christ we abominate those aspects of paganism that lead to superstition, but recognize those liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and some most useful precepts concerning morals ....These are, as it were, their gold and silver, which they did not institute themselves but dug up from certain mines of divine Providence, which is everywhere infused, and perversely and injuriously abused in the worship of demons. When the Christian separates himself in spirit from their miserable society, he should take this treasure with him for the just use of teaching the Gospel.

The first three books of De doctrina christiana treat the "discovery" or "invention" aspect of preparing to teach Christian doctrine; Book IV examines the transmission of that teaching--it is a study of eloquence, and in it Augustine's defense of pagan rhetoric is most clearly shown. Augustine's debt to Cicero in Book IV of De doc-
trina has been widely noted. Indeed, at the outset of Book IV Augustine warns that he is not going to teach the rules of eloquence in the following chapters—he asserts that those rules can be more profitably learned at their source, and the assumption is that that source is the Cicero and Quintilian taught in the academies of the fourth century. The correspondences between Augustine's concept of eloquence and the Ciceronian model are numerous. Both McKeon and Robertson observe, first of all, that of the five parts of Ciceronian rhetoric (inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, and actio or pronuntiatio), the first three books of De doctrina correspond to inventio and the last to elocutio. The threefold office of the preacher, Augustine says in Book IV, is to teach, delight and move, to affect his hearer in the realms of the intellect, the senses and the will. This corresponds exactly to Cicero's definition of the function of the orator. Furthermore, the three styles or degrees of eloquence outlined by August-

7 Baldwin, p. 52; James B. Eskridge, The Influence of Cicero Upon Augustine in the Development of his Oratorical Theory for the Training of the Ecclesiastical Orator (Menasha, Wis.: The Collegiate Press, 1912); McKeon, 5; Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, p. 286; D.W. Robertson, introduction to On Christian Doctrine, p. xviii.

8 McKeon, 5; Robertson, p. xviii.

9 Eskridge, pp. 16-17.
tine (submissa, temperata and grandis) take their names from the same adjectives used by Cicero in describing how the orator must speak. 10

While De doctrina resolves the dispute about the relevance of pagan rhetoric to Christian doctrine in favor of the judicious use of the classics, and Book IV openly acknowledges Cicero as a master to be emulated, the way in which Augustine goes beyond Cicero has a crucial bearing on the development of a distinctly Christian theory of preaching. The essential distinction between Cicero and Augustine is not in how the end of eloquence ought to be achieved; both answer that the end of eloquence will only be achieved by a skilled and trained orator, blessed with a certain measure of wisdom, who uses the devices of eloquence as though they were second nature to him. The difference lies rather in defining what the end of eloquence is, and what the value of the orator is. Ciceronian rhetoric is by and large forensically oriented, aiming at persuasion by means of a combination of reasonable probabilities and skillful eloquence. The end depends on the wisdom and eloquence of the orator, and the conclusion it arrives at, if it successfully persuades the audience, may or may not be absolute truth; it is simply a "truth" to which the

10 Eskridge, p. 18.
audience has been persuaded. Augustine's preacher is not limited by his own human wisdom and eloquence; he proclaims a divine wisdom, the proof of which is already firmly established, and the eloquence of that infinite truth speaks through him. He does not try to persuade an audience to declare something to be "truth" by being persuaded that it is so; his message is already assumed to be absolutely true. That divine truth to which the preacher bears witness provides a measure of eloquence in the spoken message and wisdom perceived by both the speaker and the hearer that transcends human limitations. There is a gift of grace which, in the act of preaching, is imparted to both preacher and congregation.

McKeon defines this expansion of Ciceronian rhetoric as being a "doubling" of the meaning of the terms wisdom and eloquence, giving them an eternal as well as a temporal significance.\footnote{McKeon, 7.} Murphy points out that Augustine's rhetoric has a theological and ethical implication that would have been meaningless for Cicero; the Christian preacher strives in love to illuminate a divine truth in a way most accessible to his hearer, whose spiritual welfare is always closest to his heart.\footnote{Murphy, \textit{Rhetoric in the Middle Ages}, p. 291.} In \textit{De doctrina} Augustine firmly
established the role of the preacher as the vehicle of
divine truth, not just an expositor of human interpreta-
tion. At the same time, he imposed the burden of an awe-
some responsibility on the preacher for the souls of his
charges, since their access to truth was dependent on the
loving care he exerted in opening up the meaning of Scrip-
ture for them.

It might be noted that the definitions of preaching
and the preacher offered by Augustine may, in fact, have
diverted attention away from the rhetoric of preaching.
As James J. Murphy has observed in another context, Paul
was also "acutely conscious of God's possible interven-
tion during the preaching event itself," which

tends to derogate the human skill derived from rhet-
oric, since God's message is so powerful that its mere
utterance will be persuasive....One practical result
was that for a dozen centuries the Church was almost
exclusively concerned with what to preach--not how.\textsuperscript{13}

Augustine's definition of preaching as a means toward di-
vine wisdom speaking through a kind of divine eloquence
may have allowed for a similar derogation of the form of
the sermon, despite his emphasis on the skill and training
of the preacher. And his emphasis on the responsibility
of the preacher to instruct his charges with a loving atti-
dude certainly contributed to the tendency of many later

\textsuperscript{13}Murphy, \textit{Rhetoric in the Middle Ages}, p. 282.
preacher's manuals to deal almost exclusively with the high standard of quality required of the preacher's life.

De doctrina christiana also implies an inseparable relationship between exegesis and preaching, thus making the understanding of exegetical theory one of the primary concerns in the study of the theory of preaching. Augustine stresses throughout his treatise that true instruction in Christian doctrine involves the correct interpretation of the things in the Bible which serve as signs. These signs are the keys to understanding divine truth; in them, we understand a "spiritual" meaning which lies beyond the literal. Augustine is clearly taking the part of the proponents of allegorical exegesis, and although he considered his position to be a temperate, mediating one, the weight of his authority convincingly resolved a dispute which had marked the attitudes of the early church fathers regarding exegesis for years.

The practice of allegorical exegesis, like the practice of preaching itself, made an easy entry into the early church because of its familiarity with a long established Jewish tradition. Christ's preaching abounds with parables, the teaching of Paul occasionally had recourse to allegorical parallels, and allegory dominates the apostle John's Revelation on Patmos. Origen, heavily influenced by Hellenistic gnosticism, particularly that of
philo, and its tripartite scheme of body, soul and spirit, asserted that Scripture had three corresponding senses: the literal, which he rarely discussed; the moral, which instructs us directly in our daily lives; and the spiritual, which signifies divine mysteries.  

14 Jerome adopted Origen's system, although he refined the terminology a bit (the slipperiness of allegorical terminology is difficult to pin down, particularly when the same term is used by two authors to indicate two different concepts; but it is important, sometimes critical, to keep the terms and concepts clearly defined). Whereas Origen had used the term "tropological" and "allegorical" almost interchangeably to indicate all the figurative meanings of Scripture, Jerome used "tropological" to indicate Origen's "moral" sense alone and defined the spiritual sense in the restricted sense of "the bliss of things to come," which would later be termed the anagogical sense.  

15 It ought to be noted that the adherents of Origen's and Jerome's principles, already known as the Alexandrian school, practiced allegorical exegesis almost to the exclusion of a consideration


15 Ibid., p. 22.
of the literal sense. They in no way denied the veracity of the literal sense; the historical facts of the Bible actually happened, the Alexandrians asserted, but they have meaning only insofar as their deeper, hidden significance is opened up.

Along the way, however, another strain of exegesis had developed. It was noted by several church fathers, primarily Greeks from the Eastern reaches of the Empire, that allegorical exegesis was an extremely dangerous theological practice. It allowed for too much equivocation and ambiguity about the plain truth of God's word. It opened the door for excesses in interpretation, spinning out "hidden" meanings where none were intended. It relied too heavily on subjective interpretation, leading to too much diversity of opinion and undermining one's confidence in the meaning of the Bible. An individual human being's capacity to truly interpret Scripture was a basically unreliable standard to apply to a matter as fundamentally necessary to the Christian faith as the understanding of God's word. Above all, allegorical exegesis created a potential situation in which dogma could be founded, not on God's divinely inspired word, but on error-ridden human interpretation, twisted to suit the ends of those in posi-

tions of authority. The school of Antioch, as these opponents of allegorical exegesis were called, argued that the only legitimate figurative interpretation of Scripture was the typological, in which certain actual, historical events in the New Testament era (which extended to the present day) are seen as anti-types which were prefigured by their corresponding types in the Old Testament. 17

Typological exegesis had no use for the fanciful imagination and the compounding of abstractions that characterized allegorical exegesis. The Antiochene school stressed the literal historicity of the Bible and refused to indulge in interpretations that went beyond historical correspondences. Like the Alexandrians, they could cite Scriptural precedent—the entire notion that the events of the New Testament fulfilled the prophecies of the Old is based on the typological principle. Again, both Christ and Paul frequently assert that the events to which they bore witness were the fulfillment of types in the Old Testament; furthermore, the anonymous book of Hebrews is almost entirely typological.

In the fourth century the controversy between the

17 Throughout this study I will use the term "allegorical" to refer to metaphorical, figurative exegesis in general, while "typological" will denote exegesis based on supposedly literal correspondences.
Antiochene and Alexandrian schools became rather intense.\textsuperscript{18} St. Basil, a confirmed Antiochene, participated in the council that condemned Origen as a heretic, largely on the basis of his supposed allegorical excesses and errors. John of Antioch, better known as Chrysostom, the Golden Mouth, because of his reputation as one of the greatest Christian preachers of all ages, was an ardent defender of typology, and its last spokesman for several centuries. Toward the end of the century Augustine inserted himself as the mediator between the two schools, and almost unintentionally turned the field over to the Alexandrians for centuries to come. Thomas Davis notes that a contributing factor to the ultimate disrepute of the Antiochene school was the unfortunate adherence of Arius to the principles of typology.\textsuperscript{19} When Arius's rationalistic heresies were roundly condemned at Nicaea, some of the stigma rubbed off on typological exegesis in general. But it was Augustine who most convincingly turned the tide.

Augustine's exegetical principles were essentially derived from Origen and Jerome, although he was less systematic and his terminology has led to even greater confu-


\textsuperscript{19} Davis, p. 26.
sion. His frequent assertion that he discerns four senses of Scripture (and even here he is inconsistent; sometimes he discerns two, sometimes five) has led some careless critics to assume that he established the familiar four senses of medieval exegesis, the literal, tropological, allegorical (i.e. metaphorical allegory, not the literal identifications of typology), and anagogical. As Harry Caplan points out, however, such is not the case. Augustine's four topics were historia, aetiology, analogia and allegoria. The second and third of these topics were, in fact, for Augustine merely refinements of the historical, or literal sense. It is interesting to note that Augustine's analogical sense, which sought concurrences between the Old and New Testaments, was in fact closely related to typology. But Augustine never emphasized this sense much; by and large his exegetical practice makes a simple distinction between literal and spiritual senses (note that "spiritual" for Augustine does not have the restricted, anagogical sense it had for Origen--it simply indicates all allegorical readings).

De doctrina christiana makes it clear that Augus-

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stine's sympathies clearly lay with the practice of allegorical (as opposed to typological) exegesis. As noted above, all of the first three books concern themselves with the teacher's difficulty in rightly understanding Scripture himself, a difficulty based on the proper spiritual interpretation of the signs in Scripture. We have already seen how, in his defense of pagan skills as important resources for the Christian, he asserted that an ignorance of some of the "things" in the Bible (an ignorance that may be remedied by recourse to secular learning) may interfere with our understanding of those things as signs, and thus block our access to the divine truth the signs point to. Augustine always argued, as McKeon points out,\(^\text{21}\) that what was most important was not the distinction between things and signs, but the understanding of divine truth. His approach, however, quite obviously assumes that things as signs are more important than things as things.

Augustine honestly believed that he was steering a middle course, in fairness to both exegetical schools. In deference to the Antiochenes he reasserts the fact that the fundamental starting point of all exegesis is the literal truth of the Bible, and that all allegorical interpretation must be based on the literal sense. He warns

\(^{21}\)McKeon, 7.
against allegorical excesses; in one particularly enlightening example (II.6.7) he quotes from the Song of Solomon 4:2: "Thy teeth are as flocks of sheep, that are shorn, which came up from the washing, all with twins, and there is none barren among them." The Song of Solomon had long been subjected to the most tortuous allegorizing, and with some justification--taken in its literal sense, the book is often feared as being dangerously erotic. Augustine quotes a lengthy and convoluted allegorical "similitude" in which another author interpreted the passage he had quoted, and asserts that he prefers the "plain language" of the passage itself to the excesses of the "similitude." It is interesting to note that Augustine does not regard the extended metaphor in the passage as constituting a "figurative" sense; he rejects the allegorical excess of the other author's "similitude" and prefers the "plain language" of the metaphor itself. It will be crucial to remember in our later examination of the Puritan plain style that metaphor is not excluded when "figurative" interpretations are rejected. The contemporary notion that metaphor, simile, personification, etc. constitute "figurative" language was not necessarily shared by Augustine or the Puritans.

In Book III, Augustine continues to seem to take the side of the Antiochenes when he warns against basing
doctrine on some allegorical interpretation rather than on the literal sense of Scripture. He briefly admonishes the reader to avoid the danger of seeing figurative meanings where only literal ones are intended. But he turns to the Alexandrians' defense when he goes to far greater lengths to warn against being strictly literal when a figurative meaning is intended. Many passages of Scripture, he warns, could lead to confusion and error if they are taken literally since they seem to endorse sin or violence. In such cases we must discount the literal sense, taking into account such things as the historical period and cultural milieu in which the passage was written, and seek the divine truth in the hidden, spiritual meaning. He admits that certain passages of Scripture might encompass various interpretations, but asserts that a thorough understanding of the rhetorical devices of the Biblical authors will lead to a simple translation of the figurative meaning. In the end, despite his explicit endorsement of certain of the Antiochene school's principles, what survived was his implicit affirmation of the principles of the Alexandrian school. It was not until near the time of the Reformation that typological exegesis once again was widely practiced—and once again, it was in protest against the excesses of allegorical practice.

In explaining Augustine's debt to classical rhetoric
in Book IV, we briefly passed over the styles of eloquence he outlined there. These three degrees of style, the plain (or subdued), moderate (or temperate) and grand ought to be more fully defined, since the understanding of them has also led to some confusion (Augustine, for example, is not the inventor of the Puritan plain style, although his prescribed style conforms more closely to what the plain style requires than most commentators acknowledge). Augustine's three styles correspond to the Ciceronian definition of the three-fold function of the orator. The plain style is to be used for instruction, the middle style is used to please, and the grand style is used to move an audience to action. It is not to be thought that the plain style is simplistic, or that it is somehow not pleasing or incapable of moving an audience simply because it is distinguished from the other two styles. It is true that it is relatively unadorned with rhetorical ornaments, but its ability to illuminate some aspect of knowledge may be pleasing in itself, and its very simplicity may be rhetorically effective in touching a response in the audience. The moderate style does please with its judicious use of ornamentation, but it lacks the power and vehemence, the emotional intensity that characterizes the grand style. Once again, however, Augustine's differences from
Cicero are instructive for understanding his definition of the role of the preacher and the nature of preaching. Cicero's orator was advised to deliver his oratory in one of the three styles, depending on the occasion and the audience to be addressed. For example, if the occasion was a moderately festive one and the audience was a group of like-minded peers, the moderate style could be used to produce the pleasing effect for its own sake. Augustine, on the other hand, urged that all three styles be used, wherever each was appropriate at any given point of the sermon, to effect the greatest benefit for the audience. He explains that, insofar as possible, one ought not to evoke emotional responses by the use of any more rhetorical devices than are absolutely necessary. The preacher uses the plain style when the simple elucidation of truth is required. Sometimes, however, that does not suffice to move an audience; besides it is always useful (to assist the hearer to be instructed) to please the audience with the moderate style. But teaching and pleasure are of no use whatsoever if the hearer is not moved to action; when that is appropriately required, Augustine advocates that the preacher ascend "the heights of eloquence" in the grand style.

Notice the distinction between Cicero and Augustine. Augustine's degrees of eloquence are not to be

\[22\text{ Cf. Eskridge, p. 58.}\]
used only with the limited utilitarian goals of Cicero's styles in view. They are certainly never to be used as ends in themselves, as Cicero would use the moderate style, for example, simply to delight the hearer with its elegance and grace. The Christian's eloquence is never admired for its own qualities, but for the extent to which it is infused with divine truth and, in loving concern for the spiritual welfare of the hearer, makes whatever adjustment is necessary to make that divine truth more accessible.

A final word on Augustine's discussion of eloquence will illustrate some important facets of the later development of the theory of preaching. The degree of eloquence in the sermon is not dependent on the number of rhetorical ornaments present, ranging from few such ornaments in the plain style to many in the grand. He says, rather (IV.12.27), that the degree of eloquence is determined by the intensity of emotion. Rhetorical ornaments are important and they can be employed at any level of the three styles, but it is not their quantity that determines the effect of the sermon. Indeed, the Scriptural examples he cites in Book IV illustrating the three styles of eloquence (notice the use of Scriptural authority for the classical, secular model) are not highly ornamented. They are distinguished rather by their forcefulness, directness, and their emotional effect on the listener. These are
characteristics that describe the "plain style" as it was developed twelve centuries later. As was true for Augustine, the quantity of rhetorical ornamentation was in fact less a central concern than the instructive and persuasive effect of the entire performance. Too many critics have assumed that the most prominent feature of the sixteenth century plain style was its rhetorical barrenness. In fact, its theory of the use of rhetorical devices was nearer to that of Augustine—the presence and quantity of rhetorical ornaments was of little importance in determining the success of the sermon.

One further point ought to be noted regarding De doctrina christiana. That is that while the type of sermon described by Augustine is the homily, the generalized discourse based on several passages of Scripture or an entire Gospel lesson and serving as a guide to right living, it is wrong to minimize the relationship of De doctrina to the type of sermon later described by the ars praedicandi tracts as the "thematic" sermon, the extended amplification of a single Scriptural text. For while Augustine admittedly describes a different type of sermon, the focus of De doctrina is not so much on the manner in which a sermon ought to be preached as it is on the matter which the sermon ought to deal with. The first three books of De doctrina deal with the problems of discovery
or invention, while only the fourth book deals specifically with the means of expression, or style. And even as he analyzes style in Book IV, Augustine repeatedly emphasizes that the expression itself is of less importance than the matter being expressed. Such an emphasis is a necessary forbear of the preoccupation with division and amplification that marks the *ars praedicandi* manuals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By far the greater portion of the *ars praedicandi* prescriptions are addressed to problems of invention, and are thus in accord with the emphasis initiated by Augustine.

Augustine ends *De doctrina christiana* with a brief statement about the quality of the man required to be a Christian teacher and orator. He briefly enumerates a set of rules regarding his deportment, primarily intended to simply establish the fact that the sanctity of the preacher's own life ought to serve as an example to his charges. This good example also serves the spiritual welfare of the people by, once again, easing their access to divine truth, since once they detect hypocrisy in the preacher, they may reject his message as well, to the peril of their souls. This emphasis on the preacher, a minor appendix to Augustine's treatise, became the primary feature of later preacher's manuals, to the virtual exclusion of any theoretical study of preaching itself. We have already noted
some possible reasons for the neglect of the development of preaching theory (the fact, for example, that the success of the sermon depended on the intervention of divine grace rather than on human rhetorical skills). Dargan cites (without convincing evidence) various causes for the decline of preaching following the fourth century, including an increased emphasis on liturgy and forms of worship, an increasingly dissolute clergy, and the rise of saint and Mary veneration.\textsuperscript{23}

Whatever the reasons for the neglect of theoretical preaching rhetoric, the next important document in the history of the theory of preaching was Gregory the Great's \textit{Cura pastoralis} (591).\textsuperscript{24} It was written nearly two centuries after \textit{De doctrina christiana}, and focuses almost exclusively on the character and motivation of the preacher.

\textit{Cura pastoralis} (also known as \textit{Regula pastoralis}) was written by Gregory as an apology for his reluctance to assume the papacy in 591. It is essentially a treatise on the awesome responsibilities of the pastoral ruler, submitted partly as an explanation of his natural sense of inadequacy when faced with those duties, and partly as a

\textsuperscript{23}Dargan, p. 110.

defense against the charges of false modesty on the one hand and of avoiding a divine calling on the other. It is in the line of a tradition of treatises dealing with the character of the Christian leader, a tradition dating back to the requirements stated in the institution of church offices in the New Testament. *Cura pastoralis* is loosely based on the second Discourse of Gregory of Naziansus, a fourth century church father. It is important less for its original contribution to the theory of preaching, which is slight, than for its enormous popularity. It was a standard text for the training of priests for literally hundreds of years, cited again and again throughout the middle ages.25

The work is divided into four sections. Part I describes in general the superior qualities required of the pastoral ruler, and points out the difficulty of the task. The familiar analogy between the doctor of medicine and the pastor as the physician of souls is introduced in Part I, and extends throughout the book. There is an echo of Augustine in the fact that the pastor must assume, in Christian love, the burden of the spiritual welfare of his charges. Gregory notes at one point that the unlearned are not allowed to practice medicine because of the potentially

25 Henry Davis, introduction to *Pastoral Care*, p. 11.
disastrous results. He continues, "With what rashness, then, would the pastoral office be undertaken by the unfit, seeing that the government of souls is the art of arts." 26

He lays particular emphasis on that aspect of this art which is fulfilled by the practice of preaching.

Part II is a simple recitation of the virtues required of the pastor: he must be discreet, humble, pure, and a stern foe of evil. There is, again, an emphasis on the preaching function. The pastor must be well steeped in Scriptural knowledge so that he can preach at any time. Gregory again echoes Augustine when he says that one purpose of living a sanctified life is to avoid being a stumbling block to your fellow Christians. Gregory admonishes that in preaching as well as in living, the pastor ought to avoid unnecessary antagonism; he ought to please as well as admonish the people, in order to draw them more easily toward the truth.

Part III is by far the longest section of the work and the most important in the history of preaching theory. Actually, there is very little that is theoretical here at all; Gregory simply sketches the characteristics of various types of audiences and offers practical advice regarding the selection of the most appropriate passages of

26 Gregory the Great, p. 21.
Scripture or the argument that would most effectively serve such an audience. He observes, "For what else are the minds of attentive hearers but, if I may say so, the taut strings of a harp, which the skillful harpist plays with a variety of strokes, that he may not produce a discordant melody." There is nothing new in this concern; the selection of the "topos" or "commonplace," also known as the "loci communes," the specific approach for the specific audience on the specific occasion, was a standard feature of classical rhetoric. What is somewhat unique is Gregory's setting up contrasting pairs of groups within a single audience. He offers advice on how to preach to audiences made up of fairly simple contrasting pairs (rich and poor; young and old; married and single; humble and haughty; the discordant and the peacemakers) as well as to more complex groups (those who repent but still sin and those who stop sinning but don't repent; those who commit small sins frequently and those who commit great sins infrequently). In all, he offers thirty-six such pairs. As noted above, however, his approach is practical rather than theoretical. Rather than offering a rhetorical theory that accommodates any contrasting pair, he simply explains how he would deal with these specific cases. As James J. Murphy observes,

27 Gregory the Great, p. 89.
"It is as if Cicero, instead of writing De oratore or De inventione had presented a great number of his own speech outlines in order to show other orators how to speak."\textsuperscript{28}

In a brief concluding section, Gregory returns to his theme of the character of the pastor, and urges him to avoid developing an overweening pride in the conduct of his office, lest he invalidate the good he might otherwise accomplish. Despite its focus on the life of the preacher and its failure to point any new theoretical direction in the rhetoric of preaching, \textit{Cura pastoralis} is a significant document for the implied emphases it contains regarding the practice of preaching. All of Part III underscores once again, as did \textit{De doctrina christianae}, the importance of the process of invention, the discovery of the subject matter of the sermon. The specific subject matter, in this case simple homilies for the correction of specific vices, is of less significance for future preachers than the continued emphasis on the importance of the process that precedes the actual delivery of the sermon. The significance of this emphasis is reflected in the very fact that two-thirds of \textit{Cura pastoralis} (the proportion occupied by Part III) is concerned with the content of the pastor's sermons. In one of the few places in which Greg-

\textsuperscript{28}Murphy, \textit{Rhetoric in the Middle Ages}, p. 296.
gory does venture an observation on style, he urges that the pastor use a simple style when dealing with weak or unlettered Christians, in order to facilitate their understanding and belief. This echoes Augustine's abiding concern for the act of love that binds the pastor to the spiritual welfare of his sheep, and perhaps anticipates one rationale that would later be used to defend the common sense of the Puritan plain style, regarding it as simply a style more meaningful to the people.

The only real significance of Rabanus Maurus' *De institutione clericorum* (819) is that it was the only preaching treatise written between the time of Gregory and the eleventh century. As such, it was a conduit by which, at least in part, the treatises of Augustine and Gregory were transmitted to and preserved in the middle ages. This is not to say that either *De doctrina christiana* or *Cura pastoralis* were in danger of being lost; indeed, Gregory's work reached the height of its popularity in the ninth and tenth centuries when two church councils made it assigned reading for bishops, King Alfred had it translated into

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English, and Rabanus Maurus himself borrowed from it liberally. Rabanus' (also spelled Hrabanus and Rhabanus) *De institutione clericorum* simply assured an even wider circulation of the earlier preaching theories. And while his borrowing from Gregory probably did little to extend the popularity of Gregory's *Cura*, his wholesale plagiarism of *De doctrina christiana* certainly helped to keep Augustine's ideas on preaching current.

Books I and II of *De institutione clericorum* deal with matters of ecclesiastical polity and liturgy. Book III, the final section, begins with a study of exegesis that is simply a restatement of Augustine's theory outlined in *De doctrina christiana*. Chapter 19 of Book III is a summary of the first three books of *De doctrina* with an emphasis, importance for the stance it took in a recurring controversy, on restating Augustine's defense of the Christian's understanding of secular, classical rhetoric. After expanding Augustine's defense to the other arts in chapters 20-27, Rabanus returns to a discussion of rhetoric in the final chapters, 28-39. These twelve chapters are lifted verbatim from Book IV of *De doctrina*. Clearly, Rabanus offers nothing new, but the historical importance of the fact that he did restate Augustine and thus lent additional weight to his precepts must be noted.

Another two and a half centuries were to pass be-
fore the appearance of another document which might properly be called a treatise on preaching. This was the Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat (1084) of the Benedictine Guibert de Nogent. Guibert's book goes beyond the observation that the preacher must be a learned and moral man to offer some slightly more theoretical contributions to preaching rhetoric than any treatise since Augustine. Most instructive in this regard is the prefatory essay. Guibert begins in the usual manner, explaining that the preacher needs wisdom and moral stature, and analyzes the various motivations that move men to become preachers, some virtuous, others evil, in much the same terms employed by Gregory.

He turns to the sermon itself by warning that it ought not to be too long, lest it put its hearers to sleep. He then offers a suggestion which is to mark a recurring theme of his. When he says that illustrations ought to be drawn from the familiar stories of the Bible or other legends, the reason he offers is that this both enlivens the sermon and makes it nearer the hearer's ken. Guibert continually emphasizes the importance of making the sermon

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both comprehensible and applicable to the mundane existence of his audience. At the same time, it ought to include a mixture of more sophisticated learning to satisfy the appetites of the more learned. He uses the familiar analogy, at one point, of the child whose diet consists of milk or milk-softened bread, since more complex fare would in fact be harmful to him. "So also," he says, the preacher who offers simple doctrine to the people and at the same time adds something more substantial whereon the more educated can exercise their intellects, by so doing is able both to feed with his words the dull and sluggish of mind and also to inject weightier ideas as well by adding something more solid to the porridge, thus delighting the educated audience as well. 31

One way of achieving this mixture of levels of meaning to provide satisfying material for an entire congregation is by recourse to what were by then the familiar four senses of Scriptural exegesis. It is not clear exactly where these four senses were first distinguished. Origen and Jerome, we noted, discerned three senses, while Augustine's exegetical practice actually distinguished only literal from figurative. Harry Caplan notes, however, that the familiar four senses had been introduced by lesser-known exegetes already in the fourth century. 32 They were

31 Guibert, p. 170.
32 Caplan, "Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation," p. 98.
well established by the early middle ages and were clearly traditional by the time of Guibert. His illustration of them, using the word "Jerusalem," is a familiar, often repeated one. Understood historically (literally), Jerusalem is a city in the Holy Land. In the allegorical sense, a word is used to represent something else; thus, Jerusalem stands for the church in this world (the church militant). The tropological sense is used for moral instruction in daily living. In it, Jerusalem represents the individual's soul in its struggle against evil. The anagogical sense, often called the "mystical" or "spiritual" sense, points toward the mysteries of eternal life. This eschatological orientation is beneficial insofar as it directs man's thoughts away from the worldly and mundane to the promises of heaven. Anagogically, Jerusalem is the church triumphant, the new heaven and the new earth whose citizens live in the presence of God.

The centuries of traditional authority which the four senses of exegesis acquired caused them to have a great impact on both theological and homiletical theory not only at the height of their acceptance in medieval scholasticism, but for many centuries to come, even as they were being explicitly refuted in the Reformation. Guibert's acknowledgement that the four senses are inextricably bound up with the practice of preaching is es-
pecially worthy of notice. Guibert especially urges the preacher to employ the tropological sense in his preaching; he urges restraint particularly with respect to the allegorical sense, since "it seems to do little more than strengthen our faith." He observes that men either have or do not have faith in their hearts according to the grace of God. While it may be fitting to allegorize in order to enrich the faithful,

it is no less fitting--indeed it is more so--for us to say those things which they can apply in their daily lives. We speak more easily and confidently about the nature of virtue than about the mysteries of faith, concerning some of which, we must admit, mild disputations are still taking place. Among the less intelligent, error can result from preaching which is too esoteric; but in moral instruction, we can especially learn the utility of discretion.33

The injunction to focus on commending virtue and abhorring vice is one certainly taken to heart by medieval homilists. Their practice, and Guibert's reasons for it, are outgrowths of the underlying Augustinian premise that the preacher seeks to use that which is most likely to be instructive to his hearers. Guibert says that preaching "ought to deal first with the interior life of men, that is, with the thoughts which are common to all."34 He points out that since ignorant people, like beasts, only

33Guibert, p. 171.
34Ibid, p. 172.
comprehend the material and not the abstract, preaching ought to deal with immediately knowable things, particularly vice, since that topic hits close to home in every case. It is better when the preacher deals with topics, not only that his audience knows, but which he knows from firsthand experience and not simply from books. He knows vice from his struggle against it in his own heart. Thus he can preach about it so convincingly.

Guibert does not discount the validity or effectiveness of the allegorical sense entirely. Certain passages of Scripture can only be understood allegorically, and "when the spirit and the will of the reader would follow a new road, then the chariot which is the holy Scripture, will carry him there." But this should only be undertaken by those well versed in the practice, since allegorical exegesis is a slippery and potentially dangerous proposition.

The significance of Guibert's book lies not so much in the subject matter it deals with, since it states nothing other than the conventional medieval wisdom on exegesis and preaching. It is important, rather, simply by virtue of the fact that it is one of the rare treatises to state the traditional view in theoretical terms. The first

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35 Guibert, p. 176.
book to at all advance the theory of preaching in the middle ages, even though in a small way, was Alain de Lille's *Summa de arte praedicatoria* (1199).\(^{36}\) Alain, a Cistercian monk, is well known as a figure in what is sometimes spoken of as the twelfth-century Renaissance. In the *Summa*, he offers the first formal definition of preaching proposed in twelve centuries of Christian history: "*Praedicatio est, manifesta et publica instructio morum et fidei, informationi hominum deserviens, ex rationum semita, et auctoritatum fonte proveniens*" (Preaching is open and public instruction in behavior and faith, proposed for the informing of men, proceeding along the path of reason and springing from the fount of authority).\(^{37}\) Implicit in this definition are a number of factors which his treatise illustrates.

Alain's *Summa* continues the emphasis on content as opposed to style that had characterized every preaching treatise since Augustine. It also emphasizes the concern for the welfare of the hearer which bears Augustine's imprint. In Chap. 1 he says,

Good preaching, on the other hand, should have its


\(^{37}\)Alain, in Migne, col. 111.
weight in its content, so that by virtue of the thoughts it contains it may appeal to the ears of the listeners, awaken their hearts, arouse true sorrow, pour forth wise teaching, thunder forth admonitions, soothe with promises, and so completely serve the one purpose of aiding the people.  

But Alain goes a bit farther than the earlier theorists in explaining what the content ought to include. He is the first to specifically stipulate that the sermon ought to be based on a single text from Scripture, although he recommends that the sources be limited to the Gospels, Epistles, Psalms or the Wisdom literature. This is a crucial recommendation; it marks a distinct departure from the practice used in preaching homilies, in which the preacher simply offered either a rather generalized, unstructured discourse on living a better life, with whatever scattered Scriptural citations he felt were relevant, or developed an overall interpretation of an entire Gospel lesson. The insistence on the Biblical foundation for the sermon and the exposition of a single text were requirements which were to figure prominently in later treatises.

Alain is also quite specific about how the text ought to be expounded. The exposition ought not to be too difficult for his audience; it ought to be well ordered and develop in a natural way. Furthermore, the preacher ought to appeal to appropriate authorities in support of each

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38 Alain, in Miller, Prosser and Benson, p. 232.
point of his exposition. These authorities may be concor-
dant Scriptural texts, or

on occasion he might even be able to interpolate the
words of pagan authors, as Paul sometimes inserts in-
to his Epistles the words of the ancient philosophers
because they have a special aptness; besides when they
are cleverly introduced they add fresh vision to the
oration.

There is no antipathy to pagan sources noted in this; the
use of the devices of classical rhetoric would be no more
illicit for a follower of Alain than for a follower of
Augustine.

James J. Murphy has observed that in practice,
Alain normally divides whatever topic he is writing about
into three parts. Alain illustrates this both in the
expository sections of the book and in the series of sample
sermons he includes. While he does not specifically pre-
scribe a three-part division of the text, it is important
to note that the example he sets uses it. This is not to
suggest, certainly, that a tripartite division was original
with Alain; it is an archetypal pattern of thought and ex-
position. It does, however, represent a significant shift
from the meandering form of the homily. Along with the
emphasis on a single Scriptural text and the appeal to au-
thorities, it combines to provide for the first time a

39 Alain, p. 233.

40 Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, p. 350.
distinct theoretical format for the sermon.

Most of what Alain prescribes regarding the formation of a sermon is contained in the first of 38 sections. The remainder of his *Summa* addresses the familiar concerns of preacher's manuals until that time—the selection of the commonplace, the life and character of the preacher, and a few notes regarding delivery. Most of the book is a series of short sermons outlining a suggested approach in addressing specific audiences on specific occasions, similar to the service performed by Gregory. He admonishes the preacher to exhibit the twin characteristics traditionally required of him, that he be superior in both learning and morals. He advises moderation in the delivery of the sermon, avoiding extremes of length or the affectation of too sophisticated a style. All this, of course, is practical rather than theoretical advice. Alain's treatise is still a long way from the entirely prescriptive, theoretical tractates that were suddenly to appear and dominate preaching theory for three centuries. But the elements of the format that he both suggests and exemplifies are the core ingredients of the *ars praedicandi* tradition, and it is a short step from Alain's *Summa de arte praedicatoria* to the sermons being preached at the University of Paris thirty years later.

In the academic year 1230-1231, there appeared at
the University of Paris, with a suddenness that dismays many scholars, a highly refined and rigidly stylized type of sermon. 41 These were the sermons that were preached to the university community on every Sunday and frequent saints' days both by the masters of theology of the school's faculty and by the aspiring scholars as proof of their merit. 42 No similar sermons have been found from an earlier date, although at about the same time they began to appear at Oxford as well. Almost simultaneously, a number of tractates describing in great detail the method used in composing such a sermon also appeared. The production of ars praedicandi tractates became a flood by the fourteenth century, and didn't taper off until well into the fifteenth. In all, many hundreds of such manuals were written; at least three hundred manuscripts are located in libraries throughout Europe, although only a handful have been published. 43 There is certainly a scholarly gap to be filled


43 For a census of extant MSS, see Harry Caplan, Medieval Artes Praedicandi: A Handlist (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1934; Supplément, 1936) and Thomas M. Charland, Artes praedicandi; contribution a l'histoire de la rhetorique au moyen age (Paris: J. Vrin, 1936).
here, although the lack of readily available sources is not so serious a deterrent to scholarship as it may seem. Since the tractates described a rigidly prescriptive method, there is, not surprisingly, great uniformity not only from pamphlet to pamphlet, but even from century to century. There is some variation of course, and some differing degrees of emphasis, as well as an occasional reactionary note. But the available tractates indicate an almost complete lack of significant diversity throughout the genre—almost any of a number of tractates may be said to be, with only a few qualifications, representative of the whole tradition.

This so-called "modern" sermon method is referred to, almost interchangeably, as the "thematic" sermon, since it was based on the expansion of a single Scriptural text or theme, and the "university" sermon, since it developed in the great university centers of Paris and Oxford. In her introduction to Charland's seminal Artes praedicandi, M.D. Chenu notes that the university sermons are correctly called "modern," not only because they were something new on the scene, but because they mark a distinction between the practice of preaching in feudal monastaries and the dedication to a new spirit of communal inquiry and analysis that underlay the formation of great urban centers
of learning. This was, of course, a significant shift not only for the history of the theory of preaching but for learning in general. James J. Murphy states its significance for preaching theory in this way: "What was lacking before 1200 was the analytic spirit that would have enabled a rhetorical observer to distill a number of critical experiences into a statement of theory." He goes on to note that after 1200, writers were, in fact, moved by such an "analytic spirit" to discuss form as opposed to (or at least in addition to) subject matter.

Murphy posits a reconstructed chronology of the probable earliest tractates, those that could predate the first extant sermons of 1230-31. In the period 1200-1230, he cites the authorship of tractates by Alexander of Ashby, Thomas of Salisbury (Thomas Chabham), Richard of Thetford, Jean de la Rochelle, and William of Auvergne. The present study, however, is less concerned with following the possible evolution of the genre than with analyzing those features which it reflected in common among most of its members. Our study, then, will focus on those features evident in the published sources, which together comprise

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44 M.D. Chenu, introduction to Charland, p. 11.
45 Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, p. 311.
46 Ibid., pp. 311-31.
a representative sampling of the genre.  

The typical *ars praedicandi* tractate required first of all that the sermon begin with the statement of the theme.  


ture. Several writers explicitly exclude the Apocrypha, while the examples of possible themes offered by other writers do include Apocryphal texts; the distinction indicates nothing more than the ambivalent status of the Apocrypha in the canon. It is often recommended that the preacher not be reluctant to use all of Scripture as a source for a text; the over-reliance on the Psalms or the Epistles, given sanction by Alain, is expressly rejected. It is important to note, however, that non-Scriptural sources, whether they are patristic or clearly secular, are not allowed as source material for the theme. In more than one case, a sermon is held up to ridicule when it portrayed as Scriptural a quotation from a patristic or classical source, or even a familiar aphorism or excerpt from a legend. The theme must be appropriate to the feast day or to the liturgical season. It must be quoted accurately; several cases are presented in which preachers totally misinterpreted a text by leaving out an important qualifying modifier or substituting one preposition for another. Some writers (e.g., Robert of Basevorn) note that it is allowed to omit or to add non-substantive words as long as doing so does not pervert the original sense.

Above all, the theme must offer what was sometimes

referred to as a "plenitude of meaning." This meant that the theme must have the potential of providing enough amplificatory material to support a rather lengthy sermon. The theme must not be too short, lest it not contain enough meat to sustain a lengthy sermon. On the other hand, it must not be too long lest its central meaning be diluted. It ought to contain in itself a complete meaning, and not be ambivalent. It is very important that the theme can be divided; in order to divide it, it must contain "predicable terms" (Pseudo-Aquinas) or "homiletical terms" (Henry of Hesse). Robert of Basevorn even requires it to have a verb, or its meaning cannot be translated into some mode of action. The number of important terms was never agreed on; most writers were willing to allow anywhere from two to four, some insisting on either two or four, while a number favored three. Robert of Basevorn offered what is probably the most perceptive analysis of why most preachers chose a theme with three parts. It may be because they thus symbolized the Trinity, or because they followed the maxim that a threefold cord is not easily broken, or because the well-loved Bernard of Clairvaux used a tripartite division. But most likely, Robert wryly observes, it is because a three-part sermon is most convenient for both the congregation and the preacher--it is not too long or too short, can be most easily written by the preacher
and easily remembered by the audience. Finally, however many terms the theme has, it must include only such terms as offer sufficient concordances throughout both Scripture and in non-Scriptural authorities.

The continued stress on the importance of invention in the *ars praedicandi* tradition is marked by the fact that all the rules governing the selection of the theme cover only that portion of the sermon which contains the initial reading of the text, with its chapter and verse citation. The first substantive portion of the sermon follows the reading of the theme. This is the protheme (or antetheme). The protheme does not undertake to divide or explain the theme; rather, it seeks to win the attention of the audience by any of a variety of devices. Usually, it is recommended that the protheme simply cite concordant authorities, Scriptural and non-Scriptural, for the important homiletical terms of the theme. This may include as well showing figurative synonyms for the terms of the theme. An appropriate anecdote (perhaps a terrifying moral tale) may drive home the significance of the theme. Frequently, the protheme offers a brief explanation, almost homily-style, of a related text, not referring directly to the theme at all. It is important to keep the protheme brief, and to phrase its conclusion in such a way that it leads very naturally into an exhortation to prayer. The protheme
always ends with a prayer seeking divine guidance in both the preaching and the hearing of the ensuing sermon.

Next there follows the introduction of the theme. It is necessary to keep in mind the fact that the protheme and the introduction are two distinct entities and have different functions. Whereas the protheme did not directly analyze the theme but focused instead on concordances and related material, in the introduction the preacher explicitly states the general meaning he will adduce in the theme. He gives the sense that the theme commonly has on the surface, and reveals his intention in using it to make a specific point. The preacher may select from a variety of means to assist him in making this introduction. He first of all has the overall choice of using one of two modes, either the narrative or the argumentative. In the narrative mode, he explains the meaning of the theme either by the use of an analogy, citing a circumstance in which the meaning of the theme is made clear, or by the use of authority, quoting outside sources who explain the same meaning he has offered. The preacher may, on the other hand, resort to any of several argumentative devices to prove his interpretation of the theme—he may use a process of inductive reasoning, he may use the convincing argument of exemplification, he may create a syllogism which proves his conclusion, or he may use an enthymeme, persuading on
the basis of an assumed premise. Usually, the preacher is urged not to mix the various methods outlined; despite the array of rhetorical choices available to him, he must keep the introduction short.

The next step which the tractates outline is, in fact, simply a process of invention. The preacher must now divide the theme into its constituent parts. This all-important division of the parts, however, is considered distinct from the next step outlined in the tractates, the declaration of the parts. The division is the **inventio** to the declaration's **elocutio**—but afforded no less importance because of that fact. In the division of the theme, the preacher separates the text into its most important senses (examples provided by Robert of Basevorn include "Come/Lord/Jesus;" "The Grace/of God/has appeared;" or "The just one/is delivered/out of distress"). Each main division may then be (and almost always is) subdivided. The subdivision may be done by means of various principles. If the main division contains three parts, the subdivision of each of those parts may contain three parts as well—this is the Parisian method. The Oxonians, on the other hand, sometimes suggested that the first term be subdivided three times, the second term twice, and the third term be left undivided.

The next step is the actual declaration and confirm-
ing of the parts. As each part of the division and subdivision is declared, it is supported by a confirming authority drawn from concordant Scriptural texts or the church fathers. The order is frequently different; some writers simply state each point of the division with its subdivisions and the appropriate confirming authority in the order they occur. Others state the main members of the division first with the subdivisions following. Still others state the divisions and subdivisions by themselves first, then start over to elicit the confirming authorities for each step. The declaration and confirmation of parts, it should be noted, is in fact simply a kind of verbal outline, a sketch of the bare bones of the sermon that is finally fleshed out in the last section.

The development, or amplification of the sermon, is its main body. In this section the parts of the theme and their corresponding subdivisions are arranged and illustrated by a bewildering array of rhetorical devices. It is at this point that a great deal of diversity among the various ars praedicandi authors appears regarding which specific approach each chooses to emphasize. Some of the treatises limit themselves entirely to a discussion of means of amplification, implying that since everyone al-

49 Simon Alcok and William of Auvergne, for example.
ready knows the preceding steps, the author will simply offer his contribution to the welter or competing amplificatory methods. Henry of Hesse only explains amplification by use of the four senses of exegesis. Robert of Basevorn, in his list of 22 ornaments for the preacher, includes eight specifically useful for amplification; the pseudo-Aquinas tractate lists nine potential devices, and Simon Alcok suggests 45! A brief examination of Pseudo-Aquinas's nine techniques will illustrate a typical discussion of the means of amplification.

The pseudo-Aquinas treatise (so-called because introductory material in one of the manuscripts cites Thomas as the source, although his authorship is strongly doubted) advises that the first and most useful device for amplifying the sermon is to arrange the quotations from authorities (concordant texts or patristic material) in support of every point. The authorities may be used in a variety of ways. Thomas Waleys' section on amplification focuses almost exclusively on various ways in which authorities can be used—one authority may be used to specify a more general one, another may be used to define a more obscure quotation, or one may complement another. The preacher may choose to cite apparently conflicting authorities and harmonize them, or may cite some which are concordant passages using the same word, while others amplify or support the
general idea which is expressed in a specific term.\textsuperscript{50} Other writers explain that authorities can be used to explain "distinction" (for example, quoting two authorities to illustrate genuine penitence and feigned penitence respectively) and to illustrate the "acceptance of plurality" (three authorities which, for example, illustrate the three requisites of genuine penitence).\textsuperscript{51}

While the various uses of authorities is the most widely prescribed method of amplifying the sermon, a close second is the variety of ways in which parts of speech or a simple analysis of the words in the divided and subdivided theme may be used. Robert of Basevorn, for instance, shows how verbs can be distinguished by tense ("Would that they knew the past, understand the present, and will foresee the future") or by person ("I will show (first) you (second) every good (third)"). On the text "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" he says that the preacher can show vanity in things made for man, those made by man and those made in man. Henry of Hesse suggests that in dividing the theme one can distinguish clause from clause, word from word, and clause from word. Others suggest that the words in the divided theme be given extended

\textsuperscript{50} Charland, pp. 196-98.

\textsuperscript{51} Smyth, p. 27.
definitions or etymologies, and the significant meaning for the sermon be drawn out in that way. Pseudo-Aquinas, among others, suggests pointing out the particular suggestions of words (what does "king" imply; what does "ass" imply). A favorite device is to treat an individual word as an acrostic (the signification, for instance, of each letter of D-E-U-S).  

Related to this method is Pseudo-Aquinas' third device, the analysis of the properties of things. Why does a portion of the theme refer to a lily, for instance, or to oil in another case? What properties of a lily or of oil further our understanding of the text?

Pseudo-Aquinas' fourth method of amplification is also one which is almost universally alluded to. It is to bring to bear on the theme the various meanings implied in the four senses of exegesis. The literal sense simply explains the historical meaning--Jerusalem was the capital city of Judaea, or David was a great king of Judah. The tropological sense provides some means of applying the

52 One can hardly let this opportunity pass without reference to a footnote provided by Harry Caplan in "Classical Rhetoric and the Medieval Theory of Preaching," on p. 128 of Of Eloquence: "The story of a sermon recently delivered at Yale University is doubtless apocryphal. A student, deeply affected by an hour's varied exposition, in this style, of the true meaning of the monosyllable Y-A-I-E, is alleged to have piously expressed his thankfulness that he was not attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology."
theme to the moral habits of men in order to correct vices and exhort the listeners to the corresponding virtues. In this sense, Jerusalem is the soul of the individual; David slew Goliath just as the believer struggles with evil within himself. The allegorical sense usually makes a comparison between the theme and either Christ or a saint—in the allegorical sense, Jerusalem represents the church militant, and David slew Goliath just as Christ slew the devil. The anagogical sense points out the destiny of the individual in eternal life—Jerusalem is the celestial church triumphant. Henry of Hesse advises the preacher, when using the anagogical sense, to use the exclamation "Oh!" when describing the joys of heaven to those who do good, and to be sure to cry "Alas!" when frightening sinners with the pangs of hell.

Another method of amplification is the use of what Pseudo-Aquinas calls "natural truths"—analogies, similes, and metaphors which drive home an accepted fact, such as "God loves us just as a parent loves his or her children."

Notice that in this case, "allegorical" is used in the limited sense it acquired in the traditional "four senses" distinction. The church militant as the body of Christ as a metaphor for Christ's actual body. This is distinct from the "tropological," which instructs the individual in his own spiritual conduct, and the "typological," in which the literal body of Christ and the figurative body of Christ, the church, are the fulfillments of an Old Testament type.
His sixth method is to point out pairs of opposites—for every vice implied in a part of the theme, exhort the audience to the merit of the corresponding virtue. A seventh method is to use comparisons, especially the common and frequently cited positive/comparative/superlative sequence. Pseudo-Aquinas' eighth and ninth methods we have already discussed under ways in which various writers use individual words to amplify the sermon: by definition (Blessedness is...) or by the listing of synonyms (woe: cares, worries, adversity, perils, etc.). Pseudo-Aquinas does not mention the various argumentative devices frequently cited by other writers—proof/disproof, syllogism, enthymeme, exemplification, causal analysis, etc.

None of the _ars praedicandi_ tractates offer advice on how the preacher ought to conclude the sermon after the amplification—this step marks the last process any writer alludes to in the production of a sermon. Many of the writers offer asides on how to improve the rhetorical affect of the sermon which is composed of these main parts. Robert of Basevorn, for instance, offers tips on how to achieve a smooth transition from one point to the next, how to employ the techniques of "correspondence" (if the subdivisions of the main divisions are abc def ghi, then adg must concur), "circuitous development" (intertwined relationships among the subdivisions), "convolution" (link
each subdivision to all the others in some way) and "unification" (cite one authority who subsumes several of your division headings under one statement). Various forms of rhetorical "coloration" are sometimes discussed (such as using a rhyming concordance to rhyme each division heading), although these are usually considered to be somewhat suspect, and are never strongly advised. There are frequent, although usually merely passing, references to gesture, bearing, vocal modulation, and length; Pseudo-Aquinas even warns the preacher to use properly euphemistic circumlocutions in order to maintain propriety. Nowhere, however, is there a discussion of anything comparable to the classical peroratio; every tract seems to assume that the sermon simply ends at the point at which the preacher completes the amplification.

It may well be, as Charland suggests, that the reason for this is simply that the preacher achieved the greatest sense of aesthetic satisfaction in the intricate and graceful rhetorical patterns exhibited in every aspect of the sermon from the choice of a theme, through the division and culminating in the amplification. There is a fullness in the completeness with which the concordant authorities support the superstructure of the sermon, creating what Charland calls "une beaute sui generis."54

54Charland, p. 166.
An integral part of the satisfaction achieved in understanding a theme was its proper expansion. The image that recurs in many of the pamphlets, and is even depicted in some, is that of a tree—the trunk is the theme and the two great lower branches are the protheme and introduction. The trunk divides into three main limbs above the two lower branches; each limb further subdivides into three parts, and the leaves and fruit that fill out the entire upper portion of the tree are the ornaments of amplification. Obviously the tree needs no peroration to summarize or draw together its leaves and fruit—its glory is contained in its fullness and beauty seen as a whole.

The lack of a peroration is cited by some critics as one of several bits of evidence which lead to a conclusion regarding the ancestry of the *ars praedicandi* tradition. Charland argues that the genre owes more to Aristotle's logical works than Cicero's rhetorical works, particularly in view of the fact that the parts of the thematic sermon do not correspond to the five parts of Cicero's rhetoric. There seems to be additional evidence of Aristotelian derivation in the fact that the reliance of the *ars praedicandi* on argument *ex auctoritate* is more

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56 Charland, p. 12; cf. also Boynton, 202.
closely related to dialectic than to rhetoric, and the entire genre can quite simply be regarded as a logical outgrowth of scholastic dialectic. Caplan notes that the Henry of Hesse tractate shows a strong indebtedness to dialectic in the way in which it uses methods of Aristotelian logic in outlining and arranging its material. Caplan notes in passing that the ars praedicandi tractates in general owe as much to Aristotelian logic as to Ciceronian rhetoric.\(^57\)

The relationship of the ars praedicandi to the various strains of rhetorical traditions it grew out of is important for tracing the later development of the history of preaching theory. We cannot conclude our study of the ars praedicandi without a brief survey of its rhetorical ancestry. It ought to first of all be noted that, although it is a commonplace to speak of the medieval academic trivium of logic, grammar, and rhetoric, rhetoric was largely the poor step-sister of these arts.\(^58\) The suspicion of being somehow diabolically pagan, against which Augustine had seen fit to defend it, to some extend dogged rhetoric

\(^57\) Caplan, "'Henry of Hesse' on the Art of Preaching." 343.

\(^58\) Cf. Louis Paetow, The Arts Course at Medieval Universities, with Special Reference to Grammar and Rhetoric, in University of Illinois Studies, v. 3 (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1910).
throughout the middle ages. Among the questions it had continually to answer were those "concerning the relation of morals and eloquence, concerning the relation of art and wisdom, concerning the definition of rhetoric as a virtue or an art or a discipline."\textsuperscript{59} This is not to way that rhetorical studies were neglected as being somehow immoral; on the contrary, classical rhetoric in certain ways throve alongside theological studies, as long as it was made clear that pagan studies were always subordinate to, or the handmaiden of, sacred studies.\textsuperscript{60} While the theologians continued to express distrust of pagan oratorical arts, they also cautiously appraised its usefulness in practice. Three passages are quoted frequently in defense of secular disciplines: The first is "Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars [of the liberal arts]" Proverbs 9:1; the second is "If the hair of the beautiful captive woman shall be shorn and her nails pared, after that 'thou shalt go unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife'" Deut. 21:12-13; and the third is Augustine's famous passage in \textit{De doctrina christian}a in which he asserts that it is no sin to enrich the people of the He-

\textsuperscript{59}McKeon, 15.

\textsuperscript{60}Caplan, "A Late Medieval Tractate on Preaching," p. 42.
brews with the spoils of the Egyptians. 61

McKeon notes that on the one hand rhetoric was under the thumb of dialectic; the Aristotelian Thomists regarded it as part of logic. At the same time, the Augustinian theologians (for example, Bonaventure) regarded it as a necessary device, used with logic and grammar, to provide a neat set of rigid regulations to be used in interpreting Scripture--in this line of development rhetoric was under the thumb of theology. 62 He significantly notes that the three prescriptive rhetorical arts that developed in the middle ages (ars grammatica, ars dictaminis, and ars praedicandi) are "modern" in the sense that they were under the thumb of neither dialectic nor theology. They represented a sort of maverick new strain which offered pragmatic, textbook explanations of formal techniques to the exclusion of a doctrinaire consideration of content. 63

What the techniques of the ars praedicandi primarily emphasized was the process of rhetorical skill known as invention. "Inventio" was the first of Cicero's five parts of rhetoric, and was the aspect of rhetorical theory that

62 McKeon, 20-23.
63 Ibid., 27-28.
was most prominent in the Middle Ages. Ornamented eloquence alone was always subordinate to the selection and arrangement of material that preceded actual delivery. Even as classical learning was being defended, the authors of the preaching manuals usually noted, as Augustine had, that the danger of secular oratory lay not in the pagan rhetorical devices themselves but in the perverted ends to which they may be turned in practice. We have noted how such predecessors of the ars praedicandi as Alain, Guibert, Gregory and to some extent even Augustine urged the preacher to avoid excessive ornamentation, to use simplicity in order to aid the hearer in finding the truth, and never to use ornamentation for its own sake. Most of the authors of the ars praedicandi tracts would not wholly forbid rhetorical devices that promote eloquence; Robert of Basevorn said, "What some say therefore seems to me altogether reprehensible: that preaching ought not to shine with false verbal embellishments--for in very many sermons of St. Bernard the whole is almost wholly rich in colors." But the treatise that follows is almost wholly devoted to framing the structural outline of the sermon; it only briefly touches on eloquence as such. The emphasis in other ars praedicandi tracts is nearly always the same. Humbert of Romans' De eruditione praedicatorum is the most notable exception to the general tendency of the ars praedicandi
tracts to describe the development of the intricately divided and subdivided thematic sermon. He says of the university preachers,

Some preachers use too many subtleties in their discourses for the sake of elegance. At one time they seek those novelties which the Athenians delighted in; at another time they produce arguments drawn from philosophy which, they imagine, improve their speech.

But Humbert's treatise is itself a study in rhetorical invention; he carefully categorizes scores of different kinds of audiences and recommends the best approach to each.

This emphasis on invention came easily to medieval rhetoricians. The works of Cicero that were most widely known, and almost universally respected, were De inventione, the Topica, and De oratore. Perhaps the single most influential and widely respected rhetorical treatise during the middle ages was the pseudo-Ciceronian Rhetorica ad Herennium, whose first two books closely paralleled Cicero's De inventione and whose fourth book provided a comprehensive index of various ornamental devices in figures of speech and thought. Also influential, although it existed only in a fragmentary condition, was Quintillian's Institutio oratoria. Boethius' De differentiis topicis (Topica Boetii) was essentially a commentary on Cicero's Topica. The single overriding element that all these popu-

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64 Humbert of Romans, p. 32.
lar sources of medieval rhetorical theory had in common was, as Caplan points out, an emphasis on the importance of invention, the subordination of the quo modo to the quid. Expressive style, delivery and eloquence were of far less importance in this rhetorical tradition than the assembling of the material for the oratory, or the sermon. This emphasis on invention included as a major component the selection of the topos, or commonplace, the right argument for the right audience in the right circumstance. This was, of course, an important element in such earlier treatises as those of Gregory and Guibert, and in such non-thematic prescriptive treatises as that of Humbert of Romans. But it had its corresponding place in the ars praedicandi tradition as well. In preaching the "modern" sermon, the selection of the proper topic included the choice of the appropriate text, according to rigorous requirements. It also included the correct understanding of the potential subdivisions of the text, the selection of correspondent authorities, and the choice of the proper means of amplification. Caplan notes that the numerous aids to less original preachers, including such things as

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65 Caplan, "Rhetorical Invention in some Medieval Tractates on Preaching," in Of Eloquence, ed. King and North, p. 84. Reprinted from Speculum, 2 (1927), 284-95.

commentaries, Biblical glosses, homily collections, theme sentences, concordances, image-books, collections of anecdotes and moralities, exempla, bestiaries, parables, and homiletical lexicons, are all aids to the sense of invention. 67

There is a certain amount of patronizing displayed by some critics when they express wonder at the apparent suddenness with which the thematic sermon of the *ars prae-dicandi* tradition appeared on the scene, 68 as if it were somehow remarkable that medieval rhetoricians could so readily consolidate what were some well established traditions into a complex and cohesive methodology. It is undeniable that nothing that precedes the *ars praedicandi* points to the rigorous ordering of the sections of the sermon or the intricate patterns of amplification which the method employed. Yet the principles on which the *ars praedicandi* method was founded were all clearly evident prior to the thirteenth century. The rhetorical emphasis on invention, with its close attention to selection of topics (theme), its psychological awareness of the audience, and its rules for both amplifying and ornamenting an oratory

67 Caplan, "Rhetorical Invention," pp. 84-85.

had long been accepted as the basis for both secular and sacred rhetoric. The tradition of the thematic sermon is simply a logical extension of such principles, since the primary objective of a successful thematic sermon is the selection of the right topic for the right audience, and the controlled expansion of that topic, not by means of elocutionary prowess but by means of strict, pre-established rules of division and amplification. Murphy notes that, in addition to the emphasis on *inventio*, at least three of Cicero's seven parts of the *dispositio* are present in the thematic sermon: the protheme and introduction correspond to the *exordium*, the division corresponds to the *partitio*, and the amplification corresponds to the *confirmatio*. The Ciceronian inheritance certainly played a large part in nurturing the *ars praedicandi* tradition.

At the same time, the thematic sermon borrowed from Aristotelian dialectic. The very rigidity of its form is in part a result of the influence of the format by which the *disputatio* was taught. We have already noted how the use of argument *ex auctoritate* is a development of the *disputatio*, and might add that the emphasis on concordances may be related to the verbal/ideal concordances of elementary logic. Chenu is undoubtedly accurate when she notes

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69 Murphy, "The Arts of Discourse, 1050-1400," 205.
that the genre must be said to borrow from a number of distinct rhetorical traditions,\textsuperscript{70} for it displays characteristics of both the Ciceronian and the Aristotelian inheritance.

The development of these rhetorical traditions coincided with the development of the theory of preaching in Augustine, Gregory, Guibert and Alain. Not only had these earlier formulators of the art of preaching underscored the merit of invention as the basis for a methodology of preaching, reflecting the predominant characteristics of prevailing rhetorical theory; they had also introduced several of the other characteristic elements of the \textit{ars praedicandi}. Most importantly, their universal approval of other "senses" of Scripture laid the groundwork for the amplification exegesis on which the thematic sermon was built. All had prescribed the appeal to authorities as the basic support of a sermon; Alain had made such an appeal an integral part of the development of the sermon. Implicit in Augustine and Guibert was the necessity of a rhetorical division of the sermon's topic; the characteristic three-part division and subdivision of the thematic sermon was already explicit in Alain. All that remained for the unknown writers and preachers who established the guidelines of the \textit{ars praed-}

\textsuperscript{70}Chenu, introduction to Charland, p. 12.
dicandi to do was to arrange these already accepted principles into the six-part structure that became the remarkably popular thematic sermon. The sophistication with which this was done was no small achievement, certainly, but it did not occur in a vacuum.

The writers of the *ars praedicandi* genre understood the debt they owed to their predecessors. The examples of preachers most often cited in the tracts are Christ, Paul, Augustine, Gregory and Bernard of Clairvaux. More importantly, the treatises on preaching most often referred to are Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* and Gregory's *Cura pastoralis*. The influence of Guibert and especially Alain is clearly evident, although not as often explicitly cited. This is partly because the developers of the "modern" sermon were careful to rest at least some authority for their method on the prescriptions of well-established fathers; it is the same reliance on *ex auctoritate* proof that characterizes their sermon method itself. But the repeated citation of Augustine, Gregory and Bernard is also largely due to the fact that these were among the relatively few impassioned voices insisting on the importance of preaching as part of the life of the church and of the individual Christian. This insistence on the indispensable primacy of preaching is a recurrent concern in the tractates. Robert of Basevorn echoes Humbert of Romans in asserting
that preachers are such not by the **office** of preacher, but by the **practice** of preaching. Humbert, who did not subscribe to the thematic method but whose treatise is still an important one in the history of preaching theory, alludes to Gregory’s familiar analogy of the preacher as the physician of the soul (although Humbert compounds the metaphor): "A sick man does not look for eloquence in his doctor; and a doctor who gives his prescriptions in flowery language is like a ruler who cares more for elegance than practicality."\(^7^1\) The author of the pseudo-Aquinas tractate also echoes Gregory in noting the utility of preaching in the scheme of salvation: "For it is the way of life, the ladder of the virtues, and the door of Paradise. It is therefore not only an art, but the art of arts, and the science of sciences."\(^7^2\)

The importance which the **ars praedicandi** tradition ascribed to the place of preaching does not imply that the thematic sermon was the only method of preaching for two or three centuries in the late middle ages. The evidence indicates that it was, in fact, only practiced within the very limited sphere of the great university centers of Paris and Oxford and at a few important cathedrals or cen-

\(^{71}\) Humbert of Romans, p. 66.

\(^{72}\) Pseudo-Aquinas, in Caplan, "A Late Medieval Tractate on Preaching," p. 54.
ters of learning in England and the continent. Popular preaching was overwhelmingly dominated by the homily, the loosely organized, conversational, usually vernacular tractatus popularis delivered both by local priests and, increasingly, by wandering friars in public places. The exemplum, the short narrative illustrating a moral lesson, became in time a type of sermon in itself, distinct from the homily. But such popular forms of preaching, perhaps because of their very inorganic nature, did not generate any prescriptive literature concerning their form. The influence of the ars praedicandi tradition on the theory of sermon rhetoric far outweighs its actual employment in the local parish pulpit. It fostered the production of a volume of preaching treatises unequalled before or since, and it was the required training of the most learned and powerful men of the church. It was, in fact, the only articulated theory of preaching that exists, and was thus the point of departure for the later development of preaching theory.

The format of the thematic sermon strikes most modern readers as being pedantic, overly formalistic, and generally cumbersome. The rigor it requires is dismaying, yet we ought to remember, as M.D. Chenu points out, that it was part of the almost daily routine of the university theology students who learned to master it, and excellence
in its application was a major goal of their years of study at the university. And while it is rigid in its overall outline, it also possesses the distinct virtue of being carefully and methodically ordered, while still allowing great inventive leeway and creative flexibility for the preacher. Perhaps most importantly, it served its age well. For the medieval preacher was not simply a mouthpiece for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; he acknowledged his own importance in bringing careful craftsmanship to bear on the preaching of the Word. Etienne Gilson has noted that, while acknowledging the Spirit's inspiration, the preacher himself shouldered the burden of adequately demonstrating and affirming his theme, of offering a fruitful observation of divine truth by means of the aesthetically satisfying allignment of divisions, subdivisions, concordances and authorities. The method does not seem pedantically cumbersome when one realizes that both its process and its goal are an organic whole; it exists, as Gilson says, "par une logique sui generis." Beginning with the selection of the theme, it offers its careful arrangement of protheme, introduction, division, declaration and confirmation, and its intricately intertwined

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73 Chenu, introduction to Charland, p. 10.
strands of amplification for no other reason than to open up for the public the moral and religious significance or potential implications of the sacred text with which the sermon began. The skill with which the theme is amplified is part and parcel of the satisfaction derived from coming to a fuller understanding of the text. Form does not follow function in the sense that the goal takes precedence over the method. Rather, form and function are united in an organic whole; the goal is only achieved if the method is artistically performed. A theoretical concept of preaching which posited such an organic unity was well suited to the medieval mind. A dual fate lay in store for the ars praedicandi tradition as Renaissance and Reformation reinterpreted the rhetorical theory of preaching.

CHAPTER III

THE THEORY OF SERMON RHETORIC

FROM WYCLIF THROUGH THE REFORMATION

While the *ars praedicandi* genre generated by far a greater volume of preacher's manuals than any other theory of sermon rhetoric before or since, the sermon style prescribed in the genre did not assume great popular acceptance. This is not to say that it was not widely practiced. The "modern" method quickly became quite the fashion at the great university centers, and aspiring clerks, established masters of theology and ambitious prelates all vied to demonstrate their wit and erudition by scrupulously and elaborately applying its principles. The nuances of such performances, however, could only be appreciated when the sermons were delivered *ad clerum*, not when the preacher spoke *ad populum*. Already in the thirteenth century, not long after the modern thematic sermon emerged, dissenting voices were raised against its potential (which was soon exploited) for excessive attention to structure and style as opposed to content. Gerald Owst quotes a thirteenth century French preacher:

There are many who, when they come to sermon,...do not care what the preacher says; but only how he says it.
And if the sermon be well "rhymed," if the theme be well "divided," if the brother discourses well, if he pursues his argument well, if he "harmonizes" well, they say: "How well that brother preached!" "What a fine sermon he made!" That is all they look for in a sermon, nor do they attend to what he says.¹

Out of such dissent arose an increasing demand for and a corresponding supply of sermons directed to the popular taste.² Throughout the period during which the thematic sermon prescribed by the ars praedicandi manuals became more and more the accepted learned practice, the prevailing form of popular preaching had remained the homily. Its rambling, loosely structured form was the chief objection lodged against the "ancient" method by the ars praedicandi authors. Increasingly, therefore, preachers attempted to maintain the popular appeal of the relatively simple and straightforward homily while yielding to the demands of the scholarly revisionists that the sermon abandon its "artless" past and at least offer evidence of concern for structural form. One mode of exposition that offered both popular appeal and an inherent structural organization of its own was the narrative mode. The exemplum, the moral


tale, fable, anecdote, or legend used to illustrate a moral or theological lesson, had always been an accepted feature of preaching practice. The ars praedicandi manuals themselves offered it as one of several means of amplification, or as a device to employ in the protheme. The use of narrative illustrations in sacred rhetoric was sanctioned by the evidence of Scripture itself, both in Hebraic practice and in Christ's use of parables, as well as by every one of the most respected preaching theorists from Augustine on. In time, however, the exemplum outgrew its supportive, illustrative role and became a form of sermon in itself.

The exemplum developed as a sermon form largely as a species of homily organized along narrative lines. In part, however, it also grew out of the thematic sermon of the ars praedicandi variety. Exempla sermons thrived, for instance, on allegorical identifications (i.e., metaphorical comparisons) for the central characters in their narratives. This practice was partly encouraged by a misapplication of some of the amplificatory techniques of the ars praedicandi tracts. The result was a debased version of the "modern" method that contributed to its ill repute in years to come. In response to the recognition that the excessively erudite university sermon was of little benefit for the common people, since it gave them neither
pleasure nor instruction, many preachers, trained in the ars praedicandi method, sought to adapt it to the popular taste by appending a host of colorful exempla to a more scholarly sermon. During the fourteenth century, an increasing number of less well trained preachers, including often unlearned wandering friars, supplied the popular demand for more preaching. The result was frequently a curious mingling of thematic sermon devices and exempla. There are tangled divisions and subdivisions and tortured "amplifications" of exempla, or truncated expositions of texts. In short, the popular sermon often made a hodgepodge of the careful formulations of the ars praedicandi tradition, creating as M.M. Davy describes it, "une véritable gymnastique de texte en texte s'ajoutant les uns aux autres sans aucun lien logique."

It is a curious irony that the clerical orders

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3 Manning, p. 22.


5 Manning, p. 18. The mendicant friars were by no means always unlearned, of course, although their academic background was usually far less rigorous than that of the university-trained clergy.


which would be heavily assessed by the later reformers as the principle culprits in the abuse of preaching had for the most part been themselves established to correct abuses in the Church. Preaching was a chief concern of most of the mendicant orders at their inception. The *ars praedicandi* tradition itself had a close affiliation with the preaching orders; it developed in part to establish guidelines to redeem preaching from the inorganic shallowness of the ancient homily. The authors of the theoretical treatises protested the underdeveloped technique of the rising tide of popular preaching, while at the same time the popular preachers claimed to fill a preaching need left vacant by the theorists. In both its popular and clerical manifestations, however, preaching by the religious orders eventually left itself open to the very demands for reform that had once led to the establishment of those very orders.

John Wyclif (1330-1384), the "Morning Star of the Reformation," is an ideological descendant of the original preaching friars. He shared their reassertion of the im-

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8 The mendicant orders were founded, for the most part, in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Chief among them were the Franciscans (founded 1209), the Dominicans (1215) and the Augustinians (1256).

portance of preaching for the well-being of the souls of
the people. He also shared with the spokesmen of the
ars praedicandi tradition the conviction that preaching
must ultimately rest on the exposition of Scripture. In
accordance with his beliefs, he advanced a doctrine of
preaching which, while it is not strictly speaking a theory
of sermon rhetoric, articulated principles which antici-
pated the later reformers in their development of a rhe-
torical theory of preaching. And in so doing he repudi-
ated the corrupted contemporary practice of the two tradi-
tions with whose original ideals his own reforming princi-
ples were in complete accord.

Wyclif recognized three types of sermons in his
day. The first was the modern method practiced by the
intellectual elite. The fault with such preaching from
Wyclif's point of view was that it relied for its author-
ity on the inventions of man's reason rather than on the
simply stated truth of Scripture. The thirty-ninth of his
stipulations in "How Religious Men should keep certain
Articles" is "...bat þei studien bisily holy writt &
techn it more þan veyn sophistrie & astronomye & more þan


11 Manning, p. 19.
pe popis decretalis & fablis & cronyclis.\textsuperscript{12} The danger of the improper manner of teaching which Wyclif here warns against is that doctrine comes to depend on human interpretation rather than the literal sense of the Bible itself; Wyclif says elsewhere, ",\& \textit{it pei schame sumdel to saie to cristene lوردis пat holy writt is fals, but pei don worse bi sotel ypocrisie пat holy writt is fals to пе wor-dis but пе vnderstondynge пер-of is trewe; \& пе vnderston­dynge hangip in determinacion of worldly prelatis.\textsuperscript{13} The worldly prelates cannot be trusted to give a faithful interpretation, since one can only authoritatively accept an exegesis made by a heart open to the Spirit of God.\textsuperscript{14} The dissolute lives of such false interpreters is ample evidence that they have resisted the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, their exegesis is not Spirit-sanctioned, but a mere human invention.


\textsuperscript{13}Matthew, p. 266.

\textsuperscript{14}It is interesting to note Wyclif's anticipation of the position stated by Calvin in nearly exactly the same way: "We are at liberty to withhold our assent to their doctrine, until they show that it is from Christ" (Commentaries, I Cor. 3:22); "But there is simply permission given them [the congregation] to judge by the Spirit of God, whether it is his word that is set before them, or whether human inventions are, without any authority, set off under this pretext" (Commentaries, I Cor. 14:29).
Wyclif protests that minute logical distinctions and compounded divisions work together to bury the simple truth of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{15} The upshot of such obfuscation is the imperiling of men's souls. He acknowledges at one point that scholastic theorizing is one possible approach to the word of God, but it does not serve to instruct men in living moral lives day by day: "Beside lettre of þis gospel, mai men meeve doutis of scole; but me þinkip now, it is bettre to touche lore of vertues. We shal bileve þat al þe gospel, be it nevir so literal, techip what þing shal bifalle, and how þat men shal lyve."\textsuperscript{16}

The very style of the university sermons contributed to the obscuring of the word they sought to preach. Workman quotes Wyclif as saying,

\begin{quote}
This ornamental style is little in keeping with God's Word. The latter is rather corrupted by it, and its power paralyzed for the conversion and regeneration of souls. God's Word, according to Augustine, has a peculiar and incomparable eloquence of its own, in its very simplicity and modesty of form.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Wyclif's quarrel with rhetorical ornamentation is founded not on an assertion that there is anything inherently wrong with such devices (he again echoes Augustine in this), but

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Workman, vol. 2, p. 211.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Uncited quotation in Workman, vol. 2, p. 212.
\end{itemize}
that they lead to the extrinsic faults of unseemly pride in one's oratorical prowess and sinful competition between preachers for their own glory.\textsuperscript{18} To all intents and purposes, then, Wyclif has no room in his doctrine of preaching for the ornamental devices of scholastic amplification.

The second type of preaching that Wyclif singled out for attack was the popular form, practiced especially by the wandering friars, which consisted almost entirely of strings of \textit{exempla} linked together.\textsuperscript{19} The basis for his attack on such sermons was the same as that for his objection to the university sermons—they did not expound the word of God, but substituted instead material invented by the human mind. He cries at one point, "See now where \textsc{be} failen in werkes of gostly mercy. first \textsc{if} \textsc{be} techen opynly fablys, cronyklis and lesyngis and leuen cristes gospel and \textsc{be} maundementis of god, and \textsc{it} don \textsc{be} pis principaly for worldly wynnynge, frendschipe or veyn name \textsc{be} don a\textsc{3}enst \textsc{3e} chifwerk of gostly mercy."\textsuperscript{20} Wyclif was realistic enough to recognize that such performances appealed to the popular taste; he notes ruefully at one point,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Workman, vol. 2, p. 212.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Matthew, p. 16.
\end{itemize}
"To sum men it plesip for to telle þe talis þat þei fynden in seintes lyves, or wip outen holi writt; and sich þing plesip ofte more þe peple."  

Wyclif could not be content to cater to such a public taste. He sought rather to elevate the taste of the common man by accustoming him to the preaching of the word of God alone: "But we holden þis manere good,—to leue sich wordis and triste in God, and telle sureli his lawe, and speciali his gospelis; for we trowen þat þei camen of Crist, and so God sei hem alle."  

This is the third style of preaching he recognizes, and it is that which he practices. It is important to note that once again, as had been the case throughout the history of the theory of preaching, Wyclif describes a close connection between preaching and exegesis. Wyclif's ideal mode of preaching is that which expounds Scripture per nudum textum; this means that all other "senses" of Scriptural interpretation are subjugated under the literal statement of the text itself:

Here men seyne aftur austyn, þat no witt of holi writt, but if [it] be literal witt, proue ou3t by autoritie of it....pus men vnderstonden not þe gospelle of ihesu

22 Ibid.
23 Smyth, p. 89.
Much of Wyclif's doctrine of preaching evolves in his denunciation of the corrupt and dissolute clergy of fourteenth century England. The importance of correct exegesis is underscored when he attacks the laxity of preachers in understanding Scripture:

But few curatis han þe bible & exposiciouns of þe gospelis, & litel studien on hem & lesse donne after hem. But wolde got þat every perische chirche in þis lond and þat þe prestis studiende hem wel & tauþen trewely þe gospel & goddis hestis to þe peple; for þen schulde good lif regne, & reste & pees & charite; & synne & falsnesse putt a bak.

Wyclif himself, of course, did much toward furthering his goal of placing a good, vernacular Bible in every parish church in England.

Among his assaults on the clergy, a recurring charge is their failure to exercise the office of preacher. In this he echoes similar sentiments expressed by such distinguished forebears as Augustine, Gregory the Great, Guibert de Nogent and Alain de Lille. These are also the views once expressed by the monastic orders themselves, although Wyclif charges that they now shamefully neglect their calling. He again anticipates the reformers when he

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24 Matthew, p. 343.

25 Ibid.
asserts that preaching is a fundamental duty of the church, not an extraneous burden: "To moste hye service pat men have in erthe is to preche Gods worde, pat falles unto prestis." Preaching was instituted by Christ and the apostolic church: "And herfore Jesus Crist occupyed hym mooste in bo werke of prechyng, and laft oper werkes; and bus diden his apostils, and herfore God loved hom." It is by preaching that the true word is maintained; preaching is conducted for the spiritual well-being of both the individual and the church. Without it, the individual no longer understands the word of God, and falls away from it; the Church as a whole is apt to fall into error and corruption: "And ydelnesse in pis office hyndris most bo Chirche, and gendres most bo fendes childer, and sendes hom to his court." He goes on in this passage to attack the prelates who delegate the duty of preaching rather than exercising it themselves.

The fundamental importance of preaching, the relationship between preaching and exegesis and the content of the sermon itself were Wycliff's most important contributions to the development of preaching rhetoric. His own

27 Ibid., p. 144.
28 Ibid.
program for reforming preaching did not meet with lasting success. The Lollard friars who preached in the Wyclifite vein (whether he specifically commissioned the order or whether they were devoted followers who set out without his official sanction is unclear\(^{29}\)) were not well received. They were, of course, a direct challenge to both the authority and the livelihood of the friars, who actively opposed them.\(^{30}\) It is generally argued that Wyclif's style of preaching, as he himself conceded, could not compete with the popular, earthy appeal of the friars' sermons.\(^ {31}\) This view is given some credence by Chaucer's portrayal of the Lollards. While Chaucer may be in accord with their attack on the rapacity of much of the clergy, he also sympathizes with his pilgrims' impatience with the sanctimonious, somewhat tedious piety of the Lollards.

Still, it can hardly be asserted that Wyclif's preaching was either too intellectual or abstract. It was spiritual, certainly, and its adherence to a Biblical passage could scarcely have been as compelling listening as some tale about a young person recalled from a life full of the most diverting vices. It was not, however, any the


\(^{30}\) Workman, vol. 2, p. 204.

less down to earth and accessible to the common man. Wyclif's homilies were addressed to the common man; his exposition of Scripture was straightforward and could easily be understood by his audience. Since his approach was exegetical rather than anecdotal, it is understandable that Wyclifite preaching was less preferred than the friars' exempla. But that is not because the lack of external aids indicated an intellectual level too abstract for his auditors. In a later age (the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in England) when spiritual fervor was more common, a similar, simple and spiritual style would find immense popularity among the relatively less learned.

The Wyclifite/Lollard influence was not long lived in England, at least not in terms of any concrete reform of existing institutions. The Lollards had all but ceased to exist before the Reformation took effect in England. The extent to which Wyclif's pre-reformational sentiment struck a respondent chord in some English hearts that still sounded at the onset of the Reformation is a tenuous link that it is not the purpose of this study to expose. It had been noted by church historians that the Reformation in England, given its political/nationalistic intricacies, is less traceable to religious motivation than to those more secular forces. Such a view would indeed tend to derogate the importance of some vestiges of Wyclifite religious
ideals as an influence on the English Reformation. Wy-clif's more immediate direct influence was in Bohemia, where Jan Hus produced a Czech Bible, and established a persecuted but persistent movement. It is a common assumption of Reformation historians that it was partly the Husite influence in southern Germany that fueled the reforming instincts of Luther and that made the Swiss cantons receptive ground for the swift and firm establishment of wholly reformed political entities. It is not too far-fetched to assert that Wyclif's influence was felt in England more by way of Hus and the subsequent continental Reformation than by any direct line of influence in his native land.

Wyclif's relationship to the history of the theory of preaching is a curious one, but one which is crucial to understanding the influence of the medieval *ars praedicandi* tradition on subsequent preaching theory. It is important to note two characteristics that Wyclif had in common with the *ars praedicandi* manuals. The first was his insistence on the importance of preaching. The *ars praedicandi* tradition had developed in response to precisely the same need Wyclif saw, the reassertion of the fundamental necessity of preaching for the survival of the church. Both the *ars praedicandi*

praedicandi authors and Wyclif spoke of the necessity of hearing the word preached for the well-being of the individual's soul. Both said that without preaching God's people were an easy target for the devil. Both underscored the notion that to preach was a fundamental duty of the ordained pastor, and both promised the priest who failed to preach a special measure of damnation. The ars praedicandi authors, however, never claimed that preaching was the only vehicle whereby the word could be interpreted; here Wyclif parted company with them, as would the later reformers, by saying that only in Spirit-led exegetical instruction was the word correctly comprehended. The philosophical disputations of the schoolman or the pronouncements of councils or papal decrees could claim no special insight into the meaning of the plain truth of Scripture.

The second fundamental agreement between the ars praedicandi authors and Wyclif was their mutual assertion that only the text of the Bible itself could be used as the basis for a sermon. It is true that the thematic sermon introduced a wealth of extraneous material to amplify the theme, but the theme itself was always Scriptural. This Biblical foundation for preaching opposed the practice of preaching rambling homilies on assorted moralizing topics, or of creating sermons which were wholly composed of exempla in much the same terms as Wyclif's denunciation of
the same practices. Wyclif's exegetical preaching was not limited to a single text as the thematic method was; in this, the ars praedicandi prescription was even closer to later practice than Wyclif. Clearly, however, Wyclif charted a course which paralleled the insistence of the entire ars praedicandi genre on the restoration of scripturally-based preaching.

While the Puritan plain style is much more closely related, both structurally and stylistically, to Wyclif's doctrine of preaching than to the ars praedicandi prescription, it is still important to recognize that the tradition the plain style grew out of included important elements of a theory to which it seems diametrically opposed. There are other strands of development in which the ars praedicandi tradition is apparent in the history of the theory of preaching rhetoric. W. Fraser Mitchell notes that there is a "striking continuity of form and design" in which the schemata of the ars praedicandi tradition are seen to be related to pagan, classical oratory on the one hand and sixteenth century pulpit practice on the other. The common denominator is classical oratory; we have already seen its influence in the patristic age and on the

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theory of the *ars praedicandi* manuals. Its influence was only heightened by the Renaissance, and one line of the development of preaching rhetoric bore the direct imprint of the classical tradition well into the seventeenth century. Of course other homiletical and rhetorical developments were also at work in evolving the theory of the plain style, but the milieu out of which it developed was saturated with classical rhetoric in both its original and *artes praedicandi* manifestations. *Ars praedicandi* tractates were still being written in the fifteenth century (primarily in Germany by then), and Blench cites examples of thematic sermons being preached in England as late as the sixteenth century.³⁴

Much of the development of preaching rhetoric in the pre-Reformation period grew out of dissatisfaction with the state of the clergy. The denunciation of the clergy in the fourteenth century in England was not wholly the work of Wyclif. Several established churchmen, including Robert Rypon, William de Rymyngton, and John de Bromyard, among others, deplored the condition of the clergy.³⁵ These men were primarily anti-Wyclifite, anti-Lollard prelates, al-

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though they certainly shared similar dissatisfactions. Their dissatisfaction, however, did not evolve into a theory of preaching reform, as Wyclif's did; they leveled their attack more at the conditions that produced poor preaching as a by-product. 

36 Bromyard's *Summa praedican-tium* (c.1360-1368), which was printed in several fifteenth and sixteenth century editions, was primarily a collection of homilies and exempla; while it strongly urged the regular and perhaps more edifying practice of preaching, it did not offer any theoretical reflections on sermon rhetoric.

The situation with respect to the rhetorical theory of preaching developed little in the fifteenth century. *Ars praedicandi* tractates continued to be written, and that tradition dominated the theoretical concept of preaching rhetoric. The practice of preaching, however, was largely loosed from any theoretical moorings; structureless homilies and exempla prevailed, and misapplications of the *ars praedicandi* prescriptions resulted in extravagant and distorted ornamentation or tortured allegorizing in many instances. By the end of the century, the influence of Renaissance humanism began to be felt in theory of preaching rhetoric. The upshot of this was a

reinforcement of the role of classical rhetoric in preaching theory, underscoring the emphasis already evident in the *ars praedicandi* tractates. The truly revolutionary impact on preaching rhetoric, however, came not from any evolution in theory but from a complete reform of practice as the era of reformation dawned. We ought to take note of a few important links between medieval theory and sixteenth-century practice before we examine that practice in greater detail.

Probably the most popular and widely-read preaching manual in circulation in the early sixteenth century was Johann Ulrich Surgant's *Manuale curatorum* (1502-03). Surgant had studied law at both Paris and Basel and became a law professor at Basel sometime around 1480. After the first edition of the *Manuale curatorum* was published at Basel in 1503, it went through nine editions by 1520.37 There was a serious attempt underway to improve preaching within the sprawling archdiocese that included Basel. Several of the cathedrals in the district had endowed clerical positions for preachers, and the bishop made Surgant's book required reading for all clerics in the archdiocese. Among the endowed Roman Catholic preachers, therefore, who

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must have read Surgant's book were John Oecolampadius (Augsburg), Wolfgang Capito (Basel) and Ulrich Zwingli (Zurich). Surgant's Manuale was certainly known by these later reformers, all of whom exhibited the typical reformers' devotion to preaching.

Surgant was no reformer, but his Manuale shared in both humanist and, to a certain extent, reforming tendencies. Much of the Manuale is devoted to a description of the type of man who ought to be a preacher. This was, of course, a concern of preacher's manuals since the time of Augustine, and had received its greatest attention in the work of Gregory and Guibert. It was less central but almost always noted in the ars praedicandi tractates. Surgant's basic definition is the familiar one that the preacher ought to be learned and good. He defines who may preach and the duties and importance of the preacher in the usual fashion—only the ordained clergy may preach, but all the ordained clergy must preach. His tone is not as belligerent as that of the later reformers when he makes this latter

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point, but he does take his contemporaries to task for failing to live up to the requirement of the practice of preaching. He urges that a sermon be presented every time Mass is offered, and requires that all prelates share in this responsibility. It is significant that Surgant so emphatically states the necessity for preaching and denounced its neglect: Hirsch notes that, while the status of preaching was clearly in a sorry state at the time of the Reformation, it is also true that to some extent the reformers tended to exaggerate the conditions they sought to improve, possibly in order to justify their separation. The success of Surgant's Manuale shows the commitment of many to reform the ministry within the established church.

Another of the important features of Surgant's book is the authority which he cites for his ideas regarding preaching. Among the sources which he claims are most important for developing a theory of preaching are Christ, Paul, Gregory the Great, and William of Auvergne, an ars praedicandi author. Another source is Maurice de Leyde, the author of a preacher's manual which contains both Al-

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41 Hirsch, 201.
ain's famous definition of preaching and that of the fif­
teenth-century German author of the pseudo-Aquinas tract­
tate: 42 "Praedicatio est verbi Dei conveniens et congrua dispensatio." The important elements in this definition
are the fact that preaching is based solely on the Word of
God and the notion that the sermon must systematically ex­
pond the meaning of the Word. These factors form the
core of the ars praedicandi method, which Surgant heavily
relies on. But they are also the basic elements of the
preaching practice of the reformers. Surgant reaffirms
the central place of Scripture in preaching elsewhere when
he notes that the Bible alone can be the source for the
preacher, since it is the repository of divine truth and
is wholly inerrant. Such a stance would soon be loudly
seconded by the reformers.

Surgant appended a list of recommended books to his
Manuale, for the edification of the preacher who is in­
clined to further his dedication to preaching. Among the
names included on the list are, not surprisingly, Augustine
and Gregory the Great, as well as St. Bonaventure and Al­
bertus Magnus, whose writing on preaching is associated
with the ars praedicandi genre. Also included is John de
Bromyard's Summa praedicantium. The list of recommended

42 Roth, p. 151.
books is a device which underscores the practical nature of Surgant's handbook. But it also indicates the persistence of a long-established line of descent, with its origin in Augustine, for the history of preaching theory. And because of the reformers' familiarity with Surgant, it is one of the few direct links between the *artes praedicandi* and the theory of preaching as it was revised for the Reformation.

While most of the *Manuale curatorum* focuses on such practical aspects of pastoral care, it also offers a summary of the medieval theory of preaching. The parts of the sermon as outlined by Surgant show the strong influence of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth century *ars praedicandi* format. But Surgant's outline also demonstrates the direct influence of humanist scholarship and a closer affiliation with Ciceronian rhetorical models than is apparent in the *artes praedicandi*. Surgant says that the sermon consists of seven parts: *thematis propositio*, *salutatio populi*, *divinii auxilii imploratio*, *thematis introductionis*, *thematis divisionis*, *partium divisionum prosecutio*, and *conclusio*. These clearly coincide with the first parts of the *ars praedicandi* scheme, the theme, protheme (in this case, the *salutatio populi* and the *divinii auxilii imploratio*, the prayer for assistance with which the protheme ends), introduction, and division. Surgant subsumes the
body of the ars praedicandi sermon, the declaration and confirmation of parts and the amplification, under the single heading partium divisionum prosecutia, and adds the conclusion usually lacking in the ars praedicandi manuals. Surgant's use of the term "salutatio populi" as a distinct section near the beginning of the sermon may show an inclination to incorporate something more nearly modeled after the classical "exordium" in the sermon. His inclusion of a "conclusio" is quite clearly a break from the ars praedicandi tradition, and an acknowledgement of the need for something corresponding to Cicero's peroratio.

While Surgant's application of classical oratory is only suggested, the Ciceronian influence is much more direct in the preaching theory of other pre-Reformation humanists, notably Erasmus, John Colet and Johannes Reuchlin. The primary importance of the so-called Christian humanists for the reformers is generally conceded to be their application of the skills of humanistic scholarship to the translation and exegesis of Scripture. These were techniques that were necessary to ease the access to the unencumbered text of the Bible essential to the formation of the Biblically-based doctrines of the reformers. The publication of Erasmus' Greek New Testament put a crucially important

\[43\] Cf. Blench, pp. 28-29 and Brown, p. 40.
scholarly tool in the hands of the reformers. Since the
protestant preachers relied wholly on the exposition of
Scripture in light of both the new learning and the pris-
tine heritage of the apostolic church in order to expose
Rome's betrayal of the Biblical faith, the humanist re-
vival was a necessary adjunct to the reform of preaching
theory.

The Christian humanists, however, also prescribed
a formula for preaching which the reformers by and large
ignored. In 1504, Reuchlin, a colleague of Surgant, pub-
lished his Liber congestorum de arte praedicandi, which
prescribed that the sermon ought to be modeled directly
after the Latin oratory of Cicero. He argued that the ser-
mon should be composed of the traditional seven parts of
the classical dispositio: exordium, narratio, partito,
confirmatio, refutatio, the optional digressio, and the
peroratio. 44 Erasmus urged the use of the same Ciceronian
model in his Ecclesiastes (1535). Such thorough imitations
of classical oratory were not picked up by the Protestant
preachers, however. It would remain for Peter Ramus later
in the century to provide a rhetorical theory suitable for

44 Cf. Blench, p. 85 and Hirsch, 201. Blench does
not take into account the influence of classical oratory
on the artes praedicandi when he claims that Reuchlin was
the first to apply the Ciceronian model to the sermon (cf.
James Jerome Murphy, "The Arts of Discourse, 1050-1400,"
Medieval Studies, 23 (1961), 205).
development into a distinctly Protestant theory of preaching.

As noted earlier, there was a considerable revival of interest in the status of preaching in the years immediately preceding the Reformation, especially in the Swiss cantons and southern Germany. Certain preaching manuals were extremely popular, including Surgant's *Manuale curatorum* and John de Bromyard's monumental collection of homilies and exempla, the *Summa praedicantium*. The revival of humanist scholarship had sparked a great deal of interest in the early church fathers, and a number of patristic sermon collections were being published for the first time. Perhaps even more importantly, a number of clerics developed a reputation as excellent preachers, and began to be respected as such. Among these were Johannes Heynlin, whose students included Reuchlin and Surgant. Another particularly influential mentor was Johannes Geiler of Kaysersberg, whose students included Matthew Zell, Jakob Sturm and Jakob Ottler, all of whom turned to the support of the Swiss Reformation. We have already noted how such central figures in the Swiss Reformation as Capito, Oecolamadius and Zwingli held endowed posts as preachers in major cathedrals. And in the university town of Wittenberg, an Augus-

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45 Old, pp, 185-86.
tinian monk was about to commence a career that depended for its success on this greater devotion to and popular appreciation of preaching. He would in large part rely on his own preaching, and that of his followers, to solidify a broadly based popular support for his break with the established church.

The conventional wisdom asserts that Martin Luther was the fiery spirit and emotional heart of the Reformation, while Calvin lent it its logical precision. There is much to support that assertion in the evidence of the preaching practices of the two great reformers. Although both men preached for the benefit of popular audiences, Luther's preaching was reputed to be impassioned and the sermons themselves were inclined to stir the emotional commitment of the hearer to the just cause of Reformation. Calvin's sermons are coolly exegetical, and were delivered in the dispassionate pace and range of inflection which his chronically asthmatic condition only allowed him. But despite the nearly stereotypical surface distinctions between the preaching of Luther and Calvin, their respective preaching theories have much in common. While neither man left any systematically articulated record of his theory of sermon rhetoric, such as a preacher's manual or a treatise on preparing a sermon, both left numerous scattered references both to their theology of preaching and their
attitude toward the practice of preaching.

Luther recognized that the preaching of the word of God was to be a mainstay of his movement. This recognition had both a practical and a theological element in it. The practical aspect was the simple understanding that regular preaching of the Lutheran position was necessary both to educate the people in the plain meaning of Scripture and the corresponding errors of the Roman Catholic inheritance, as well as to solidify their sense of themselves as a unified body of believers and to help recruit new adherents. The theological aspect was more complex, and always implicit rather than explicit. It is most apparent when he speaks of the relationship of the word and the sacraments, as he does, for example, in "This is My Body" and "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper." The word of God is, for Luther, the spoken word, the word as preached, the oral proclamation of both the Law and the Gospel. It is inextricably linked in meaning with that sense of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper which speaks of the celebration of the supper as the proclamation of

the Lord's death till he comes. Exegetical preaching is not merely the exposition of correct doctrine. It instructed, certainly, but it did more—it summoned the hearers, called to them, invited them to come to the font of divine wisdom, the word of God. The word as preached was thus just as much a proclamation of Christ's death as the commemorative supper which consecrated it.

Luther consistently emphasized the centrality of preaching in the church since it is the vehicle for the word of God. When Luther refers to the "Word of God," he is usually referring to the spoken, proclaimed word, not the written record of the Bible. Since Christ's was an oral ministry of the Word, so must ours be. In another context, he points out that the mistake of believing that the invented doctrines of men are God's word speaking through them arises from the Church's misapplication of Christ's injunction to his disciples that "Who hears you, hears me." This exhortation of Christ does not mean that the preacher's subjective opinion has Christ's sanction. Luther explains that the text is used out of context, for it is preceded by the exhortation to preach about the king-


48 Ibid., 63-65.
dom of God; then whoever hears their words hears Christ. The great commission enjoined the apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Luther points out that Christ "does not say, 'Go and preach what you like, or what you think to be right.' But he puts his own word into their mouth and bids them preach the gospel." 49

As the vehicle for the word of God, then, preaching holds a greatly elevated rank in the scale of Christian duties. Luther says at one point, "Therefore, whoever has the office of preaching imposed on him has the highest office in Christendom imposed on him." 50 He goes on in the same passage to say that only after one is ordained a preacher of the word may he proceed to administer the two sacraments and perform other pastoral duties. If one leaves the office of preaching in the hands of subordinates, as the haughty Roman prelates do, then one is not a true priest or preacher of the word:

Whoever does not preach the word, though he was called by the church to do this very thing, is no priest at all....Therefore, those who are ordained only to read


50Luther, "That a Christian Assembly has the Right and Power to Judge all Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture," Works, vol. 39, p. 314.
the canonical hours and to offer masses are indeed papal priests, but not Christian priests, because they not only do not preach, but they are not even called to preach. \(^{51}\)

Preaching, then, is not the prerogative of an anointed priesthood, but the basic responsibility of all men called to minister for the word of God. It is on the basis of one's devotion to preaching that he is ordained. This means, however, that since the ministers of the word are not necessarily only those chosen few nourished in the bosom of the church and anointed in a false sacrament, any man has the right to exercise the office of preaching. In order to maintain order and avoid the nearly anarchic chaos that would soon plague the more radical Protestant sects, Luther points out that the office of preaching must be limited only to those most skilled in its practice:

Thus Paul charges Timothy to entrust the preaching of the Word of God to those who are fitted for it and who will be able to instruct others. The person who wishes to preach needs to have a good voice, good eloquence, a good memory and other natural gifts; whoever does not have these should properly keep still and let somebody else speak. \(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\) Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," Works, vol. 36, p. 113. This passage is, of course, a strong condemnation of the cenobitic monastic orders, such as The Benedictines, Cistercians, and Carthusians. The contemplative orders, with their devotion to manual labor and prayer, neglect the fundamental office of preaching.

Luther's remarks concerning natural gifts lead us to a discussion of his theory regarding the content, form and style of preaching. He says in one of the Table-Talk fragments, "Some day, I'll have to write a book against artful preachers." Unfortunately for the student of the history of preaching rhetoric he never tackled that project—but he has left us a very full account of his notions regarding preaching, particularly in his Table-Talk, a collection of fragments of informal conversations between Luther and various friends and admirers.

Like the other early reformers, Luther's exegetical principles were based on the literal sense of Scripture. In an uncited footnote, Owst quotes Luther as saying, "When I was young,...I dealt largely in allegories, and tropes, and a quantity of idle craft; but now I have let all that slip, and my best craft is to give the Scripture with its plain meaning, for the plain meaning is learning and life." In his "Lectures on Genesis," Luther says that

53 Luther, Table-Talk, Works, vol. 54, #5047, p. 384.
55 Owst, Preaching in Medieval England, p. 313n.
in his interpretation he has created all these facts in their historical meaning, which is their real and true one. In the interpretation of Holy Scripture the main task must be to derive from it some sure and plain meaning, especially because there is such a variety of interpreters--Latin, Greek, and Hebrew too. Almost all of these not only do not concern themselves with the story but bury it and confuse it with nonsensical allegories.\(^{56}\)

He specifically rejects the use of the four senses, and says, "But if we wish to handle Scripture aright, our one effort will be to obtain unum, simplicem, germanum, et certum sensum literalem."\(^{57}\) He asserts elsewhere, "It is the historical sense alone which supplies sound and true doctrine."\(^{58}\)

Luther does, however, allow a certain amount of figurative interpretation. Once the literal sense is clearly established by the words of the text, he concedes that figures and allegories might be understood in the meaning of the text: "After this has been treated and correctly understood, then one may also employ allegories as an adornment and flowers to embellish or illuminate the account."\(^{59}\) Admitting his distaste for allegories, he

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\(^{56}\)Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," Works, vol. 1, p. 231.

\(^{57}\)Luther, uncited quotation in Brench, p. 39.

\(^{58}\)Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," op. cit., p. 233.

\(^{59}\)Ibid.
explains that he avoids them "unless the text itself indicated them or the interpretations could be drawn from the New Testament." Thus there are two distinct senses of Scripture for Luther, the literal and the figurative, or spiritual. But since the meaning of the spiritual is so closely dependent on the literal, his figurative exegesis is in fact little more than the application of the principles of typology—the historical meaning of the words of scripture pre-figure other literal, historical occurrences. He distinguishes his figurative interpretation from Alexandrian allegory at precisely the point at which the Antiochene and Alexandrian schools part company—Alexandrian allegory at some point departs from the literal sense and thus denies the historicity of scripture, while the Antiochene type/antitype scheme preserves the literal meaning of scripture even while allowing for a figurative sense. Davis points out that Luther uses "figure," "type," "picture," "example," and "image" nearly interchangeably, because all such terms are equally applicable to typological identifications.

His use of typological exegesis as the basis for

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61Davis, p. 36.
62Ibid., p. 37.
the content of the exposition provided in his preaching is consistent with Luther's overall view that preaching ought to be as instructive as possible for the common people. Excessive allegorizing is rejected partly because the instruction it provides may be prone to error, since it relies on human wit rather than the naked text. And equally important, allegorizing may well be too convoluted or abstract to be understood by the ordinary parishioner. It is the device of the scholar, the intellectually adept university clerk. Simple literal correspondences, the identification of Old Testament Christ figures for instance, are more within the ken of the popular masses, and are also more beneficial than error-ridden flights of fancy that take them far from the word itself.

Luther makes his intention in preaching clear when he says at one point in Table-Talk:

In my preaching I take pains to treat a verse, to stick to it, and so to instruct the people that they can say, "That's what the sermon was about." When Christ preached he proceeded quickly to a parable and spoke about sheep, shepherds, wolves, vineyards, fig-trees, seeds, fields, plowing. The poor lay people were able to comprehend these things.63

Luther recognizes the great power popular preaching can exert in support of the Reformational movement. He accordingly takes pains to address the common people. There is

63 Luther, Table-Talk, #1650, p. 160.
a sense in which this practice derives from the popular preaching of the wandering friars, although Luther is, of course, much more strict about the content of his exegetical sermons than were the friars with their fabulous tales and shocking exempla. Not surprisingly, Luther takes particular aim at the learned university preachers—the practitioners, in fact, of the *ars praedicandi* tradition:

Cursed be every preacher who aims at lofty topics in the church, looking for his own glory and selfishly desiring to please one individual or another. When I preach here I adapt myself to the circumstances of the common people. I don't look at the doctors and masters, of whom scarcely forty are present, but at the hundred or thousand young people and children. It's to them that I preach, to them that I devote myself, for they, too, need to understand. If the others don't want to listen they can leave. Therefore, my dear Bernard, be simple and direct; don't consider those who claim to be learned but be a preacher to unschooled youth and sucklings.64

He urges a follower at another point to avoid erudition in his preaching, but to give the sixteen-year old girls, the women, the old men and the farmers something they can take home with them: "Accordingly he's the best preacher who can teach in a plain, childlike, popular and simple way."65

It may be debated whether there is a superior air of condescension in this or simply an honest, humble concern for the welfare of his charges. There are certainly

64 Luther, *Table-Talk*, #3573, pp. 235-36.
65 Ibid., #5047, p. 384.
overtones of Augustine in the notion that the preacher has a duty to open the way to divine truth for his hearers. He is responsible to them in a bond of love in the act of preaching. There are also echoes of the notion most clearly stated by Guibert de Nogent that the rhetorical style of the sermon is an important consideration in choosing how to most effectively, or beneficially, address a congregation. Speaking of a fellow Lutheran preacher, Luther says, "Osiander possesses eloquence, follows an outline, and adheres to rules of rhetoric, but he doesn't instruct the people."66 A favorite target of Luther's barbs against excessively erudite, "artful" preachers was John Bugenhagen of Pomerania, known popularly as Pomeranus; in another passage he says,

When you are going to preach, speak with God and say, 'Dear Lord God, I wish to preach in thine honor. I wish to speak about thee, glorify thee, praise thy name. Although I can't do this well of myself, I pray that thou mayest make it good.' When you preach, don't look at Phillip or Pomeranus or me or any other learned man.67

The instruction of the people was of far greater value than the impression made on Pomeranus.

One of the faults of the erudite sermon is its excessive length, which Luther regarded as a burden on the

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66 Luther, Table-Talk, #5047, p. 383.
67 Ibid., #1590, pp. 157-58.
common parishioner and an impediment to his ability to be instructed. He wryly observes, "Every high priest should have his private sacrifices. Accordingly Pomeranus sacrifices his hearers with his long sermons, for we are his victims. And today he sacrificed us in a singular manner." One of the causes of excessive length is, again, an egotistical preacher more concerned with his own glory than his parishioners' instruction:

A preacher should see to it that he sticks to the subject and performs his task in such a way that people understand what he says. Preachers who try to say everthing that occurs to them remind me of the maid-servant who is on her way to market. When she meets another maid she stops to chat with her for a while. Then she meets another and talks with her. She does the same with a third and a fourth and so gets to market very slowly. This is what preachers do who wander too far from their subject. They try to say everything all at once, but it won't do.

Luther claims that he simply preaches until he has nothing more to say, and then stops talking. On the other hand, he despises those churchmen who are so afflicted with a poverty of Biblical knowledge that they cannot expound extemporaneously. He talks of a monk who meticulously wrote out a rhetorically perfect sermon and memorized all eight pages of manuscript. He delivered it at a rapid pace, word for word, but when he had finished, he was dismayed

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68 Luther, Table-Talk, #2898, p. 179.
69 Ibid., #5498, p. 428.
to discover that he had only spoken for a quarter of an hour. Mortified, he had to sit down because he could think of nothing else to say. "Dear God," Luther exclaims, "men like this who knew nothing were supposed to have been rectors of the churches!" 70

Luther made a great advance in correcting such a mechanical approach to preaching. The hearty, down-to-earth common sense of his pronouncements regarding preaching show his concern that it be meaningful for the people. He even ventures an observation on church architecture, seeking to make it conducive to the instruction of the people as well: "Good, modest churches with low arches are the best for preachers and for listeners, for the ultimate object of these buildings is not the bellowing and bawling of choristers but the Word of God and its proclamation." 71 Fortunately, the Lutheran heritage of great choral music did not develop under such severe acoustical restraints. But similar considerations, as well as a distaste for any earthly pomp that smacked of a papist influence, were certainly factors in the development of the relatively stark, barren Puritan meeting house.

The importance of Luther's thought regarding preach-

70 Luther, Table-Talk, #3910, p. 292.
71 Ibid., #3781, pp. 271-72.
The impact of Luther's work on Protestantism is significant in its own right. His contributions provided a new invigoration and awareness of the practical and theological significance of rhetorical style to the development of preaching theory. A "new" awareness is not precisely an accurate description of Luther's contribution to the junction of practical homiletics, theological homiletics, and rhetoric. Much of what he offered had been articulated by various predecessors, especially Augustine and Guibert. Much of his emphasis on the Scriptural foundation for the sermon was shared by the *ars praedicandi* tradition. Above all, both his emphasis on the Scriptural basis and his rejection of the scholarly style were characteristics of Wyclif's practice. But Luther's impact did impart something "new" in a real sense. For the first time, various strands of the development of preaching rhetoric came together to form a widely practiced, popular, and yet carefully self-conscious style of preaching. Luther's example laid the groundwork for the Protestant sermon tradition that would lead to the plain style a century and a half later.

If Luther laid the basis for a Protestant sermon rhetoric, Calvin refined it to an approach that was much more nearly the immediate model of the Puritans. Like Luther, Calvin did not articulate a careful set of principles governing preaching; it was one of the few signifi-
cant functions of the Christian religion he did not systematize. But also like Luther, he left a considerable body of references regarding that theology and practice of preaching which, along with his own example, served to instruct generations of his followers. More importantly, the direct influence of Calvinism was much more intensely felt in England, and ultimately America, than was Lutheranism, for a variety of reasons that we shall examine. Therefore Calvin's theory and practice of preaching left more mark on the development of the theory of preaching rhetoric in England and America than that of any other reformer.

Calvin came to the office of preacher only reluctantly. The well-known story of his assuming a post in Geneva is often told, but bears repeating. In August of 1536, Calvin was en route from Italy to Strasbourg, where he intended to study and continue his work on the Institutes, the first edition of which had been published in March of that year. He had stopped only to spend a night in Geneva. The leader of the local evangelical movement, William Farel, knowing of Calvin's growing reputation as a scholar and committed reformer, visited him in his lodging and urged him to stay on. Calvin demurred, and Farel used the only argument he knew Calvin could not withstand by saying, "You are following only your own wishes, and I de-
clare, in the name of God Almighty, that if you do not assist us in this work of the Lord, the Lord will punish you for seeking your own interest rather than his."  

Calvin professed throughout his life that Farel's ultimatum seemed to him at the time the very judgment of God, and within a week he preached his first sermon in St. Peter's cathedral in Geneva. Bowman reports, "It is related that after his first sermon people flocked in crowds to his residence to testify to their delight, and he was obliged to promise those who had not been able to hear him on this occasion to preach again on the following day."  

This was the first of several thousand sermons he was to preach in Geneva, at the rate of several a week, over the course of the next two and a half decades.

Although Calvin's grip on the life and government of Geneva is legendary, and he is commonly misregarded as a theocentric dictator, the only title he ever held in Geneva was that of minister of the church, and the only official office he ever filled was that of preacher. According to his thought, it was the noblest, most elevated

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office an individual could hold, but only in terms of its importance for the life of the church and the fulfilling of the kingdom of God, not for any status or power it might confer on the individual who held it.  

He says regarding the pastoral office in the Institutes (IV, iii, 3) that

God has repeatedly commended its dignity by the titles which he has bestowed upon it, in order that we might hold it in the highest estimation, as among the most excellent of our blessings. ... [Paul] contends, that there is nothing in the Church more noble and glorious than the ministry of the Gospel, seeing it is the administration of the Spirit of righteousness and eternal life.

He says at another point:

What a weight, therefore, rests on the pastors, who have been intrusted with the charge of so inestimable a treasure! ... And if the instruction of the Gospel be not proclaimed, if there are no godly ministers who, by their preaching, rescue truth from darkness and forgetfulness, instantly falsehoods, errors, impositions, superstitions, and every kind of corruption, will reign. In short, silence in the Church is the banishment and crushing of the truth.

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75 John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970; based on the Calvin Translation Society edition, Edinburgh, 1845), vol. 2, p. 318. It should be noted at the outset that all of Calvin's references to preaching and its benefits assume that the benefits of preaching accrue only to the elect. God's word speaks only in a condemning fashion to those who are not among his elect.

His recognition of the great importance of this office is often accompanied by a corresponding denunciation of the neglect of preaching in the Roman Catholic church. In the same passage just quoted, Calvin asserts that the papists trample truth underfoot by neglecting to proclaim it in public preaching. He asserts that the Roman hierarchy errs in that "they do not consider, what was of the greatest importance, that the truth of God is maintained by the pure preaching of the gospel." In his "Reply to Sadolet," Calvin defends the authority of the reformers regarding preaching as being nearer the position of the apostolic and patristic church than the perverted hierarchy of Rome is. He adds, "In short, why is the preaching of the gospel so often styled the kingdom of God, but because it is the sceptre by which the heavenly king rules his people?" 77

The notion that the preacher is the instrument of God appears frequently in Calvin's writing, and is part of the reason he held the office of preacher in such high esteem. In one of the commentaries Calvin says, "When, therefore, a duly ordained minister proclaims in the gos-

references will be to this edition; as the vols. of the reprinted edition are unnumbered, citations hereafter will make reference to Commentaries and the Biblical passage alone.

pel, that God has been made propitious to us, he is to be listened to as an ambassador of God." 78 In commenting on a passage in Isaiah in which the prophet says, "Let him hear the voice of his servant," Calvin explains, "He might have simply said, 'the voice of God,' but he expressly says, 'of his servant,' for God does not wish to be heard but by the voice of his ministers, whom he employs to instruct us." 79 It is unfortunate that for his highly instructive study of Calvin's preaching T.H.L. Parker chose to use the title The Oracles of God. While Calvin clearly affirmed the fact that the preacher does not minister by virtue of his own strength but rather that God speaks through him, his only use of the term "oracles" occurs when he speaks of the errors of the papists, who wrongly believe that because God has promised his grace to support the preacher, their own words become as "oracles." The error in this is simply that the preacher is not subject to oracular revelations, but is merely the vehicle for explaining God's already revealed word. The minister is more the instrument, the mouthpiece of the Lord than a divinely inspired oracle: "Paul explains what he meant by the term 'minister:' "Those are "ministers' whose services God makes

78 Commentaries, II Cor. 5:18.
79 Commentaries, Isaiah 50:10.
use of, not as though they could do anything by their own efforts, but insofar as they are guided by his hand, as instruments.'"\(^80\)

Calvin makes it clear that it is the Spirit of God operating within the hearts of both preacher and congregation that makes preaching efficacious: "We ought at the same time to understand that preaching is an instrument for effecting the salvation of the faithful, and though it can do nothing without the Spirit of God, yet through his inward operation it produces the most powerful effects."\(^81\)

In his commentary on the Synoptic Gospels Calvin observes,

> We ought to hold universally that no mortal is of himself qualified for preaching the gospel, except so far as God clothes him with his Spirit, to supply his nakedness and poverty....So all whom God raises up to be ministers of the gospel must be endued with the heavenly Spirit; and, therefore, in every part of Scripture he is promised to all the teachers of the church without exception.\(^82\)

None of the high regard afforded the office of preacher ought to reflect on the individual, but must be directed instead to its source:

> Paul, indeed, boasts that 'the ministration of the Spirit' was given to him, (II Cor. 3:8) and Scripture

\(^80\)Commentaries, I Cor. 3:5.

\(^81\)Commentaries, Rom. 11:14. Note again that only for "the faithful" is preaching an "instrument for our salvation."

frequently adorns the ministers of the word with such titles as the following; that they convert the hearts, enlighten the understandings, and renew men so as to become pure and holy sacrifices; but then it is not to show what they do by their own power, but rather what the Lord accomplishes by means of them.83

Calvin sounds a similar note when, in the Institutes (IV, i, 6), he refutes both the tendency of the Catholics to overstate the importance of the individual preacher as an "oracle of God" and the belief of the extreme Protestant radicals that the Spirit of God becomes identical with the minister: "The arguments on both sides will be disposed of without trouble, by distinctly attending to the passages in which God, the author of preaching, connects his Spirit with it, and then promises a beneficial result."84 Calvin's position is similar to that of Augustine—the preacher remains a mortal, sinful man, but he has a duty to exercise his skill in teaching as best he is able, and may expect the gift of God's Spirit to attend his preaching. He is not divinely inspired in the sense that the Spirit offers him a new revelation or that his words must be regarded as dogmatically true. But if he simply preaches the word of God, God's Spirit may make his interpretation a blessing for his hearers and himself.

Even given the fact that the preacher's efficacy is dependent on the Spirit of God, there still remains the problem of who is to be granted the office of preacher. In one of his tracts Calvin asks rhetorically whether all believers are not justified in regarding themselves as preachers:

Must they go out into the streets to preach the truth of God? Must they mount pulpits and call meetings? Not at all... On those whom the Lord destines for the ministry of his word he bestows a kind of public character, that their voice may be heard in the light, and rise trumpet-tongued above the house-tops! Others abstaining from the public office of Apostles must prove themselves Christians by performing the duties of public life.85

The vagueness of the nature of this "public character" is clarified in the *Institutes* (IV, iii, 10). No individual may assume a public office in the church without a "call;" the nature of this call is both the inner motivation of the individual's heart ("...that secret call of which every minister is conscious before God, but has not the Church as a witness of it") and the external summons to practice his vocation issued by a congregation. The pastoral offices to which one might be called are those of "teacher" and "pastor." Both have the responsibility to preach the word and instruct the people in the Christian faith, al-

though only the pastor may administer the sacraments and exercise church discipline.

While it is undeniable that God separates out such men as are particularly suited for such offices, still it is necessary that, in order to maintain order in the church, only such men as are duly ordained by the church and selected by the assembled membership may be invested with those offices: "We see, then, that ministers are legitimately called according to the word of God, when those who may have seemed fit are elected on the consent and approbation of the people" (IV, iii, 15). 86 Calvin carefully makes the distinction between the assent of the church to the minister's calling and the actual calling by God. In the commentary on Acts, he explains the problem of Paul's ordination by the church in view of the fact that he had already been called by God, and that Paul himself denied "that he was called of men or by men." God simply asks the church to subscribe to his previous call, and does not imply that Paul's calling is dependent upon men:

For, seeing the Lord doth pronounce that he had called him, what doth he leave for the Church, save only that they subscribe obediently. For men's judgement is not here put as in a doubtful matter, neither have their voices and consents any freedom. 87

86 Institutes, vol. 2, p. 325.
In point of fact, the church "installs" rather than "ordains" a minister; the ordination of the office comes from God. This sleight of hand is necessary to preserve order in the church on the one hand, by exerting some measure of ecclesiastical control over who may officially preach in order to avoid a chaotic babble, while on the other hand leaving clear the knowledge that only God can create a preacher, and the Lord speaks through such as he calls:

But inasmuch as he worketh by his ministers, by resigning to them his office, he doth also impart [to] them his titles. Of this sort is the preaching of the gospel. He [Jesus] alone was appointed by the Father to be our teacher; but he hath put in his place pastors and doctors, who speak, as it were, out of his mouth. So that the authority remaineth wholly to him, and he is nevertheless heard in his ministers.\textsuperscript{88}

The same dilemma that confronts Calvin when he considers the relationship between God's calling and the ordination of the church is apparent in the question of how the word of God is affected when it is mediated through a human speaker. Just as Calvin had to explain how human ordination, while arrived at by the judgment of men, is not a free act but merely a subscription to the divine will, he must also explain how human eloquence in preaching, arising in the judgment and interpretation of men, is likewise not a free act but is the word of God speaking through men. We

\textsuperscript{88} Commentaries, Acts 13:47.
may deduce from Calvin's grappling with this problem a complex but meaningful theology of the Word that satisfactorily resolves the problem. God's truth is proclaimed in the ministry of the word, even though the human agency which is necessary to transmit and receive it can claim no credit for understanding the truth:

God, in ascribing to himself the illumination of the mind and renewal of the heart, reminds us that it is sacrilege for man to claim any part of either to himself. Still everyone who listens with docility to the ministers whom God appoints, will know by the beneficial result, that for good reason God is pleased with this method of teaching, and for good reason has laid believers under this modest yoke. 89

The problem of the way in which the word of God is present in preaching has two extremes which Calvin frequently seeks to correct. On the one hand there is the stance of the Roman Catholic church which asserts that, since Christ told his disciples that "who hears you, hears me," whatever human invention they proclaim from the pulpit has the status of the word of God. On the other hand there is the position asserted by the radical Protestants that the word of God comes to them directly by means of special revelations, so that the voice with which they speak, and the ideas they express, do not spring from the human mind at all, but are wholly divine.

89 Institutes, IV, i, 6; vol. 2, p. 287.
Calvin answers the Catholic heresy regarding the preaching of the word in much the same way Luther does—he lays a heavy emphasis on the error of relying on the sufficiency of human knowledge rather than opening oneself to the plain and direct word of God:

With what impudent trifling do Papists argue from the words of Paul that all their absurdities ought to be held as oracles of God, because they are the 'pillars of truth,' and therefore cannot err.... For it is a shocking blasphemy to say, that the word of God is uncertain, till it obtain from men what may be called a borrowed certainty. Paul simply means what he states elsewhere in other words, that since our 'faith is by hearing,' there will be no faith unless there be preaching.... But the mistake arises from this, that they do not consider, what was of the greatest importance, that the truth of God is maintained by the pure preaching of the gospel; and that the support of it does not depend on the faculties or understandings of men, but rests on what is far higher, that is, if it does not depart from the simple word of God.90

In this commentary on John, Calvin observes that Christ explicitly stated that some things we are not yet able to learn. The papists abuse this clear statement by claiming that new revelations came to them later in history, thus making their unscriptural inventions "oracles of God." The Catholic belief denies the necessity of the

90 Commentaries, I Tim. 3:15. There is no inconsistency between Calvin's doctrine of predestination and Paul's assertion that "there will be no faith unless there be preaching." Calvin is simply underscoring the fact that God has ordained the "foolishness of preaching" to be the vehicle for his word. Since the vehicle has been ordained, there is no danger that any predestined faith will be jeopardized by a withholding of the word preached.
operation of the Spirit of God to make preaching beneficial; they mistakenly believe that some benefit comes simply by the action of the human intellect of the hearer listening to the human intellect of the preacher:

We now see in what way 'Faith is by hearing,' and yet it derives its certainty from the 'real' and 'earnest of the Spirit.' Those who do not sufficiently know the darkness of the human mind imagine that faith is formed naturally by hearing and preaching alone.91

No one had a greater appreciation of the darkness of the human mind than John Calvin; he could only reject any theory of preaching that claimed efficacy on the basis of human skill or understanding.

There was, if anything, more danger from the left-wing Protestant interpretation of how the word of God functioned in preaching than in the Catholic heresy. We must recall that for Luther, since preaching is the proclamation of the word of God, God himself speaks in preaching in much the same way that he is present in the sacraments. It is not a very great step to move from that position to one in which the preacher is nothing but a passive vehicle for the direct revelations of God's voice. The Zwinglians sought to counter that extremity, much as they opposed Luther's doctrine of the extent to which Christ's body and blood were actually present in the sacrament of the

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91Commentaries, John 16:12.
Lord's Supper. It is not difficult to see that the principles upon which the opposing positions of the Lutherans and the Zwinglians are based are quite similar both in the matter of the sacrament and in the theology of preaching. In each case the Lutherans claimed a more immediate presence of God, while the Zwinglians argued for a more indirect influence. In the matter of preaching, the Zwinglians charged that the Lutherans claimed a direct benefit of grace in the preaching of the word. There is no such direct benefit, argued the Zwinglians; the word as preached is not efficacious in itself, but is simply a means by which we come to an understanding of divine truth. This understanding, in turn, is conjoined with the operation of the Spirit to effect a transformation of the heart.

Clearly, the Zwinglian approach that there is no immediate benefit in the preaching of the word was intended to counter the enthusiasts who claimed that preaching offered the grace of the direct revelation of God, or, even worse, that direct revelation to the individual could take the place of preaching.

As in the dispute regarding the sacrament, Calvin's position sought to mediate the conflicting claims of the

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92 Parker, p. 47.
93 Ibid., p. 48.
Lutherans and Zwinglians. He certainly sees the danger posed by the enthusiasts who entirely discounted the role of man in preaching. He speaks at one point of the "many fanatics who disdain the outward preaching, and talk in lofty terms about secret revelations and inspirations." In the same passage he explains that although it is very true that we do not have true faith until the Spirit works in us, we do not find "oracles in the clouds" but must rely on the instruction of the word as preached. In the commentary on Ephesians, Calvin again explains that we need the external ministry of the word....Yet such are the fanatics, on the one hand, who pretend to be favoured with secret revelations of the Spirit,—and proud men, on the other, who imagine that to them the private reading of the Scripture is enough, and that they have no need of the ordinary ministry of the church.

Calvin's theology of the word of God relies in part on his thought regarding the divine sanction granted the offices of the pastor and teacher, that when they speak they are instruments of God. God's word is spoken through these ambassadors, and such men must have "the interior power of the spirit conjoined with his external voice." 

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94 Commentaries, John 15:27.
95 Commentaries, Eph. 4:12.
96 Commentaries, Ps. 105:31.
The preacher does not offer any new revelations—he simply interprets, as best he is able, the already fixed and revealed canon.\(^9^7\) That the human mind is extremely limited in its ability to interpret or explain the word of God, Calvin attests again and again. Such passages as this abound in the *Institutes*: "Let us remember that the human mind enters a labyrinth whenever it indulges its curiosity, and thus submit to be guided by the divine oracles, how much soever the mystery may be beyond our reach" (I, xiii, 21).\(^9^8\) The "oracles of God" are the Scriptural word of God, not the words of the interpreter.

It is nevertheless absolutely crucial that the word be preached; it is by preaching that "God begets and multiplies his church" (*Comms.*, Ps. 22:30), and that "the church maintains the truth" and "transmits it to posterity" (*Comms.*, I Tim. 3:15).\(^9^9\) In the commentary on the Hebrews he explains,

> The Scripture has not been committed to us in order to silence the voice of pastors, and...we ought not be fastidious when the same exhortations sound often in our ears; for the Holy Spirit has so regulated the writings which he has dictated to the prophets and apostles that he detracts nothing from the order instituted by himself; and the order is, that constant

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\(^9^8\) *Institutes*, vol. 1, p. 129.

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exhortation should be heard in the church from the
mouth of pastors.lOO
This preaching of the word is the explanation of the canonical Scriptures, the divinely dictated, inerrant, wholly
reliable word of God.

It is not a new revelation, but is

a kind of revelation nevertheless.

Preaching reveals that

word by which alone God is known, and i t only becomes such
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Th e

function of preaching in opening up the word of God is in-

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1 y re 1 ate d , as Par k er exp 1 a1ns,
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which man knows God for Calvin.

Sinful man's intellect

cannot "know" or come to understand God by its own operation; all it knows is that which God chooses to reveal, and
what is revealed is only understood to the extent that the
Spirit operates to assist man's understanding.

Preaching

"reveals" no more than what is already in canonical Scripture; and what is revealed is only understood insofar as
the Spirit works in the hearts and minds of both speaker
and hearer.
As Leroy Nixon puts it, Calvin's preaching of the
word of God is sanctioned both by Scripture, the "source,

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Parker, pp. 53-55; cf. also the discussion of
the word as a means to the knowledge of God in Ronald S.
Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the word and Sacrament (Edinburgh, 1953}.
102

Parker, p. 54.


standard and criticism of preaching," and by Jesus Christ, the "source, standard and criticism of all Biblical interpretation." A theory of exegesis is central to Calvin's theory of preaching, since preaching is nothing but the exegesis of God's word:

Since Scripture is obscure to us, through the darkness in which we are involved, let us learn not to reject whatever surpasses our capacity, even when some dark veil envelopes it, but let us fly to the remedy which Daniel used.

The remedy which Daniel used to unveil the veiled mysteries of God was the exegetical promptings of visiting angels. The angel visitors of the Old Testament, who came to unveil God's revelation, were types of Christ who performs that function in the New Testament, and who in these days teaches us familiarly by means of pastors and ministers of the gospel....So we are daily commanded to approach those who have been entrusted with the gift of interpretation, and who can faithfully explain to us things otherwise obscure.

Interpretation for Calvin is not merely the patching together of proof texts to support points of doctrine; it is true, of course, that Calvin does this frequently

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104 Commentaries, Daniel 7:16. This passage also illustrates Calvin's recurrent use of typological identifications, in this case between the Old Testament angels and Christ and his ministers. Cf. Davis, p. 39, Kemper Fullerton, Prophecy and Authority (New York, 1919), and Wallace, p. 2ff.
enough, particularly in the Institutes. But that is not the kind of exegetical exposition one finds in his sermons, in which specific passages are paraphrased and expounded in order to get as close as possible to the meaning of the word itself.105 Calvin's extensive commentaries are nothing but outgrowths of his sermons; while the commentaries stress exegesis and the sermons put more emphasis on application, both commentaries and sermons are integral combinations of exegesis and application.106

Like the other reformers, Calvin considered the return to a close study of the simple, unadorned text of Scripture to be among the most important achievements of the Reformation:

This much, certainly, must be clear alike to just and unjust, that our reformers have done no small service to the Church, in stirring up the world as from the deep darkness of ignorance, to read the Scriptures, in labouring diligently to make them better understood, and in happily throwing light on certain points of doctrine of the highest practical importance. In sermons little else was heard than old wives' fables, and fiction equally frivolous. The schools resounded with brawling questions, but Scripture was seldom mentioned.107

Calvin's own disinclination to old wives' fables and

105 Milner, p. 103.
scholarly disputations is everywhere evident in his sermons and commentaries. His focus on the literal sense is clearly evident in his extensive typological identifications; the entire Old Testament is a prefiguring of the New, as the former is the "letter" to the "spirit" of the latter.\textsuperscript{108} In the commentary on Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians Calvin notes that the distinction between letter and spirit is not, as Origen says, the distinction between a literal and an allegorical interpretation, but is rather between the dead and ineffectual attention to the words of Scripture and the lively, effectual apprehension of their meaning for our souls.\textsuperscript{109} This spiritual, lively understanding is arrived at, not by allegorical flights of fancy, but, at least in part, by the recognition of how the New Testament is the anti-type to the type of the Old.

Calvin's preference in patristic exegetes makes his typological inclination clear. Like many of the reformers, Calvin frequently refers to an exegetical passage of one of the early fathers to support his own interpretation. The patristic source that he quotes most often is Augustine, although he frequently cites Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome and Origen (among many others). Of these last four,

\textsuperscript{108} Cf. Commentaries, II Cor. 3:6 and Davis, 39-40.
\textsuperscript{109} Commentaries, II Cor. 3:6.
he clearly prefers Chrysostom and Ambrose, Antiochene exe-
getes, to Jerome and Origen, Alexandrian exegetes. In 1536, Calvin wrote an introduction to an edition of Chry-
sostom's works, a project he never furthered. The intro-
duction, however, survives, and in it he states that while Augustine is the greatest theologian of the patristic age, Chrysostom is the greatest exegete. Smits notes that while Calvin relied on Augustine heavily, and on the whole trusted his interpretation of Scripture, he was simply too uncomfortable with "la subtilite" (Calvin's term) of some of Augustine's specific interpretations:

Quant à l'exégèse d'ensemble de la Bible, saint Augustin restait pour lui sans pareil. Pour l'exégèse de certains versets en particulier, Calvin préférait la simple explication du sens littéral donnée par saint Jean Chrysostome à la méthode allegorique et aux spéculations recherchées de saint Augustin.

This is not to suggest, however, that Calvin dis-
allowed all figurative interpretation of Scripture. Typo-
logical exegesis, although it relies on literal corre-
spondences, as in itself a type of figurative interpreta-
tion. And on occasion, Calvin acknowledged, as Augustine

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did, that certain passages simply had to be given an allegorical explanation in order to avoid the pitfall of believing Scripture to contain a contradiction:

Let the pious and diligent reader turn over the whole of Scripture, and he will find that what we say of the sacraments always holds, viz., that the name of the thing signified is given to the sign. This is what is called by the grammarians a figurative expression .... We say with Augustine, that when a manifest absurdity occurs, there is a trope or figure in the expression.¹¹³

He is, of course, always careful not to carry the application of this technique too far, as he notes in this commentary on the Jewish ceremonial law regarding clean and unclean animals:

Whilst I fear that but little confidence can be placed in allegories, in which many have taken delight; so I do not find fault with, nor even refuse that which has been handed down from 'les Docteurs anciens,' viz., that by the cleaving of the hoof is signified prudence in distinguishing the mysteries of Scripture, and by the chewing of the cud serious meditation on its heavenly doctrines; although I cannot approve of the subtlety which they add, viz., that those 'rightly divide the word' who have known how to elicit mystical senses from its letter; because hence it has come to pass that they have allowed themselves in all sorts of imaginations.¹¹⁴

Given the bounds within which exegesis can occur, how is one to determine whether or not a given exposition of the word of God concurs with the truth? It is in answer


¹¹⁴ Commentaries, Leviticus 11:3.
to this question that Calvin's theology of the word of God and its relationship to preaching comes full circle. Gerstner says that Calvin's "two-voice theory of preaching" recognizes both the voice of the preacher and the voice of God's word speaking through him when he properly fulfills his office.115 Remember that God's word is revealed in preaching only to the extent that the Spirit operates in the hearts and minds of the speaker and hearer to understand it. Even in the most spirit-filled exposition, a certain amount of complete insight is always withheld.116 Therefore it is perfectly proper, indeed it is necessary, that the listener try every utterance of the preacher by the word of God in order to understand the extent to which the Spirit has been withheld from his interpretation. Exegesis is a task for both the preacher and the hearer, who must judge each interpretation by God's word. Milner observes that for Calvin, the word lies mute unless we use wisdom and discretion to interpret it, and to judge the interpretation of others.117

This testing of the word as preached, however, can no more be carried out simply on the authority of the human

115 Gerstner, 117.
117 Milner, pp. 104-05.
mind than the original preaching of the word can. Whoever will interpret God's word and whoever will try that interpretation must alike be open to the operation of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{118} It is equally important to note that in such a testing by means of the Spirit, it is the words of the human preacher and the extent to which the Spirit was withheld from him, and \textit{not} the word of God itself, which is being subjected to judgment:

It may seem, however, to be absurd that men should have liberty given them to judge of the doctrine of God, which ought to be placed beyond all controversy. I answer, that the doctrine of God is not subjected to the scrutiny of men, but there is simply permission given them to judge by the Spirit of God, whether it is his word that is set before them, or whether human inventions are, without any authority, set off under this pretext.\textsuperscript{119}

Put in other words, we always respect the office of preacher to which a man has been called by God, even though we do not sit passively by, and automatically accept the words of the man himself:

We are at liberty to withhold our assent to their doctrine, until they show that it is from Christ. For they must all be tried, and we must yield obedience to them, only when they have satisfactorily shown themselves to be faithful servants of Christ. Now as to Peter and Paul, this point being beyond all controversy, and the Lord having furnished us with amply sufficient evidence, that their doctrine has come forth from him, when we receive as an oracle from heaven, and ven-


\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Commentaries}, I Cor. 14:29; cf. also v. 32.
erate everything that they must have delivered to us, we hear not so much them, as Christ speaking in them.\(^{120}\)

The Spirit of God usually accompanies the preaching of his word, but neither the preacher nor the hearer may take that for granted.\(^{121}\) The preacher may not passively await the gift of the Spirit to begin to form words in his mouth; he must take the initiative, expecting but not assuming the aid of the Holy Spirit, just as the hearer listens with a Spirit-filled attitude. Preaching is only true and is only a mark of the church when it bears fruit. This fruit is the growth of faith in the heart of those who hear the word preached, and faith is a gift of God: "We must not boast, therefore, of the outward preaching of the word; for it will be of no avail unless it produces its fruit by enlightening our minds."\(^{122}\) Thus Spirit and word must act together to produce the beneficial result of preaching.

We refer once again to that passage in the *Institutes* (IV, i, 6) in which Calvin explains that preaching produces a beneficial result, not by the power of the preacher, but by the operation of the Spirit. Here Calvin cites several passages of Scripture in support of this fact:

\(^{120}\) *Commentaries*, I Cor. 3:22.

\(^{121}\) Milner, p. 108; Parker, p. 53.

\(^{122}\) *Commentaries*, Isaiah 29:11.
Christ declares that he sent the Apostles to produce fruit from his labours (John 15:16)....Hence Paul glories...that his was not a ministry of the letter, which only sounded in the ear, but that the effectual agency of the Spirit was given to him, in order that his doctrine might not be in vain. (I Cor. 9:2; II Cor. 3:6).123

In the same passage Calvin quotes Paul again to the effect that the ministers themselves have no cause to receive credit for the fruit borne out of their preaching:

'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' (I Thess. 2:13)...

...And that he allows no more to ministers is obvious from other passages. 'So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. (I Cor. 3:7)

It is therefore not surprising that Calvin approves the zeal of Paul's words, "The truth of my preaching is as sure and stable as God is faithful and true" by saying,

With such an assurance of good conscience does it become ministers to be endowed, who mount the pulpit to speak the word in Christ's name--so as to feel assured that their doctrine can no more be overthrown than God himself.124

We have already seen how Calvin makes it clear that the work of the Spirit is only meaningful in the heart of the hearer when it operates in corporate preaching, not in

123 Institutes, vol. 2, p. 287.
124 Commentaries, II Cor. 1:18.
secret revelations or by means of an inner light.\textsuperscript{125} It remains, then, for us to examine Calvin's instruction regarding the actual practice of preaching, the form and style that ought to be employed when one "mounts the pulpit to speak the word in Christ's name." As has already been made apparent, the heart of Calvin's preaching is the simple exposition of Scripture, not unlike what he accomplishes in his commentaries. It is important to remember that Calvin always considered himself a Biblical, not a systematic, theologian.\textsuperscript{126} This seems curious in the man who wrote the Institutes, but Calvin regarded his commentaries as more important than the Institutes, and felt his sermons were his most valuable production. Still, as noted earlier, he never specifically described the form the sermon ought to take. In one of the few passages in which he does describe the preferred liturgy of the worship service he says:

After this a Psalm is sung by the whole Congregation; then the Minister again engages in Prayer, in which he begs God to grant the gift of the Holy Spirit, in order that his Word may be faithfully expounded to the glory of his name and the edification of the Church, and be received with becoming submission and obedience of mind. The Form of Prayer suitable for this the Minister selects for himself at pleasure. Having finished

\textsuperscript{125}Milner, p. 109.

the Sermon, he exhorts the people to pray....

This passage is interesting for indicating in Calvin's own liturgy the use of a prayer for illumination which Old suggests may have come from the invocatio divini auxilii of Surgant, and which may ultimately be related to the bidding prayer which ends the protheme in the ars praedicandi method. But the passage is characteristically silent on the rhetorical principles governing the sermon; it simply indicates that there is, in fact, a sermon. Throughout the development of the Reformed liturgy which Old traces, a sermon is always required, but never specifically described.

The structure and material of Calvin's sermons varied little. The subject matter, of course, changed as each sermon examined a different text, but nearly all dealt with the passage at hand phrase by phrase until the entire text had been paraphrased, explained and applied. In this manner, Calvin preached sermons on nearly every book of the Bible (the most notable exception is Revelation; nowhere in his voluminous writing does he ever attempt to comment on this mystical allegory). Calvin's use of the lectio

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128 Old, p. 209.
129 Ibid., pp. 80-95.
continua, preaching through an entire book of the Bible one passage at a time, certainly did not originate with him. It had originally been a patristic practice; some of the fathers preached through the entire Bible, beginning to end, and the practice was still used at some of the universities, although by then the thematic method had deviated from the original expository approach. The practice was adopted by Bucer, and was notably used by Zwingli and his successor, Bullinger, although Luther did not make use of the lectio continua.

Calvin's sermons were simple homilies, relatively unstructured. The only structure was that of the text itself which Calvin carefully followed phrase by phrase. The parts of the sermon itself often seem unconnected with one another as Calvin carefully explains the meaning of various portions of the text. Each sermon begins abruptly; the introduction does not serve the usual rhetorical purposes of winning the attention of the audience or introducing the theme. At most he may briefly summarize the meaning

133 Harold Dekker, "Calvin's Sermons--Their Struc-
elicited from the preceding texts ("We saw yesterday...;"
"As you recall from this morning... "). The passages he
chooses average six verses in length in Old Testament
books, and two to three verses in the New Testament. In-
sofar as there is any recurring structure, it is simply to
begin with a prayer, offer a recapitulation of the previous
 sermon, and proceed to treat each phrase of the text by
first explaining it and then offering an application of that
meaning in the life of the individual. 134 This application
frequently takes the form of an exhortation to apply one-
self more fully to the moral or spiritual duty implied in
the text. The pattern of paraphrase, expound, and apply
is followed for each phrase of the text (sometimes focus-
ing on a single word) until the text is completed. Calvin
concludes with a brief summary, and calls the congregation
to prayer. Contrary to popular opinion, the sermons were

134 Cf. especially discussions of structure in Gerst-
ner and Parker. For other analyses of the form and style
of Calvin's sermons, cf. also E. Caldesaignes, "Calvin,
predicateur," Revue de theologie et d'action evangeliques,
3 (1943), 351-68; W. F. Dankbaar, "Hoe preekte Calvijn,"
Kerk en Eredienst, 3 (1948), 17-26; Dekker, "Calvin's Ser-
mons," op. cit.; Emile Doumerge, Calvin, le predicateur de
Geneve (Geneva, 1909); Erwin Mulhaupt, "Beobachtung über
die Beziehungen von Theologie, Predigt und Personlichkeit
Calvins in seinen Predigten," Deutsche Theologie, 4 (1937),
252-63; Mulhaupt, Die Predigt Calvins, op. cit.; Mulhaupt,
"Wird sich das Schicksal der ungedruckten Calvin predigten
wenden?" Reformierte Kirchenzeitung, 13 (1956); and Nixon,
op. cit.
not lengthy; even though Calvin spoke slowly, they rarely exceeded thirty minutes.

The sense of application is very important to Calvin, and it partly explains why he regarded his sermons as more important than anything else he produced. Remember that a mark of the true church is preaching that, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, culminates in some spiritual benefit for the elect hearer. Calvin's primary concern in his preaching, then, is to meet the spiritual needs of his congregation, and to assist the congregation in fulfilling its role of responding to the word by pointing out exactly how they may literally take the message of the word to their hearts. In conjunction with the work of the Spirit, which is operating in the hearts of the congregation during the preaching of the word (and will, of course, continue to work if the word is planted in their hearts), Calvin's careful explanation of how the meaning of the text may be applied makes it just that much easier for the sermon to bear its fruit. The evidence of the fruit of the preached word is in the change wrought in the life of each individual; the application shows the way to make such a change. This same understanding of the need for applying the message of the word will feature prominently in the de-

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135 Dekker, "Calvin's Sermons," 205; Gerstner, 23.
development of the Puritan plain style.

Calvin's sermons were more valuable than his systematics in his estimation because in the sermons the Spirit worked with the word to meet the immediate spiritual needs of the people. In his systematic writings, the word of God serves to illustrate various heads of doctrine, but there is not the immediate agency of the Spirit to make that use of the word bear fruit in the hearts of a believer. There is no distinction in Calvin's preaching between practical homiletics and doctrinal homiletics. All expository preaching was both doctrinal and practical, explaining the Christian religion and the way it leads to spiritual and moral growth. This arises not from preaching out of a dogmatic system of thought, but as a benefit of the revelation of God's word. Calvin's most vehement objection to the preaching of the Catholic church is that, since it is not based on the word of God, it can be of no benefit to the people:

Many in the present day feel almost disgusted with the very name of preaching, as there are so many foolish and ignorant persons that from the pulpit blab out their worthless contrivances, while there are others, also, that are wicked and sacreligious persons, who babble forth execrable blasphemies.  

136 Dekker, "Calvin's Sermons," 206.  
137 Commentaries, I Thess. 5:21.
When he defends the route which the reformers had to take in his "Reply to Sadolet," Calvin focuses on preaching for the benefit of the people as a crucial issue which forced the Reformation:

Not to go over every point, what sermons in Europe then [prior to the Reformation] exhibited that simplicity with which Paul wishes a Christian people to be always occupied? Nay, what one sermon was there from which old wives might not carry off more whimsies than they could devise at their own fireside in a month? For, as sermons were then usually divided, the first half was devoted to those misty questions of the schools which might astonish the rude populace, while the second contained sweet stories, or not unamusing speculations, by which the hearers might be kept on the alert. Only a few expressions were thrown in from the Word of God, that by their majesty they might procure credit for these frivolities. But as soon as our Reformers raised the standard, all these absurdities, in one moment, disappeared from amongst us. Your preachers, again, partly profited by our books, and partly compelled by shame and the general murmur, conformed to our example, though they still, with open throat, exhale the old absurdity. Hence, any one who compares our method of procedure with the old method, or with that which is still in repute among you, will perceive that you have done us no small injustice.\textsuperscript{138}

It is important to note that he refers in this passage to the simplicity of Paul. Calvin's concern for the needs of the audience led him to insist on clarity of expression in addition to accuracy of interpretation and an emphasis on application.\textsuperscript{139} One way to maintain an awareness of the immediate needs of the congregation and to

\textsuperscript{138} Calvin, "Reply to Sadolet," \textit{Tracts and Treatises}, vol. 1, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{139} Gerstner, 23.
offer sufficient clarity of expression was to be impromptu in the pulpit, to speak extemporaneously and not from a written manuscript. This allowed the preacher the flexibility to observe the congregation, to reiterate a point if they appeared confused or eager to hear more about it, or to move on if they appeared bored. When he said that true preaching is lively and effective and dead preaching is tied to the letter, he was in large part talking literally. He disdained the written sermon or even the use of notes, and would himself mount the pulpit with nothing in hand other than the text.¹⁴⁰ Part of the reason he avoided writing out his sermons may have been the press of time incurred by his many responsibilities and voluminous writing, as well as his chronic ill health. But his primary consideration in objecting to the practice of reading sermons was to avoid the artificial rhetorical limitations of a written manuscript.¹⁴¹ He objected strongly to Archbishop Cranmer's requirement that sermons be read from the Book of Homilies (1547); writing to decline the Duke of Somerset's invitation that he visit or even reside in England, he criticizes the direction of the English Reformation, and notes, "I say this to your highness because there is little of


living preaching in your kingdom, sermons there being mostly read or recited."\(^{142}\)

This is not to say that he did not believe it necessary to prepare ahead of time. After all, he carefully insisted that the preacher may not simply rely on the Holy Spirit to do his work. Parker quotes him as saying:

If I should enter the pulpit without deigning to glance at a book, and frivolously imagine to myself, 'Oh, well, when I preach, God will give me enough to say,' and come here without troubling to read, or thinking what I ought to declare, and do not carefully consider how I must apply Holy Scripture to the edification of the people--then I should be an impudent upstart!\(^{143}\)

Even in the question of how to prepare a sermon, there is, as there is in so much of Calvin's thought, the tension between man's incapacity and total dependence on God on the one hand, and his duty to work diligently on the other.

It would have been a great loss if Calvin's sermons had simply evaporated, leaving no written record. A group of French and Waldensian exiles living in Geneva had the foresight to prevent this, when they hired Denis Raguenier as a permanent scribe. Raguenier and others kept a very complete written record of Calvin's sermons, through nearly all of his career, transcribing them in short hand as he preached, and later arranging for their publication. Cal-

\(^{142}\) Bowman, 252.

\(^{143}\) In Parker, p. 69.
vin approved of the practice, as he noted in a letter re
garding one such collection of sermons: "They have been
printed simply as they could be gathered from my mouth in
the church. You there see our style and ordinary mode of
teaching."\textsuperscript{144} This same technique (called tachygraphy in
England) preserved scores of the sermons of the later Puriti-
an preachers.

It is not difficult to accurately record Calvin's
sermons; as noted above, he spoke rather slowly, possibly
because of his asthmatic condition, but also quite distinct-
ly. His speaking voice was quiet and dignified, perhaps
a trifle ponderous, but packing the emotional impact of
quiet intensity, as distinct from fiery passion.\textsuperscript{145} Bow-
man may be right in arguing that Calvin did not separate
intellect and emotion in his preaching, but used the emo-
tional import of logical conviction:

Calvin was a dialectician who sought to persuade his
hearers by reasoned conviction. He was not an orator
who allures and wins his hearers by the excitement of
the emotions. He was unlike Luther who aroused senti-
ment and emotion, and drew men by their hearts. Cal-
vin bound his hearers fast in the "serried links of
his iron logic."\textsuperscript{146}

Quirinus Breen notes this same combination of wisdom

\textsuperscript{144} Bowman, 252.
\textsuperscript{145} Bowman, 250; Nixon, p. 34; Parker, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{146} Bowman, 250.
and eloquence in Calvin's use of what Breen claims was the Renaissance fashion in rhetorical practice. 147 The favored theory of rhetoric in the early sixteenth century, according to Breen, was the Ciceronian model which urged the union of wisdom and eloquence. Such a rhetorical model was opposed to the distinction between a rhetorically barren, syllogistic style for philosophical discourse and an elaborate ornate oratorical style. Breen says that just such a marriage of careful reasoning and rhetorical grace is apparent in Calvin's consistent use of a deliberative style. 148 The eloquence Calvin favors, however, is far from the highly ornamented Ciceronian model; if it has any specific source, Breen suggests the simple dignity, the sense of awe and majesty, that resides in some forms of Biblical prose. 149 Beza said of Calvin, "He despised mere eloquence, and was sparing in the use of words, but he was by no means a careless writer." 150 That he was no careless writer is surely an understatement, but his attitude toward "mere eloquence" was in fact a cautious one.

147 Quirinus Breen, "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition," Church History, 26 (1957), 5-7.
148 Ibid., 8-11.
149 Ibid., 7.
Calvin's most explicit statement regarding the use of eloquence in preaching comes in his extensive commentary on I Cor. 1:17.\textsuperscript{151} Analyzing Paul's explanation of his own manner in preaching, Calvin observes,

Hence he says, by way of concession, that he had not been formed to be an orator, to set himself off by eloquence of speech, but a minister of the Spirit, that he might, by plain and homely speech, bring to nothing the wisdom of the world.

The important point emphasized by Calvin is that nothing the ecclesiastical orator accomplishes is by his own ability; all the benefits of preaching result from the operation of the Spirit. He draws on Paul's analogy with the cross of Christ; if God chose to use something as humble as the death on the cross to bring about his glorious purpose of redemption, ought we not to be satisfied with humble speech to preach that message? Calvin goes on, quoting Paul and then commenting:

"The cross of Christ would have been rendered useless," he says, "if my preaching had been tricked out with eloquence and brilliance."...Now the teaching of the gospel, which calls us to that benefit, ought to suggest the nature of the cross, so that, instead of being glorious, it might rather be despised and worthless, in the eyes of the world.

The power of the cross would have been buried under an avalanche of words if Paul had sought to emulate the erudition of the philosophers; it cannot come to us by means of "phi-\textsuperscript{151}The passages cited in the following pages are all from Calvin's commentary on this text.
losophical acuteness and studied address," but only in the unstudied humility represented by the cross.

Paul is anxiously trying to point out to the Corinthians that they are mistaken in dividing into factions, claiming that they are adherents to this preacher or that preacher, and favoring those preachers who are the most elegant in their speech. He impresses on them, as Calvin reiterates, that there is no benefit in the preaching per se of any individual:

Further, as men's minds were turned aside to neatness and elegance of expression, to ingenious speculations, and to an empty show of superior sublimity of doctrine, the efficacy of the Spirit vanished, and nothing remained but the dead letter. The majesty of God, as it shines forth in the gospel, was not to be seen but mere disguise and useless show.

Calvin says that Paul is quite right to claim that only the most unaffected, unselfconscious style of preaching is to be valued:

It is as though he had said—"I am well aware how much your fastidious teachers delight themselves in their high-sounding phrases. As for myself, I do not simply confess that my preaching has been conducted in a rude, coarse, and unpolished style, but I even glory in it. For it was right that it should be so, and this was the method that was divinely presented to me."

Calvin hastens to add that this is not to be taken as a blanket condemnation of elegance and rhetoric in particular, or the arts in general. Like Augustine, he recognizes the benefits inherent in the proper use of the "spoils of the Egyptians:"
It were quite unreasonable to suppose, that Paul would utterly condemn those arts which, it is manifest, are excellent gifts of God, and which serve as instruments, as it were, to assist men in the accomplishment of important purposes. As for those arts, then, that have nothing of superstition, but contain solid learning, and are founded on just principles, as they are useful and suited to the common transactions of human life, so there can be no doubt that they have come forth from the Holy Spirit; and the advantage which is derived and experienced from them, ought to be ascribed exclusively to God.

Eloquence can be made to serve the purposes of the gospel; it is not necessarily, as Calvin says, "unfavourable to piety." What's more, it is a divine gift, and ought to be so used by its faithful stewards: "For as Augustine says, 'He who gave Peter a fisherman, gave also Cyprian an orator.'"

The problem Calvin perceives in the use of eloquence is the dangerous potential it has to obscure rather than illuminate, to divert attention rather than direct it to what should be the focus of preaching. Calvin respects the proper use of eloquence, but only if there is enough assurance that it recognizes its own role:

That eloquence, therefore, is neither to be condemned nor despised, which has no tendency to lead Christians to be taken up with an outward glitter of words, or intoxicate them with empty delight, or tickle their ears with its tinkling sound, or cover over the cross of Christ with its empty show as with a veil; but on the contrary tends to call us back to the native simplicity of the gospel, tends to exalt the simple preaching of the cross by voluntarily abasing itself, and, in fine, acts the part of a herald to procure a hearing for those fishermen and illiterate persons, who have nothing to recommend them but the energy of
The eloquence of the gospel, then, is not such as would be praised by the "wisdom of the world," yet it is sufficient to call attention to the message it proclaims. Calvin is outlining a very fine distinction, and does not completely resolve the apparent paradox inherent in describing eloquence as a vehicle for simplicity. He notes two factors that help, he believes, to partly explain the implicit contradiction. The first is that Paul is addressing a congregation easily impressed by a good orator; the Corinthians, says Calvin, had "itching ears." Thus Paul was inclined to derogate the importance of both eloquence and the orator a bit more totally than Calvin thinks is really required; "Hence they needed more than others to be brought back to the abasement of the cross, that they might learn to embrace Christ as he is, unadorned, and the gospel in its simplicity, without any false ornament." He admits that Paul is quite within his right in sounding such a warning; Christ's own preaching was very simple and unadorned, and since he certainly could have used eloquence if he chose to do so, he clearly intends "that the gospel should be administered in simplicity, without any aid from eloquence." But that certainly does not mean that an eloquent proclamation of the gospel ought to be rejected; Paul is simply telling a congregation that thinks too highly of
eloquence that they are applying the wrong standards to their hearing of the word.

Calvin finds further evidence that eloquence can be used to preach the simple word of God in the Bible itself. He cites particularly the poetry of David, Solomon and Isaiah, and the impassioned oratory of the Prophets and, to some extent, Moses. He finds less of this stately eloquence in the more unpolished writings of the New Testament, but points out that in the Old Testament, the Spirit speaks with

an eloquence of his own....Hence the eloquence that is suited to the Spirit of God is of such a nature that it does not swell with empty show, or spend itself in empty sound, but is solid and efficacious, and has more of substance than elegance.

This is a succinct description of Calvin's own preaching style. Calvin was, by all accounts, regarded as among the most learned men of his age. The scope of his knowledge was sweeping. His legal training had given him a firm command of the classical authors; his own inclination had led him to develop a comprehensive understanding of the church fathers. The Institutes abounds with wide-ranging proofs from ancient authorities. His sermons, however, consciously avoid flaunting that learning.\textsuperscript{152} His concern is always with the clear exposition of the word

\textsuperscript{152}Parker, p. 75.
for the benefit of the people. Consequently, his tone is conversational, his style unadorned with verbal embellishments, even a little severe, but possessing that same "solid and efficacious" eloquence he perceived in Scripture. The self-assessment he offered in his own last will and testament is worth taking note of:

I likewise declare, that, according to the measure of grace and goodness which the Lord hath employed towards me, I have endeavoured, both in my sermons and also in my writings and commentaries, to preach His Word purely and chastely, and faithfully to interpret His sacred Scripture.

Being Calvin, he of course hastens to add that this endeavor has in no way helped to earn his salvation, since he has miserably failed in accomplishing it, and since in any event his salvation is wholly dependent on his "gratuitious adoption" by God.

The lines of development that contribute to the evolution of the Puritan plain style of preaching are nearly all complete by the middle of the sixteenth century. The underlying exegetical principle that every sermon ought to expound the word of God had been a characteristic of preach-

153 It would be instructive to study the influence of Biblical prose on Calvin's prose style. A similar study has been made upon the subjects of this dissertation in Phyllis Jones' "Biblical Rhetoric and The Pulpit Literature of Early New England," Early American Literature, 11 (1977), 245-58.

ing theory (although certainly not of practice) from the
time of Augustine. It was reinforced by the *ars praedican-
di* tradition, and loudly reaffirmed in the Reformation.
The substance of preaching, that it starts with the word
of God, is maintained throughout the history of the theory
of preaching rhetoric, and is most carefully articulated
for the Puritans by John Calvin. The practice of exegesis
takes a less direct route—allegorical interpretation re-
ceives its impetus from Augustine and is the assumed prac-
tice of the *ars praedicandi* tradition. It is expressly
repudiated by Wyclif and the later reformers, however, and
the Puritans once again take their lead from Calvin in only
cautiously maintaining some of the allegorical tradition,
while turning enthusiastically to the typological method,
and professing a complete reliance on the literal meaning
of Scripture.

In matters of style, there seem to be two diametri-
cally opposed positions in the sixteenth century. The *ars
praedicandi* tradition prescribed an intricately ornate
structure, and the Ciceronian model offered by the non-
reforming humanists of the sixteenth-century is the near
cousin, if not the direct descendent, of the *artes praedici-
di*. Wyclif, Luther and Calvin led the way in vehemently
denouncing such a style and while the practice of each of
these three figures differs from that of the others, to-
gether their style is radically different from that prescribed by the *ars praedicandi* genre. Yet the theory of both sides claims an origin in a common source, the practice of the early church and the fathers, especially Augustine. Partly because of this and partly because of other factors, elements characteristic of the *ars praedicandi* tradition will appear in Puritan preaching theory. 155

Manifestly, however, the Puritan theory of preaching style will once again be a distillation of Calvin's thought on the matter.

We must next examine how Calvin's influence came to figure in the development of an English Puritan movement in general and a Puritan theory of preaching in particular. We must also note how all the lines of development of the theory of preaching rhetoric already examined took root in the English Reformation and, combined at a crucial time with the Ramist "reform" of logic and rhetoric, became the Puritan plain style of preaching.

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155 It will be important to note that this opposition between the *ars praedicandi* / classical approach to sermon rhetoric and the style of the Reformers becomes, broadly speaking, the basis for the Anglican/Puritan opposition in the development of English preaching theory.
CHAPTER IV

THE THEORY OF SERMON RHETORIC IN ENGLAND--
TYNDALE AND THE PURITANS

I

William Tyndale

In England, the evolution of a rhetoric of preaching after the Reformation followed a course that was at once dependent on the theories of Continental reformers while being at the same time conditioned by circumstances peculiar to its setting. It is important to recognize both these factors as sources which contribute to the distinctive quality and variety of English homiletics. Despite the idiosyncratic nature of English homiletic theory, in some of its manifestations it remained very similar to its Continental antecedents and contemporaries. This is particularly true with reference to the Puritan plain style. There is a tendency in much of the critical literature about the plain style to stress its uniqueness. The argument generally goes that, while the plain style owes a certain debt to Calvinism and an even greater debt to Ramism, within its particular political and religious setting it
became a style of preaching quite unlike any that had existed either before or since. \(^1\) Such a view overemphasizes the notion that the Puritan plain style developed somehow *sui generis*, that it adhered to a new set of homiletical principles, and that it had no counterpart outside of Eng-

\(^1\) Charles and Katherine George call the English plain style a "fairly clear monopoly of 'puritan' divines;" *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 338. The entire thrust of Perry Miller's chapters on "Rhetoric" and "The Plain Style" in *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939; Boston: Beacon Press, 1961) is that the rhetorical roots of the New England plain style go back no further than the English Puritans; he says "Against this kind of oration [the Anglican, 'metaphysical' sermon] Puritans opposed their own conception, the plain and profitable way of doctrine, reasons, and uses, which perfectly reflected in form and style as well as in substance the mentality and tastes of Puritans, Roundheads, and lovers of the Word of God" (p. 344). In form, Miller sees in the Anglican sermon a relationship to "classical and patristic eloquence" while the Puritan sermon looks "more like a lawyer's brief than a work of art" (p. 344). In discussing style, he implies a similar lack of historical precedent when he speaks of their "doctrine of style" as the Puritans' own construction (p. 362). William Haller emphasizes the idiosyncratic nature of English Puritan preaching when he says, "Strictly speaking, English Puritanism in the large may continue to be called Calvinistic chiefly as a matter of historical reference. Actually, the preachers, Calvinist though they were in varying degrees, referred as often to St. Augustine as to the author of the Institutes but were chary on principle of citing any merely human authorities whatsoever. The French reformer's positive, clear, dogmatic intelligence supplied them with ideas but not on the whole with a model of discourse which they chose to imitate when they mounted the pulpit," *The Rise of Puritanism, Or, The Way to The New Jerusalem as Set Forth in Pulpit and Press from Thomas Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton, 1570-1643* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938; Harper Torchbook edition, 1957), p. 85.
land and her American colonies. While it is true that specific circumstances within England that did not operate elsewhere contributed to the evolution of the plain style, in its final form it still remained remarkably similar to other contemporary homiletic forms as well as to its source. To argue that it evolved away from Calvinist theory and practice is to look too closely at the various stages in its development and to lose sight of the fact that, by the time it had evolved, both in theory and practice the plain style was remarkably close to that which Calvin himself had prescribed and demonstrated.

The course of the Reformation in England is a well-known tale of hesitant advances and painful setbacks, and while it need not be repeated in detail here, certain ele-

2Although it is not within the scope of this study to examine the similarity between the plain style and other contemporary homiletical practices, such a study would certainly prove instructive, particularly with regard to the Reformed churches on the continent. An especially fruitful comparison might be made between the plain style and the preaching of the strictly orthodox Calvinist, Reformed churches of the Netherlands. Such a study might serve to make more evident the extent to which English Puritan homiletical theory and practice were very orthodox in their Calvinist underpinnings. The Dutch connection is also important because of the reciprocity between the Dutch Reformed and English Puritan and separatist communities, dating from the time of the Marian exile, and most evident in the early decades of the seventeenth century, particularly in the work of William Ames (cf. Keith L. Sprunger, The Learned Doctor William Ames; Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972) ).
ments in the story are necessary to understand the development of the theory of preaching rhetoric in England. The fact that reformation by no means sprang full blown upon the English people, as it did, for example, in Geneva, is a circumstance that had an enormous impact on the development of preaching theory. Protestant preaching in Geneva, and in a few other thoroughly Protestant, independent centers, was simply taken for granted and was free to develop, without external constraint, at the discretion of the preachers. In England the fitful, often half-hearted and occasionally reactionary movement toward Protestantism kept the preachers on the defensive. Consequently, there was a great deal more rhetoric expended on the nature and office of preaching in England than in more comfortably Protestant communities. Because preaching itself was more embattled in England, the theory of preaching was more exhaustively and self-consciously articulated and debated there than elsewhere.

The most insistent voice in the early, tentative stages of the English Reformation was that of William Tyndale. Marshall Knappen has pointed out that the brand of Protestantism Tyndale espoused was the forerunner of the religious position later to be claimed by the Puritan fac-
tion of the Church of England. Tyndale was clearly at the radical vanguard of English Protestantism in his time, arguing for reforms that Henry, even following his break from Rome, termed "heretical." Tyndale's influence, however, was a powerfully guiding one in the later development of English Protestantism, particularly for the Puritans and sectarians. One of his most influential contributions is also the one that is most important for the theory of preaching rhetoric; that is his theory of scriptural exegesis.

Tyndale was educated at Oxford in the second decade of the sixteenth century. He was influenced by the so-called Christian humanism of Erasmus and Colet, whose theories encouraged cautious reform within the established church. Tyndale's initial interest in translating the Bible into English was very likely a result simply of a more or less disinterested devotion to Erasmian humanistic scholarship. Tyndale evidenced his scholarly concern by proposing to rely only on Hebrew and Greek texts; he was the first English translator to do so. A vernacular Bible was, for Tyndale, a useful scholarly tool, not a weapon of religious protest as it had been for Wyclif.

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4 The Wyclifite English Bible, translated from the
While at Cambridge in the 1520's, Tyndale made the acquaintance of such advocates of Reformation as Christopher Coleman (later an active Puritan), John Firth, who was to become an ardent Tyndale supporter, John Rogers, one of the first Marian martyrs, and Miles Coverdale. It is interesting to note, even at this early date, the predilection Cambridge seemed to demonstrate for the more radical wing of Protestantism. In 1524, with the support of certain London merchants, Tyndale moved his project to the continent to find a more favorable atmosphere for the translation of an English Bible than that offered by the English authorities. There he also produced his by now thoroughly Protestant treatises and expositions of Scripture.

Tyndale's principles of exegesis are based on his fundamental respect for Scripture as the word of God. His attitude is much like that of Wyclif—the word itself assumes absolute primacy in one's interpretation and preach-
ing. This is, of course, the position taken by all the leading reformers. And, as is also true for the other reformers, the basis of one's understanding of the word of God must be the literal sense of Scripture:

Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense, and that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way. 6

Tyndale is quick to turn this insistence on the literal sense of Scripture into an attack on the Catholic church, particularly the pope:

They divide the scripture into four senses, the literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical. The literal sense is become nothing at all: for the pope hath taken it clear away, and hath made it his possession. He hath partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies, and feigned lies; and partly driveth men from it with violence of sword: for no man dare abide by a literal sense of the text, but under a protestation, 'If it shall please the pope.' 7

One way in which the church drove men from the literal sense of Scripture by "violence of sword" was to condemn as heretical any attempt to render the Scripture into the vernacular. Such a prohibition was merely the church's way of maintain-


ing a stranglehold on doctrine. In introducing several reasons defending the English translation of Scripture, Tyndale says he offers his defense in order that

...thou mayest perceive how that the scripture ought to be in the mother tongue, and that the reasons which our spirits make for the contrary, are but sophistry and false wiles to fear thee from the light, that thou mightest follow them blindfold, and be their captive to honor their ceremonies, and to offer to their belly. 8

Like Wyclif, Tyndale combines a doctrinal defense of the literal sense of Scripture with an attack on the Roman Catholic clergy. He attacks the authoritarian tyranny which the church maintains over the individual Christian by pointing out that false human doctrine is given sway over Biblical, divine truth in the exegetical practices of the established church. Impertinent human reason obscures rather than illuminates when it invents its own interpretation of Scripture rather than allowing it to speak for itself: "When by glosses of our imagination we darken the clear text of God's word, then is the scripture locked up from us." 9 Later in the same exposition he states the case more starkly: "And when God's word is altered with false


9 Tyndale, marginal note to "Exposition Upon the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Chapters of Matthew" (1532), in Expositions and Notes on Sundry Portions of the Holy Scriptures, Together with the Practice of Prelates, ed. by Henry Walter for the Parker Society (Cambridge: The University Press, 1849), p. 5.
glosses, it is no more God's word."\(^{10}\)

There is no question for Tyndale who the chief culprits are in thus preventing the light of Scripture from shining through; it is the corrupt clergy, who thereby ensnare the people for their own profit:

And as they are false prophets, which prove with allegories, similitudes, and worldly reasons, that which is no where made mention of in the scriptures; even so count them for false prophets which expound the scriptures, drawing them into a worldly purpose, clear contrary unto the ensample, living and practising of Christ and of his father, and of all the holy prophets.\(^{11}\)

The priests of Rome use their control over the interpretation of the word of God to exert control over the people just as the Scribes and Pharisees used their monopoly on the interpretation of the Hebrew Scripture to control the religious life of the Jews. Tyndale makes the analogy explicit when he paraphrases Christ as saying,

I do but only wipe away the filthy and rotten glosses wherewith the scribes and the Parissees have smeared the law, and the prophets; and rebuke their damnable living, which they have fashioned, not after the law of God, but after their own sophistical glosses, feigned to mock at the law of God, and to beguile the world, and to lead them in blindness.\(^{12}\)

\(^{10}\) Tyndale, "Exposition Upon...Matthew," Expositions and Notes, p. 41.


\(^{12}\) Tyndale, "Exposition Upon...Matthew," Expositions and Notes, p. 39.
Part of the reason for this misinterpretation Tyndale attributes to their willful lack of understanding. The Roman Catholic clergy are merely content to allow their own in-comprehension and error to perpetuate itself. They lack the incentive of a conscientious heart to seek out the simple and evident true sense of scripture:

And therefore, because their darkness cannot comprehend the light of scripture, as it is written, 'The light shined in the darkness, but the darkness could not comprehend it;' they turn it into blind riddles, and read it without understanding....Heresy springeth not of the scripture, no more than darkness of the sun; but it is a dark cloud that springeth out of the blind hearts of hypocrites, and covereth the face of the scripture, and blindeth their eyes, that they cannot behold the brightest beams of the scripture.13

This attack on the failure of the clergy to open up the meaning of Scripture for the people is an attack on their failure to perform a basic clerical function—-that of preaching and instruction. We have seen how a concern for the revitalized role of the pastor in assuming the care and feeding of his flock was a central rallying cry of the continental reformers. Tyndale echoes that concern for his English audience:

Even so it is not enough to have translated, though it were the whole scripture into the vulgar and common tongue, except we also brought again the light to understand it by, and expel that dark cloud which the hypocrites have spread over the face of the scripture, to

13 Tyndale, "The Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John" (1531), Expositions and Notes, p. 141.
blind the right sense and true meaning thereof. And therefore are these diverse introductions ordained for you, to teach you the profession of your baptism, the only light of the scripture.\footnote{14}

While Tyndale was not himself a preaching minister and fulfilled his duty in exile, still he sought, in his many treatises, to provide that clear exposition of Scripture required of the pastor.

Tyndale also recognized, as did the other reformers and the authors of preacher's manuals for several centuries prior to the sixteenth century, that this work of clear instruction could only be carried out by an educated clergy, well-trained in the interpretation of scripture. The common people will not understand even the vernacular Scripture correctly unless the priests do their job in a responsible manner and carefully instruct them. The inability of the Catholic clergy to do so occasions yet another stinging rebuke:

But, alas! the curates themselves (for the most part) wot no more what the new or old Testament meaneth, than do the Turks: neither know they of any more than that they read at mass, matins, and evensong, which yet they understand not: neither care they, but even to mumble up so much every day, as the pie and popinjay speak, they wot not what, to fill their bellies withal.\footnote{15}

Tyndale's complaint here anticipates the almost identical...

\footnote{14} Tyndale, "The Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John" (1531), Expositions and Notes, p. 144.

\footnote{15} Tyndale, "The Obedience of a Christian Man," Doctrinal Treatises, p. 146.
one raised fifty years later by the Puritan advocates of preaching against the Anglican "dumb dogges," who sought comfortable benefices, but whose "preaching" was limited to reading an approved homily once or twice a quarter. Such clerical slackers, says Tyndale, are "enemies unto the cross of Christ." They "preach their belly, which is their god" and "think that lucre is the serving of God." A "true preacher," on the other hand, "preachest Christ's testament only: and maketh Christ the cause and reward of all our deeds."²⁶

Like Luther and especially Calvin, Tyndale acknowledged that the words of instruction that come from the preacher are not to be taken as divine oracles; it was just such a mistaken elevation of human wisdom that allowed the Catholic church to substitute human inventions for Biblical faith. Tyndale urges that the preacher be faithfully listened to and his instruction believed and applied "as long as the preacher teacheth the true word of God." He is not above reproach; since he is subject to the universal frailty of all men, it is altogether possible that his infirm reason may make a mistake. If such a case is determined by recourse to the light of Scripture, it is quite proper to correct the preacher: "For if the preacher

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preach wrong, then may any man, whatsoever he be, rebuke him; first privately, and then if that help not, to com-plain further."17 Tyndale underscored the need for his lifelong project, the vernacular Bible, by noting its role as the final arbiter for any discrepancy:

   Now ought we not to believe any man's doctrine unadvisably, or condemn any man's preaching ere it be heard and seen what it is: but a Christian man's part is to examine, judge and try it, whether it be true or no....Try therefore all doctrine. Wherewith shall we try it? With the doctrine of the apostles, and with the scripture, which is the touchstone.18

   In discussing the method of "trying" the doctrine of a preacher by the test of Scripture, Tyndale returns to a discussion of his exegetical principles. It is interesting to note that an important means of arriving at the literal sense of Scripture for Tyndale is a careful examination of the context in which a passage occurs:

   Yea, why shall I not see the scripture: and the circumstancies, and what goeth before and after; that I may know whether thine interpretation be the right sense, or whether thou jugglest, and drawest the scripture violently unto thy carnal and fleshly purpose; or whether thou be about to teach me or to deceive me?19

The inclusion of context as a tool to use in interpreting

17 Tyndale, "Exposition Upon...Matthew," Expositions and Notes, p. 36.

18 Tyndale, "Exposition of...I John," Expositions and Notes, p. 195.

the literal sense indicates that the meaning of the literal sense is not always quite as apparent on the surface as one might believe. Tyndale makes this more clear when he says later:

Let God's word try every man's doctrine, and whomsoever God's word proveth unclear, let him be taken for a leper. One scripture will help to declare another. And the circumstances, that is to say, the places that go before and after, will give light unto the middle text. And the open and manifest scriptures will ever improve the false and wrong exposition of the darker sentences. 20

Tyndale thus acknowledges that even the literal sense of Scripture bears its "darker sentences" that are, nevertheless, clearly illuminated elsewhere. This is in complete accord with Augustine's pronouncement that nothing is obscure in Scripture that is not clearly expounded somewhere else in the canon. Tyndale notes that even Augustine ("which is the best, or one of the best, that ever wrote upon the scripture") occasionally had difficulty deciding on the correct literal interpretation of a text; he amended much of his early exegesis on the basis of further study.

The point Tyndale is making is an important one for preaching rhetoric. The insistence on the literal sense of Scripture does not imply that the Bible itself does not make use of figurative senses in many instances. Nor does it

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disallow all figurative interpretation, as long as it is clearly demonstrated that the figurative interpretation is the invention of the preacher and not an article of faith or a literal, Biblical truth. It was in much the same way that the Puritan preachers, while also insisting on the literal, unadorned sense of Scripture plainly expounded, nevertheless recognized as such the difficult, figurative passages of Scripture, and freighted their plain style with similes, metaphors and typological identifications in abundance.

Tyndale notes the first of these points, that the Bible itself used figurative language, in the same passage quoted earlier in which he asserted that "the scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense." Nevertheless," he continues, "the scripture useth proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle, or allegory signifieth, is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently." There is a great danger in forgetting the latter part of this observation, that allegory only serves to illuminate the literal sense. Tyndale lays the blame for this abuse of allegory on Origen, ...whose example they that came after followed so long,
till they at last forgot the order and process of the text, supposing that the scripture served but to feign allegories upon; insomuch that twenty doctors expound one text twenty ways, as children make descant upon plain song. Then came our sophisters with their analogical and chopological sense, and with one antitheme of half an inch, out of which some of them draw a thread of nine days long.

Of course, the Puritan plain preachers would be accused of excessive length by their detractors, so ardent allegory hunting was not the only source of longwindedness.

Tyndale's recognition of figures of speech in the Bible was primarily limited to what he called "similitudes," or similes and metaphors. Their usefulness was not in showing some abstract, allegorical meaning, but in signifying properties held in common by two literal things. He explains, for example, that the metaphor "Christ is a lamb" does not have reference to the property of bearing wool, but the properties of meekness and patience. In other places the identification Tyndale makes is clearly a typological one--a literal object, person or event in the Old Testament prefigures its antitype in the New.

22 "Chopological" is Tyndale's derisive term for the tropological sense.


24 Ibid., pp. 304-05.

use of typological identification is entirely in keeping with Tyndale's insistence on the literal sense—typological interpretation is the figurative sense that remains the closest to the literal sense of Scripture.

Tyndale is implicitly acknowledging that it is quite allowable for the preacher to use a figurative expression to make his point clear; this is the second important point Tyndale makes regarding exegesis and figurative language. Making typological identifications is in fact a form of translating the surface sense of the Bible into a figurative expression. The important point stressed by Tyndale is that, in so doing, the preacher does not offer a different "sense" of Scripture beyond (or at least in addition to) the literal. The interpretation remains a human invention, designed to illuminate the literal sense. It is even allowable to expound an allegorical meaning, so long, once again, as the distinction between the literal sense and the human invention (the allegory) is maintained, and so long as the allegory does not depart very far from the literal sense or contradict sound doctrine.  


Tyndale very carefully, and with quite evident misgivings, spells out the stipulations governing allegorizing:

Thus doth the literal sense prove the allegory, and bear it, as the foundation beneath the house. And because that allegories prove nothing, therefore are they to be used soberly and seldom, and only when the text offereth thee an allegory.27

Tyndale expresses the same reservations regarding those "similitudes" invented by the preacher for purposes of illustration as he felt regarding allegories. They prove nothing in themselves, since they are not God's word, but simple devices conceived by human wit to illustrate the word itself. If they are offered without a firm foundation in Scripture, they are considered to be false:

For the reasons and similitudes of man's wisdom make no faith, but wavering and uncertain opinions only....But faith is wrought by the power of God, that is, when God's word is preached, the Spirit entereth thine heart, and maketh thy soul feel it.28

Allegories and similitudes may be useful, in conjunction with the power of the Spirit, to "engrave" the meaning of the word on the breast of the listener.

Tyndale established a tone for the more insistent style of English Protestantism that was to persist for well over a century to come. His attitude toward preaching very closely approximated that of the Puritan faction in the

28 Ibid., pp. 312-13.
later decades of the sixteenth century. Tyndale and the
Puritans shared an insistence on the absolute importance of
exegetical preaching and the duties of the preacher. In­
deed, just as Tyndale's stance regarding the word preached
set him apart from the church he sought to reform, so it
was the Puritans' theology of preaching that was a key ele­
ment in setting them apart from the established, only moder­
ately Protestant Anglican church. Tyndale also shared with
the Puritans the conviction that preaching could only be
based on a clear and straightforward exposition of the Bible.
It did not consist of the merely ceremonious reading of a
service, or of a homily. Finally, Tyndale very closely ex­
emplifies the attitude of the Puritans toward their style
of preaching. The strident emphasis on the literal sense
does not overlook the patently figurative nature of much of
the literature of Scripture. Nor does it absolutely pre­
clude the preacher from employing figurative devices in
interpreting and explaining the literal sense for the bene­
fit of the people. The sometimes surprisingly vivid and
colorful language of the "plain" style is given sanction by
Tyndale, himself the early champion of the plain exposition
of the clear word of God.
II

Calvinism and the English Reformation

Of course, Tyndale, while more visible because of the treatises he left analyzing the roles of preaching and exegesis, was by no means the only English reformer to assume such a stance. Indeed, Tyndale's entire career and his martyrdom were played out in exile. As the Reformation, by fits and starts, gained momentum in England, a number of practicing English curates began to demonstrate similar principles regarding the importance, content and style of preaching in their own sermons. Among such early English Protestant preachers were John Foxe, Miles Coverdale and Hugh Latimer. It has been variously noted, and with some justification, that these preachers represented a line of succession from the medieval preaching friars or, as Haller puts it, from Chaucer's parson.²⁹ The connection between the friars and Protestant preachers is not a very complete one by any means—the most significant distinction is that the mendicant friars were not in the service of a single parish or even diocese, and although many were edu-

cated, rigorous academic training was by no means a prerequisite for membership in an order, while the early Protestant preachers were well-educated, settled churchmen. Yet both brotherhoods acknowledged the theological importance and the practical benefit of regular, popular preaching. A similar impulse moved both the friars and the reformers in their attitude toward preaching, and Morgan is quite right in regarding what Haller terms the "spiritual brotherhood" of the Puritan preachers as similar in motivation and commitment to a monastic order or brotherhood of friars. Morgan quotes a letter by John Foxe in which he claims that his "degree or order...is that of a mendicant or if you will of the preaching friars." This in no way suggests that the friars were Protestant precursors, but simply points out that the preaching friars and the preaching Protestants held one essential precept in common—that preaching is fundamental to the life of the church.

The change in sermon form between the medieval friars and the Puritans was a gradual one, despite the writings of Tyndale. Nearly to a man, the English reformers subscribed to Tyndale's basic exegetical principle, that it is only the literal sense of scripture that may be expounded in a

30 Morgan, pp. 2-3.
31 John Foxe, letter to Laurence Humphrey (1561), in Morgan, p. 5.
sermon. But the structure and style of the sermon which expounded the literal sense varied widely. Blench, whose analyses of sermon styles are most instructive, notes that John Bradford's sermons were modelled after the thematic mode of the artes praedicandi in their structure, although their style was quite simple. Hugh Latimer, perhaps the most popular preacher among the English reformers, employed a format patterned directly after the medieval exempla sermon. Latimer proved his Protestant credentials by taking all his tales from the Bible, usually the Old Testament. He would simply narrate the Old Testament story, using it just as the medieval friar used an exemplum, and proceed to draw some moral conclusion from it. Latimer's style was very colloquial--its colorfulness proved an effective popular device with the people who crowded to hear him. Not surprisingly, since nearly all his sermons were expositions of Old Testament passages, Latimer made frequent use of


33 Blench, p. 88.

typological identifications, seeing some person or event in his text as the type, or prefigurement, of its New Testament counterpart.  

Latimer is an important link in the line of development from medieval to Puritan theories of homiletics. T.H.L. Parker notes that some English preachers were inclined to retain the medieval form of preaching while adopting the doctrine of preaching offered by the continental reformers. This is certainly true of Latimer. That he readily subscribed to the Reformation's doctrine of preaching is indicated in this passage, quoted in Smyth, in which Latimer explains Paul's definition of preaching:

*Evangelium est potentia dei ad salutem omni credenti.* The preachynge of the gospel is the power of god to every man that doth believe. He meanes gods word open-ed, It is ye instrument, and the thing where by we are saved. Beware, beware, ye diminish not thys office, for if ye do, ye decaie goddes power to all that do beleve.

And so Latimer "opened" God's word in accord with such a conviction; his method of opening it happened to be borrowed from the medieval *exempla* sermon.

It was not a long step from Latimer's use of Old

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35 Cf. Davies, p. 303.


Testament exempla to "open" a meaning in scripture to Bishop John Hooper's technique demonstrated in a sermon on Jonah preached before Edward VI. Hooper, popularly known as the "father of noncomformity," used his text first to reveal the "doctrine" it contains, or the sense of each verse that was applicable to Christian faith. He then illustrated the "uses" of each doctrine, or the moral application of those doctrines to the life of the Christian. This technique very closely corresponds to that being used by Calvin at about the same time, although Calvin did not label his exposition and application as Doctrines and Uses. It is quite possible that Hooper might have been influenced by Calvin's practice, since there was a rather free movement of correspondence and people between Edward's England and Geneva. On the other hand, Hooper's practice may have developed simply as a rather natural consequence of the exegetical doctrine of preaching. In expounding a passage of scripture, it is natural to first examine the "sense" of the text and then, by virtue of the preacher's faithful concern for the care of souls, to show how that meaning may be applied to improve one's spiritual life. Hooper's technique was to be later refined (at a time when Calvin's influence is without question) into the fixed format of

38 Cf. Blench, p. 94; Davies, p. 304.
the plain style, Doctrine, Reasons and Uses.

Calvin's connection with the English reformers was quite extensive during the period of Edward's reign. Several of his works were already being distributed in England, although his popularity in print was exceeded by that of Bullinger. English visitors to Geneva were numerous, and they were always hospitably received. Early in his career Calvin had made the acquaintance of two Englishmen close to Edward--Edward's tutor, Jean Bellermaine, and his librarian Bartholomew Traheron. Bucer, who was frequently at Cambridge, kept Calvin abreast of developments in the progress of reformation in England. Calvin corresponded with the Protector, the Earl of Somerset, with Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, and with Edward himself. Cranmer wrote him that he could "do nothing more useful than write to the king frequently." In one of his letters to Edward, Calvin sounds an encouraging admonition that illustrated one area in which his influence was to be most surely felt:

40 Ibid., p. 182.
42 Cf. McNeill, p. 311; Porter.
43 Cranmer to Calvin, 15 June 1551, in McNeill, p. 311.
There is another point, Sire, which ought to be especially regarded by you, namely, that the poor flocks be not destitute of pastors. Ignorance and barbarism have pressed so heavily in this accursed papacy, that it is not easy to obtain, at the first attempt, persons fit and qualified to discharge that office. However, the thing is well worth taking pains about; and let your ministers, Sire, keep their eye upon it, that the food of life may be afforded to the people, as it ought to be. Without that, all the holy and good ordinances you can make will avail but little to reform their hearts in good earnest.44

Calvin's admonition was a necessary one given the struggling status of preaching in England. This was caused partly by a very significant event for the development of preaching theory that had occurred during Edward's reign, and that caused Calvin to write to Somerset that "there is little of living preaching in your kingdom, sermons there being mostly read or recited."45 The reason sermons were "mostly read or recited" in England was the publication in 1547 of the first Book of Homilies—and the subsequent prohibition of preaching in 1548. The Book of Homilies was a collection of topical sermons compiled by Cranmer originally for the purpose of promoting preaching in the kingdom. Shortly after its publication, Cranmer sent commissioners


throughout England ensuring that preaching was revived in every parish of the realm. Many of the curates were frankly uninterested in or even incapable of preaching to their congregations; the Book of Homilies was to provide such non-preaching clergy with an approved and ready-made sermon. Cranmer's commissioners were expected only to ensure that sermons were preached at least once a quarter--this was surely not following the doctrine of regular preaching advocated by every important reformer. And by September of 1548, reading of the homilies became the only approved form of preaching in England; the preaching of exegetical sermons, one of the foundations of the Reformation, was suppressed.

The sermons collected in the Book of Homilies were, for the most part, not, strictly speaking, homilies at all. Nearly all were composed in the form of the traditional seven-part Ciceronian oration--the sermon form advocated by Erasmus, Colet, and of course, another prominent Christian humanist, Cranmer himself. Several of the twelve sermons were written by Cranmer; the authorship of others has been attributed to various contemporaries. Only one of the sermons takes the form of the ancient, patristic homily.

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47 Davies, p. 229.
The topics, however, are those ordinarily associated with the ancient homilies—ethical discourses on specific themes, rather than expositions of specific portions of Scripture. The topics range from the encouragement of specific virtues ("Good Works;" "Christian Love and Charity"), to courses of instruction in the Christian spiritual life ("Reading Scripture;" "Fear of Death"), to attacks on specific vices ("Against Whoredom and Adultery;" "Against Swearing and Purgery").

Like the Ciceronian structure, the style of the homilies is modelled after the classical prescription for didactic prose—they are both "eloquent and intelligible," demonstrating "plainness and clarity." There is none of the convoluted amplification or pedantic citing of proofs characteristic of the *ars praedicandi* method. Wall notes that, like Augustine, the sixteenth century humanists who composed sermons in the classical mode were simply borrowing from the pagan tradition those devices that could serve the purpose of Christian oratory. Just as Cicero believed that oratory which could teach, delight and move an audience helped to establish an orderly society, so the humanists taught that it was entirely correct to use the same

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means of teaching, delighting and moving to further God's will for the individual's salvation and the orderly preservation of Church and State. The homilies are all intelligible to the common man, presenting in a rather elementary fashion the fundamental precepts of this new Protestant faith that rather jarred the age-old preconceptions of the ordinary Englishman. Without compromising their clarity, they followed the classical prescription in the use of figures of thought and language, illustrating their principles with the full range of tropes and emotion-generating devices recommended by the classical texts.

While they may have had a certain kind of classical forcefulness and precision about them, and while they may have been effective for ensuring at least some kind of intelligible Protestant instruction for the parishioners of reluctant clergy, the fact remains that the homilies were woefully inadequate to supply the kind of preaching required by the reformers. The 1548 suppression of other forms of preaching was never strictly enforced. Men like Latimer, Bradford, Rogers and Hooper continued to preach, and to attempt to make the recognition of regular exegetical preaching an accepted feature of the official church. Already an Anglican/Puritan split was appearing in the

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Church of England regarding the matter of preaching. Calvin's correspondence indicates his interest in the matter; he continually seeks to urge the conservative English church to push their progress of reformation further toward the example of the reformed churches of Switzerland, France and Germany. As illustrated earlier much of his correspondence touches directly on the matter of preaching. It is a testimony to Calvin's ability to deal diplomatically with those who differed from him, a fact obscured by his undeserved reputation as a narrow-minded tyrant, that he maintained a cordial relationship with Cranmer. Indeed, in 1552 Cranmer invited Calvin to attend a conference designed to resolve the controversy concerning the eucharist among the Protestant churches; Calvin warmly responded that he would cross ten seas if he could be of service. 50

That conference was never held because of Edward's death and the accession of Queen Mary in 1553. During the five years of her reign, Calvin was to have occasion to exert a much more direct influence on scores of influential Englishmen who escaped Mary's violent persecutions by means of the expedient of self-imposed exile. Many English Pro-

50McNeill, p. 200.
testants stayed at their posts, preaching the word, until they were imprisoned or burned in the fires of Smithfield. The names of these martyrs are well-known, thanks in no small part to John Foxe, whose memorializing Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs (Foxe's Book of Martyrs) took pains to establish their dedication to preaching as a primary cause for their suffering. Among the martyred preachers were Latimer, Bradford, Hooper and Rogers. Needless to say, Mary's reinstitution of Catholicism and her inclination to incarcerate or incinerate all Protestants effectively suppressed preaching during her reign.

While it is important to note that, thanks to Foxe, later generations were to understand that many of the prominent Marian martyrs died because of their faithful devotion to the preaching of the word, a more important immediate influence on the development of the theory of preaching in England were those Protestants who survived Mary's reign in exile. Hundreds of Protestants fled England for the duration of Mary's reign. While many of these were prominent Anglicans, a majority were from the newly emerging, "purifying" element of the church, who were less able in conscience to express their conformity to Catholicism, or who were unwilling to face the risk of going underground (as several secret Protestant congregations did). It is estimated that a total of between 700 and 1000 exiles fled
England. This was by no means a large number of people, but it included many who were to be leaders of both factions of the Elizabethan church.\textsuperscript{51}

The exiles settled originally in Strasbourg, Basel, (where John Foxe began his \textit{Book of Martyrs}) Zurich and Frankfurt-am-Main, with a few living in Geneva from the start. The history of the English congregation in Frankfurt is an often repeated one, but its retelling has a crucial bearing on understanding the development of preaching theory for two reasons. First, it illustrated the growing Anglican/Puritan dispute regarding liturgy and worship that would help direct the development of divergent attitudes toward preaching in Elizabeth's reign. And secondly, it leads to a further indication of the increasingly potent impact of Calvinism on the Puritan faction. Briefly, the facts of the Frankfurt dispute of 1554 are these. The English congregation, led by Whittingham and including John Knox, was dissatisfied with the liturgy of the second Ed-

wardian prayer book (1552) they were using. Calvin himself advised them that it smacked of "popish dregs." Whittingham and Knox composed a revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* that was much more closely patterned after the liturgies of the reformed churches.\(^{52}\) Shortly after this revision was adopted, however, another group of exiles led by Richard Cox arrived. The Cox group was composed of stalwart Church of England defenders, and they strongly objected that the Frankfurt congregation was not using the only officially sanctioned English liturgy. In the dispute that ensued, Cox's supporters triumphed; Knox bitterly departed for Geneva, shortly followed by Whittingham and most of the leaders of the original group of Frankfurt exiles. The English congregation was warmly received in Geneva; Knox is often quoted as observing that Calvin's Geneva was "the most perfect schoole of Chryst that ever was in the erth."

since the dayis of the Apostillis." 53

The liturgy controversy is a most important one as a preview of what was to develop in England almost from the moment Elizabeth took the throne through the better part of the ensuing century. The essential distinction between the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and the reformed, Puritan liturgy was the focus of the worship service. It was the intent of the Reformation in general to make the pulpit the focal point of the worship service rather than the altar. 54 From the beginning, the use of ceremony was decreased; Calvin's services consisted of a few prayers, the reading of the Decalogue, the singing of a few Psalms--and the exposition of the text for the day. The two sacraments (i.e. baptism and the Lord's Supper) were administered only upon occasion--they were, of course, absolutely essential, but the celebration of the Lord's Supper did not monopolize every worship service as the mass did. The preaching of the word supplanted the ceremonious practice of the sacrament as the focus of worship. Introits, collects, responses, chants, the reading of various lessons, the following of the liturgical year--all this

53 In Dickens, p. 198.

intruded upon the main object of worship, the preaching of the word. The Anglican prayer book, however, prescribes a service freighted with just such ceremonial devices. The preaching of the sermon occupies a much smaller niche in proportion to the ceremonial service than that outlined in the reformed and Puritan liturgies.

There were, of course, serious theological disputes about the ceremonies themselves. But essentially all such disputes resolved themselves into the basic question of whether the "plain and perspicuous" preaching of the word was more important than rites and ceremonies. In essence, the Anglican position derogated preaching in order to elevate the sacraments and accordingly followed a ceremonious liturgy; the Puritans on the other hand derogated as superstitious and popish such ceremonies as would at all diminish the importance of scriptural preaching.55

Many of the issues which divided Anglican and Puritan--issues with increasingly social and political overtones--arose out of this basic dispute regarding whether the Lord was to be worshipped in an elaborate ceremony or by the mere preaching of the word. The extended contro--

versy over the wearing of vestments, which led to the silencing of many preachers who chose this issue as symbolic of their resistance to the dictatorial control of the Church of England over cases of conscience, was a direct offshoot of the liturgical disagreement. The various and often bitter controversies in church architecture are also a direct result of the controversy regarding whether sermon or sacrament was to be most featured in worship. The Anglican order to rail the altar was intended solely to elevate the ceremonial importance of the sacrament. The Anglican split chancel emphasized the co-equal role of ceremonial readings and preaching; the Puritan chapel had only a single pulpit, for obvious reasons. The Puritans objected to screening the chancel from the nave; it separated the preacher from the people, and the screened-off chancel made the minister seem more like what the Anglicans came to call him—a priest. The Puritans introduced pews for the seating of the congregation during preaching; pews interfered with the ceremonial processions of the Anglican service, and were not really necessary since the people were not expected to sit for long anyway. The political threat of preaching caused Elizabeth to move to silence Puritans by means of licensing; the development and propagation of lectureships was a political act as much as a theological one, and the instrument was the preaching of the word. The de-
velopment of Sabbatarianism was a means to make the focus of the Lord's Day the sober attention to and study of the preaching of the word and to reduce the effect of shallow ceremonial worship. It had profound social repercussions as well. 56

It will not be necessary in this study to trace all of these Puritan/Anglican controversies in detail. Our study is, after all, of the rhetoric of preaching, not of its social and political impact. It must be observed, however, that most of the issues that divided the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were somehow, and often directly, related to the role of preaching. This is important to understand because of the way in which such an involvement reflected back on the development of the rhetoric of preaching. The religious, social, political and economic implications of preaching made it the center of an intense and sustained controversy. Its theories were conceived and articulated under conditions that

demanded painstaking scrutiny and careful consideration. Its rhetoric is thus a very self-conscious one. It was a rhetoric shaped at the vortex of a conflict that was to become a revolution; its importance was not overlooked by either side.

This much, then, had its beginning in the Anglican/Puritan conflict over liturgical forms and the role of preaching in worship that originally came to a head in Frankfurt in 1554. The other upshot of this conflict was the establishment of an English congregation led by John Knox in Geneva, and the influence this was to have for the circulation of Calvinism among the English Puritans. Although Anglican Protestantism remained essentially Calvinist in its basic doctrines, the Anglican/Puritan dispute of later years was to be largely a matter of the Church of England practice vs. Calvinist practice. The Calvinist element was fortified during its years of exile and would remain quite orthodox, right through its planting in New England. The orthodoxy of the Calvinist Puritans would become even more pronounced as the Anglican church became more Arminian in outlook.

Knox's congregation (he was the official pastor of the group in Geneva) became thoroughly reformed in practice and attainments during their stay in Geneva. Knox composed what came to be known as his Genevan liturgy while
there. This included Calvin's catechism and was to be a foundation document of the Scottish church, and well-known among the English Puritans as well. Following their return from exile, some members of the group established a Calvinist, reformed congregation in London, although this project did not flourish. Calvin died shortly after Elizabeth took the throne, but this in no way diminished his influence in England; if anything, his successor, Beza, had more influence than Calvin himself. Geneva continued to be looked on as a model city, something the Puritans envisioned in their dreams of the Protestant realm they hoped for from Elizabeth.57 Cremeans notes that the most popular university on the continent for Englishmen studying abroad during Elizabeth's reign was Heidelberg, a thoroughly Calvinist institution. Calvin's work continued to be widely published in England--indeed, his books were the most popular items issuing from the English press until the end of the sixteenth century, when they were finally surpassed by the works of Henry Smith and William Perkins, both of them thorough Calvinists.58

The Geneva congregation included some of the most gifted and capable English linguists of the day. Geneva

57 Cremeans, pp. 62-63.

58 Cremeans, p. 65.
itself was a center of Biblical scholarship, the base for several vernacular translations of the Bible. The result of this combination was the Geneva Bible (1560), by far the most popular Bible in England (and America) for many years. Its influence was enormous; its relative inexpensiveness and convenient size made it available to nearly every literate household in the land. Even more importantly, its extensive marginal notes made it a vehicle for the dissemination of a Calvinist interpretation of Scripture. Although it faced official competition from the Great Bible and later the Bishop's Bible, it easily outpaced such rivals. It was eventually superceded by the King James version, but remained the standard text for the Puritans long after 1611.

The Elizabethan settlement proved far from satisfactory for the more extreme Protestants. The standard interpretation of Elizabeth's policy of religious accommodation is that it was demanded by practical exigencies—and that the queen's instinct for survival took precedence over what were frankly not very profound religious convictions. The Church of England of her father and of Edward was the official state church, and the emerging Puritan faction simply had to attempt in whatever way possible to move the established church to a position of more complete reformation. Hart observes that "the Protestant extremists, returning from their Marian exile after drinking at the pure foun-
tain-head in Geneva, proved themselves much more doughty opponents of the Elizabethan compromise than the Catho-
olics."

As noted above, one of the disputes upon which this opposition was played out was the controversy regarding the role of preaching.

In 1559, Elizabeth issued an edict entitled the Royal Injunctions which demanded compliance with the Geneva Book of Common Prayer of Edward VI (1552). Only licensed preachers were allowed to preach their own sermons, and such licenses were issued only to those who conformed to the Royal Injunctions. Conforming meant subscribing to the ecclesiastical supremacy of the crown as well as accepting the Book of Common Prayer. Unlicensed ministers, or those unwilling or unable to preach their own sermons, were to limit themselves to reading from the Book of Homilies. Initially, this restriction was intended as a temporary measure until there was a sufficient supply of trained clergy to fill the need for more preaching. Early in Elizabeth's reign, the great majority of parishes were with-


out a preaching minister; Elizabeth acknowledged this in the preface to the 1561 edition of the Book of Homilies by noting that "all they which are appointed ministers have not the gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people committed unto them."\(^6\) The use of homilies, however, which was originally intended to supplement the skills of non-preaching clergy, quickly became a device to supplant evangelical preaching. The Puritans were quick to respond in a variety of ways.

As it became clear that preaching was to be suppressed among the clergy of the Church of England, one apparent means of avoiding ecclesiastical control was to remain outside the established church but to preach anyway. Such preachers were ordained ministers, not sectarian laymen, who esteemed preaching more than preferment, and who thus became known as "lecturers."\(^6^3\) The lectureship provided the liberty of preaching to a supportive congregation, at the same time that it involved the continual constraint, and even the risk, of being outside the ecclesiastical pale.\(^6^4\) The lectureships took various forms--some were endowed by individuals, some by local parishes, others

\(^6^2\) Seaver, p. 17.

\(^6^3\) Cf. Hughes, 15.

\(^6^4\) Seaver, p. 33.
even by the corporation government of cities and towns. The lecturer was sometimes licensed, sometimes not, depending on his ability to so phrase his oath of conformity that it did not do too great violence to his scruples while still satisfying the interest of his local bishop. A licensed lecturer held a fairly secure post, so long as he performed to the satisfaction of those who appointed him. It was often the case that the stipend afforded a lecturer was equal to or even greater than that which accompanied the benefice of the local curate. Naturally, there was often a certain amount of envy and animosity on the part of the conforming, usually non-preaching curates toward the lecturer imposed on what had been the local curate's own parish. A few lecturers even took the pulpit during Sunday morning services, although most preached on Sunday afternoon and at special weekday meetings. Other Puritan preachers became ordained churchmen, and were able

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to secure an official benefice, although this usually demanded at least some oral compromising of principles along the way.

III

A Puritan Theology of the Word

The Puritans occasionally debated, although never with too much heat, and also without any ultimate resolution, whether it were preferable for a preacher to secure a benefice or to preach as a lecturer. What was far more important was their insistence on a preaching ministry in every parish in England. It was in this important sense that the Puritans echoed the similar concern of the authors of preaching manuals from the time of Augustine. Much of what the English Puritans said regarding the importance of preaching had been expressed in quite similar terms by the author of the *ars praedicandi* manuals, by the monastic preaching orders, by Wyclif, Luther and especially Calvin. A thorough understanding of the Puritan theology of preaching is essential to a full understanding of the rhetorical principles the Puritans prescribed as the vehicle for their

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66 Seaver, p. 35.
preaching. Indeed, as we shall see, the very terms in which they described the nature of preaching and the duties of the ministry presupposed certain rhetorical principles.

The phrase that recurs again and again in Puritan writing and preaching is that used by Paul in Romans 1:16, that "the Gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to everie one that beleeveth." The Westminster Directory of 1644, the liturgical culmination of nearly a century of Puritan struggle to establish the importance of preaching in the life of the church, says,

Preaching of the word, being the power of God unto Salvation, and one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging to the ministry of the Gospel, should be so profound, that the workman need not be ashamed, but may save himself, and those that hear him.

It is significant to note how the Directory silently paraphrases "the Gospel of Christ" in the original text as "preaching of the word." This is done with the aid of the passage found in Romans 10:14-17, which is usually appended to the previous passage in explaining the nature of preaching. Here preaching as a means of salvation is made explicit in verse 14: "But how shal thei call on him, in whome

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67 Unless otherwise noted, Scriptural quotations will be from the first edition of The Geneva Bible, 1560.

they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" It is stated more succinctly in verse 17: "Then faith is by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Puritan Thomas Goodwin notes in commenting on the same text, "it is such a hearing as is by preaching." John Downname quotes the same text and observes, "and therefore whosoever contemne or neglect the hearing of God's word, they refuse the meanes of faith."

69 In A Warning against the Idolatry of the Last Times, and An Instruction Concerning Religious or Divine Worship, William Perkins cites the Scriptural texts which demonstrate that preaching is a means of salvation: "The Gospel is the power of God to salvation to all that believe," Rom. 1:16; "How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. 10:14; "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." I Cor. 1:21. William Perkins, The Workes of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins, 3 vols. (London: 1626, 1631; first edition, 1602), vol. 1, p. 703.


71 John Downname, The Christian warfare; wherein is first generalie shewed the malice, power and politike strategems of the spirituall enemies of our salvation, Satan and his assistants the world and the flesh; with the meanes also whereby the Christian may withstand and defeate them, 3rd ed. (London: Felix Kyngston, for William Wolby, 1612; first edition, 1604), p. 379.
Geneva Bible translators further this identification of the word of God with preaching by providing this marginal note on the phrase "by the worde of God" in Romans 1:17: "That is, by God's commandment, of whome they are sent that preache the Gospel. It may be also taken for the very preaching its self."

Again and again the Puritans, throughout the period from the reign of Mary to the interregnum, sound this note, that preaching is essential as a means to salvation. Thomas Goodwin, in the passage just quoted, calls Paul's preaching "necessitate medii," for it is "a means to save the souls of men whom God had committed unto him." John Downname says that,

the ministrie of the word is God's owne ordinance.... Neither doth he use ordinarilie any other meanes (especially where this is to be had) for the true conversion of his children, and for the working of the sanctifying graces of his spirit in them."

Richard Sibbes expresses the imperative attitude that sounds in most of the Puritan commentary on preaching:

All the good we have by Christ is conveyed by the ministry....Despise the ministry, that is contemptible to flesh and blood, and despise Christ himself, despise the kingdom, and life, and all; for Christ preached is that we must rely on, Christ unfolded. The bread of life must be broken, the sacrifice must be anatomized and laid open, Christ Jesus the Son of God

must be preached. 74

It is this sense of urgency that is conveyed in the often quoted couplet of the post-Restoration Puritan Richard Baxter: "I preached as never like to preach again/ And as a dying man to dying men."

It is not surprising that the preaching of the word is often vividly described; note the titles ascribed to it in John Downname's The Christian Warfare:

The ministrie of reconciliation; the Gospell of peace; the word of life; the word of salvation; that heavenly seede; the foode of our soules, even milke for babes, and strong meat for men of ripe yeares; the Physicke of our soules; the square and rule of our lives; a lanthourne to our feet, and a light unto our pathes. 75

Sibbes calls it "the chariot that carried Christ up and down in the world," 76 his figure making preaching a literal vehicle of the gospel. In one of the Puritan preacher's manuals, Richard Bernard succinctly defines its role in salvation, and lists some of its metaphysical attributes:

It is the ministry by which God hath appointed to beget people unto him, to plant men in Christ, and by which

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they that believe are still confirmed and further built up, and without which the people perish....And the better to declare the necessity of the Ministry of the Word, the Lord compareth it to food, to the light, to the raine, deaw, and shewres upon the grasse.77

Goodwin expands on the rain and dew imagery, noting that, like the rain, preaching works "both beginnings and increase," that is, both the sprouting and budding of faith. But preaching does even more than rain is able to do, for other rain falling on a briar, it remaineth a briar still; but where this rain falls, God accompanying it with a blessing, instead of a thorn comes up a fir; and of fuel for hell it makes men fruitful trees to God, and fit for his building, for it fully alters the nature of them. And though watering the earth with watering-pots is good and useful in the time of drought, and so is reading of good books and conferring of things holy, yet preaching is the kindly ordinance, when, 'doctrine drops as the rain, and speech distils as the dew, and as small rain upon the tender herb,' as in preaching it still doth, Deut. xxxii. 2.78

One of the most vivid images by which preaching is defined is that in which it is called the very voice of God himself. In defining the two-fold role of the preacher in public preaching and public prayer, William Perkins says,


78 Goodwin, Works, vol. 11, p. 360. The imagery in such a passage as this goes beyond the bounds earlier reformers, particularly Calvin, would have been comfortable with. It is not inconsistent, however, with the imagery common to the so-called "plain" style.
"And every Prophet is partly the voice of God, to wit, in preaching; and partly the voice of the people, in the act of praying." 79 Elsewhere, Perkins even more powerfully evokes this image:

And hence we may also marke what a wonderfull might and power is in the word preached: for it is the very word of Christ, and therefore being preached by his Ministers lawfully called by him thereunto, both the same power and force is in it, which Christ himself shewed when he spake on earth. It is the savour of life unto life, to save those that heare it: or the savour of death unto death. 80

Sibbes repeats the image of preaching releasing the "savor" that makes Christ apparent to us: "To preach is to open the mystery of Christ, to open whatsoever is in Christ, to break open the box that the savour may be perceived of all." 81 In an even more curious image, it is assigned the role of marriage broker, or procurer, when he says that the role of preaching is "to woo,...to procure the marriage between Christ and his church." 82

Of course, this access to the word of God provided by preaching was intended only to emphasize the fact that

82 Ibid., p. 506.
preaching must be *sola scriptura*. All preaching was to be based on the written word of God and on that alone. Perkins instructs his audience of ministers that "the perfect and equal object of Preaching is the word of God" and elaborates in a marginal note: "Or, the Word of God is the whole and onely matter, about which preaching is exercised: it is the field in which the Preacher must contain himself." Goodwin explains that the gospel was declared by Christ to his apostles; they in turn preached it and recorded it in their writing.

Now this glorious gospel which the apostles have thus left in writing, and which we poor ministers in all ages do expound as well as we can unto you, what is it? It is the lively image or picture of Jesus Christ, who is the express image of the Great God, and of all his glory; and hence is it a glorious gospel. Goodwin is careful to explain the lineage of this word of God expressed in the gospel--it is that and only that recorded in the Scriptural account. Like Calvin, the Puritans are careful to avoid the excesses of the sectarians who claim that in preaching, the word of God is newly expressed in a special revelation. For the Puritans, the preacher speaks with the voice of God only metaphorically;

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the word of God that he expresses is that revealed in scripture, not that revealed in a dream or vision:

And howsoever in former times men had visions and dreams, and Angels from God himselfe to reveale his will unto them: yet this Ministrie of God's Word in the New Testament, is as sufficient a meanes of the beginnings and increasing of true faith, as that was then. This plainly comforteth all those that neglect or contemme the Ministrie and preaching of the Word, and looke for extraordinarie revelation, and for visions and dreames, for the beginning and increase of faith and grace in their hearts.85

As for Calvin also, the preaching of the word has no power in and of itself; its effectiveness cannot be attributed to the words that come out of the preacher's mouth, but to the two-fold operation of the Holy Spirit, in aiding the preacher in his act of speaking and interpreting, and, more importantly, in opening the hearts of the audience. It is the Spirit that makes the heart of the faithful and attentive hearer receptive (assuming, of course, that such a hearer is among the elect), and that plants the seed of regeneration. Perkins emphasizes that preaching is merely an instrument of grace; it has no power in itself unless the Spirit blesses it and gives it increase.86 Downame explains,

For howsoever Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God alone giveth the increase....And though the word

85 Perkins, A Cloud of Faithfull witnesses: Leading to the Heavenly Canaan; or A Commentarie upon the Eleventh Chapter to the Hebrews, in Works, vol. 3, p. 132.

may long sound in our ears before it pierce the heart, or beget any saving grace in us, unless the Lord open our hearts and make the seede of his word fruitfull. 87

In his series of sermons published as The New Creature, John Preston uses a number of images to indicate how the Spirit operates to achieve sanctification through hearing the word preached:

What doe wee, when we dresse up a Sermon never so well? It is but the rigging of the sailes, and what will all this doe without winde? Is not the Spirit the wind? What are Organs without breath? There is no musicke made: And what is all our preaching when the Spirit is absent?88

It is important to note that this emphasis on the sole efficacy of the Spirit tends toward the derogation of eloquence, as Preston intimates. Since the sermon is neither more nor less beneficial without the operation of the Spirit, though it be dressed up "never so well," the implication is that a sermon so "dressed up" may represent a presumptuous attempt to effect some action upon the hearts of the congregation by strength of the sermon alone. Since no amount of rhetorical window dressing can increase the beneficial effect of the sermon, it is better to avoid such unprofitable ostentation altogether, and use a plain, un-adorned style. Indeed, such a style may reflect even greater


glory upon the Lord, since, as was the case so often in the Biblical account, it demonstrates his ability to refine the treasures of his saving grace from mere dross. Above all, it shows the power of the Holy Spirit in using so weak a vehicle as the preaching of the word to effect such a radical transformation in the hearts and lives of his people. Goodwin comments on the same passage in I Corinthians that Calvin had so meticulously analyzed for its instruction regarding the style of preaching, and makes the observation:

They know not God in his wisdom, by reason of their own wisdom which they are so full of, and by reason of their high esteem of worldly learning and eloquence, accounting the plain, naked, and slow style of the word to be but foolishness;...but God chose it the rather: 'It pleased him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe,' ver. 21, to show that his foolishness is wiser than men's wisdom ....And so when Luther, Calvin, and those other divines came once to preach, where were the schoolmen and learned of the world? Popery fell down before preaching, like Dagon before the ark of God.89

Thus the style of the sermon is closely related to the doctrine that the sermon serves as an instrument for the work of the Spirit in the hearts of hardened sinners, what Preston calls "a transcendent worke, it is the worke of God and not of man."90 It is also significant

89 Goodwin, "Of the Constitution...Of the Church," in Works, vol. 11, p. 362.
at this point to note that, even as the Puritan preachers explain that they use a plain and "foolish" style in the eyes of the world in order to give greater glory to the power of God's Spirit, the style in which they make this disclaimer is dense with vivid and powerful imagery and illusion. Goodwin's final simile in the passage just quoted is a good example of this. The identification is, of course, suitably literal—it typologically equates Dagon (the God/idol of the Philistines) and popery, the ark of the covenant (the liturgical focal point of the Hebrew religious ceremonies) and the preaching of the word. This is not a scholastic allegory, but a "plain and perspicuous" illustration. But the rhetorical effect is, if anything, more immediate and compelling than that achieved by the use of more exotic rhetorical devices; there is no "foolishness" in this careful choice of a rhetorically effective image. Note Preston's use of imagery in a passage in which he, too, derogates the preacher's significance:

This is the errand we are sent about, and the work we are taught to do every Sabbath; and every Sermon which we preach to you, to turne Lions into Lambes, to transform the heart of men, and to make you New Creatures. ...We doe but apply the Pen to the Paper; but if God put not Inke into the Pen, that is, the Spirit of the living God, nothing will be written in your hearts. Therefore, remember what you have to doe, and with whom; not with us, for we are able to doe nothing.... It is God that doth it, wee are but those by whom you beleive....Wee are the Rammes hornes, but who throwes
downe the wals of Jerico? 91

Even as the preacher claims no beneficial power in his own works, the work of the Spirit is undeniably being assisted by the vivid imagery the preacher employs.

While the Puritans are insistent on the necessity of the operation of the Spirit in the hearts of the elect, they do not allow the hearers merely to sit passively and await the inflowing of the Spirit. Calvin had said that while we may expect the operation of the Spirit in the act of preaching, we may not use such an expectation to become slothful either in preaching or hearing a sermon. The Puritans wrote extensively on the necessity for the preacher to be well prepared, as we shall see; they also noted, as a significant aspect of their theology of preaching, the requirement placed on the hearer to listen attentively, and with a heart open to the Spirit. John Downname explains that those who listen diligently may expect the Spirit to enter their heart, although they may have to wait longer than they expect. Those, however, who do not really hear the sermon, do not hear the word of God speaking to them even though they are in attendance, have no such assurance of the aid of God's Spirit. 92 Sibbes says that in order

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for the ministry of the word to be an effective means of grace for the elect, these things are required: the word itself, the word preached, and the word faithfully attended to. Preston explains in *The New Creature* that, since God is the active agent in the powerful preaching of the word, and not the ministers, we must come to the sermon attentively, prepared to meet God, or to see into heaven. Downame specifically prescribes a suitable method of preparation:

> We must banish out of our minde all prejudice, fore­
stalled opinions, and sinister conceits of the Minister of God's word whom we are to heare; whereby men are either carried away with a vaine admiration of his gifts...or else with a prejudice opinion of his insufficiencie in gifts, or imperfections of life.  

Samuel Ward gives a vivid example of the problem the Puritan's conscience found in forming opinions about the preachers rather than concentrating on the word preached. In recording in his dairy his shortcomings for May 11, 1595, Ward accuses himself of the following sins:

> Thy little affection in hearing Mr. Chatertons good sermon upon the 34 verse of the 25 of Math. The adul­
terous thoughtes that day. Thy backwardness in calling to mind the sermon that day....Thy anger against M[r.] N[ewhouse] for his long prayers.

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96 Samuel Ward, in M.M. Knappen, ed., *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, by Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward (Chicago:
Worse still, Ward maintained his animosity towards Mr. Newhouse, for the following day's entry confesses "My evil thoughts of M[r.] N[ewhouse] when I heard him beginning to expound a place in Ecclesiastes." 97

The attentive hearing of the preaching of the word required preparation beforehand, at least in clearing away any distractions, careful attention during the preaching, and thoughtful meditation afterward. Ward records in his diary on May 26, 1595: "How God gave this morning, beying Sunday, before thow rise, some good meditation agaynst wearisomness in Godes service. They dulness this day in hearing Godes word." 98 Puritan devotional literature abounds with helpful hints to aid in preserving the good effect of a sermon. Ward's diary offers one often repeated bit of sound advice to assist in remaining attentive during the sermon itself: "My wandering thoughtes at the common place. Remember always att the hearing of Gods word to be applying the things delivered to they self, and so by-thoughte will take lesse place." 99 Downame advises that

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The American Society of Church History, 1933), p. 103.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid., p. 105.

99 Ibid., p. 108.
following sermon; one ought to meditate on what one heard. Best of all, he says, the hearers ought to regularly confer about the sermons they hear preached—in such conferences, various listeners may elucidate different nuances of meaning, and may supply a pertinent point which others had overlooked. Besides, by planning to confer about the sermon, the listener is inclined to concentrate more carefully on it and to memorize its divisions, which in turn impress it more permanently upon his mind. It is often suggested that it is the duty of the head of a household to exercise his family and servants upon the morning's sermon every Sunday afternoon. In one particularly poignant entry, Ward demonstrates how even the most conscientious of Puritans could have his good intentions undermined by a sequence of infirmities of the flesh:

My negligence in not calling upon God before I went to the Chappell, and the little desire I had then to call on God, and my drowsiness in God's service. My sinnes even thorow the whole day, being Sunday: 1. My negligence aforesayd. 2. My hearing of the sermon without that sence which I should have had. 3. In not talking of good things att dinner.... 4. In the immoderate use of Godes creatures [at dinner]. 5. In sleeping immediately after dinner. 6. In not preparing me to [the evening] sermon till ytt told. 7. In sluggish hearing of Godes word, and that for my great dinner.

In the Puritan Book of Discipline, one entry makes

101 Ward, June 14, 1595, in Knappen, Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries, p. 108.
specific the requirement for the ministry of the word that occasioned Samuel Ward so much difficulty on this particular Sunday: "Let there be, if it may be, every Sabbath day two sermons, and let them that preach always endeavor to keepe themselves within one houre, especially on the weekedayes."102 Puritan worship was based on the actual, literal prescription of Scripture, which was interpreted to provide six ordinances for worship: prayer, praise, the proclamation of the word, the exercise of the sacraments, catechism, and discipline.103 The marks of the true church

102 Walter Travers, A Directory of Church-government Anciently contended for, and as farre as the Times would suffer, practised by the first Non-conformists in the dais of Queen Elizabeth. Found in the study of the most accomplished Divine. Mr. Thomas Cartwright, after his decease; and reserved to be published for such a time as this (London: John Wright, 1644). Popularly known as the Book of Discipline, the Latin text (entitled Discipline ecclesiae sacrae Dei verba descripta) had been privately circulated since 1583. Although long believed to have been the work of Cartwright, the authorship of Travers has now been quite definitely established.

103 Hart, p. 13. Davies, Worship and Theology...from Cranmer to Hooker, p. 259, identifies the Scriptural citations for these ordinances most often alluded to: prayer: "I Exhort, therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thankes be made for all men," I Tim. 2:1; praise: "Speaking unto your selves in psalmes, and hymnes, and spiritual songs, singing, and making melodie to the Lord in your hearts." Eph. 5:19; preaching: I Cor. 1 and Rom. 10:14, already cited at length; sacraments: "Go therefore, and teache all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and the Sonne, and the Holie Gost," Matt. 28:19, and "That the Lord Jesus in the night that he was betrayed, toke bread. And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my bodie, which is broken for you: this do ye in remembrance of me. After
were, as they were for Luther, Calvin, and the other major reformers, the celebration of the sacraments and the preaching of the word. As noted above, preaching became in one important sense more important for the Puritans than the sacraments. Preaching actually supplied the means whereby grace could be infused into the heart of the elect by revealing God's word; the sacraments were memorializing symbols of our salvation, but not a means to convert our hearts.

In this context, two more requirements regarding the nature of preaching must be noted. First, in order for preaching to be effective, it must be the public proclamation of the word, not simply a private reading. Goodwin

the same manner also he toke the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the Newe Testament in my blood: this do as oft as ye drinke it, in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye shall eat this bread, and drinke this cup, ye shewe the Lordes death til he come," I Cor. 11:23-26; catechism: "Keepe the true paterne of the wholesome wordes, which ye hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus," II Tim. 1:13; discipline: Christ's injunction that if a brother is in error you first approach him individually, then with two or three others, and finally present him to the church, for "Whatsoever ye bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye lose on earth, shall be losed in heaven," Matt. 18:15-18.


explains that private instruction is not lawful, so long as we do not scruple to teach the same thing publicly; too much secrecy suggests the possibility of heresy: "Error and falsehood always shun the light.... The gospel is light, and it seeks no corners, and it ought to seek no corners, but ought to be spoken publicly." 106 The second requirement is that preaching is necessary for all hearers, whether they are believers or unbelievers. It is impertinent for believers to suggest that they have no need of preaching; since the regular attendance of the public worship of the church is one of the marks of the true believer. God's Spirit must continue to work in the elect, and it can do so most effectively if the preaching of the word opens the heart of the believer and makes it receptive to the Spirit. 107 It is, of course, commonplace among later evangelical Christians to suggest that preaching is also necessary for unbelievers, since it may serve to convert them. But William Perkins, that thoroughgoing Calvinist, observes another benefit of preaching. Noting that it is primarily beneficial to the elect, Perkins goes on to say that preaching serves a different purpose when preached to the unregen-


erate. Its purpose for them is not to evangelize, as we would expect, but rather to harden the hearts of the obstinate. It is a means to seal their damnation, since it ensures that they have indeed heard God's word, but refused to believe anyway.\textsuperscript{108}

Not every Puritan preacher would have adopted Perkins' rather grim view of the persuasive effect of preaching. "Grim" is an unfair term; Perkins' observation arose from his sense of predestination, and that belief emphasized the saving mercy of God far more than it did his stern retribution. Nevertheless, it reflects the doctrine prevalent among the more orthodox Calvinist Puritans (including most of the New England emigrants) that the grace of God available in preaching, while sufficient for all, was efficient only for the elect. Henry Smith, the "silver-tongued Smith," certainly the most eloquent of the first generation of English Puritans offers a most powerful testimony to the potential power of preaching, when it is both zealously delivered and equally zealously attended to. Preaching on the story of Jonah, he notes how God used the instrument of Jonah's preaching to humble Ninevah:

...for not only within forty days, but within four days, much within forty days, he converted Ninevah, suffering

Ninevah, old and idolatrous Ninevah; long before forty days be ended, the seed is sown, grown, increased mightily, and full ripe, in a soil in reason most barren. Sow therefore, ye seedmen, where ye are set. If ye sow cheerfully, ye shall reap plenteously in due time; faint not. Say not, I have a stony, or a starved or a thorny ground: "Ninevah repents in sackcloth.\(^{109}\)

Smith provides the necessary and equally orthodox counter-part to Perkins' observation that preaching is most beneficial for the elect. Smith simply observes that no mere human can presume to know who are the elect; the faithful shepherd must preach in whatever circumstances he finds himself.

Ninevah only repents, Smith observes, if the minister can faithfully perform his duty. The analysis of the character and attainments of the minister is a crucial aspect of the development of the Puritan theology of preaching. It stands to reason that if preaching was to be esteemed as highly as we have just seen it was, the preacher will also share in that elevation of respect and status. Perkins makes the connection between the dignity of the ministry and the utility of preaching in the epistle dedicatory of *The Art of Prophecying*, the most influential of the Puritan preacher's manuals. The dedication is addressed to "The Faithfull Ministers of the Gospel," and in

it he says of the ministry itself:

The dignity thereof appeareth, in that like a lady it is highly mounted and carried aloft in a chariot: whereas all other gifts, both of tongues and arts, attend on this like handmaidens aloofe off. Answerable to this dignity there is also a twofold use: one, in that it serveth to collect the Church, and to accomplish the number of the Elect: the other, for that it driveth away the Woolves from the foldes of the Lord, for this is indeed that lexanima, that allurer of the Soule, whereby mens froward mindes are mitigated and moved from an ungodly and barbarous life unto Christian faith and repentance. This also is that Engine, which as it hath shaken the foundation of ancient heresies, as it hath in these few bypast yeerers, but asunder the sinews of that great Anti-christ. Wherefore if it be demanded which is the most excellent gift of all, doubtless the praise must be given to Prophesying.\textsuperscript{110}

The role of preaching in the reformation is underscored here; Luther, Calvin, Hooper, Ridley and Latimer are praised more often for their role as preachers than theologians or the leaders of a movement. John Foxe emphasized the fact that the Protestant martyrs died more because of their indefatigable practice of preaching than for their supposedly heretical beliefs. Throughout Puritan literature, the theme is reiterated that the preachers are deserving of gratitude and respect; Henry Smith puts it the most eloquently:

Because they are like lamps, which consume themselves to give light to others, so they consume themselves to give light to you; because they are like a hen, which clucketh her chickens together from the kite, so they cluck you together from the serpent; because they are

like the shout which did beat down the walls of Jericho, Josh. vi. 20, so they beat down the walls of sin; because they are like the fiery pillar which went before the Israelites to the land of promise, so they go before you to the land of promise; because they are like good Andrew, which called his brothers to see the Messias, John i. 41, so they call you to see the Messias; and therefore make much of such.\textsuperscript{111}

The "godly ministers" were known by a variety of figurative titles, some of which Smith suggests. Richard Bernard offers another list: "And hence is it also that Ministers are compared to Salt, Light, to Pastors, Planters, Waterers, Builders, Stewards, Shepherds, Watchmen, Guides, to Fathers, Nurses, and such like."\textsuperscript{112} It will be noted that a preponderance of Bernard's terms suggest the pastoral duties of the preacher, a role we will shortly examine in more detail. Other titles suggest the theological importance of preaching itself; those that appear most frequently are "angels," "ambassadors," or "messengers" of God.\textsuperscript{113}


\textsuperscript{112}Bernard, The Faithfull Shepherd, pp. 7-8.

\textsuperscript{113}Cf. "In this they are not only teachers, but Messengers sent from God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost," Richard Baxter, A Christian Directory: Or A Summ of Pracitical Theologie, and Cases of Conscience... (London: Neville Simmons, 1673), p. 714; ministers' titles include "Ambassadors of Jesus Christ, The men of God, Angels, Disposers of the secrets of God, and Workers Together with God," Bernard, The Faithfull Shepherd, pp. 10-11; "A true minister, one that is a right Angel, and a true Interpreter, is no common or ordinarie man" and "Out of his Word God sheweth thee the dignitie and excellency of this calling, to be a
As such, they are the mouthpiece that delivers the word of God to his people. They are not a direct conduit for the spoken word of God; they no more reveal the oracles of God directly than the preacher defined by Calvin. They are, rather, interpreters of God's word—and as such have a calling even more elevated than mere angels or messengers. By interpreting the word, they declare the necessity of repentence and are the instruments of faith; by their office they further the goal of the Spirit to deliver the elected hearer from the pit. This is a function not given to angels or other messengers, who repeat God's words verbatim, without interpretation or instruction.114 Perkins says of the calling of the ministry that "it teacheth the way to salvation, that without it ordinarily God's Church is not regarded, nor mens soules saved."115 It is not surprising that the authors of the Puritan preachers' manuals claim a special power for the calling of the ministry. Bernard claims that ministers are more honored than followers of other callings, and cites a heritage that includes Noah, Solomon, Jesus, Minister of the Word: namely, they are his Messengers and Ambassadors, &c," Perkins, Of the Calling of the Ministrie. Two Treatises: Describing the Duties and Dignities of that calling, in Works, vol. 3, pp. 432-62. 114 Perkins, Of the Calling of the Ministrie, in Works, vol. 3, p. 438. 115 Ibid., p. 462.
Joseph of Arimathea and Chrysostom—such men are "Workers together with God."  

Perkins takes another tack, saying that although ministers are not afforded any status on earth, they are highly esteemed in heaven. Indeed, the dignity and responsibility of the job are so great in the eyes of heaven that the minister must be awestruck with fear and astonishment when he acknowledges his calling, as were Moses, Jeremiah and Paul. This helps to instill humility, for, despite the low status afforded the preacher, he "is no common or ordinarie man; but...one of many; nay one of a thousand."  

He ultimately asserts a virtually heretically elevated status for the ministry: "To call a man to the Ministrie, is the greatest worke that God worketh in his Church, but the converting of a sinner, and calling him to a state of grace: nay it is a worke even like unto it."  

Since the ministry of the word is the means to salvation, the call to that ministry is made equivalent to the end it procures.

Such a calling requires a gifted and righteous individual. The basic requirements for the preacher in the

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118 Ibid., p. 443.
puritan tradition are the same as they had been in the pre-
scriptive literature about preaching since Augustine—he
must be learned and good. Perkins admonishes the churches
to take care "that their Ministers be godly men, as good
Schollers; and their lives be inoffensive, as well as their
doctrine sound." The learning that they demonstrate
must be "humane" (knowledge of secular learning), "divine"
(knowledge of sacred learning), and the "inward" learning
(piety) imparted by the Spirit. At the same time, they must
give evidence of a sanctified life.

The emphasis on the godly life required of the minis-
ter is usually muted; this aspect is ordinarily dealt with
in a conventional, routine fashion. The pastoral capaci-
ties of the minister are spelled out in more detail. It is
particularly urged that the minister be familiar with his
congregation; Travers' Declaration of Ecclesiasticall Dis-
cipline requires that only such a man be chosen a pastor
"that knoweth what feedings and what waters is fittest for
the flesh: and fynallie that perfectly understandeth how

119 Perkins, Of the Calling of the Ministrie, in
Works, vol. 3, p. 450. In stating similar criteria, Good-
win requires first that the minister be able to set a good
moral example, but adds that, even more importantly, he
must be learned in order to provide correct "Doctrines"
and meaningful "Exhortations;" "Of the Constitution of the
Church," in Works, vol. 11, p. 375.

120 Ibid., vol. 3, p. 431.
to help and heale the weake and diseased." 121 Perkins once again makes this attribute specific: "he must not only have a flocke, and know which is his flocke, or have a generall eye over it; but hee must have a particular and distinct knowledge of the state of it: and the more particular the better." 122 This sounds the old Augustinian note that the minister does whatever he does with an eye to the welfare of his congregation. But in the context of Elizabethan England, it also sounds a note of complaint against a particular abuse. The practise of plurality allowed a curate to hold more than one benefice; many parishes of the land were administered by absentee clerics, and Perkins rather mildly observes that an absentee pastor can not know how best to serve his particular flock. However, this is only the tip of the raging dispute that characterized much of the Puritan writing about preaching. For a large proportion of the Puritan literature about the nature of preaching and the ministry consists not of the definition and articulation of a doctrine of preaching, but of an attack on the abuse of preaching by the Church of

121 Walter Travers, A full and plaine description of Ecclesiasticall Discipline owt off the word off God, and off the declininge off the churche off England from the same (London: 1574), p. 96.

England. And our understanding of the Puritan notion of preaching depends at least as much on the attacks they directed against the established Church as the theoretical definitions they offered.

One of the areas of abuse most subjected to criticism by the Puritans is the matter we have just discussed, the qualifications and attainments of the clergy. William Fulke defines the necessary ability of the clergy and attacks those who lack it in his *Learned Discourse of Ecclesiastical Government*:

> By these and many other testimonies of the Scripture, it is as clear as the sun at noondays that it is the office and duty of a pastor both to be able and willing to teach his flock, and that no ignorant and unlearned person is to be admitted to that charge or retained, if he be crept in, no more than a blind man is to be suffered in an office which must be executed only with the sight, or a dumb dog to give warning which cannot bark, or an idol to have the place of a man, or a fool of a wise man, or a wolf of a shepherd, or darkness instead of light, or salt that is unsavory to season withal.\(^{123}\)

The Puritan clergy, whose ministry was devoted to careful exegetical preaching, could not remain silent in light of the great number of ignorant and indeed licentious (at least

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by Puritan standards; some even by any standards) clergy.

The factual record attests to the ineptitude of many of the clergy, and the absence of a preaching clergy in many corners of the realm.\textsuperscript{124} The Second Admonition to Parliament, a document intended to persuade Parliament to legislate Puritan reform in the established church, notes, among other things, the lack of set order and the existence of downright corruption in the awarding of benefices, which results in the appointment of "moe boy ministers, and dumbe dogges not able to barke, than they wot where to bestow." The church also appoints "many roving preachers, to preach in whose cure they list, out of all order."\textsuperscript{125} Many such curates were men not qualified to hold the office they had been awarded, often as a gift for political patronage. They frequently demonstrated little or no interest in their appointed office, being men of other occupations, or preoccupations: "Look upon your ministry, and there are some of one occupation, some of another, some shake bucklers, some ruffians, some hawkers and hunters, some dicers and carders, some blind guides and cannot see, some dumb dogs.


\textsuperscript{125}Cartwright, Second Admonition to Parliament, in Frere and Douglas, eds., Puritan Manifestoes, p. 110.
and will not bark."\textsuperscript{126} Perkins, who had most strongly suggested the special favor due to ministers because of the greatness of their calling, conversely warned ministers of the severity of their judgment if they should lead less than exemplary lives. He even suggested that ministers forego such pleasures as are allowable to other men, simply so that their example not encourage others to excessive indulgence in such pleasures, and thus prove a stumbling block. Among the "foule and scandalous sinnes" among the clergy for which he severely upbraids them are included "Symony, Incontinency, Usury, Inhospitality, Covetousness, Ignorance, Idleness, careless Non-residancy." His warning is unmistakeable:

\begin{quote}
Surely when God shall visit them, their states will be most fearfull, nor shall any mans case be so miserable, as an unconscionable Ministers. And though now such loose and licentious Ministers seem to live in jollity, and without any fears, yet when God shall affirm unto their conscience, then will they cry out in fearefull anguish, "Woe is me, I am undone."\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

William Fulke calls them "blind watchmen and ignorant dumb

\textsuperscript{126}Edward Dering, "A Sermon Preached Before the Queen's Majesty the 25th day of February by Master Edward Dering" (1569), in Trinterud, ed., Elizabethan Puritanism, p. 159. One can only be astounded at Dering's audacity to speak so before the queen, who had been known to shout down preachers for less.

\textsuperscript{127}Perkins, Of the Calling of the Ministrie, in \textit{Works}, vol. 3, p. 444.
dogs, and idle greedy curs, and unlearned sheperds that serve for nothing but to fill their own purses or their paunches.  

The lack of learning among the clergy is a source of constant irritation to the Puritans. Their standard of profitable, exegetical preaching required a thorough knowledge of the Bible, reinforced by both secular and patristic learning. The Puritans were strong advocates of a clergy trained by higher education; nearly every Puritan preacher was a university graduate. Emmanuel College, Cambridge, was established for the express purpose of training Puritan divines; it shortly became the most well-attended college in the university. It is therefore not surprising to hear Walter Travers complain,

But this is it that I reprove and find fault with all, that they admit suche to the office off a Bishop, that is to say unto the ministry and expoundinge off the word, who are altogether unmeete, who understand not the scriptures, and who take upon them the place to teache, before they have lerned.

Fulke notes that one would not appoint a "natural idiot" to have charge over one's flock of sheep; how much less ought

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129 Haller, p. 20; Hill, p. 84.

130 Travers, A Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline, p. 103.
we to allow "unlearned, unskillfull and unsufficient pastors" the care of a congregation.\textsuperscript{131} The Second Admonition notes that "The people have learned little or nothing at their handes (for they can not learne muche, where little is spoken to purpose)," and denounces the established church's clergy in boldly harsh language; they are "ignorant Asses, loitering and idell bellyed Epicures, or prophane and heathenishe Oratoures."\textsuperscript{132}

The popularity of a preaching ministry was supported by an earnest and devoted lay following. It was not difficult to secure patrons to support a Puritan lectureship.\textsuperscript{133} Many parishes demanded a preaching clergy, and despite the opposition of both church and state officials, the number of Puritan preachers swelled rapidly to supply the demand.\textsuperscript{134} Although suppression of preachers continued in various forms throughout the reign of Elizabeth and James, it could often be circumvented. A preacher displaced from one location usually surfaced elsewhere, and another usually came in to assume his vacated post. It was not until the late 1620's

\textsuperscript{131}Fulke, A Learned Discourse of Ecclesiastical Government, in Trinterud, ed., Elizabethan Puritanism, p. 257.

\textsuperscript{132}Cartwright, A Second Admonition to Parliament, in Frere and Douglas, eds., Puritan Manifestoes, p. 110.

\textsuperscript{133}Seaver, p. 36.

\textsuperscript{134}Hart, p. 17.
and the 30's that suppression, under the leadership of Laud, became painfully effective. One indication of the popularity of preaching is the number of editions of sermons printed during the period. Herr has placed the number of editions during Elizabeth's reign at 9 during the 1560's, 69 during the '70's, 113 in the '80's, and 140 in the '90's.\(^\text{135}\) In the early seventeenth century, William Perkins remained for many years the most widely published author in England.

Where no preaching ministry was available from Puritan sources, the Anglican church was slow to provide one. This occasioned further Puritan outcries. The appellation "dumb dogs" which we have already encountered, was a familiar epithet in Puritan attacks. It denoted a curate who performed the rites and ceremonies of the church, but rarely or never preached, and if he did so, simply read an approved homily. Edward Dering, in his bold sermon addressed to Elizabeth, was one of the first to quote the phrase: "When were the people's sins so ripe to procure vengeance, as when their preachers were dumb dogs and could not bark?\(^\text{136}\)

\(^{135}\) Herr, p. 27.

\(^{136}\) The reference is to Isaiah 56:10: "Their watchmen are all blind: thei have no knowledge: thei are all domme doggs: thei can not barke: thei lie and slepe and delite in sleping." The marginal note in the 1560 Geneva Bible explains, "He sheweth that his affliction shal come through ye faulte of ye governours, Prophets, and pastors,
And what, I beseech you, is our condition better? Or what be many ministers of our time and country, other than dumb dogs?"\footnote{137} Richard Sibbes uttered another familiar appeal:

Therefore be stirred up, as ye favor the souls of God's people, to pray to God 'to send labourers into his harvest,' Mat. ix. 38; and to pray that the gospel, and the preaching of it, may have a free passage, that God would set up lights in all the dark corners of the kingdom...The mine must be digged; people must see it familiarly laid open.\footnote{138}

William Fulke explains that the nation ought to be ashamed that after twenty-five years of enlightened Protestant rule, most of the kingdom has no more able preaching than that which could be read by any ten-year-old child. He urges that "every several congregation, church or parish be provided of a learned pastor" and adds,

If there be no way of salvation but by faith, and none can believe but such as hear the word of God preached (Rom. 10:14), O Lord, how miserable is the state of many flocks in this land who either seldom or never hear the word of God truly preached and therefore know how to believe that they might be saved.\footnote{139}

The first Puritan Admonition to Parliament quotes the same

whose ignorance, negligence, avarice and obstinacie provoked Gods wrath against them."


\footnote{139}Fulke, A Learned Discourse of Ecclesiastical Government, in Trinterud, ed., Elizabethan Puritanism, p. 257.
text in Romans and adds,

Nay some in the fulnesse of their blasphemie have sayd that muche preaching bringeth the word of God into contempt, and that fowre preachers were inoughe for all London, so farre are they from thinking it necessary, and seeking that every congregation should have a faithfull pastor.140

Perkins, again, turns the criticism on the individual minister, showing how the blame is his own. One is not a minister of God simply by performing external pastoral duties, for

if he preach not, if he 'abuse his lips;' or if he open them not, hee hath no conscience: nor can have any comfort, for that is the principal duty of a Minister (though all the other bee required to make him complete).141

The established church could of course reply that, far from discouraging preaching, it had encouraged it by making available the Book of Homilies to be read to every parish in the realm. Travers ironically observes that, lest we suppose the authorities are uncaring about the church,

they have found out a mervellous way whereby appointing readers to reade some part of the scripture and the praires and the rest of the service they should be thought notwithstanding to make meet ministers and preachers off the word off god....A mervellous straunge remedy and never herd off in the churche in

140 An Admonition to Parliament (1571) in Frere and Douglas, eds., Puritan Manifestoes, p. 23.

the Apostles time and which not only amendeth not the fault but maketh it greater.\textsuperscript{142}

The objection the Puritans raised against the reading of homilies is, at bottom, based on the same principle that caused Calvin to object to the reading of prepared sermons—the immediate needs of the particular congregation are not met. The first Admonition points to the dissolute times, and says of the ineffectual clergy that "they cannot fynde us, except they lead up by other mennes light, and heal us by saying a prescript form of service, or else feede us with homilies, that are to homely, to be sette in the place of Gods scriptures."\textsuperscript{143} Travers puts the objection to reading in similar terms:

Therefore a worthy Bishop or minister is to be chosen that can interprete the holie scriptures and applie it as occasion shall serve to the use and necessitie of the churche: not a reader to rehearse other mens sayings and writinges by whose ignorance the church of God may be in danger of their salvation.\textsuperscript{144}

Nothing shows the importance to the Puritans of the theological necessity of preaching, its all important function of plainly expounding the word for the benefit of the

\textsuperscript{142}Travers, A...Declaration of Ecclesiasticall Discipline, p. 102.

\textsuperscript{143}An Admonition to Parliament, in Frere and Douglas, eds., Puritan Manifestoes, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{144}Travers, A...Declaration of Ecclesiasticall Discipline, p. 103.
people, than their opposition to the practise of reading homilies. The first Admonition to Parliament expresses the Puritan point-of-view, the concept of sola scriptura, in clear-cut terms: "By the word of God, it is an office of preaching, they make it an office of reading: Christ said goe preache, they in mockery give them the Bible, and authority to preache, and yet suffer them not." In the Bible, ministers are required to be able expositors and, armed with this skill, to "fede Gods lambes," but the ministers of the established church "onely are bare readers that are able to say sermons and minister a sacrament. And that this is not the feeding that Christ spoke of, the scriptures are plain. Reading is not feeding." What is even worse, "A manye of them can scarcely reade within booke." The Second Admonition is even more succinct:

For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing not by homilies: but by the worde of God, and in deede reading of the word is as good, and better preaching, than reading of homilies, but the ministrie of faythe is the preaching of the same, out of the woorde of God, by them that are sent of God.

From early in Elizabeth's reign the "godly ministers" had practised a means of training young divines in the sound

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exposition of scripture. Called "prophesyings" or "exercises," the practice had originated on the continent, in Zurich and some of the reformed churches in the Rhineland.\textsuperscript{147} The Zwinglian prophesyings had been observed by the Marian exiles, who carried the practice back to England with them. A prophesying exercise consisted of the gathering together of a group of clergymen to expound a text. Although the exercise had slightly different variations in different locales, it generally consisted of four or five of the younger preachers offering their exposition of a text, followed by a dinner, and concluding with an evaluation of the earlier sermons and a definitive exegesis offered by a senior preacher.\textsuperscript{148} There was occasionally an opportunity for the listeners to offer objections or discussion, and frequently either the entire exercise or at least the first sermon were open to the lay public. The prophesyings were a means of exercising a certain amount of self-discipline among an increasingly closely knit and single-

\textsuperscript{147}The continental practice of prophesying is discussed in Collinson, p. 169; Hughes, "Preaching, Homilies and Prophesyings," 16; and Morgan, p. 71. Cf. also the practice in Calvin's Geneva in which the ministers met weekly to discuss doctrine; McNeill, pp. 161-62.

\textsuperscript{148}The process is outlined in some detail in Thomas Fuller, The Church History of Britain, from the Birth of Jesus Christ until the Year MDCXLVII, 3 vols. (London: James Nichol, 1842; first edition, 1655), vol. 3, p. 6.
minded brotherhood of preachers, what Haller terms the "spiritual brotherhood" of Puritan divines. The exercises were also an additional occasion for public preaching, and by all accounts were extremely popular among lay people.

The prophesyings aroused a certain amount of concern among church officials as well as members of the court. Elizabeth terms them "seminaries of Puritanism," and in 1580 directed Archbishop Edward Grindal to suppress them, as well as to restrict the number of preachers altogether. Grindal was a quite thoroughly Calvinist churchman, one of the Marian exiles, who had previously encouraged the prophesyings. He replied to Elizabeth's directive in an extraordinary letter, particularly bold in view of the fact that Elizabeth was notorious for brooking no contradiction. Grindal began by saying that Elizabeth's orders had "exceedingly dismayed and discomforted me," not because of the personal rebuke which accompanied them, but because they "might tend to the public harm of God's church....and also the heavy burden of your conscience before God, if they should be put to strict execution." He first defended the necessity of preaching the word:

But surely I cannot marvel enough how this strange opinion should once enter into your mind,—that it should be good for the church to have few preachers. Alas, madam, is the scripture more plain in anything,

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149 In Fuller, vol. 3, pp. 7-18.
than that the gospel of Christ should be plentifully preached? and that plenty of labourers shall be sent into the Lord's harvest, which, being great and large, standeth in need, not of a few but of many workers?

Describing how the Bible requires many preachers, he asks, "how can it then well be thought that three or four preachers may suffice for a shire?" Grindal goes on to offer a quite Puritan-like definition of the value of preaching:

Public and continued preaching of God's word is the ordinary means and instrument of the salvation of mankind. St. Paul calleth it 'the ministry of reconciliation' of man unto God. By the preaching of God's word, the glory of God is increased and enlarged, faith nourished, and charity increased. By it the ignorant are instructed, the negligent exhorted and incited, the stubborn rebuked, the weak conscience comforted, and to all those that sin of malicious wickedness the wrath of God is threatened.

He then adds a lengthy explanation of the way in which preaching serves the good of the realm in general and the monarch in particular by fostering a sense of the duty of lawful obedience, and by preventing the revival of papistry.

Grindal next echoes the Puritan attack on homilies, noting that their reading "is nothing comparable to the office of preaching." He explains how preaching is more apt to serve the immediate needs of the congregation, since the preacher "can apply his speech to the diversity of times, places, and hearers, which cannot be done in Homilies. Exhortations, reprehensions, and persuasions, are uttered with more affection to the moving of the hearers in sermons, than in Homilies." He also reminds her that when they were
instituted in Edward's day, the homilies were intended simply as a temporary measure because of the lack of qualified preachers; homilies are "not to be preferred, but to give place to sermons, wheresoever they may be heard, and were never thought in themselves to contain alone sufficient instruction for the church of England."

The second part of the letter is a defense of the prophesyings, which he labels "a thing profitable to the church, and therefore expedient to be continued." He explains the procedures involved in them, the Scriptural authority by which they were instituted, the many benefits they offer, (a more industrious and theologically sound clergy; a less restive citizenry) and the risk involved in suppressing them (the revival of papistry). He asserts that he cannot in conscience suppress such profitable exercises, and boldly implores, "Bear with me, I beseech you, madam, if I choose rather to offend your earthly Majesty, than to offend the heavenly Majesty of God."

Grindal concludes this remarkable remonstrance with two petitions that are the sure grounds for his undoing. He asks first that Elizabeth defer jurisdiction in ecclesiastical affairs to the church authorities; this is a clear confutation of the Royal Injunction of 1559 which asserted the throne's ecclesiastical supremacy. He then asks that, when the queen delivers a pronouncement in reli-
gious matters, she do so with a greater tone of humility than the "resolute and peremptory" manner of dealing with secular affairs.

Remember, madam, that you are a mortal creature. Look not only, as was said to Theodosius, upon the purple and princely array wherewith you are apparelled, but consider withal what it is that is covered therewith. Is it not flesh and blood? Is it not dust and ashes? Is it not a corruptible body, which must return to her earth again? God knoweth how soon!...And although you are a mighty prince, yet remember that He that dwelleth in heaven is mightier.

Historians have wondered how Grindal escaped with his head. As it was, Whitgift was shortly named Archbishop of Canterbury, and Grindal remained under a form of house arrest until his death three years later. The prophesyings were suppressed, although never fully eradicated. It was clear that the pulpit was regarded by the Elizabethan establishment as a political threat; there was no denying its effectiveness as a powerful propaganda force. Elizabeth was known to say that she sought to "tune the pulpit" to feed "her" clergy the political points of view she wanted expressed on a particular issue. The first Admonition to Parliament complained that, while the ancient church preached the word from the pulpit, "Now Princes pleasures, mennes devices, popish ceremonies, and Antichristian rites

150 Hill, Society and Puritanism, pp. 35-39; Seaver, p. 58.
The political tincture of preaching became an important ingredient in the evolution of the Puritan theory of preaching.

At the same time the Puritans objected to the political ends to which the pulpit was turned by the establishment, they also recognized the duty of political authority to decide the fate of preaching. Perkins calls the sorry state of preaching in the established church "a king's evill," and says it can only be finally corrected by "Prince and Parliament." The first Admonition to Parliament is clear in putting the responsibility for reform on the shoulders of the members:

You must displace those ignorant and unable ministers already placed, and in their towmes appoint such as both can, and will by God's assistance feed the flock. ...Appoint to every congregation a learned and diligent preacher. Remove homilies, articles, injunctions, a prescript order of service made out of the masse book. ...Let a lawful and godly Seignorie loke that they preach, not quarterly or monthly, but continually, not for fulthy lucre sake, but of a ready mynde. So God shall be glorified, your conscience discharged, and the flocke of Christ (purchased with his owne blood) edified.

There was another aspect of the political pressure

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upon preachers—the fear of the future it imposed on some, and the insistence on "profitability" that often followed this. Richard Rogers poignantly expresses the uncertainty felt by a Puritan preacher in a diary entry made in 1588:

Also I finde that this one thing is like to be a great hindrance if it be not prevented, that we shall rest our selves too much in the meanes by which we are made godly, the ministry of the word, and good company by which we are stirred upp, and much of our comfort shall be raised through them, and by them, as well as by the matter which we shall heare and learne at them. Now seing we may be cut off from these many waies, how shall we be astonished when in forgoing them we shall be cast doune from our former peace and fruitfulness?154

This was a serious concern for many preachers; it was offset by the Puritans' insistence on boldness and reproof in their preaching, so as to sway the powers of the world. Rogers writes a year and a half later,"Of many thinges, this presently greeveth me, that I seing so much cause to mislike the grosse course of many preachers, should my self be so unprofitable like and out of savore."155

Richard Sibbes uses a historical perspective to point up the powers of "savory" preaching:

Luther, a poor monk, with a trumpet of ram's horns, with his preaching and with his writing, you see how he shook the walls of Rome, how much they have lost within the last hundred years. The last age, the last

155 Ibid., p. 84.
century of years, they have lost a great part of the western part of the world, that they had in slavery before; and how? By weak means, as you heard, by the preaching of the gospel, by learning, and knowledge. ...We must use the means that God hath appointed us, poor contemptible means, trumpets of ram's horns, the preaching of the word, the learning of the truth; and by these means we shall more and more gain upon them.156

There is a strong sense of political awareness about the power of preaching in this. The Puritans were willing to draw on the political/social context within which they saw their preaching enclosed, and use that to inform their theology of preaching. In their view, it was a virtue of preaching that it had not only a theological benefit, but a social and political one as well. In preaching about Jonah, Henry Smith takes note of the reluctance of modern preachers to zealously reprove their charges. Although he calls for moral and ethical impact in this passage rather than political and social, it is a powerful and witty demonstration of the demand for the profitability of reproof:

But their fire is quenched, and the tongues are tied up, so that they that should cry are struck dumb. But though they cannot speak, they can see if a great benefice fall, though it be an hundred miles off; and Pharoah had more care of his sheep than some have of our souls....But let a preacher preach dumb mysteries, or profane speeches, or unprofitable fables, or frivolous questions, or curious inventions, or old conceits, or brain-sick dreams, and any of these will be more welcome unto them than reprehension, which is

156 Sibbes, "The Ruine of Mystical Jerichio" (1639), in Works, vol. 7, p. 469.
most profitable and necessariest of all. Balaam's ass never spoke but once, and then he reproved, Numb. xxii. 28. Thus, if Balaam's ass reproved Balaam, how much more ought Balaam to reprove asses, or such as will be otherwise than beasts in their behaviour!

IV

A Puritan Rhetoric of Preaching

Smith's comment recalls once again the close connection expressed throughout the Puritan theory of sermon rhetoric of the theological and the stylistic elements of preaching. The "profitability," the "savor," the ability to effect massive religious, social and political upheavals is missing from Anglican preaching, say the Puritans, because of the matter of which they preach and the manner in which they preach it. It is in precisely this same sense that the attitude of the Puritans toward the office of the ministry and their attacks upon the abuses of preaching are reflected in their rhetoric of preaching. What the Puritans believed by faith is acted out in the world of experience. What the Puritans believed concerning the doctrine of preaching finds immediate expression in the plain, power-

ful, exegetical sermon. The content and style of the sermon is determined by faith; the theoretical doctrine and the surface expression are identical. When the Puritans attack the reading of homilies and the lack of a preaching ministry, this reflects both their theological concern for the heretical neglect of one of the most crucial of God's ordinances for the church, as well as their concern for the neglect of a plain and perspicuous style. And when the Puritans insist on the dignity of the ministry, the attainment and devotion of the preachers, and the reliance on the word of God for all exegesis, they are implicitly prescribing the methodology and rhetorical principles of the plain style.

As was true for the other rules by which they lived their lives, the Puritans did not come to their theory of sermon rhetoric by the direct, literal prescription of the Bible. The theory evolved in response to their interpretation of the Biblical ordinance for preaching, but that ordinance did not provide a specific outline for their theory. As they sought to conform their preaching, both in theory and practice, to their theology of the ministry, the Puritan divines did not create, full-blown, an original or wholly unique rhetoric of preaching. Their theory of preaching rhetoric represented a step within the tradition we have been tracing since the time of Augustine. It shared many
of the elements of various aspects of the tradition—while it is closest in form and spirit to the practice of the Reformation, it shared with the reformed tradition certain aspects of the medieval inheritance. It will be necessary to briefly trace some of the divergent lines of development of preaching rhetoric in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to understand the Puritan theory in both its contemporary context, as well as within the context of its historical development.

The prevailing theory of sermon rhetoric in the established Church of England was that prescribed by classical humanist scholars.\(^{158}\) Reuchlin's Liber congestorum de arte praedicandi and Erasmus' Ecclesiastes were models of Ciceronian oratory, adapted to the needs of the preachers. Cranmer's Book of Homilies, as noted earlier, almost wholly adopted the classical mode. This use of Ciceronian rhetoric was well suited to the topical nature of the sermons illustrated in the Book of Homilies; the treatment afforded such generalized topics made possible by the rules of classical oratory is in fact little more than a modification of the thematic sermon of the ars praedicandi authors. As the most widely represented tradition in the genre of prescriptive

\(^{158}\) Cf. Blench, p. 102; Davies, Worship and Theology ...from Cranmer to Hooker, p. 243; and Wall, 83-84.
preaching rhetorics, and with the support of humanist scholarship, it is little wonder that the *ars praedicandi* tradition survived, albeit in an updated guise, into the sixteenth century. It was, of course, a feature of the classical theory of rhetoric embraced in both the *ars praedicandi* tradition and the Anglican pulpit to use whatever rhetorical ornaments were available to embellish and amplify the argument, both to make it more logically persuasive as well as to make it more aesthetically appealing.159 Such devices as were outlined in Sherry's *Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1550) and Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence* were thus available to and recommended for use by the Anglican, classical preachers.

There is a notable preacher's manual by Andreas Gerardus Hyperius (sometimes known as Andre Gerhard, although usually referred to as Hyperius, the Latinized version of his native Ypres) that illustrates this rhetorical approach to preaching.160 First published in 1555 as *De formandi concionibus sacris*, it was translated into English by John Ludham and published as *The Practice of preaching, Otherwise Called The Pathway to the Pulpet: Conteyning an...* 

159 Wall, 85.

excellent Method for to frame Divine Sermons in 1577. The seven parts of the sermon as outlined by Hyperius are the reading of Scripture, the invocatio, exordium, propositio or divisio, confirmatio, confutatio, and conclusio. Such a structure can clearly be seen to be a modification of the ars praedicandi thematic approach according to the principles of Ciceronian theory. Hyperius was not, however, simply another classical humanist scholar. He was a Calvinist, and his manual was widely read in England—his name appears in the writings of several of the Puritans, and is included in Perkins' acknowledgements of influences on his preaching manual. As a Calvinist, it was not to be assumed that he should automatically shun the precepts of the secular rhetorical arts, as Calvin himself did not, although he should certainly view them with caution. Hyperius cites Augustine's De doctrina christiana as evidence for the validity of an alliance between the classical orator and the preacher, and adds:

Certainly, he that hath beene somedeale exercised in the Scholes of the Rhetoritians before he be received into the order of Preacher, shall come much more ofte and better furnished than many other, and may be bolde to hope, that he shall accomplish somewhat in the Church, worthy of prayse and commendation.161

Hyperius intends his book to be used by popular preachers

161 In Howell, p. 112.
who may use the oratory described therein for the benefit of the "rude, ignorant and unlearned." He states the Renais-
issance conviction that the marriage of rhetoric and logic serves to make logic more accessible: "Rhetorical bountie and furniture ministreth much grace and decencie." Other Calvinists, however, were more cautious in ass-
suring themselves that logic was not so diffused by rhetoric as to become ineffective in its original logical inten-
sity. Calvin himself had provided a good example of this--his sermons convinced by the irrefutable logic of their doctrinal exegesis, unobstructed by any clouds of rhetorical fancy. What the Calvinist Puritan preacher sought was a rhetorical shorthand for the divine logic of the truth of scripture he sought to unfold. The English Puritans would soon have in their hands, courtesy of Peter Ramus, the epistemological tool necessary to maintain the distinc-
tion between logic and rhetoric necessary for preaching.

The nature of another popular homiletical/rhetori-
cal treatise may serve to illustrate the terms upon which the Puritan plain style departed from the classical defi-


\[163\] In Howell, p. 111.

nitions and uses of logic and rhetoric. Bartholomaeus Keckerman's *Rhetoricae ecclesiasticae sive artis formandi et habandi conciones sacras* (1600) prescribed five steps in the process of preparing a sermon. First was the praecognitio textua, then partitio et propositio, explicatio verborum, amplification and application. It is important to note the departure here from the structure assigned to the sermon by the humanist authors of Ciceronian homiletical guides. In terms of Aristotle's rhetoric (which consisted of invention, disposition, memory, elocution and pronunciation) the traditional sections of a Ciceronian oration corresponded simply to the process of disposition. Keckerman was nearer the *ars praedicandi* tradition by returning to a fuller consideration of invention as an integral part of the process of composing and delivering a sermon. Of his five parts, the first three correspond to a process of invention, while only the last two correspond to disposition. The *praecognitio textua* required the same careful consideration of the choice of a text called for in the *artes praedicandi*. The division of the text and the statement of that division are the inventive steps required in *partitio et propositio*, while *explicatio verbum* requires "opening the sense" of the passage. "Amplifica-

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tion," as in the medieval thematic sermon, is the body of
the sermon, exposing the meaning elicited in the explicatio
verbum. The "application" is not a mere conclusion, but a
careful statement, either specific or general, on how the
text thus treated may be of use to the hearers. That part
of Aristotle's rhetoric which deals with figures of thought
and language (elocution), Keckerman treats in a general way
as "embellishment," while "pronunciation," the use of
voice and gesture, is discussed, also in a general way, in
book two.

Keckerman's reliance on Aristotle is clear; his homiletical
treatise was one of the most popular statements of
Aristotelian rhetoric from the late sixteenth century until
nearly a century later. The reform that Ramus instituted
in rhetoric can be illustrated by how a truly Ramist rhet-
oric differs from Keckerman's rhetoric of preaching. Essen-
tially what Peter Ramus sought to do was to simplify the
outlines of the Aristotelian tradition of logic and rhet-
oric. He saw that Aristotle's rhetoric unnecessarily dup-
licated many of the same processes that were, as Ramus de-
\textit{fined} them, properly within the sphere of dialectic. Ramus
is best known for his reform of Aristotelian dialectic,
simplifying the proofs of logic by the application of
"Method," which essentially taught that truth, or the com-
\textit{plete} understanding of any subject, could be arrived at by
means of a series of dichotomous divisions. Every subject could be completely analyzed by means of a series of dichotomies, which moved from the general to the most minute specifics possible. When proof of any question was required, it could be simply ascertained by means of the dichotomies, in which the truth of one of two choices is made manifest when it is set in opposition to its untrue alternative. The intricate and often fallacious reasoning processes required by the syllogism are discarded in favor of the simple recognition of that which we innately perceive to be true.

This is, of course, a vast oversimplification of the Ramist method, but it will suffice to introduce the major features of his thought. Part of the Ramist program consisted of carefully delineating and setting the limits of various fields of knowledge; it was in pursuing this goal that the "overlapping" aspects of logic and rhetoric were perceived (by means of the Ramist "method") and were redefined by Ramus and his disciples. According to Ramus the first three parts of Aristotelian rhetoric (invention, disposition and memory) were the subject matter of dialectic; rhetoric proper was to treat only elocution and pronunciation—the use of schemes and tropes (style), and the use of voice and gesture (delivery).¹⁶⁶ These four head-

¹⁶⁶Walter Ong, Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dia-
ings are the subject matter of Omer Talon's *Rhetorica* (1548), which in a very full and systematic way treats the same subject matter usually disposed of in the last two sections of an Aristotelian rhetorical text. The influences of Talon's *Rhetorica* can be overstated, however. Ramus' influence on Puritan preaching is of much less importance in the arrangement of device and technique to enhance style and delivery than in the provision of a method for the very content and structure of the sermon—and this is derived from his *Dialecticae* (1543) rather than Talon's *Rhetorica*. For all his effort to distinguish the spheres of logic and rhetoric, Ramist rhetoric is inextricably bound up with Ramist dialectic. Strictly speaking, Ramist rhetoric has no invention mode at all, since it consists entirely of elocution and pronunciation, but an oratory composed according to Ramist principles is so circumscribed by the arrangement and explanation of its materials that invention may be said to dominate it. This is still, to the minds of Ramus' followers, a far preferable means of discourse than that provided by the redundant structure which Aristotelian rhetoric superimposed on dia-

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167 Ong, p. 289.
lectic. The appeal of Ramus' method was its ability to combine dialectic and oratory, logic and rhetoric, to create a kind of rhetorical shorthand. Once the subject matter of the Ramist oratory was arranged according to Ramist rules of dialectic, all the essentials of its rhetorical delivery were already disposed of. Ong accurately observes that the Puritan plain style is merely oration by dialectic--its structure of Doctrines, Reasons, and Uses, arrived at by means of dialectic, determines the rhetorical performance. Ong oversimplifies, as many critics of the plain style do, by further observing that to "open the text" in such a way is in fact somehow nonrhetorical; all the preacher does is state the conclusion arrived at by means of dialectic. Ong's conclusion is symptomatic of those critics who take the Puritan's claims of disaffection for words themselves at face value. But there is no denying that the simplified combination of logic and rhetoric appealed to both the preachers and the people who found in such "plain and perspicuous" fare a fervor and a seriousness lacking in more traditionally "eloquent" sermons:

Thus the rhetoric of the tropes and figures, the rhet-

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168 Mitchell, p. 69.
169 Ong, p. 283.
oric which had sought to say things in unusual ways in order to persuade, found itself failing to convince the people that religious belief was a serious matter. Thus preaching in the established church began to question the elaborate rhetoric of style.  

It is difficult to assess the extent of the influence Ramus exerted on sermon rhetoric in England, and hence New England. His Dialecticae was first published in 1543; Talon's Rhetorica in 1548. Both were constantly and extensively revised, and went through many editions. Ramus did not become a Protestant until 1561, and died in the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris in 1572. His influence in England centered on Cambridge and dates from 1571, when Lawrence Chaderton, one of the earliest of the "spiritual brotherhood of godly divines," lectured on Ramus. The Dialecticae was first published in England in 1574; this edition included an English translation by Roland MacIlmaine. Ramus' influence spread quickly, especially after 1581; he is specifically cited by many of the prominent Puritans (including, of course, Milton) and his influence on their thought is apparent, particularly in their polem-  

170 Howell, p. 11.  
172 Ong, pp. 302-04.
The make-up of the Puritan plain style clearly reflects the influence of Ramus' thought. We may only speculate, however, to what extent the plain style may have assumed the same or a very similar form without a Ramus-like "method" of logic and rhetoric. That is to say, to phrase the observation in such a way as to minimize the unfruitful "what if" construct, there seems to be a sufficient quantity of evidence that suggests that Ramism was only one of a variety of influences that shaped the plain style, and not necessarily the determining factor.

174 Perry Miller clearly disagrees; for him, the plain style is a direct product of Ramist logic and rhetoric: "Once the Ramist had been freed from the domination of Aristotle,...what more natural than that he should throw aside the Aristotelian sermon and create a logical form de novo according to the golden rules?" Later, Miller notes that Perkins had acknowledged a reliance on Augustine, Erasmus and Beza, while never mentioning Ramus or Talon. But rather than examining Perkins' relationship to those earlier analysts of preaching rhetoric, Miller notes a parallel between Perkins' prescription and that of Ramus and concludes, "Certainly, if Perkins was not wholly guided by Ramus, he must have been strongly influenced, and assuredly the best of the later writers, Bernard, Chappell, and Price, were completely Ramists. We have already seen how undeniably Richardson and Ames had embraced the doctrines. Consequently this much seems clear: the Puritan form of the sermon which was first advanced by Perkins and then expounded in Puritan manuals, was altogether congenial to Ramist ways of thinking, and hence there is good cause to suppose that Perkins arrived..."
Most of the major ideas that form the components of the plain style had been articulated in preacher's manuals or carried out in practice before the last half of the sixteenth century. The basic exegetical nature of the plain style was a feature of the *ars praedicandi* method, of Wyclif, Tyndale, and the continental reformers. It cannot be attributed simply to the application of Ramist dialectic to the subject matter of the sermon. The restricted, cautious application of rhetorical devices had been thoroughly discussed by Augustine, and was much in evidence in Calvin, Wyclif and Tyndale. Even the specific device of carefully outlining doctrines and uses predated the influence of Ramist dialectic--Calvin's sermons illustrate the techniques, and John Hooper used the very terms in Edward's day. Both Calvin and Hooper preached after the first publication of the *Dialecticae*, although at a time when Ramus' notoriety had not spread far beyond Paris.

Given the lines of development, the examples of a long established heritage, and above all the requirements of a carefully formulated and deeply felt theology which

at it by pondering the question of form in the light of Ramus' logic and rhetoric" (The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, pp. 338, 339). Miller did much to advance our critical awareness of the significance of Ramus, but he did so, at least in his analysis of preaching rhetoric, at the expense of more fundamental influences.
implied specific demands of its rhetoric of preaching, it is apparent that the sermon rhetoric of the Puritan's was inclined to adopt the outline it ultimately displayed even without the framework of Ramist logic and rhetoric. But we must not err in the opposite direction and deny the support, shape and direction that the Ramist influence did indeed exert. In his Epistle to the Reader, with which he prefaces his translation of the Dialecticae (1574), Roland MacIlmaine illustrates how the Ramist method may serve the needs of experts in various fields of knowledge, including the ministry:

And if thou be a divine this methode willete thee that in place of the definition, thou sett forthe shortly the somme of the text, whiche thou hast taken in hand to interprete: nexte to parte thy text into a fewe heads that the auditor may the better retaine the sayinges: Thirdly to intreate of every heade in his owne place with the ten places of invention, shewing thus the causes, the effects, the adjonts and circumstancies: and last to make thy matter playne and manifest with familiar examples and authorities out of the worde of God: to sett before the auditor (as every heade shall geve the occasion) the horrible and sharpe punyshing of disobedience, and the joyful promises apppartayning to the obedient and godlie.

It was not difficult to apply Ramus' dialectical method of dichotomies to religion, and thus systematize theology with a thoroughness not attained even by Calvin. This eased the task of instructing the people; it also aided in

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175 MacIlmaine, in Ramus, p. 7.
The outlining of a carefully prescribed rhetoric for preachers.

The Puritan plain style had as its basic reason for being the preaching of the word of God in a plain and powerful way to the common people. Unlike earlier popular movements in preaching, however, the requirements of the plain style were subjected to intense and detailed scrutiny. The plain style was not simply a popular, rude, un-self-conscious evangelical harangue. It was popular, to be sure—but it was carefully cultivated in the universities, ruminated about by doctors of divinity, and spelled out in detailed instruction manuals. It is that characteristic of the plain style which is the one truly unique aspect about it, at least until its day—it was the only form of preaching to enjoy immense popular appeal among the common people while at the same time submitting to the scholarly attention of the academic and theological elite. The *ars praedicandi* manuals had described a sermon suitable for an academic audience only; the popular preaching of the friar, of Wyclif and of Calvin and the other reformers was not theoretically analyzed. As noted earlier, the Puritans did not separate faith and life or faith and reason; their theology was acted out in a preaching rhetoric that at once served the needs of the people and could be theoretically accounted for.
As was true for their theology of preaching, both practical and abstract, the Puritans wrote often on the requirements of content and style in their sermons. While all these comments help to define the plain style, the essence of the Puritan rhetoric of preaching is captured in the preacher's manuals prepared by various Puritan divines. These manuals are by and large similar to their predecessors in this genre— they offer some observations on the theology of the ministry, the nature and duties of the preacher, and other more practical observations of the contemporary state of preaching. But by and large the homilectical guides are sets of regulations for the preparing and delivery of a sermon. As a genre in themselves, the preacher's manuals are more closely related to the *ars praedicandi* tractates than to any other form of literature, even though the requirements they contain are more directly descended from the Reformation than the medieval church.

We have already taken note of two sixteenth century preachers' manuals (by Hyperius and Keckerman); although neither author was by any means a Puritan, both were important in this period. Another important and rarely examined manual was *The Preacher, or Methode of preaching* by Nicholas Hemminge. Hemminge says in the Epistle to the Reader that his book "may not unfitly be termed *Christiana Rhetorica*, that is to say, an arte out of whiche the true
and faithfull Minister of Christe, may learne playnely, and orderly, to breake and distribute the words of God un­to the people, and flocke committed to their charge." 177 Hemminge's treatise prescribes a sermon whose structure is that of the classical disposition. Despite his Ciceronian methodology, however, Hemminge makes frequent pronouncements regarding exegesis and style that show his thought to be closely related to the Puritan manuals on those accounts.

Perkins cites both Hemminge and Hyperius as influences on his monumental The Art of Prophecying, by far the most important of the Puritan preacher's manuals. Perkins spent his entire career at Cambridge—he was trained in the most Puritan college of the university, Emmanuel, by Lawrence Chaderton, Emmanuel's first master, and another of the first generation of great Puritan divines, Richard Greenham. 178 Perkins went on to become a fellow of Christ's College, and was for many years the principal lecturer at Great St. Andrews. He was the prolific author of immense-

177 Nicholas Hemminge (Niels Hemmingsen), The Preacher, or Methode of Preaching...Very necessarie for al those that by true preaching of the word of God, labour to pull down the Sinagoge of Sathon, and to buylde up the temple of God (London: Thomas Marshe, 1574; facsimile reprint, Menston, England: The Scolar Press Limited, 1972).

ly popular books on practical theology, in which he applied his strictly orthodox Calvinism to a common-sense understanding of the crises as well as the common occurrences of ordinary life. Perkins had an enormous impact in New England as well. He was the teacher of John Cotton and William Ames; it was through Ames that Perkins' theology was distilled for the New England divines, for Ames was the most popular theologian in the colonies. Perkins' three volumes of Works were the most often printed volumes in England for many years, and appear on nearly every shelflist of early New England libraries.  

There were many Puritan preacher's manuals after Perkins. Among the most important was Richard Bernard's The Faithful Shepherd, which closely parallels Perkins' Art of Prophecying. Two later manuals are important not so much for their influence on the period of our study, but as examples of the articulation of the principles of the plain style even late in the English Puritan era. William Chappell's The Preacher, or the Art and Method of Preaching, 180 very clearly demonstrates its Ramist influ-


180 William Chappell, The Preacher, or The Art and Method of Preaching: Shewing the most ample Directions and Rules for Invention, Method, Expression, and Books
ence. Chappell himself was an Anglican/Puritan, perhaps best known as the tutor who had occasion to whip Milton—and be dismissed for doing so. John Wilkins was no Puritan at all; his *Ecclesiastes* is a thoroughly Ramist attempt to streamline the method of the plain style. Wilkins' concern was to systematize language itself—he was to be a founder of the Royal Society. There were occasional attempts to apply the principles of Ramist logic and rhetoric directly to the preacher's art that failed to become preacher's manuals at all. An example of such an attempt is Thomas Granger's *Syntagma Logicum; or The Divine Minister may be furnished with such helps as may make him a Useful Laborer in the Lords Vineyard* (London: Edward Farnham, 1656; facsimile reprint, Menston, England: The Scolar Press Limited, 1971). The Latin edition, *Methodus concionandii*, was first published in 1648.

181 John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes*, or, a discourse concerning the gift of preaching as it falls under the rules of art, shewing the most proper rules and directions, for method, invention, books, expression, whereby a minister may be furnished with such abilities as may make him a workman that needs not to be ashamed (London: 1646).

Logic,\textsuperscript{183} which is nothing more than a Ramist textbook on method. Its only distinguishing feature is that the examples Granger cites are taken from Scripture; this however, does not make it any more a preacher’s manual than any of the multitude of other Ramist handbooks.

In the preface to \textit{The Faithfull Shepherd}, Richard Bernard offers the most concise Puritan definition of preaching:

Preaching is, as you well know,...a sound and plainly laying open of holy Scripture, by a publicke Minister before the people, to their understanding and capacity, according to the analogue of faith, with the words of exhortation applied to the conscience, both to informe and reforme, and where they bee well, to confirme.\textsuperscript{184}

Bernard’s definition is more descriptive than prescriptive; he assumes that his audience is already well acquainted with the type of preaching he describes. It conveys all the salient aspects of the Puritan plain style, however--its basis is the exegesis of scripture, the basic structure of the sermon ("laying open" the meaning and applying it to the hearers), and the appropriate style to be used. The fundamental starting point is the word of God; we

\textsuperscript{183}Thomas Granger, \textit{Syntagma Logicum; or, The Divine Logic Serving especially for the use of Divines in the practise of preaching, and for the further help of judicious Hearers, and generally for all} (London: William Jones, 1620).

\textsuperscript{184}Bernard, \textit{The Faithfull Shepherd}, Preface.
have already examined the insistent emphasis the Puritan divines placed on maintaining Scripture as the sole referent for their theology of preaching. The mode of exegesis is nearly as fundamental a provision for the sermon as the principle of sola scriptura. If the word is not "soundly" and "plainely" laid open, according to the "analogy of faith," the word itself is obscured, and the sermon is a mere noise of words.

The Puritans carefully specify the sources for the text:

Let him that shall Preach choose some part of the Canonicall Scripture to expound, and not of the Apocrypha. Further in his ordinary Ministry, let him not take Postills (as they are called) but some whole books of the holy Scripture, especially of the New Testament, to expound in order. 185

This accords with the practice of the early Swiss reformers, and Calvin himself. The "postils" are the Gospel and Epistle lessons, taken from a different passage of Scripture for each Lord's Day. In attacking the use of such liturgically assigned texts Travers underscores the Puritan doctrine while denouncing the practice of the established church. In the Epilogue to the Art of Prophecying, Perkins outlines the content of his book in "The Order and Summe of the sacred and onely Method of Preaching." The

185 Travers, Book of Discipline (A Directory of Church Government).
first two points are "1. To reade the Texte distinctly out of the Canonicall Scriptures. 2. To give the sense and understanding of it being read, by the Scripture it selfe."\(^{186}\) The Scripture is both the subject matter of the sermon, and the touchstone by which the interpretation is measured. As Hemminge puts it, "Every interpretation of Scriptures, should depend uppon the everlasting word of God."\(^{187}\)

Quite naturally, the Puritan exegetes followed the lead of Wyclif, Calvin and Tyndale in insisting that the exegesis of Scripture be based on the literal sense. During Mary's reign, literal exegesis had of course waned in England. The Anglican position as it evolved early in Elizabeth's reign, however, was that allegory, tropology and anagogy are "applications or accommodations" of a single, literal sense.\(^{188}\) Keckerman's \textit{Rhetoricae ecclesiasticae} specifically excluded the use of the four senses as a means of exegesis. Since the acknowledgement of the literal sense was officially the position of the Anglican

\(^{186}\) Perkins, \textit{The Art of Prophecying}, in \textit{Works}, vol. 2, p. 673. The Scriptural precedent for this practice, often referred to in Puritan writings, is found in Nehemiah 8:7-8; "The Levites read in the book of God's law distinctly, giving the sense, and causing them to understand the reading."

\(^{187}\) Hemminge, p. 10.

\(^{188}\) Cf. Blench, p. 57.
church as well, there was little point of contention on this score between the Puritan divines and their established church counterparts. Consequently, the Puritans wrote relatively little concerning the importance of literal as opposed to allegorical exegesis; they were able to take the acceptance of literal exegesis for granted. Their argument against excessive figures of speech is a question of eloquence, not exegesis. Perkins uses a paragraph to illustrate an exegetical treatment of a passage of Scripture by means of the traditional four senses simply in order to "explode and reject" it: "There is one onely sense, and the same is the literall. An allegory is onely a certaine manner of uttering the same sense. The Anagogie and Tropologie are waies, whereby the sense may be applied."189

The Puritans are also, however, well within the Augustinian tradition that allows for the possibility that the literal, surface sense of the words of Scripture may not speak clearly to our darkened minds. Travers says that there are two ways in which the literal sense may be interpreted. One means of understanding the literal sense is to discern the meaning which "is contained plainly in the very words." The other literal meaning may occasionally

be that which is "gathered by consequent," in which case it must "be fit and cleere and such as may rise upon the propriety of the word, grace of speech and suit of the matter, and not be allegorical, strange, wrested or far fetched." 

Perkins defines interpretation as "the Opening of the words and sentences of the Scripture, that one entire and natural sense may appeare." 

The problem for the Puritan exegete lies in how he may know that this way in which he has "opened" the literal words and sentences of Scripture had not led him astray from the unencumbered kernel of divine truth they hold. Hemminge offers one of the techniques sanctioned by Augustine, and that is to use the skills of the grammarian. He refers his readers to Melancthon's four devices to ensure an accurate interpretation; the first two are the accurate translation of individual words and phrases, and judging the signifiance of the rhetorical structure, the "order of things" in the passage. 

Hemminge, of course, is writing with a classical/humanist presupposition, but even the most thoroughly Calvinist of all the authors of the preacher's manuals, Perkins, agrees with Hemminge. He says that in certain pas-

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190 Travers, *Book of Discipline*.
192 Hemminge, p. 3.
sages it is absolutely necessary to take into account grammatical and rhetorical considerations, to take a pragmatic approach to the text itself. There are places, he says, in which the translation has omitted a crucial word; the preacher must fall back on his thorough Biblical scholarship to detect and correct the omissions. The preacher must be able to recognize when the language of the text employs a trope, perhaps in using an anthropomorphic metaphor for God, or in using metonymy, or synecdoche, or any of many more specific devices. The text may use certain words or phrases as part of a given rhetorical strategy—certain figures of speech may be used to achieve emphasis, or to express intentional irony, or to pose a rhetorical question. The preacher, says Perkins, must be able to reconcile those passages which appear to contradict other passages by reference to their expression, not their matter. This technique, however, does not resolve the basic exegetical dilemma, since it does not tell the exegete how to determine which passages should be submitted to this grammatical/rhetorical analysis—by what means can the preacher recognize that he is obliged to go beyond the surface, literal sense?

Another means of interpreting a difficult passage

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is to use outside authorities. The Puritans were not at all averse to alluding to patristic sources or other commentaries that concurred with their interpretation—but they were unwilling to include an external source to provide the basic interpretation of a passage that they were unable to make. Bernard warns that in preparing the sermon, the preacher must first rely on his own knowledge; the overreliance on others indicated either too little knowledge in the preacher himself, laziness, or too much respect for the sayings of men, as if they were "Oracles of God." 194 Hemminge is more explicit in warning that commentaries are merely aids in studying, not aids in themselves: "Many do abuse Commentaries, whilst they labour continually in them little or nothing entering the text of the Bible, who do like unto him that travayling some whither, determineth to abide always in his iourneye." 195 Bernard notes that there is another extreme position regarding the use of outside authority which must also be avoided:

The other fault is in those which bee of an Anabaptisticall spirit, making their owne spirit their guide, their owne imagination a sound Commentary upon any place of the Bible, they reject antiquity, and become

195 Hemminge, p. 15.
Authors of novelty, sects and scisms. 196

A more reliable means of interpreting the literal sense is to examine concordant passages of Scripture. Augustine had said that any unclear passage of Scripture is clearly expounded elsewhere in Scripture. Hemminge echoes that doctrine when he says:

To thende that the consent of Moses, of the Prophetes, of Christe, and of the Apostles, maye evidently appeare, and that suche sentences as seem to disagree, through conference maye be reconcyled, the cyrcumstances of the places beinge diligently observed. This care causeth thee not rashlye to take hould of anye one sentence of the Scriptures to assulte or repugne another therewith, from whence no doubt all the sectes of heresye have spronge uppe. 197

Perkins observes that if the doctrine contained in a passage is not expressed on the surface, it can be "collected" by looking at concordant passages. The doctrine which is sought will be clearly expressed in one or more of those passages, and, if the job is carefully done, the collection of concordant passages will provide doctrinal proof for the disputed passage. 198

The use of concordant passages is a reliable test of the intended literal meaning of Scripture, because by means of this technique the sole test of an unclear passage of

197 Hemminge, p. 8.
of Scripture is the evidence of Scripture itself. But the puritans had at their disposal an even more convincing proof of the legitimacy of their exegesis—the "analogy of faith." Perkins says that there are essentially two means of exegesis. The first is "analogicall," which is performed when the literal signification of the word already corresponds to the analogy of faith. The second is "crypticall or hidden," which is necessary when the literal sense of the words contradicts either the analogy of faith or a more plain passage of Scripture. In the case of "crypticall" exegesis, we must go beyond the literal meaning of the words themselves in order to see in what figurative sense the words do agree with the analogy of faith. He briefly defines the analogy of faith as being those basic Christian tenets that correspond to the doctrinal heads of the creeds, or to the Decalogue. Perkins' assessment of this test of exegesis was anticipated by Hemminge who had written: "Let the first care be to referre every interpretation to the proportion of fayth, from the which if the interpretation doe disagree, it shal be accompted false." In the same passage he offers a rather tauto-

200 Ibid., p. 654.
201 Hemminge, p. 9.
logical definition of the "proportion of fayth;" to interpret by the proportion of faith is to "have respecte to the first principles of Religion, which are plaine and manifest, as concerninge the lawe and the promises of the Gospell, with the which every interpretation oughte to agree." 202

In other words according to Hemminge, the interpretation must agree with the proportion of faith; the proportion of faith is that which is in agreement with the interpretation.

The Puritans saw no discrepancy in the tautology, however. It is consistent with the Calvinist doctrine that man's reason is wholly unreliable and certainly cannot be expected to account for his faith. It is not that faith transcends reason; such a belief would lead to skepticism at the onset of the first inklings of doubt, for, given the depravity of reason, without a firm faith nothing could be known as a certainty. For the orthodox Calvinist, faith and reason are inseparably linked. Reason cannot engender faith, but what is known by faith is confirmed by reason. The doctrine of the analogy of faith is the Puritan statement of this orthodox Calvinist belief. The tenets of our faith are apodictic proofs; they are the clear and certain demonstration of a necessary truth. Robert Bolton said that a true exegetical sermon is supported "by the true,

202Hemminge, p. 9.
naturall, and necessary sense of the Word of life, managed with the powerful incomparable eloquence of Scripture." 203 Walter Travers requires that, in opening up a text, the preacher must "let the whole confirmation and proof be made by arguments, testimonies and examples taken only out of the holy Scriptures, applied fitly and according to the naturall meaning of the places that are alleadged." 204 The "necessary sense" and the "natural meaning" are those immutable truths recognized by the analogy of faith; such a meaning in Scripture is its own proof. 205 Perkins, in the passage quoted above, says that after reading the text, the preacher ought to "give the sense and understanding of it being read, by the Scripture it self."

It is not difficult to observe that Ramist logic supports the Puritan doctrine of the analogy of faith. In the Ramist method, the process of dichotomizing any subject serves to point up any discrepancy between the two corresponding parts of each dichotomy. When such a discrepancy is noted, Ramus says, it can most often be resolved simply by relying on "judgement," that "common sense" that opts

203 Robert Bolton, in George, p. 338.
204 Travers, Book of Discipline.
for the side which is manifestly true. This is the logical process that operates in the use of the analogy of faith—questions of truth are resolved by reference to axiomatic, apodictic proof.\textsuperscript{206} The proof afforded by Aristotelian dialectic or Ciceronian oration was not absolute; a subject was true only to the extent that the orator persuaded an audience of its truth. Ramus' common sense logic offered absolute proof rather than conditional persuasion. Like Aristotle (and like Calvin, for that matter) the Puritans assumed a judicious and informed audience which could be moved to a position of logical conviction, reinforced by an emotional commitment. Ramist logic served this purpose well, but the Puritans went beyond even Ramus by arguing that, while conviction is based on understanding, the commitment of the whole man, the intersection of faith and reason, is necessary to prove with absolute certainty the truth of a passage of Scripture expounded in a sermon.\textsuperscript{207}

The Puritans were very specific in assigning the precise structure of the sermon that would most efficiently and powerfully serve as the vehicle for such an exegesis.


Nicholas Hemminge provided a foretaste of the structure of the Puritan sermon when he cast a very similar layout in Ciceronian terms. Hemminge's sermon consisted of a brief exordium; the "treatise," in which the doctrines of the text were explained by means of the process of division and declaration of the parts, as well as confirmation and confutation; the little-used "digression," which Hemminge elevated to an important part of the sermon in which the doctrine illuminated in the treatise is applied to the hearers; and a brief peroration. Excluding the exordium and peroration, Hemminge's sermon is very much like that outlined in the epilogue to Perkins' *Art of Prophecying*. After the preacher has read the text and given the sense of it, his procedure is, "3. To collect a few and profitable points of doctrine out of the naturall sense. 4. To apply (if he have the gift) the doctrine rightly collected, to the life and manners of men in a simple and plaine speech." Along with the "doctrine" are usually included the "reasons" which confirm or explain the doctrines elicited in the text. Doctrine, Reasons, Uses—the practical program for expounding the word of God, using a framework designed to insure that the preacher remains

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208 Heminge, pp. 16-17.
close to Scripture and sound in doctrine, and that the people derive the greatest benefit of theological and practical edification.

William Chappell defines the "Doctrine" as "a divine axiom comprehended in the text." Ordinarily, each doctrine was delivered with its reasons and uses before proceeding to the next one. After a series of four or five such doctrines were discussed, the text was regarded as fully "opened," and the sermon was over. It was, of course, necessary to take care in dividing the text into its doctrines; the reliance on the analogy of faith played a crucial role in this process. The doctrines elicited must be pertinent and natural to the text; as John Wilkins puts it,

For want of skill in the invention of this, many Men (especially young beginners) are very apt to complain of much dryness and slowness in their composesures, and to take any hint of flying out into impertinent Amplifications, not being able to inlarge themselves and keep close to their Text.

As Wilkins notes, the division of the text into its constituent doctrines is essentially a process of invention; the statement of the doctrines in the sermon itself serves only as headings for the discussions that follow. In terms of classical oratory, the pronouncement of the doc-

210 Chappell, p. 6.
211 Wilkins, p. 33.
trines is the equivalent of the partition and declaration of the parts; in the *ars praedicandi* tradition, this was the division of the theme and the declaration of the parts.

Not every doctrine was supported by reasons in the body of the sermon itself. Frequently, the support of the doctrine was so self-evident that the preacher simply immediately applied the uses to the doctrine he had stated. When the reasons for the doctrine are spelled out, they usually take the form of either an explanation of how the doctrine discerned in the text conforms with the analogy of faith, a brief, catechetical explication of the meaning of the doctrine itself, or the use of confirming authorities, derived either from Scriptural passages, other ecclesiastical writings, or "the wiser pagans." The "reasons" correspond to the *confirmatio* and *confutatio* sections of classical oratory, and the confirmation of parts section of the *ars praedicandi* thematic sermon.

Wilkins says of the final section,

We are in the next place to descend into the Applica-

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tion of them [the doctrines], which is the life and soul of a sermon; whereby These Sacred Truths are brought home to a Man's particular conscience and occasion, and the affections engaged unto any truth or duty. 1

In a sense, the Uses have no counterpart in either classical oratory or the ars praedicandi sermon. 2 Only in a very limited sense did the classical peroration serve to apply the meaning of the oratory to the lives of the hearers; it was the purpose of the entire oration to demonstrate its applicability. And the Uses of a Puritan sermon do not in any way fulfill the function of a peroration—they are itemized throughout the sermon, and do not serve to summarize or conclude. Nor do the Uses correspond to the amplification of the thematic sermon—the ars praedicandi amplification did not seek to make an application, and the Puritan Uses were new topics in the sermon, not embellishments of earlier divisions and subdivisions.

213 Wilkins, p. 24.

214 White uses a rather forced analogy to compare the "Uses" of the plain style to the epilogue in Aristotelian oratory, or the peroration in Ciceronian oratory, because it is in these sections that the orator appeals to the emotions of the audience most directly. White's analogy compares an incidental quality of the Uses (the appeal to emotion) to the essential quality of the epilogue and peroration. The essential quality of the Uses (outlining a specific application of the preceding material) is only an incidental quality of the epilogue and peroration. To attempt to draw a close analogy between them is clearly to indulge in a logical fallacy.
The Uses do have their counterpart in the sermons of Calvin and other of the reformers, however. Calvin was always careful to end each exegetical sermon with the application of that sermon to the needs of his congregation. He specifically required that this be faithfully observed in the preaching of every sermon. The principle operating in this requirement was one of the oldest of the principles applied to the theory of preaching, that it beneficially serve the needs of the people. Augustine had said that preaching was an act of love on the part of the pastor for his flock. The Puritans had demonstrated a similar concern in their definition of the necessity of preaching as the sole means of salvation. Their consistent and clearly delineated recitation of Uses was nothing but a means of working out that theology of preaching in practice, for the assured benefit of the people.

It is sometimes suggested that a preface and conclusion may be used in a sermon. In practice, this is often done, although both sections, if they are present, are generally quite short. The structure of the Puritan sermon was very functional. The function of the sermon was carefully defined by the theology of preaching, and the structure was designed to carry it out in the most

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efficient and efficacious manner possible. The systematic method was important; John Wilkins defines it in terms that smack more of his scientific, Royal Society orientation than of Puritan theology, but the Puritan preacher would agree with his conclusion: "An immethodical discourse (though the Materials of it may be precious) is but as a Heap, full of Confusion and Deformity; the other as a Fabrick or Building, much more excellent, both for Beauty and Use."216

Wilkins goes on to note that, of the various meth-

216 Wilkins, p. 5. Part I of John Preston's The Breast Plate of Faith and Love; A Treatise, wherein the ground and exercise of Faith and Love, as they are set upon Christ their Object, and as they are expressed in Good Works, is explained (London: Nicolas Bourne, 1630), as outlined in the table of contents, illustrates a typical arrangement. The text is Romans 1:17: "For by it the righteousness of God is revealed from Faith to Faith: As it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Doctrine 1--Saving righteousness only in Scripture
Use 1--see Gods justice in condemning those who neglect it
Use 2--not to defer taking Christ

Doctrine 2--faith is the means of making righteousness serve our salvation
Reasons
1. that salvation is a gift of grace
2. that it is sure
3. that it is to all the seed
4. that no flesh should rejoice in self
Use 1--not to be discouraged to come to God
Use 2--to rejoice in God
Use 3--to labor for faith
Use 4--to apply the promises with boldness

Doctrine 3--faith admits degrees, and we grow from degree to degree
Use 1--comfort those with a lesser degree of faith
Use 2--exhortation to grow in faith
ods of constructing a sermon, the most successful is that which follows the order of Doctrines and Uses, because it is so very logical, starting with general subjects and working toward particulars. Wilkins was a thoroughgoing Ramist, and he states here another sense in which Ramism tended to support the Puritan plain style. The Ramist dialectic of dichotomies was designed specifically for the purpose of streamlining logic by moving in a very systematic, controlled methodology from universals to particulars. Universal truths were anatomized and reduced to concrete specifics. This is exactly the movement in the Puritan sermon. Every sermon begins with the text itself; the text, which contains the kernel of some absolute divine truth, is anatomized into its doctrines. These in turn are given a concrete meaning for the everyday life of the individual in the uses. As noted earlier, it cannot be convincingly demonstrated that Ramist logic directly accounts for the Puritan adoption of this particular sermon structure; many other lines of development also contribute to it. But the Ramist influence certainly supported the structure that evolved, and in a later manual, such as that of Wilkins, it is given credit for the systematic structure of the plain style.

That which most characterizes the Puritan plain style in the minds of most people is, in fact, its rhetorical style. Even among some of the best informed of the students of the history of preaching, the plain style is dismissed as unartistic, simplistic, or, above all, interminably dull. A number of recent stylistic analyses of the Puritan sermon have done much to rescue it from the limbo of scholarly condescension. While it is not our purpose to conduct a stylistic analysis of the plain style, the Puritan pronouncements regarding style are a crucial element of their theory of sermon rhetoric.

The choice of a "plain" style was a conscious rhetorical choice for the Puritans, as it had been for Augustine, for the preaching friars, for Wyclif, Luther, and Calvin. It was as much a conscious rhetorical art as that evidenced in the *ars praedicandi* tractates, or in the simultaneous evolution of an Anglican, "metaphysical" style. The motivation for the choice was the same as it had been

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218 Such an attitude is expressly stated, with varying degrees of intensity, by such scholars as J.W. Blench, Horton Davies, Charles and Katherine George, and W. Fraser Mitchell. Perry Miller will only go so far as to allow, "Occasional passages may even now manage to express for us something of the majesty of the spirit; granted a Puritan community, probably many that are dull to us then succeeded in being majestic, but there can be no doubt that every word uttered from New England pulpits was eminently fitted for the people's understanding" (The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, p. 362).
for the earlier advocates of a simple preaching style--it was of greater benefit for the people. Richard Bernard requires his faithful shepherd to be sure to offer only "profitable matter" in his sermons, and has harsh words for the "man pleasers" who do not give attention to the needs of the audience:

This is it that makes them to choose a Scripture little concerning the Auditorie, and to weigh every word they intend to utter in the balance of mans corrupt imagination, marking how tunable to the eare, how farre from offending, how gilded with shew of learning, how expressing wit and conceits, and all for an applaudite for their own praise, not caring at all how little they should profit their hearers, or how well before God they discharge their duties.219

It is important to notice how Bernard links the choice of a rhetorical style with the nature of the office--one fails in his divine duty if he aims his sermon over the heads of the common people. John Wilkins, whose objection to rhetorical flourish was not entirely theological, still states the matter in terms of the divine ordinance binding the minister:

And it will not become the Majesty of a Divine Ambassage, to be garnished out with flaunting affected Eloquence. How unsuitable is it to the expectation of a hungry Soul, who comes unto this Ordinance with a desire of Spiritual comfort and instruction, and there to hear only a stalked speech, full of puerile worded Rhetorick?220

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220 Wilkins, p. 251.
In John Preston's treatise entitled *Sinnes Overthrow*, he includes a lengthy discourse on the use and abuse of eloquence. He notes that the fundamental goal of the use of a plain style is the saving of souls. To mix eloquence with the pure word of God is to offer the hearer nothing but mere enticing words, such words as doe rather feed the humour, than worke upon the conscience of a man....And the truth is, he that useth Eloquence in the Preaching of the Word, doth nothing else than draw the heart away from affecting the pure Word, unto that which have no vertue in it to save.  

Preston compares the preacher to a physician who does not save his patient by catering to the appetites that are destroying him, but rather purges him of harmful affections. The affections for worldly eloquence must not be encouraged in highly ornamented sermons, but must be purged by powerful plain preaching. Preston goes so far as to observe that a good test of whether one is "heavenly-minded" or not is whether one relishes "the Word when it is preached purely without any mixture" or prefers it "mixed with eloquence." Preston's implication is one that many of his contemporaries as well as later critics of the plain style would fully agree with--only a saint can love

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222 Ibid., p. 106.
the Puritan sermon: "The man that is truly regenerate and renewed, he doth best relish the Word when it is alone without any mixture, and therefore he calls it the sincere milke; that is, the pure Word." 223

It is not surprising that a generous proportion of the Puritan observations on style are in the form of attacks on the rhetorical excesses in the preaching of their opponents. There is a double purpose in such attacks, as we have seen in other Puritan pronouncements regarding the theory of preaching. There is first of all the sincere, spiritual desire to see abuses and misapplications of God's ordinances corrected. There is also the practical strategy of damaging the reputation and popularity of an entrenched opponent, and winning the spiritual-minded public to their cause. The attacks on rhetorical ostentation grew out of a long tradition in English church affairs; we have noted such attacks as far back as the fourteenth century, and they were prominent even earlier in the attitudes of the preaching friars. They appear within the Church of England even before the Marian exile; John Jewel's Oratio contra rhetoricam attacked the highly ornamented rhetorical style practiced in the English universities. 224 Jewel argued

224 Howell, p. 123.
for a style that offered a more direct statement of truth.

The various Puritan manifestoes were weighted with attacks on the rhetorical abuses of the established church. The Second Admonition to Parliament calls the clergy of the Church of England

ignorant asses, loitering and idell bellyed Epicures, or profane and heathenishe Oratoures, that thinke all the grace of preaching lieth in affected eloquence, in fonde fables to make their hearers laughe, or in ostentation of learning of their Latine, their Greke, their Hebrue tongue, and of their great reading of antiquities: whom God knoweth, moste of them have little matter than is in the infinite volumes of common places, and Apothegmes, called to their hands.225

Some of the attacks on eloquence are more reasoned, if no less antithetical. John Preston argues in Sinnes Overthrow that you cannot add any grace to the word of God by embellishing it with eloquence, since it is already the most excellent thing in the world. Far from adding to it, eloquence is mere dross that detracts from the pristine beauty of the word.226 He elaborates in The New Creature: "Therefore come not with affection of excellency of words and wisdome: if we had all the wit in the world to set the word of God in it, it is better than that in which it is set; as the Diamond is better than the Gold in which it

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226 Preston, Sinnes Overthrow, p. 102.
Bartimaeous Andrewes argues against eloquence with the familiar complaint that it is not beneficial; what's more, it is in fact impious:

Let the sinner come forth, that hath beene converted by hearing stories or fables of poets, I am sure there is none: for faith is onely by the worde of God: or let the preacher come forth that useth such things, and doth it not either to please man, or to boast of his learning.

For there are some which thinke Christe too fare to bee preached simply in him self, and therefore mingle with him too much the wisdom of mans eloquence, and thinke that Christ cometh nakedly, unless cloathed with vaine ostentation of wordes. Others esteem him too homely, simple and unlearned, unlesse he bee beautified and blazed over with store of Greek or Laten sentences in the pulpits: some reckon of him as solitaire, or as a private person without honor and pompe, unlesse he bee brought forth of them very solemnly, accompaned and countenanced, with the ancient Garbe of the fathers and Doctors of the Churche to speake for him: or els he must be glosed out and painted with the frooth of Philosophie, Poetry or such like.

Walter Travers forbids rhetorical eloquences on similar grounds in his Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline, but he at least adds a positive prescription at the outset:

The holie scriptures are to be expounded simiple, and sincerely, and uttered with reverence. For some to shew them selves to the people to be lerned, stuffe ther sermons with divers sentences out off Philosophers, Poets, Orators, and Scholeman, and of the ancient Fathers, Augustine, Hierone and others, and thos often times rehearsed in greek or latin; by which pieses sometimes ill favourably patched together, they


228 Bartimaeus Andrewes, Certain verie worthie, godly and profitable Sermons, upon the fifth Chapiter of the Songs of Solomon (London: Robert Waldegrave, 1583), p. 26; in Herr, p. 90.
seeke and hunt for commendation, and to be esteemed lerned of the people....They bring forth to the people off that store which they have gathered together, and play rather the Orators and Philosophers then Prophets and interpreters off the holie scripture.229

Scarcely any passage of Puritan writing that calls for the proper style to be used in preaching the word is free from a renunciation of the style which is to be avoided. Travers here offers a more extensive description of the plain style--but still carefully defines what the plain style is not:

The second thing to be performed by him that preacheth is a reverend gravity. This is considered first in the state, phrase and manner of speech, that it be spirituall, pure, proper, simple and applied to the capacity of the people, not such as humane wisdom teacheth, nor savoring of new fanglednesse, nor either so to affectate as it may serve for pompe and ostentation, or so carelesse, and base, as becometh not Ministers of the Word of God.230

Even Perkins' definition of style is qualified by a warning against what to avoid:

And it is a speech both simple and perspicuous, fit both for the people's understanding, and to express the Majesty of the Spirit....Wherefore neither the wordes of arte, nor Greeke and Latine phrases and guiles must be intermingled in the sermon....Here also the telling of tales and all profane and ridiculous speeches must be omitted.231

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229 Travers, A...Declaration of Ecclesiasticall Discipline, p. 105.
230 Travers, Book of Discipline.
The Georges note that the plain style is defined more by what it avoids (foreign learning, ornamentation, self-aggrandizement) than by what it is. They go on to note, however, that the plain style is by no means anti-intellectual—it greatly respects learning, but does not use it in support of God's word or to risk confusing the people.  

A passage in Samuel Clarke's *Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons* referring to Richard Mather will illustrate this rhetorical stance:

Mr. Richard Mather's way of preaching was plain, aiming to shoot his Arrows not over his People's Heads, but into their Hearts and Consciences; whence he studiously avoided obscure Phrases, Exotick words, and unnecessary citation of Latin Sentences, which some men too much adict themselves unto. Holy Mr. Dod was wont to say, that so much Latin was so much flesh in a Sermon: So did this humble Man look upon the affectation of such things in a Popular Auditory to savour of Carnal Wisdom. And the Lord gave him an excellent faculty to mak Abstruce things plain, that in handling the deepest Ministries he would accomodate himself to Vulgar Capacities, so that even the meanest might learn something....He would often use that saying, Artis est celare artem: Tis a great piece of Art to conceal Art. And he much approved that of Saint Austin. If (said he) I Preach Learnedly, then only the Learned, and not the unlearned can understand and profit by me: But if I preach plainly, then learned, and unlearned both can understand, and so I may profit all.

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232 Charles and Katherine George, pp. 239-40.

233 Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons in this Later Age* (London: Thomas Simmons, 1683), p. 135. It is significant to note that the subject of this observation, Richard Mather, was among the first generation of emigrants to Massachusetts Bay, and the patriarch of the Mather dynasty of New England divines.
There is a wealth of insight into the plain style in this description of Richard Mather's preaching. It argues, first of all, the aesthetic self-consciousness of the plain style—it's simplicity was not simplistic, its plainness not rudeness. Furthermore, it was based, not on a foundation of unlettered zeal, but on the firm footing of careful scholarship. The author of Richard Mather's life was undoubtedly familiar with this passage in Perkins:

Humane wisdom must be concealed, whether it be in the matter of the sermon, or in the setting forth of the word: because the preaching of the word is the testimony of God, and the profession of the knowledge of Christ, and not of humane skill: and againe, because the hearers ought not to ascribe their faith to the gifts of men, but to the power of God's word....If any man thinke that by this means barbarisme should be brought into pulpits, hee must understand that the Minister may, yea and must privately use at his libertie the arts, Philosophy and a variety of reading, whilst he is in framing his sermon: but he ought in publique to conceal all these from the people, and not to make the least ostentation. "Artis etiam est celare artem; it is also a point of Art to conceal Art." 234

John Wilkins said, "The greatest learning is to be seen in the greatest plainness." 235 Sasek notes that the Puritans never derogated learning, but only such "dazzling" as leads to deceit. 236 The word "plainness" is not at all


235 Wilkins, p. 251.

pejorative; "it has as its antithesis not ornamentation or elaboration, but ostentation." All the evidence points to the Puritan's devotion to learning; it was one of the chief objections to the clergy of the Church of England that they were intellectually unfit or unprepared for their task. It was also one of the Puritans' chief achievements to promote and encourage higher education; nearly every Puritan divine had a university degree. The Puritans and their plain style are sometimes confused with the "mechanick preachers" among the sectarians. The Puritan divines were not at all the laborers or tradesmen who simply mounted their soapbox, like the preachers of some of the more radical sects. Richard Bernard sees "humane learning" as a basic necessity for his "faithfull shepherd," if only to be able to accurately interpret Scripture. He specifically refuted those who became preachers with only a basic education, or those who claim that a godly preacher need not be an educated man but only a spiritual one. At the very least, the preacher must be well-trained in the arts of grammar, rhetoric and logic. "A man's speech without this, is but sound of words without reason, and an ignorant discourse."^238

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Bernard maintains that such arts are both useful and necessary, although he carefully adds the qualification, "God's Spirit being guide in the use of these three instruments." 239

The trivium only represents the basic knowledge required of the preacher. Bernard adds that the learned preachers must also know Hebrew, Greek and Latin, as well as ethics, economics, political science, history and church history. His religious training must begin with a thorough knowledge of the Scripture and also include an understanding of the principal creeds and confessions throughout the history of Christianity, a doctrinal understanding of the fundamental principles of religion, and a thorough acquaintance with the way in which those principles are illustrated in the Bible. 240 Bernard's criteria do not describe an unattainable ideal; they are the actual requirements for the university training of the Puritan preachers. If it is indeed an art to conceal art, then the plain style is an aesthetic masterpiece of deception.

In actuality, the plain style is far from being sterile or crude. While the style was plain, it was also full, frequently being enriched with colorful and vivid figures of thought and speech. Blench notes three general

240 Ibid., pp. 58-72.
styles of preaching in the sixteenth century: the colloquial (a racy, down-to-earth language employing many exempla but few other rhetorical devices); the plain (language is simple but not colloquial; few exempla or rhetorical devices); and the ornate (frequent literary exempla; much rhetorical ornamentation). These styles more or less correspond to the preaching of the sectarians, Puritans and Anglicans respectively. Blench has difficulty, however, in making his categories fit the practice of Puritan sermon-making. In the Elizabethan period, for example, he discerns three sub-categories within the plain style: the most austere (Perkins' style, patterned after Calvin—no tropes or schemata); a less austere style, using tropes such as simple similes and metaphors, but no schemata; and the least austere, which goes beyond mere comparative figures of speech to use more extended and elaborate rhetorical strategies. It is difficult to see what is austere at all about this third category. One could quibble as well, with the support of numerous illustrations lifted from any single passage of any sermon, with Blench's definition that the "most austere" style of Perkins and Calvin lacks figurative expressions. Blench goes on to note that

241 Blench, p. 113.
in some of its manifestations, the plain style illustrates elements of the colloquial style on the one hand and the ornate style on the other. In the end he finds himself unable to resolve the dilemma of whether Henry Smith uses an ornate style or some degree of the plain style.\textsuperscript{243}

The range of uncertainty that Blench's labels allow clearly shows them to be unacceptable criteria to use in making evaluations of the plain style. The plain style cannot be measured against the sum total of rhetorical devices used per paragraph, because it is not defined by its practitioners in terms of the prohibition of figurative language. The Puritans are frequently accused of violating in practice what they prescribe in theory, because their sermons, from the most "plain and perspicuous" to the most eloquent (as for example, in Henry Smith), are found to abound in typological identifications, original and varied similitudes, and striking metaphors.\textsuperscript{244} The fact is that nowhere in their definition of plainness, or in the corresponding renunciation of "eloquence" are such devices excluded.

\textsuperscript{243}Blench, p. 184; Davies, who relies on Blench's categories of style, has similar difficulty pigeonholing certain Puritan preachers (Worship and Theology in England from Cranmer to Hooker, p. 314).

\textsuperscript{244}Cf., for example, Clifford Davidson, "Style and the Heavenly Ladder," The Gordon Review, 11 (1968), pp. 165-66; Davies, Worship and Theology in England from Cranmer to Hooker, pp. 304-05; and Levy, p. 2.
plainness was simply that which spoke most meaningfully and powerfully to the people--well-chosen illustrations and figures of speech performed this function well, and were well-suited to the plain style. The "eloquence" that was rejected did not consist of the use of all rhetorical devices, but only such ornamentation as went beyond the understanding of the people, substituted its own glitter for the message it proclaimed, or was wrongly motivated, seeking to promote the speaker rather than the subject matter. None of these abuses of eloquence can be understood to imply a ban on the proper use of rhetorical devices.

In answer to the objection that his attack on eloquence seems to imply that we throw out our learning when we preach, John Preston answers that we are indeed to use our human skills and abilities, including the arts of rhetoric, but simply not as ends in themselves:

But yet wee must take heed that wee doe not bring them unto the Word as wee finde them, neither in them to shew our selves, but onely make them as a meanes to helpe us for this work: As for example; the Children of Israel might whet their sithes upon all the stones of the Philistines: so a Minister may sharpen his faculties with Arte. A man that keepes sheepe, he feeds them with hay, not because he lookes that they should bring forth hay, but Lambes and Wooll; even so, let a man use these Arts and Sciences, yet not to bring forth Eloquence, but to make us more able to Preach the pure Word. 245

It is a fact that is clearly apparent here, but may be

245 Preston, Sinnes Overthrow, p. 104.
pointed out anyway, that even as Preston warns about the potential for the abuse of eloquence, he whets his scythe on the stones of the Philistines and uses two rather striking comparisons to illustrate his point. The Biblical allusion has a typological element in it; Old Testament history illustrates a New Testament doctrine of preaching. And the second illustration is quite witty; the notion of a shepherd who expects his hayburners to grow hay surely provoked a knowing, albeit respectfully subdued, chuckle. The illustrations are "plain" in that they are close to the people's experience; but that clarity does not deny them their vividness or even sense of humor.

Preston's Biblical allusion in this passage recalls Augustine's defense of secular learning in which he argues that it is entirely proper for Christians to use the "spoils of the Egyptians" for the enlargement of their abilities, and the ultimate benefit of the people. Augustine had also noted that a knowledge of secular arts is necessary because such devices are used in the Bible itself. This at once gives the sanction of the Holy Spirit to such arts, and imposes on the preacher the responsibility of knowing them well enough to recognize and interpret them. Perkins observes the same divine sanction:

Hence observe the lawfulness of the art of Logicke: for divisions are lawfull, (else the holy Ghost would not here have used them) and so by proportion are
other arguments of reasoning; and therefore that art giveth rules of direction for the right use of these arguments, is lawfull and good. Those men then are farre deceived, who account the arts of Logicke and Rhetoricke to bee frivolous and unlawfull, and in so saying, they condemne the practice of the holy Ghost in this place.246

Perkins gives one side of the proof of Scripture regarding the plain style—it sanctions the judicious use of rhetorical devices. More importantly, it provides an example of the spiritual style sought by the Puritans. In seeking the "simplicity of the Gospel" the plain style is modeled after the example of the Bible.247 But Biblical prose is neither uniform nor dull—it can be powerful eloquent or "brusquely vigorous."248 The Bible is, of course, also the subject matter of the Puritan sermon—the truth of that subject matter will be more immediately revealed if it is not obscured by the method of presentation.249 The Bible dictates the style of the Puritan sermon both by its example and as the subject matter. Richard Bernard perfectly summarizes how the Puritan preacher translated this two-

247 Brench, p. 142.
249 Sasek, pp. 46-47.
fold obligation into his style of preaching:

Tearmes too base for so high mysteries; foolish, ridic­
culus, and too light, for the truths of such weight
and gravity, scurrilous and every other undecent tearm,
unbefitting the dignity of Christ's Ambassadors are
to bee avoyded, and so that foolish affectation of
speech in any kinde, not becoming the holy Scriptures,
not the spacious spirit of a man of God. There is a
godly eloquence approved by Scripture and used in it,
which is to bee laboured for.250

In their thoroughness to fully outline both the the­
oretical and practical qualities of preaching, the Puritans
did not neglect to provide a number of practical hints for
the preacher on preparing and delivering the sermon. As
was true for Calvin, the apparent simplicity of the surface
of the sermon belies a great deal of painstaking preparation.
Bernard says, "What though a man have a good wit, a good
memory, and an extemporall faculty, and voluble tongue to
speak; yet its best to bee wise in Gods matters, not to
come rashly, vainely, unpreparedly."251 Wilkins is even
more frank in advising careful preparation: "To deliver
things in a crude confused manner, without digesting of
them by a previous meditation, will nauseate the hearers,
and is as improper for the edification of the mind, as raw
Meat is for the nourishment of the Body."252

251 Ibid., p. 108.
252 Wilkins, p. 252.
Wilkins, like most of the authors of preacher's manuals, advises that preparation consist of prayer, meditation, and especially reading. Wilkins recommends that the preacher possess a large and learned library. Richard Baxter lists recommended libraries for those who have very little money, those with moderate resources, and those with unlimited funds. Baxter's most modest library consists of a Bible, a concordance, a commentary, a catechism, books on the doctrine of grace, justification, and free-will and duty, and finally "as many Affectionate Practical English Writers as you can get;" his suggested list includes most of the best-known Puritan writers. Perkins includes a section in the *Art of Prophecying* which outlines an orderly technique of private study. He offers tips on how to organize one's reading of the Bible, which of the church fathers to read, and how to recognize old heresies in the modern sects (with cross references). Perkins also suggests that the preacher keep a systematic commonplace book divided into all the heads of doctrine, into which he can record important observations made in the course of his reading.

Having sufficiently prepared himself to compose his

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253 Wilkins, pp. 33-37.

254 Baxter, p. 723.

sermons, the preacher must first divide his text into its doctrines, Reasons and Uses. He may or may not wish to write out the body of his sermon. Hemminge expresses no preference for either preparing a full manuscript or not doing so; others have more definite ideas. Bernard says, "Great is the benefit of writing Sermons," since it helps the preacher to capture fleeting insights that might otherwise be lost between preparation and delivery, and is an aid to meaning. Wilkins, on the other hand, says,

> When we have the matter and motion well digested, the expressions of it will easily follow; whereas to be confined into particular words, besides the great oppression of the memory, will likewise much prejudice the operations of the understanding and affections.

Whether they advise that the sermon be written out ahead of time or not, all of the preacher's manuals agree with Perkins that the sermon must not be read or memorized verbatim. Memorization wastes too much effort, is tedious and tiring, and dulls the mind to the point of hindering the delivery. Perkins advises that the preacher commit to memory his chief divisions (doctrines, reasons and uses) as well as the important illustrations, but not the actual words he may have composed. The reason he gives is just

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256 Hemminge, p. 65.
258 Wilkins, p. 254.
that used by Calvin—to do so restricts the ability of the preacher to communicate with the congregation, to pursue new suggestions that come to him as he preaches, or to react to the appearance of the congregation. Wilkins says, "A man cannot ordinarily be so much affected himself (and consequently, he cannot so easily affect others) with things that he speaks by rote." 

Thus the Puritan preacher, like Calvin, ascended his pulpit with only his Bible and perhaps his notes in his hand. What followed could occasionally take on something of the nature of an ordeal. Unlike Calvin, who limited his preaching to the endurance of the people and preached few sermons longer than thirty minutes, Puritan sermons were frequently known to last up to two hours. It must have been an exasperating sight to a significant portion of even the most devout congregation to see the preacher calmly turn the hour-glass over once or even twice after the first hour had run out. Hart reports that an ordinary Sunday morning service could be as much as five hours long; there was, of course, another service in the afternoon or

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260 Wilkins, p. 260.

261 Davies, Worship and Theology in England from Andrewes to Baxter, p. 140.
evening. After the interregnum, the Anglican Herbert Thorndike expressed a certain bitterness in declaring, "I call the World to Witness: is it not a work as much of lungs and sides, as an office of God's service, which takes up the time of their Church Assemblies?" The sermons were recorded in shorthand, called "characterie" or "bra- chygraphie," and frequently collected and published, sometimes with the approval and editorial supervision of the preacher, but often without.

On the last page of The Art of Prophecying, William Perkins epitomizes the function of preaching in a single aphorism: "Preach one Christ by Christ to the praise of Christ." The entire construct of the Puritan theory of preaching rhetoric is intended to achieve that purpose. Wilkins points out that the success or failure of the sermon depends entirely on the way in which the text is first "opened up": "And these observations must be laid down in the most easie expressions; for if the hearers mistake the chief Subject, all that follows will be to little pur-

262 Hart, p. 74.
263 Herbert Thorndike in Davies, Worship and Theology in England from Andrewes to Baxter, p. 140.
264 Haller, p. 136; Herr, pp. 79-81.
pose." All the questions of content and style that the Puritans painstakingly resolved in the plain style are aimed at making the "chief Subject" clear for the benefit of the hearers. Hemminge points out just what that benefit is; the minister must expound his text

\begin{quote}
in a plaine and common speache, not having any re­specte to his owne commendation for his eloquence, but rather to advance the glory of God, and helpe the ca­pacitie of the present hearers, whiche if hee doe, he may hope that the hearer shall not waver in opinions any more, but consent to the true and clear doctrine.\end{quote}

That process of eliminating wavering and securing firm consent requires the simultaneous operation of reason and emotion, or, as the Puritans would put it, understand­ing and affection. This is achieved by virtue of one final quality of the plain style, often alluded to but not as clearly defined as its content and style; that is, that it be powerful. Perkins says: "Our Church and all reformed Churches may make use of this doctrine: for it is the glory of a Church to have their doctrine powerfull, and effec­tuall for the winning of souls." Puritan doctrine had to manifest itself in the face of stony opposition, at­tempts at suppression, and even persecution. There is an

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{266 Wilkins, p. 17.}
\footnote{267 Hemminge, p. 19.}
\footnote{268 Perkins, Of the Calling of the Ministrie, in Works, vol. 3, p. 450.}
\end{footnotes}
aspect of Puritan theology that calls for quietness, pious meditation and soft-spoken words; but much in the Puritan daily experience of religious life called for forcefulness. Perkins addresses this characteristic by saying:

Certain it is, that they both teach us this much, that all true and able Ministers, must pray and indeavour to have a tongue ful of power and force, even like fire, to eat up the sine and corruptions of the world. For though it bee a worthy gift of God to speake mildly and moderately, so that his speech should fall like dew upon the grass: yet it is the firie tongue that beats down sinne, and works sound grace in the heart. It may bee there are some which need the firie tongue.269

Eugene White sees in the Puritan belief that the sermon must arouse the commitment of the whole man the rhetorical equivalent of Cicero's docere, delectore, and per move--oratory must instruct, delight and move.270 White argues, however, that the Puritan sermon did not consciously seek to delight, in the Ciceronian sense, since that implied winning the approval of the audience, and the Puritan preacher assumed that the audience (at least that portion which was not reprobate) was already well-disposed towards his message. White further claims that the parts of the sermon which opened the text and recounted its doctrines and reasons served only to instruct the understanding.

270 White, p. 17.
Only in the application of the doctrines did the will and affections of the audience come into play. It is here that the hearers accuse themselves of sin and reaffirm their faith, that they experience humiliation and fear as well as ecstasy.\footnote{White, p. 22.} White quotes Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard, to this effect:

> In handling the doctrine be as plain as may be, only look at what concerns the understanding of the doctrine. Look especially at the logic. The rhetorical passages are only profitable in the Uses when you come to the Affections.... From the Doctrine come to Application to the soul wherein consists the life of preaching. You shall first apply it to the Understanding, secondly to the Will and Affections for therein consists the labor; and as to search and inform the Understanding, so to stir up the people's hearts to the things taught.\footnote{Henry Dunster, MS, in White, p. 24.}

White is typical of those critics who see in the plain style evidence of a dichotomy in the Puritan view of rhetoric that the Puritans themselves simply do not acknowledge. The plain style makes no conscious separation between understanding and affection; the power of preaching consists of its operating upon the whole man, not upon the "understanding" at one point and the "affections" at another. Even the passage that White quotes to support his contention serves to disprove his argument. The concluding portion of Dunster's passage seems to imply that the understanding is...
only activated when the affections operate upon it; the benefit of preaching is only achieved when understanding and emotion act simultaneously. The Puritans go beyond Cicero in their definition of the function of oratory. Cicero intended his three purposes of oratory, to instruct, delight and move, to be mutually exclusive; a particular situation and audience called for one or another of the types of oratory. For the Puritans, instruction, pleasure and emotional commitment could not be separated to achieve the full accord of faith and reason, and to call into play the full range of emotions that underlies faith. Understanding serves to generate and make more meaningful the affections quite as much as the affections serve to confirm and carry into practice the understanding. John Wilkins notes the value of the doctrines and reasons in just these terms. They are not in the sermon because the Scripture itself requires such proof; rather, doctrinal confirmation serves "the more powerfully to convince the judgement;...whereas we shall embrace any Doctrine with a stronger assent, and rest upon it with the whole hart of the affections, when it comes in upon us with a full stream of evidence."\textsuperscript{273}

The Puritan plain style is a monument to the theo-\textsuperscript{273} Wilkins, p. 24.
logical and literary manifestation of the interaction of faith, reason and creativity. It is this characteristic of the plain style that makes understanding it an important contribution to American colonial studies. The plain style as it evolved in England was transported nearly intact as we have described it by the first generation of emigrant preachers to New England. By 1630 the Puritan theory of sermon rhetoric was firmly established within a long tradition of prescription and experience. In New England, it was to be articulated with such variations as were attributable to differing circumstances and specific individuals. In short, it began to evolve into a peculiarly American literary form.
CHAPTER V

THE THEORY OF SERMON RHETORIC OF
THREE FIRST GENERATION NEW ENGLAND DIVINES:
JOHN COTTON, THOMAS HOOKER, AND THOMAS SHEPARD

The theory of sermon rhetoric of the first generation New England preachers was, in most of its important respects, already articulated before those preachers emigrated in the 1630's. It has been largely the purpose of this study to trace origins and continuities in the development of the rhetoric of preaching. As the tradition of a prescriptive preaching theory developed, the articulation of that theory was conditioned by more and more precedent. Every "new" manifestation of the theory of sermon rhetoric owed its shape, at least in part, to an inheritance of tradition, both in precept and practice. This is not to suggest that by the 1630's there was nothing new under the sun in the realm of preaching rhetoric. But, more than at any point in our study so far, the theory of preaching rhetoric expressed by the first generation of New England divines is a theory based on a preceding expression, and is not a newly formulated expression. In colonial New England preaching theory, the element of continuity clearly
outweighs the element of originality.

The reasons for this continuity are, of course, readily apparent. Two important factors must be recognized. The first is simply that the emigrants of the first generation carried with them the practice to which they were already accustomed. The theology and practice of preaching as it had developed among the English Puritans was transmitted nearly intact in the theology and preaching practice of the emigrant divines. The second factor is less obvious, but of at least equal importance in establishing the continuity between the preaching theories of the English and New England Puritans. The Puritan preachers were extraordinarily well-versed in the structural and stylistic requirements of the plain style. No preaching format since the *ars praedicandi* tradition of the late middle ages had been outlined in such rigorous detail. As noted in the preceding chapter, the Puritan plain style was refined in an atmosphere of intense religious, political and social debate. As a result, it was an acutely self-conscious artistic form. Its practice was secularized by a number of handbooks. Its mastery was an integral part of the training of a Puritan divine, particularly at the great Puritan "seminary," Emmanuel College at Cambridge. More important, even, than the formal training was the influence exerted by what Haller calls "the spiritual brother-
hood,”¹ the closely knit community of Puritan divines. Through their "prophesying" exercises, conferences, and mutual support and self-discipline, they created a self-perpetuating cadre of like-minded preachers, drilled in and devoted to a shared set of assumptions regarding the practice of preaching. While the plain style had within it a good deal of flexibility for individual performance in the pulpit, the expression of its theory was not subject to individual modification (as the rhetorical theory of the Anglican pulpit was), but was held in common by Puritan preachers for several decades.

Given such a fixed format and a clergy so thoroughly steeped in its practice, it was inevitable that the eighty or so emigrant divines² demonstrated an almost total conti-


nuity between the theory of the English Puritan plain style and their own theory of preaching rhetoric. It was also inevitable, however, that within a group as large as the spiritual brotherhood, no matter how much solidarity of doctrine they expressed, some diversity in emphasis was bound to arise. Even given such a unanimously professed set of doctrines as that held by orthodox Puritans, it is foolish to speak of some monolithic "Puritan mind" that fully accounted for every individual Puritan.³ To imply that Puritan thought remained static for over a hundred years or to fail to identify quotations on the grounds that any Puritan can stand in the place of any other Puritan, as Perry Miller does, is to overlook a diversity of personalities and viewpoints that adds texture and depth to the already rich fabric of Puritan intellectual history.

The essential elements of the New England theory of preaching rhetoric, then, are the shared elements, the elements already familiar to us from our study of the English

Puritans. There are, however, important individual emphases in the preaching theory of these "lights of the western church" studied here. For the most part, these are differences of degree rather than substance, differences that arise when one aspect of the commonly held assumption of the plain style is highlighted more than others. Some of this shift in emphasis is a result of individual conviction or inclination. Some of it may be due to conditions unique to the colonial setting in which colonial Puritanism, almost from the outset, developed in a direction that moved it away from its English counterpart. The bulk of colonial preaching theory will echo the prescriptions for form and content we have already noted among the English Puritans. In some important ways, however, it is the small and gradually developed variation upon the English Puritan norm that gives the colonial rhetoric of preaching its greatest significance in contributing to the development of a distinctly American literary expression, both in the seventeenth century and beyond.
I

John Cotton

Moses Coit Tyler called John Cotton "the unmitred pope of a pope-hating commonwealth." While the terms of the comparison would have appalled Cotton, it expresses nevertheless the degree of affection and authority Cotton commanded as the unofficial spiritual leader of the Bay Colony. His reputation enabled him to withstand his association with the Hutchinsonian group, and to remain for twenty years among the most popular and respected leaders in New England. He possessed one of the finest intellects in the colonies, and exercised it ably in his protracted pamphlet debate with Roger Williams as well as in his articulation and defense of the New England way of church polity. Cotton has also been accused by both his contemporaries and more recent historians of displaying exasperating shifts in his stance on crucial issues. His critics cite his retractions in the Antinomian crisis, his rapid acceptance

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of congregationalism and implicit abandonment of non-separating non-conformity following his emigration, and his changes in exegetical interpretation of various Scripture passages as his career developed. The fact is, however, that in the case of the Antinomian crisis, Cotton merely retreated from a position imputed to him by Anne Hutchinson's brother-in-law, John Wheelwright, a position which Cotton had never intended to espouse. His principles with regard to church polity were changed simply to accommodate his pragmatic recognition of the actual circumstances of the church in the new world, especially in view of the rapidly deteriorating situation for the non-conformists in England. Even his shifts in exegetical stance can, in some cases, be traced to a changing perspective on the meaning of the church in the world afforded by his new life in Massachusetts. Cotton's apparent inconsistencies are often such as can be attributed to the experience and maturing of a nimble intellect and one that was informed at all


points by a sincere faith. Cotton provides an illuminating portrait of the transplanted Puritan, and the course whereby Old World Puritanism accommodated itself to new soil.

However he has fared at the hands of later generations, Cotton was among the most successful preachers of his generation, in every stage of his career. John Cotton was born in 1584, received his B.A. at Trinity College, Cambridge, and his M.A. at Emmanuel in 1606. At Emmanuel, he was a student of some of the most eminent divines of the spiritual brotherhood—Arthur Hildersam, Laurence Chaderton, John Dod, William Perkins and Richard Sibbes. Among his close friends were John Preston and Thomas Goodwin. Cotton only slowly, however, came to a full acceptance of the tenets of his Puritan colleagues. By virtue of his brilliant scholarship he became dean and subsequently head-lecturer at Emmanuel in the years 1606 to 1612. He was thoroughly learned in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, the latter

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9The details of Cotton's biography are available from several sources. John Norton's is the earliest (Abel being Dead yet speaketh; or, The Life and Death of that deservedly Famous Man of God, Mr. John Cotton, Late Teacher of the Church of Christ at Boston in New England (London: Tho. Newcomb, 1658)). Norton was the source for Cotton Mather's accounts in Johannes in Eremo. Memoirs, Relating to the Lives of the Ever-Memorable, Mr. John Cotton, Mr. John Norton, Mr. John Wilson, Mr. John Davenport,...and Mr. Thomas Hooker (Boston: Michael Perry, 1695) and in Vol. 1 of Magnalia Christi Americana. The two most reliable biographies in recent years are those by Emerson and Ziff, already cited.
being of the most value in his position at Emmanuel, and
he was an accomplished patristic scholar as well.

Significantly, preaching played an important role
in the direction his career took during his years at Cam-
bridge. In his eulogistic biography of Cotton, John Nor-
ton, Cotton's successor in Boston, reported that Cotton
took a great deal of pride in displaying his wit and
scholarship in the early sermons that he preached. 10 He
was received with the "high applause of Academical Wits"
and particularly pleased the students, who had "an Athenian
itch after some new thing." 11 Norton editorializes that
Cotton's scholarly eloquence naturally recommended itself
to those "who prefer the Muses before Moses, who taste
Plato more than Paul, and relish the Orator of Athens far
above the Preacher of the Cross." 12 Cotton first displayed
his erudite style in a funeral oration delivered for a Dr.
Some, which was "so accurately performed, in respect of
Invention, Elegance, Purity of Style, Ornateness of Rhet-

10 Norton, p. 13. Abel being Dead yet speaketh is
the first colonial biography to be published. It is com-
posed in the manner of the funeral sermon genre, and is
comprised, as D.K. Merrill puts it, of "equal parts of
biography, eulogy and sermon." Cf. Dana K. Merrill, "The
(1938), pp. 152-54.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.
orick, Elocution, and Oratorious beauty of the whole, as that he was thenceforth looked at as another Xenephon. 13

Cotton Mather, John Cotton's great-grandson, reported that the Dr. Some oration showed Cotton to be "a Master of Periclean, or Ciceronian Oratory." 14

Since he so delighted in the adulation his own florid style brought him, it is not surprising that Cotton tried to avoid hearing Perkins preach, as he regularly did at Emmanuel. Perkins' "plain and perspicuous" style pricked Cotton's conscience and thus distracted him from his studies. Mather describes another of Cotton's sermons at this time,

wherein aiming more to preach Self than Christ, he used such Florid Strains, as extremely Recommended him, unto the most, who Relished the Wisdom of words above the Words of Wisdom: though the Pompous Eloquence of that Sermon, afterwards gave such a Distast unto his own Renewed Soul, that with a Sacred Indignation he threw his Notes into the Fire. 15

That shift in Cotton's attitude toward preaching also resulted from the experience of hearing the word preached. It was the preaching of Richard Sibbes, also at Cambridge in those years, that caused Cotton to see the folly of his own manner of preaching. Despite his many years of study

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14 Mather, Johannes in Eremo, p. 6.
15 Ibid., p. 7.
at Emmanuel, the most Puritan institution in the realm, and his close association with the greatest Puritans of his day, it was a sermon preached by Sibbes that converted Cotton to Puritanism. The immediate upshot of his conversion was the dilemma that Cotton faced with regard to his preaching. On the next occasion that he was to preach, Cotton confronted the problem. He knew that a large and expectant audience, comprised mostly of students, awaited another witty and polished discourse with "itching ears." He feared that to "preach with a Scriptural and Christian Plainness" would cause his hearers to mock the effect that a religious conversion had on a man, turning a scholar into a "dunce."

Mather's account continues,

On the other side, he considered, That it was his Duty to Preach with such a Plainness, as becomes the Oracles of God, Which are intended for the Conduct of men in the Pathes of Life, and not for Theatrical Ostentations and Enrichments, and the Lord needed not any Sin of ours to maintain His own Glory. 16

Cotton made his decision, and "discoursed Practically and Powerfully, but very solidly upon the Plain Doctrine of Repentance." Norton offers a similar account of what motivated Cotton to adopt the plain style:

But his Spirit now savouring of the Cross of Christ more than Humane literature, and being taught of God to distinguish between the word of wisdom, and the wisdom of words; his speech and preaching was not with the enticing words of mans wisdom, but in the demon-

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16 Mather, Johannes in Eremo, p. 9.
stration of the Spirit and of power.\textsuperscript{17}

Cotton's hearers on that first occasion of his plain preaching were dismayed--every account reports that they pulled their hats down about their ears to register their disapproval. Cotton returned to his rooms thoroughly disheartened and unsure that he had chosen the right course. His new direction was reaffirmed, however, when he answered a knock at his chamber door and admitted John Preston, a scholar of great repute and powerful influence, although little religious inclination. Preston professed to have been converted by the sermon he had just heard, and became in later years one of the most well-loved of the Puritan leaders.

It may be questioned, of course, how many of the facts of this story were true just as they were reported, or to what extent the chronology of otherwise true events may have been foreshortened to heighten the dramatic effect. But this does not discount the significance of the prominent role played by preaching in the entire sequence of events. Cotton was converted by preaching, his conversion was in turn reflected in his own preaching, and his converted preaching style was confirmed by the conversion of another prominent scholar. It was not by means of prayer

\textsuperscript{17}Norton, p. 14.
alone, or meditation, or private study of the Bible, or the example of a sanctified life, or the celebration of the sacraments that all this evidence of God's grace was procured, but by means of preaching alone. It is no less significant that the hagiographers who recorded Cotton's life stressed the role of preaching when they retold this episode. Preaching remained near the center of the Puritan religious experience as Puritanism was transmitted to the new world. Preaching came more and more to share that focus of Puritan spirituality with the conversion experience, however. In the accounts of John Cotton's years at Cambridge, preaching and conversion are the elements featured with equal prominence.

In 1612 Cotton assumed the office of pastor in St. Botolph's parish in old Boston. At first, he attempted to conform to the practice of the established church, but by 1615 Cotton was thoroughly non-conformist in both his preaching and his conduct of the other details of worship and pastoral administration. His years at St. Botolph's were eminently successful. He developed a reputation as being among the finest preachers in all of England, and attracted a large and devoted following, including some of the most powerful and influential men in his Lincolnshire diocese. Thanks largely to their influence with the local bishop, Cotton was allowed to remain a highly visible and
virtually unhindered Puritan prelate during twenty years of increasingly restrictive regulation throughout the rest of England.

While at St. Botolph's, Cotton followed the conventional Puritan pattern of preaching the *lectio continua*, preaching straight through many books of the Bible. He preached several times a week for two decades; eventually his bishop appointed a conforming assistant to administer some of the affairs of the parish, although Cotton remained the central figure. During his years at Boston, John Preston would regularly send Cambridge students to Cotton to be catechized. The chroniclers of Cotton's life report that under his influence a great religious reformation was wrought in what had been a notoriously dissolute district. It is interesting to note that only Cotton Mather adds that this reformation was met with material prosperity for Boston; Mather apparently regarded that observation as a needed incentive in another Boston that stood in need of reform.

Preparing to sail for the new world in 1629, the leaders of the Winthrop fleet anxiously importuned the more eminent non-conformist ministers in England to accompany them. 18 John Cotton was among those approached, and was

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also among the vast majority who declined to embark at that juncture. It was Cotton, however, who delivered the farewell sermon as the fleet was poised to leave in April of 1630. And within three years, at the age of 49, Cotton himself sailed for New England. The administration of Archbishop Laud had finally put an end to his years of respite in old Boston. Cotton had been summoned to appear before Laud's Court of High Commission, certainly to be silenced, possibly to face a harsher penalty. With difficulty, and only upon the urging of many old and trusted friends, including his mentor John Dod, did Cotton decide to emigrate. He sailed on the same ship as his fellow Cambridge Puritans Thomas Hooker and Samuel Stone; they all preached every Sunday, one sermon morning, noon and night, all the way to Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{19} The little village of Shawmut had been renamed Boston in Cotton's honor, and he was installed as the teacher of the First Church, a position he held until his death in 1652.

The next twenty years of Cotton's ministry were even more productive and met with greater adulation than the first twenty years. His preaching figured prominently in fomenting the Antinomian crisis which centered on his dis-

ciple, Anne Hutchinson. But he managed to emerge from the situation with only a temporarily tarnished reputation. He became the definitive spokesman for the New England way, the structure of congregational church polity as it developed in the Bay Colony. He wrote voluminously on matters of ecclesiastical government, much of it in reply to inquiries and objections from England and from another Cambridge emigrant, Roger Williams. He continued to produce a prolific number of sermons and commentaries, many volumes of which were published. Cotton was, as we shall see with regard to his theory of preaching, probably the most orthodox Calvinist of the major New England preachers. He was renowned for his great learning and his vast library which encompassed the fathers, the school-men, and most prominently, according to Mather's famous anecdote, John Calvin:

Yet, at last, he preferred one Calvin among them all. ...Said he, "I have read the Fathers and the School-men, and Calvin too; but I find That he that has Calvin, has 'em all." And being asked, why in his Latter Dayes, he Indulged Nocturnal Studies, more than formerly, he pleasantly Replied, "Because I Love to Sweeten my mouth with a piece of Calvin, before I go to sleep."

It is not surprising, in view of the significance of preaching in his career and his affection for Calvin, that Cotton's theology of preaching should so clearly echo that

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20 Mather, Johannes in Eremo, p. 54.
of the great Genevan reformer. Cotton was the most emphatic of any of the New England preachers in insisting on the doctrine that salvation is afforded to the elect only by means of the gift of God's free grace. The emphasis in Cotton's thought was, as it was in Calvin, on the absolute and illimitable mercy of God in choosing to save whom he will, and of the total inability of the depraved elect to earn or in any way partake in the act of salvation. The focus in this scheme is on the omnipotent mercy of God rather than on the actual process of salvation in the redeemed individual. There was a subtle but important shift of this emphasis in the focus of the English Puritans, however, particularly following the accession of James when the Hampton Court conference dashed any further hopes of sweeping institutional reforms within the Church of England. The emphasis of the Cambridge Puritans was directed more and more towards the process of personal salvation and the morphology of conversion, thus developing into what


came to be known as covenant theology. The difference between Calvin and the covenant theologians was simply one of emphasis rather than one of substance. In Calvin's terms, there was nothing unorthodox in the covenant theology that examined in minute detail the gradual process of conversion and regeneration that follows when God grants the gift of faith to one of the elect. Calvin indeed called for the self-inspection and the obligation to lead a sanctified life that justification entailed. But Calvin implicitly recognized the danger that an overemphasis on such activities created, namely that they would be taken as absolute assurance of justification or, far worse, that they might be thought necessary to gain the gift of saving grace. Calvin, and Cotton after him, preferred rather to emphasize the total unreliability of either external evidence or self-examination, and to lay repeated emphasis on the gift of

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24Calvin's relative lack of interest in an identifiable conversion experience does not imply that he does not recognize the possibility that an outwardly unregenerate life could be dramatically reversed. Such an individual was, of course, always among the elect; his "conversion" consisted of conforming his external behavior to his internal state of grace.
grace rather than the process of conversion. Cotton manifests this orthodox Reformed doctrine in his theology of preaching which repeatedly emphasizes that God gives the gift of his grace through the preaching of the word. It is only by means of the word preached that faith is engendered in the hearts of the elect:

First, Hearing the Word; it hath pleased the Lord much to delight in this Ordinance, and to make it onely a principall soveraigne meanes for the piercing of the hearts of his people; Hence it is, that the Word is called "a two edged sword," Heb. 4.12. A sharpe and a keene Arrow; God hath given the Word a piercing nature. The imagery Cotton chooses is very important here; God's word "pierces" the hearts of the elect, like a goad, a nail, a sword or an arrow. The heart does not prepare for this.


experience, or come half way and accept it. Indeed, the heart need not even be open to receive it. God is the sole transmitter of the action; in a rather violent metaphor, he cuts through to the heart of man. The most that sinful man can do by way of "preparation" is to await God's act passively; he can take no more active role in obtaining that unearned gift of grace.

Cotton clearly echoes Calvin in pointing out that preaching is the only means by which God offers his grace in faith:

There is a mighty power in the Scriptures preached, for he writes these things that they may be preached, and to be read, and to make use of them in conference, and meditation, and in them all there is a mighty power.... By the Gospel of God preached, the Righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, to lead on believers to believe, and not to rest growing in believing, til they reach unto salvation; it is the "mighty power of God to salvation, to every one that believes," such an one, while he lives shall be of the thriving band in faith.27

God could have used other means to make his grace available, but he chose to dispense his Spirit in the word preached, that he might confound all the wisdom of the Orators, and Philosophers, and wise men of the world. I Cor. 1.21. "It pleased God by the foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe," all the learned Philosophers could never convince a man of a sin, they could sometimes persuade men by moral persuasions, but they could never pierce their hearts, nor teach them the

27Cotton, Christ the Fountain of Life: or, Sundry Choyce Sermons on part of the fifth Chapter of the first Epistle of St. John (London: Robert Ibbitson, 1651), p. 199.
knowledge of Christ. 28

It is only by means of preaching that God pierces the heart of the elect; it is important to note Cotton's consistent emphasis that it is the free gift of God that is offered in the preaching of the word. The doctrine Cotton expresses is almost exactly that expressed by Calvin in the Institutes (IV.1.5):

> We see that God, who might perfect his people in a moment, chooses not to bring them to manhood in any other way than by the education of the Church. We see the mode of doing it expressed; the preaching of celestial doctrine is committed to pastors.... Hence it follows, that all who reject the spiritual food of the soul divinely offered to them by the hands of the Church, deserve to perish of hunger and famine. God inspires us with faith, but it is by the instrumentality of his gospel, as Paul reminds us, "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom.X.17). God reserves to himself the power of maintaining it, but it is by the preaching of the gospel, as Paul also declares, that he brings it forth and unfolds it. 29

Cotton also shares with Calvin the paradox implied in this doctrine. If the gift of grace afforded by the preaching of the word "pierces the heart" of the elect without their preparation or deserving, how can there be said to be any act of the will involved in their acceptance of faith, their "conversion." Cotton clearly regards his preaching as an instrument of conversion; he specifically addresses parts of many of his sermons to the ungodly, (that is, those among the elect who show no signs of regen-

eration—he would never have been so rash as to expect to convert those not among the elect). There is an apparent inconsistency in claiming on the one hand that preaching is merely the vehicle for a wholly divine act while assuming on the other that both the minister and the hearer are active agents in the imparting and accepting of that gift. Phyllis Jones and Nicholas Jones make the point that Cotton is clearly inconsistent by claiming doctrinally that God's grace is all-sufficient and totally free, while exhorting his congregation on the other hand to open their hearts to receive the gift of grace or God will not enter their hearts. There is no real inconsistency here, however, since Cotton's observations are two sides of the same coin. The apparent paradox is explained in terms of the Reformed doctrine of how the Spirit operates in the sermon. The operation of the Spirit in the mouth of the preacher and the hearts of the hearers may be expected, although not assumed, in the corporate preaching of the word. This operation is at once a gift of supernatural grace and a means whereby the will can act. It is irresistible, yet the response it enables appears spontaneous. The operation of the Spirit in the preaching of the word can be explained

30 Jones and Jones, Salvation in New England, p. 120.
31 Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 155-158 above; cf. also Emerson, John Cotton, p. 50.
in the same terms in which Calvin and the orthodox Reformed theologians thought of the covenant. The covenant of grace is, in a sense, both absolute and conditional. Both the distribution of grace and its acceptance in the hearts of the elect are attributed solely to God's act, but at the same time God's gift of grace demands a response on the part of the recipient.  

The elect do not thereby become deserving of God's grace, nor is the covenant conditional in the sense that God's act is dependent upon or awaits man's act. The gift of grace remains absolute and irresistible, even though God requires, as a "condition" of his mercy, a life that gives evidence of regeneration.

It is for this reason that the application of the sermon, the Uses, becomes such an important element in Reformed preaching and the Puritan plain style. Even though the gift of grace through the word preached is not dependent upon the response of the hearers, it is nonetheless essential that God's word should bear fruit in the lives of those it touches. The Uses show most directly how this may be done. Cotton affirms that not only the non-elect but even the unregenerate elect can be averse to the direct impact of the word on themselves:

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Many men could willingly heare a minister flourish out a sermon, but they care not for the word to come neare them; but consider, you cannot more manifest to God and your brethren, that your hearts are naught, then when you will not be convinced of your particular sins. The sword of God, take it as it lyes in the word, and it is like a sword in the scabbard, and the exposition is but the brandishing of it; but when application is made, that thou art the man that hast done this, not to endure this, is an argument of a carnall heart, though sometimes eyen God's own people do not like to be particularized.\textsuperscript{33}

It is therefore essential that the word be applied directly and powerfully. It is that application which is the prick upon the heart; without it, the sword of the word is merely waved in the air, and there can be no corresponding response in the life of the believer. The Uses portion of the sermon is the catalyst that makes it possible for God's word to come to fruition in the faith and behavior of his people.

As noted earlier, Cotton's espousal of the strictly Calvinist line with regard to the relationship between free grace and conversion put him somewhat at odds with other Puritans of his generation who had come to emphasize more and more the importance of analyzing the conversion experience from the point of view of the individual's participation in it. In the preaching of many of Cotton's New England colleagues, Hooker and Shepard, for example, the problem of preparation for conversion was an important element. The concept of preparing to receive the word played

\textsuperscript{33}Cotton, \textit{The way of Life}, p. 172.
little or no part in Cotton's theology of preaching. By the same token, Cotton was inclined to regard Hooker and Shepard's focus on the sanctified life of the regenerated man, a subsequent step in the process of conversion, as a temptation to put false security in outward evidence of justification; once again, his emphasis was on the direct infusion of grace into the heart of the elect, regardless of their external behavior. Cotton always felt that the difference between his position and that of his colleagues was more a matter of style than substance: "Although he clearly believed his doctrine to be correct, he felt that the differences were ultimately in emphasis and not central to what all saints must believe. Neither side was heretical."\(^{34}\)

It was this difference in emphasis, which was for Cotton a mere matter of rhetorical stance in his preaching, that led to the Antinomian crisis of 1636-38, a dispute that threatened to tear the colony asunder. Hearing Cotton's preaching, and comparing it to that of the other Bay area ministers, Anne Hutchinson, Cotton's disciple from Lincolnshire, concluded that Cotton alone among the ministers preached the true covenant of grace. The others, Hutchinson claimed, by virtue of their interest in seeking

\(^{34}\)Ziff, Puritanism in America, pp. 64-65.
evidence of conversion, preached a heretical covenant of works, implying that man took an active part in earning his salvation by means of his own works.

To give Anne Hutchinson her due, the covenant theology of English Puritanism, as it had developed a greater and greater fascination with the morphology of conversion, had gradually moved dangerously in the direction of espousing a covenant of works. It was difficult not to take the small logical step between examining one's life to see if it were sanctified enough to afford one some hope of justification, to seeing in one's sanctified life positive proof of justification (already a heretical notion) or even to assume that such a sanctified life would merit justification. Preparationist theologians, who officially required no more than what Calvin had said, that one's heart should be opened and prepared to receive the Spirit, could easily be construed as requiring that a certain form of sanctification (preparing for conversion) preceded justification. In New England, such notions were only reinforced by the structure of the society. A society in which all rights were reserved to church members, those whose sanctified life and personal testimony was taken as nearly definitive proof of their election, put a high premium on sanctified, or sanctimonious, behavior. There is repeated evidence, both in many sermons of the period and especially
in the records of laymen (such as Winthrop's journal) that individuals did indeed make judgments regarding the state of the souls of their neighbors on the basis of external evidence. Those who led a godly life, or who prospered by a special Providence were assumed to be among the elect; the dissolute, or those who suffered misfortune, must surely be damned. Anne Hutchinson (whose soul was itself the victim of vicious pronouncements on the evidence of subsequent events in her life) certainly had a good deal of evidence on which to base her charges.

Yet the Hutchinson group misrepresented the positions of both Cotton and the other ministers. Hooker, Shepard, Davenport, Wilson and the other ministers accused by the Antinomians of being under a covenant of works, never preached or taught that justification follows sanctification. They were men thoroughly steeped in the Calvinism of Perkins and Ames; their emphasis on conversion differed only, as Cotton rightly believed, as a matter of degree along a continuum. None of them denied that salvation was a free gift of God, and could not be earned by the efforts of man. They taught that the sanctified life was not a condition of salvation but a duty of the elect, a point emphasized by Calvin extensively. The relationship between Cotton's position and that of the other ministers was something like that between Paul and James: Paul says "Justification by faith"
but James adds "Faith without works is dead." They are complementary, not contradictory, doctrines; so Calvin had taught, and so Cotton and the other ministers believed.

Hutchinson clearly put Cotton in an awkward and embarrassing position by representing his preaching as being diametrically opposed to that of the other ministers. It was that notion that Cotton repudiated when he publicly separated himself from the charge of heresy against the other ministers which the Hutchinson group sought to make with his sanction. Hutchinson and her followers had gone even further, however, in claiming that, under the covenant of grace, the gift of faith could come to the individual even apart from the ordinary vehicle by which it was transmitted, namely, the preaching of the word. Cotton was as appalled as his colleagues when Hutchinson asserted that the covenant of grace assured the elect of a direct revelation of God's word that could come privately, as if by means of an inner light, at any moment.

It was on this score that Hutchinson was eventually trapped into convicting herself of heresy by her own words. Throughout the period of turmoil, it had not been possible for the leaders of the colony to produce evidence that Hutchinson had in fact ever said anything heretical. When she and her followers first came to prominence in 1636, many of the most influential citizens of Boston, including the
current governor, young Henry Vane, were among her converts. When Winthrop and his group returned to office in 1637, they moved to effectively silence the Antinomians, by means of disfranchisement and banishment, on the clearly demonstrable grounds that they had challenged the leadership of the colony (the ministers and those civic leaders, Winthrop et al., who backed them), an action which constituted sedition.

The magistrates and ministers were not content to allow matters to stand at that, however, so Anne Hutchinson was called before a special synod of the New England churches in 1638 to stand trial for heresy. The charge proved difficult to substantiate. There was within the Antinomian doctrine the potential for libertinism; indeed, Hutchinson's followers were often called Libertines in contemporary accounts of the dispute. Since the covenant of grace taught that reliance in external, sanctified behavior was untenable as proof of salvation, it was possible to argue that any form of loose behavior was permissible, because one's works were in no way related to one's faith. In some radical Protestant sects on the continent, just such a doctrine had been used to justify a wide variety of dissolute lifestyles. The New England Antinomians, however, had never taught or allowed such a conclusion to be drawn from their belief. Indeed, Hutchinson and her fol-
lowers were, in general, characterized by intense piety and exemplary lives. There were no grounds for heresy on the grounds of libertinism.

After days of badgering, however, in response to the question of how she had come to receive her doctrine, Hutchinson made the fatal mistake of answering that they had come to her in an "immediate revelation." The significance of this for our study is that it struck at the heart of the Reformed and Puritan theology of preaching. Calvin had expressly denied the efficacy of private meditation, visions, or special revelations as a means of receiving God's word. The crucial role that preaching had played throughout the reformation and throughout the development of the widening rift between the Puritans and the established Church of England had been predicated on the unshakeable belief that preaching was the only means by which God's word spake to the hearts of men. It was the only theater in which the Spirit operated to impart the gift of grace necessary to engender faith. Hutchinson had denied a central doctrine of the church. It was her implicit lowering of the status of preaching that caused her to be convicted of heresy, excommunicated, and banished. Her death at the hands of Indians in Vredeland, in the New Netherlands col-

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35 Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 143-45 above.
ony, was universally accepted in Massachusetts Bay as evidence of God's judgment on her profound heresy.

Cotton, of course, could not follow his avowed disciple to anywhere near the extremes she sought to draw him. It is unfair to berate Cotton for retreating from the position that Hutchinson had sought to ascribe to him, since it was never a position he sought to maintain. At most he was guilty of preaching out of a certain perspective which, although thoroughly orthodox in his expression of it, could be logically carried to an unorthodox extreme. Perhaps he was most to blame in being, as Larzer Ziff puts it, so "unworldly" that he failed to see the social consequences of the emphasis he had chosen to enunciate. That failing can only be ascribed to his being the most thoroughly Calvinist minister in New England, and presenting most unremittingly the difficult Reformed paradox of grace and works. In attempting to resolve the paradox, which was a presumption that Cotton never intended his followers to attempt, the Antinomians ultimately denied the one institution, the ministry of the word, upon which Cotton could brook no tampering.

Cotton's theology of the importance of the ministry, beyond his absolute belief that it was the only means of

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salvation, was expressed in more detail in his belief in the dignity of the office of the ministry and his belief that all preaching must be *sola scriptura*. In *Gods Mercie Mixed with His Justice*, Cotton illustrates the importance of the ministry in performing the function of delivering God's word:

> The Law was a light, but it was in a Lanthorne, or in a "darke place, and was not easily discerned, but in the end the day starre appeares," that is the preaching and dispensation of the Gospell, and the Sonne of Righteousnesse closely follows the preaching of the Gospell, and so displayes and manifests himself, even as the Sunne follows the day starre....The Ministers are starres when they arise with cleare and pure dispensations of the Gospell, and manifestations thereof in the faces and hearts of the sonnes of men.37

It is illuminating to note that whereas the "day star" in this passage (II Peter 1:18) is often interpreted to be the appearance of Christ himself, Cotton chooses the interpretation (also warranted by the text) that equates the day star with the prophets, those who foretell and thus precede the advent of Christ. By means of typological identification, the Old Testament prophets whose message preceded the entrance of Christ into the world are identified with contemporary ministers whose message must precede the entrance of Christ into the hearts of the believer.

The role of the minister assumes dramatic significance in

37Cotton, *Gods Mercie Mixed with His Justice*, or, *His Peoples Deliverance in Times of danger* (London: Edward Brewster, 1641), p. 120.
this analogy.

In one of his interpretations of the Song of Solomon, Cotton takes the familiar tack of reading the book as an allegory of Christ and his church. By means of his typological identifications, however, Cotton here avoids some of the excesses of more fanciful allegorical readings, while committing some typological excesses of his own. The overall argument of this series of sermons is that the Song of Solomon provides types which correspond to specific antitypes through the history of the church from the time of Solomon to the church's present setting in New England. The virtues called for in the Song of Solomon to effect the perfect marriage between Christ and his church are a "faithful Ministry" and a "Christian magistracy." Obviously, Cotton's exegesis thus allows him to make a number of observations on the office of the ministry throughout the history of the church.

The two breasts of the bride illustrate how the preaching of the word has been an ordinance of the church since the days of the apostolic church:

The breasts give milke: now the breasts that give milke to the Church, the sincere milke of the word, are the Ministers, which in the Church of Christ's time were first the Apostles, secondly the seventy: and are therefore here called two breasts.38

38Cotton, A Brief Exposition of the whole Book of Canticles, or, Song of Solomon... (London: Philip Nevil,
Cotton goes on to trace the heritage of this doctrine of preaching through the years. He finds it manifested in "John Wickliffe," whom he cites as a minister of the powerful gospel and restorer of the true sacraments. He sees the true ministry most abundantly illustrated in the Reformation of the preceding century:

What worthy Ministers did that first age of the Reformed Churches yield? as Luther, Calvin, Martin Bucer, Cranmer, Hooper, Ridley, Latymer, &c. What a wonderful measure of heavenly light did they of a sudden bring into the Church? and that out of the middest of darkness and Popery; from whence it was, that the knowledge and faith of the Faithfull then was wonderfully enlarged far beyond the ignorance of former times.

It was by means of the teaching and preaching ministry that the great works of that time were accomplished.

The parallel between the practice of the ministry through the history of the church and the duties and dignity of the ministers of his own day is abundantly clear. Cotton perceives in the Song of Solomon a succinct outline of the requirements of the ministry:

...this may teach Ministers how to prove themselves to be amiable in God's sight, (viz.)
First, by carrying themselves evenly with their brethren.
Secondly, by cleansing their hearts and lives by the power of Baptisme.


39 Cotton, Exposition...of Canticles, pp. 158-59.

40 Ibid., p. 177.
Thirdly, by fruitfulnesse, and faithfullnesse in their Ministry.

Fourthly, by not affecting carnal eloquence, but gracious and deep-dyed powerfull utterance; for swelling words of humane wisdome make mens preaching seeme to Christ (as it were) a blubber-lipt Ministry.

Fifthly, by restraining abuses and offences amongst the people, and strengthening and comforting the feeble minded.

Sixthly, by feeding their people with sincere milke, and not being drie nurses.

Seventhly, by taking most delight in conversing among lillies, their well-affected people, though seeking also to winne all, and therefore sometimes conversing with them as the Physicians among the sick.41

The pastoral element figures large in Cotton's catalogue of ministerial virtues. Despite his firm belief in the free gift of grace, or, more accurately, as a corollary to it, he clearly underscores the all essential function the minister fills as the conduit for saving faith. The final qualification Cotton cites in the preceding catalogue is especially noteworthy. The minister sees his first duty to be toward the "lillies," but since to be "well-affected," even among the elect, does not imply that regeneration may not still be necessary, he must occasionally preach as though all his people still stand in need of justification. The preacher is not urged to preach to the non-elect, but must from time to time take care to address the unregenerate elect.

The pastoral qualities necessary to address such a

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41 Cotton, Canticles, pp. 112-13.
mixed congregation are an additional indication of the nobility of the ministry:

this shewes what gifts and graces are most requisite in a Minister, and doe most adorne him, even rewle in his ministry, and fervency in prayer, and all sorts of sweet grace to season and direct all sorts of his people in their several callings....For men must not come into the Ministry with judgement and learning alone, for these may come from nature, but they must come perfumed with graces, to keepe themselves and others from putrefaction; yea, they must labour for those graces which will give a strong sent to save themselves and others.42

The essential requirements for the minister, then, are the age-old ones—he must be learned and good. In the historical perspective provided by the church history Cotton perceives in the Canticles, both qualities ought to be more apparent now than formerly. Examining the success of the Apostolic church, Cotton notes, "The Pastors and Ministers of the Primitive Church did this without help of Universities; what a shame then is this in us to come short of them in such abundance of outward helps and means."43

Among the spiritual gifts which must adorn the minister are those which enable him to deal with the subject matter of his sermon—the word of God: "Interpretation of Scripture is from a spirituall gift, which God hath given, and commanded to be used for the edification of his

42 Cotton, Canticles, p. 96.
43 Ibid., p. 128.
Church. In stating the familiar doctrine of the theology of preaching, that it must be *sola scriptura*, Cotton must again come to grips with the same problem that had vexed earlier Reformed and Puritan theologians: how may a finite and sinful human mind interpret and transmit a divine truth? In response to a query from England on this very problem, Cotton explains,

> It is true, preaching of the Word and Interpretation of the Word, are of God, but the phrase and Method is of men, yet so of men, as they have commandment and warrant from God, to preach and interprete the Word: and not in what phrase and Method pleases themselves; nor in such words as mans wisdome teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, I Cor. 2.13.

The surest test of the reliability of the preacher's message is its source—if the word preached is clearly grounded in Scripture, it is much more certainly a vehicle of divine truth than a message which springs from human invention:

> If the Apostles Doctrine were so certain, that they preaching nothing but what they had seen and heard, then hence we see a reason, why they were so bold, and zealous, and diligent in preaching, Act. 4.20, 2 Pet. 1. 15,16. Fables are best at first hearing, but comfortable, sound and certain truths, the oftener

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44 Cotton, *A Modeste and Cleare Answer to Mr. Balls Discourse of set formes of Prayer. Set forth in a most Seasonable time, when this Kingdome is now in Consultation about Matters of that Nature, and so many godly Long after the Resolution in that Point* (London: Henry Overton, 1642), p. 11.

they are heard, the more profitable. 46

To equate "certain truths" with God's divine word is clearly to appeal to the "analog[y] of faith," the apodictic proof of Ramist logic--that which is known to be manifestly true is, of course, true. Cotton warns that the ministers of the word, like the Apostles, must be careful to preach nothing that may allow an ambivalent interpretation:

First, by preaching nothing but what we have good warrant for from Scripture; for the Scriptures are of certain truth.... No Scripture is of any private notion of interpretation, because being penned at first by the Spirit, by him best interpreted. 47

Cotton is here directly addressing one of the more difficult claims of Anne Hutchinson's followers--that they were subject to private revelations of the Spirit. It was on the basis of that claim that Anne Hutchinson was excommunicated. Cotton confronts the issue cautiously:

Private Revelations without the Word, are out of date, but certain it is, that God doth speak by his Spirit in private Meditation and Prayers, and conferences with Brethren; and in all these, comforteth his people with the manifestation of his fatherly goodness, yet speaketh nothing, but in his word, and according to it. 48

46 Cotton, A Practicall Commentary, or An Exposition with Observations, Reasons, and Uses upon the First Epistle Generall of John, 2nd ed. (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1658), p. 17

47 Ibid.

48 Cotton, The Powring Out of the Seven Vials: or,
At first glance, it appears that Cotton is talking out of both sides of his mouth, but he is making a very real distinction here. It is undeniable that the Spirit of God may operate in our hearts and understanding in meditation, prayer and conference, as well as in the preaching of the word. But this by no means constitutes a new revelation of the Spirit—nothing is added beyond the word of God as it has already been revealed in the canon. We may grow in our affection for and understanding of the word as already revealed. Nothing new, however, is revealed "but in his Word, and according to it." Furthermore, Cotton goes on, whatever the Spirit may "speak" to us in private is not effective, nor can it be considered in any sense a "revelation," unless it is subsequently confirmed in a public proclamation of God's word. Preaching is the first arbiter of the word of God; no private operation of the Holy Spirit can be relied on unless it operates in the same way in the corporate preaching of the word. By threatening the role of preaching as the only vehicle of God's word, the Antinomians threatened the crucial Reformation doctrine of sola scriptura, and opened the floodgates of potential theological anarchy.

Assuming that the source of the word preached is the Scriptures, there remains the vexed problem of how they are interpreted in the words of the preacher. Cotton follows Calvin exactly by insisting that in no sense is the word of God itself ever judged in the preaching of the word; this is the great vice of the Roman Catholic church:

...the Papists...make their Judge and Clergy, Judges of the Scriptures: the Pope himself here is most faulty, who hath left off his Office of declaiming his Message, and keepeth himself to that which was never committed to him, to judge of the Scriptures.49

The Gospel is such a message as cannot be subjected to the messenger's interpretation. If the word of God is truly preached, it is the Holy Spirit who guides the interpretation. Like Calvin, Cotton admonishes the congregation to diligently try each sermon by the test of Scripture, with hearts open to the operation of the Spirit, to determine whether or not a given message actually presented the unalloyed word of God:

Goe home and consider whether the things that have been taught were true or no: whether agreeable to the holy Scriptures or no; for a Preacher speaks not the expresse words of the Scripture, but comments and explications of the Scriptures, and therefore examine whether that which is delivered be agreeable to the Scriptures which are alledged for to prove the doctrine. We must make use of the Scripture as a rule to measure all the Sermon by we heare, whether it be of just length and breadth of Gods word or no...50

49 Cotton, Commentary...Upon I John, p. 23.

50 Cotton, Christ the Fountaine of Life, p. 200.
In addition to the test of the analogy of faith, which confirms whether that which the preacher presents as sound doctrine is indeed sound doctrine, Cotton offers a further, slightly more empirical test of the efficacy of the word preached;

Consider whether it make you more conformable to the Word of God or no, whether it make you obey the Word of God more carefully than before, whether it make you most like to Christ; if it work these effects, it is the Word of God that is preached.\textsuperscript{51}

The assumption operating in this advice is not that good works are a necessary proof that God has been revealed; rather, Cotton merely asserts that which had been contended since the days of the reformers, that Spirit-filled preaching is a mark of the true church, and is known, at least in part, by its fruit.

Since preaching is a mark of the true church, Cotton is as insistent as other English Puritans on the necessity of a preaching ministry. In his "Answer" to John Ball, Cotton addresses much of the treatise to the question of the validity or usefulness of a prescript liturgy. Cotton argues against such a liturgy, comparing it to the practice of reading homilies, which he deems to be totally devoid of benefit. In \textit{Christ the Fountaine of Life} he adjures the ministers to be diligent to preach faithfully. To merely

\textsuperscript{51}Cotton, \textit{Commentary...Upon I John}, p. 284.
read the word without opening it, or to read a homily, is to leave the people ignorant:

So in very deed, if you shall looke at all the good that hath been done by reading in poore Congregations, that have no meanes of preaching, the people are as ignorant as those that never heard of the name of Christ, as empty of faith, and of the knowledge of them.52

The point at issue is one which other English Puritans had defined. The Spirit only operates in a lively and powerful opening of the word by a preacher clearly attuned to the needs of his congregation; such prerequisites are lacking in a dated and impersonal homily. Cotton goes so far as to allow the preaching of sermons read from a manuscript (although he himself never did so), but draws the line at reading "official" homilies:

...the Preacher may deliver his Sermon by writing, and so that writing may be preaching; but that reading is therefore preaching, followeth not. For in writing, a Minister may and doth make use of spiritual gifts requisite in a Prophet or Preacher, to the exercise of his ministry, I. Cor. 14. 1. but not so in reading; which even a School-boy may perform, that never attained any spirituall gift at all.53

Cotton defines the nature of the office of preaching in a manner that draws heavily on the English Puritan theology of preaching, while remaining even closer than most

52Cotton, Christ the Fountaine of Life, p. 184.
puritans to the Reformed, orthodox Calvinist position. Cotton's treatment of the style of preaching is expressed in similar terms. There is very little distinction for Cotton between the theology of preaching and its rhetorical theory. Each informs the other; the plain style is nearly inseparable in his thinking from the doctrines of sola scriptura, the office of the ministry, and the function of preaching as the only vehicle for the word of God. A passage in Cotton's commentary on I John makes this holistic notion of preaching clear:

Look that your bred be spirituall, that is, the pure Word dispensed in the Spirit and Power, mingle no Traditions or Tricks of your wit with it, if you doe, your Seed is corrupt, and wants vigour, a velvet scabbard dulls the edge of the Sword, so the word deckt over with Human eloquence is like a Sword in a velvet scabbard, it hinders the power of it, what hath the Chaffe to do with the Wheat? Jer. 23. 28,29. you must not mingle the Word with the dreams and fancies of men, but dispense the Word in the power and evidence of the Spirit, and labour to have the Word sealed in your hearts, that you may speak out of the heart and inward affection; that Word which comes from the heart, sooner goes to the heart.\footnote{Cotton, \textit{Commentary...Upon I John,} p. 47.}

It was important for Cotton that the word preached be delivered with power and simplicity, to move both the affections and the understanding, and, through them, the will of the hearer. It was the word of God preached in the plain style by one of God's ministers that could achieve that end.

Cotton's theory of sermon rhetoric assumes a struc-
ture of Doctrine, Reasons and Uses. Cotton was by no means doctrinaire, however, when it came to applying that structure either to his preaching or to that of his colleagues. Although the great majority of Cotton's sermons followed the Doctrine/Reasons/Uses format, he occasionally used a simple question and answer structure. It must be noted that when he did so, the answers would often conform to the familiar Doctrine/Reasons/Uses pattern. However, although he closely recognized the utility of the traditional plain style pattern, and therefore most often followed it as the most effective means of opening God's word, he did not insist on it. He wrote to John Ball,

> It is true which the Discourses speaketh of the Method of Sermon, devised or studied by such as preach them, there may be some liberty, whether to preach by doctrine, reason and use, or some other way; the like may be said of forms of Catechismes, Blessings, and Baptismes: But the reason of this liberty is because we finde in Scripture severall forms of all these, and therefore we limit or prescribe no set formes to any; Pauls Epistle to the Romans is carried along by Doctrine, reasons and uses, and so are sundry more of his Epistles. But Christs Sermon on the Mount, is carried in another Method...The thing is this, where God used variety of forms, he leaveth us at liberty to use that one forme or the other.\footnote{Cotton, \textit{Answer to Ball}, p. 10.}

Cotton's final court of appeal is, as always, Scriptural precedent.

Cotton also touches in this last quotation on an issue with which he grappled more thoroughly than did most
of his colleagues. That is the same issue which colored the very beginning of his preaching career—the liberty of the preacher to use his own inventions to preach the word of God. Quite obviously, Cotton opted for the plain style which implied far less rhetorical "liberty" than the elegant style he has once employed. Yet he frequently defends, and more often illustrates, the use of rhetorical devices. He observes that they are given sanction by their use in Scripture, and that they are useful and legitimate means to further the effectiveness of the preaching of the word. More than any other of his colleagues in the New England ministry, Cotton consciously struggled with the relationship between the power of art and the word of God.

The foundation of Cotton's pronouncements on style in his theory of sermon rhetoric was that the word of God must be presented in its own powerful simplicity, unadorned by human inventions. The word of God speaks most eloquently when it is most undefiled, most near the pure word of God himself. In the sweep of church history which Cotton unravels in his commentary on Canticles, he notes that the purest doctrine of the church was that believed at the time of the apostolic church. The church's doctrine was less tainted by heresy than at any later stage in its history; what is more, "it was dispensed in powerful simplicity." The worship of the apostolic church showed "the
purity of God's ordinances, without mixture of human inventions." The true church of God in the modern age must strive for the same qualities:

To get strength, we must get wholesome and good diet, and feed heartily on it; so if we would get Spiritual strength, we must feed on the Ordinances of God, the Word of God....Thus if a young man feed on these wholesome meats he will grow strong: so if men affect tricks of Elegancy, and Wit, and Speech, such will be fill'd only with vain empty Notions, but he that feeds on wholesome food, on the purity and simplicity of God's own Ordinances, will grow in strength.

Clearly, as we have noted in the rhetorical preaching theory of men in every era since Augustine, to warn against wit and elegancy and other such dangerous rhetorical tricks does not mean the prohibition of figurative language. Even as Cotton warns against the abuse of rhetorical devices he employs an extended analogy. It is a "simple," "plain" analogy in that it is based on a universal human experience; it is not learned or restricted to the capacity of certain hearers. It makes Cotton's meaning more accessible to the ordinary man in the pew; at the same time it does not divert attention to the wit of the speaker but allows the message itself to stand out more clearly. Cotton declares the same principle, and employs a series of "plain similitudes," in one of the Uses in his commentary on

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56 Cotton, Exposition...of Canticles, pp. 115-16.
57 Cotton, Commentary...Upon I John, p. 105.
Ecclesiastes:

Use 2. To teach the Master of Assemblies, how the Word should be handled, wisely according to the sense of Scripture, and to the estate of the people...This is done by dispensing the word, 1. In faithful simplicity, Jer. 2.3. 28,29. Humane wit and authorities added to it, or as honey and wine in children's milke: as painted glasse windowes darken the light; as a bum-basted sword hindreth cutting.58

Cotton was, as we have noted earlier, an exceptionally learned man. He also possessed a creative imagination in framing his sermons. His theory of the plain style allowed him to display that creativity in developing colorful, vivid, often powerful imagery in his sermons, but the learning, although it underlay the exegesis and often the artistry, could not be displayed. Cotton Mather says of him (as it was said of a variety of Puritan preachers) that "he had the Art of Concealing his Art," and that he agreed with his mentor, John Dod, "that Latin for the most part was Flesh in a Sermon."59 Mather quotes Cotton as saying,

"I desire to speak so, as to be understood by the meanest Capacity!" And he would sometimes give the same Reason for it, which the Great Austin gave, "If I Preach more Scholastically, then only the Learned, and not the Unlearned, can so Understand as to Profit by me; but if I Preach plainly, then both learned and Unlearned, will understand me, and so I shall profit all." When a Golden Key of Oratory would not so well open a Mystery of Christianity, he made no stick to take an Iron One, that should be less Rhetorical. You should hear few Terms of Art, few Latinities, no Exotic or

58 Cotton, Exposition...Upon Ecclesiastes, p. 253.
59 Mather, Johannes in Eremo, p. 55.
Obsolete Phrases, obscuring of the Truths, which he was to bring unto the People of God.\(^{60}\)

Cotton's theory of the plain style, then, emphasized simplicity but never required barren sterility. His writings on the Wisdom and poetic literature of the Bible forced him to confront the role of aesthetic devices in transmitting the word of God. Faced with the evidence of the allegory of the Song of Solomon, the poetry of the Psalms and Proverbs, and the riddles of Ecclesiastes, Cotton had to account for the place of such devices in his rhetorical theory. In commenting on Ecclesiastes, Cotton observed that one use was

to teach us, It is no vanity to teach the variety of the creatures in Rhetorical elegancies; here are many Tropes of Rhetorick used; so Rom. 12.5. With these Cautions;

1. That the Rhetorick be suitable to the matter, grave and holy, else its bastard Rhetorick.
2. That it set forward the end of the discourse, to wit, to affect the heart with the sense of the matter in hand.\(^{61}\)

Later in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Cotton observes that the book makes clear certain principles regarding the rhetoric of preaching:

Use 2. To reprove the rejection of studied Sermons.
Use 3. To teach Preachers the Imitation of Solomon in studious Invention, Judgement, and Order of words; first of power; secondly, of delight; thirdly,

\(^{60}\)Mather, Johannes *in Eremo*, pp. 55-56.

\(^{61}\)Cotton, *Exposition...Upon Ecclesiastes*, p. 8.
of uprightnesse; fourthly, of truth....Talents should be employed to best advantage.

Use 4. Sermons may be elaborate without quotations.62

Cotton specifically rejects extemporaneous preaching here, seeking instead the "studious invention" that had been a requirement of _ars praedicandi_ authors since before the Middle Ages.

One may see in these passages evidence of a fault with which Puritan exegetes in general and Cotton in particular are often accused--the ability to see in a passage of Scripture that which they want to see. It is very convenient, for example, that Cotton sees in Solomon's logic the use of Invention, Judgement and Order (or Method); those are the key terms of Ramist logic. Taken all together, the observations Cotton gleans from these passages provide a rather succinct definition of the plain style. Solomon's prophetic inspiration is certainly enhanced by a little Monday morning exegesis. It is not our intention, however, to reprove Cotton for interpreting Scripture in a way that fit his conception of created reality; exegetes in all ages have done so, rightly or wrongly. We must examine, rather, the reasons Cotton saw such passages as being instructive for a theory of preaching rhetoric. There are basically two such reasons--rhetorical devices are sanctioned by their

62 Cotton, _Exposition...Upon Ecclesiastes_, p. 250.
use in the Bible itself, and they may serve to enhance the preaching of the word.

It is uncertain whether Cotton, whose distrust of art and its potential danger was great, would have become its proponent without the example of the Bible to sustain him. He was certainly ambivalent regarding the power of art. Cotton allowed that an aesthetic rendering of created reality might, in fact, serve a useful purpose. It was possible that a work of art might move the affections, and so operate to make one more receptive to the enlightening of the Spirit. "Delight" was permissible as long as it served the further ends of the will and understanding. But an object of art had in it the potential to become an idolatrous image in itself. That diabolical nature of art was never far from Cotton's mind. Cotton never rejects art itself as being intrinsically evil, but recognizes that it is forbidden when it becomes the focus of attention and obscures rather than illuminates that which it represents. In his "Answer" to John Ball, he links artistic renderings of Christ's life and especially his passion with images. He admits that a work of art could suggest a spiritual meditation and thus serve a useful purpose. But to regularly resort to a conscious focusing on a specific image as a spur to meditation is, for Cotton, clearly idolatrous.63

63 Cf. Cotton, Answer to Ball; see also Norman Gra-
In The Singing of Psalms a Gospel-Ordinance (1647), Cotton cites the Psalms as an example of artistic forms whose beauty consists largely in their grammatical and rhetorical forms. Cotton says of these grammatical/rhetorical (that is, poetic) devices, "they are all of them gifts of God (though common) and given chiefly for the service and edification of the Church of God."\(^6^4\) So long as figurative language serves the end of edifying the church, it is permissible. And there could be no question that the figurative language of Scripture served for the edification of the people, as all of God's word did. Early in his commentary on Canticles, Cotton takes pains to note that, despite the surface subject matter (a mutedly erotic love poem), the book was nevertheless divinely inspired:

> It were prophane blasphemy to preferre this Song above other Songs of holy Scripture, if it were not also given by divine inspiration as well as they: to preferre the invention of Man before the wisedome of God were sacreligious madnesse.\(^6^5\)

He is quick to admit however, that the Song of Solomon

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\(^6^5\) Cotton, Exposition...of Canticles, p. 11.
"admitteth more variety of interpretation than any other, and also of singular use." 66

Cotton is alert to the use of rhetorical devices in Scripture. He says of the book of Ecclesiastes that it illustrates the Holy Spirit's use of various styles throughout the inspired word, from the royal oratory of Solomon's pen to the simple speech of a shepherd/prophet such as Amos. 67 He goes on to identify a generous catalog of the "ornaments of Rhetorique" to be discovered in Ecclesiastes, using the familiar terminology of the standard rhetorical texts. In introducing his commentary on the Song of Solomon, Cotton noted that some passages of Scripture are more artistically refined than others; Scripture is "all purified gold; yet some gold wrought more exquisitely than others, and finer engraved than others; even some portions of the pure and holy word of God more exquisitely penned and polished than others." 68 This book, says Cotton, speaks more largely than any of David's Psalms, and with more store of more sweet and precious, exquisite and amiable Resemblances taken from the richest Jewels, the sweetest Spices, Gardens, Orchards, Vineyards, Winecellars, and the chiefest beauties of all the workes of God and Man. 69

66 Cotton, Exposition... of Canticles, p. 9.
67 Cotton, Exposition... Upon Ecclesiastes, p. 5.
68 Cotton, Exposition... of Canticles, p. 9.
69 Ibid.
Such a rich example of the utility of rhetorically embellished prose contributed to a theory of a "plain" style that was by no means sparing in the use of imaginative and extensive, albeit simple and homely, illustrative equipment.

The use of rhetorical devices was always a thorny problem for the preacher who was faced with the challenge of sifting through such devices when they occurred in Scripture and arriving at the core of divine truth they represented. Cotton followed the lead of earlier Puritan exegetes and committed himself wholeheartedly to resolving such problems, whenever possible, with recourse to typological identifications. Typology had the advantage of being the means of interpretation that relied most closely on the literal sense of Scripture. There is a considerable body of recent scholarship that demonstrates that typology became an even more indispensable tool of exegesis when the Puritan experience was moved to the New World.  

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There was undeniably an abundant supply of grist for the typologist's mill in the colonial experience. The Biblical images of Eden, the wilderness, the people of Israel, the new Jerusalem, the city on a hill, the city of refuge—all provided contrasting, usually complementary types that found their antitype in the movement of God's people to New England. Cotton's work abounds in such typological imagery.

In many ways it was his farewell sermon preached to the Winthrop fleet in 1630 (God's Promise to His Plantation) that set the tone for the New Canaan imagery that was thenceforth attached to the New England Puritans--although the parallel drawn by such an image was probably inevitable in any event.

As noted above, Cotton's commentary on the Canticles is an extended typological exegesis that finds the antitype of the poem's imagery in the history of the church from the time of the apostles until the settlement in New England. His commentaries on Revelation attempt much the same strain of identification, although there is, naturally, a more eschatological bent to his Revelation typology. For all the Puritan intent to avoid the excesses of allegorical or mystical exegesis, Cotton often involves himself in typological absurdities. To cite just two examples that relate to the preaching of the word: we have already noted how, for Cotton, the two breasts of the loved one in Canticles are the ministry of the primitive church, dispensing the pure milk of the Gospel. Further on, Cotton explains that the kisses the loved one years for are, in fact, sermons--those who love Christ quite naturally long for more of his kisses, or sermons. In one of his commentaries on Revelation, Cotton acknowledges that, even given such license as is illustrated in the typological identifications just
cited, typological exegesis does have its limitations. Some passages, such as the hailstones in Revelation 16, must be interpreted allegorically, relying on the ancient device of the correspondence of Scriptures to support the meaning. The surface significance of the hailstones is simply not readily apparent:

Interpreters do not tell us: So that we can take no better course to know it, then to see what allegorical haile-stones meane in Scripture, for by comparing Scriptures together, you shall have the full meaning of every part of Gods Counsell.\(^{71}\)

Cotton somewhat immodestly prided himself on his ability to learn the full meaning of God's counsel; Cotton Mather says of him,

His abilities to expound the Scriptures, caused him to be admired by the ablest of his hearers.... Unto a private friend he hath said, "That he knew not of any difficult place in all the whole Bible, which he had not weighed some what unto satisfaction."\(^{72}\)

Such self-assurance made the appeal to the correspondence of Scripture a less arduous task than it was for a mere mortal.

Beyond the sanction granted them by their use in Scripture, the second essential rationale for defending the use of rhetorical devices in preaching the word is that they benefit the people. The concern of the Puritan preacher was

\(^{71}\)Cotton, The Powring Out of the Seven Vials, p. 149.

\(^{72}\)Mather, Magnalia, vol. 1, p. 274.
for the spiritual welfare of his congregation. This is, of course, the traditional pastoral role as it evolved from the time (and the example) of Christ. It is that which Augustine defined as the act of love which moves the preacher to seek his hearer's welfare. Augustine had linked the use of secular rhetorical devices with this notion of pastoral concern to underscore the validity of such devices in instructing the people. Cotton does precisely the same thing; he finds an even more compelling Scriptural precedent for the use of human rhetorical inventions:

A minister that delivers an old Doctrine and known to the people, yet he must bring it in in a new manner, that it may affect them the more, being drest after a new manner; the appetite desires new dishes more, as for our Savior, he taught no new Doctrine, but he spake it in such a manner, in such Parables, that it seem'd strange to them.73

Cotton was fully conscious of what was required to speak convincingly to his congregation. His style was plain, certainly, to be grasped by the most common people, but it was far from dull. Again reflecting the nature of his audience, the figures which he chose to illustrate his sermons were wide ranging, but such as arose in the ordinary domestic and commercial vocations of the colony, or the readily observable natural phenomena of both Old and New England. To be sure, Cotton gave his love of the clas-

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73 Cotton, Commentary... Upon I John, p. 76.
sics its due by alluding to Ovid and Pliny in his commentary on Canticles, for example,\textsuperscript{74} but never in such a way that the ordinary man would miss the point by failing to recognize the allusion. The end was not the creation of a witty and elegant discourse, and the gathering of personal approbation, but the illumination of God's word for the good of his congregation's souls. Cotton put it succinctly in a letter prefixed to the 1629 edition of Arthur Hildersham's \textit{Lectures Upon the Fourth of John}: scholars who possess human but not spiritual learning speak only to the intellect,

But he that diggeth all the treasures of his knowledge and the ground of religion out of the Scriptures, and maketh use of other authors, not for ostentation of himself, nor for the ground of his faith, nor for the principle ornament of his ministry, but for the better searching out of the deep wisdom of the Scriptures, such an one believeth what he teacheth, not by a human credulity from his author, but by a divine faith from the Word.\textsuperscript{75}

The truly effective preacher must be one, then, who is well equipped for his office, possesses a sufficient breadth of intellect and academic training to fully explicate the word, and prepares carefully before preaching every sermon. In answer to a question from John Ball re-


\textsuperscript{75} In Emerson, \textit{John Cotton}, p. 35.
garding whether using human "inventions" (that is, a pre-
script liturgy), to which Cotton objects, is not the same
as using a carefully thought out sermon, Cotton retorts,

It is true in studying a Sermon the Preacher useth his
Invention and Judgement. And in that sense his Sermon
may be called mans Invention: But you are not ignorant,
wee speake in this cause [i.e., regarding prescript
liturgies] of such Inventions of men, as God hath
given neither Commandment nor direction for in his
Word; In which sense a studied Sermon is no more a
mans Invention, then a studied answer, which Solomon
commendeth as a path of the Righteous, Prov.15.28.76

Even the inspired authors of Scripture carefully prepared
their words:

It is an Ordinance of God that Sermons should be
studied, before preached, Jude made it his whole
studie, to write his Epistle, Jude 3. How much more
ought we to make it our whole study to preach: who
are not so immediately inspired.77

The preaching of the word is a self-conscious act, carefully
prepared for and studiously opened according to the "inven-
tion" and "judgement" of a thoroughly human wit. And yet,
when the word was preached, it was the word of God which
was spoken.

The tightrope that Cotton had to walk in order to de-
fine the role of secular rhetorical devices in the preach-
ing of God's word illustrates not the minute and agonizingly
strained distinction which the Puritans are so often accused

76 Cotton, Answer to Ball, p. 11.
77 Ibid., p. 11.
of indulging in, but rather the organic unity in which they saw all human endeavor serve the purpose of the kingdom of God. John Cotton's theory of preaching went to such lengths to clarify the role of human creativity in the transmission of God's word, in order to define the role of human invention and free it to serve most effectively, not to inhibit its use. The Puritan sense of art embodied in Cotton's theory of preaching was designed not to avoid the sensual (as is so often implied in casual characterizations of the plain style) but to carefully maintain it in a perfect balance with the dominant concern, the edification of the people of God. Structure, style, the office of the ministry, the theology of the word—they were all integral parts of a fabric which John Cotton saw as a whole, not in piecemeal distinctions.

Seventhly, this doth teach Ministers how to make their Ministry amiable to Christ, (not to preach once a moneth, or quarterly, by the preaching of the Law), but to be full as the honey-combe dropping out of it selfe, to preach sweet doctrine as honey, and wholesome as milk, for the nourishment of Christ's lambs....Wouldst thou be a faithfull Minister, let thy doctrine drop as honey, preach willingly, freely, sweetly, comfortably. 78

All the essential elements of Cotton's theology of preaching and theory of preaching rhetoric are summarized in this injunction to the ministers; the "summe of the summe" con-

78 Cotton, Exposition...of Canticles, p. 128.
sists of the concluding adverbs.

Cotton was widely regarded and immensely popular as a preacher in his day. Although the greatest period of success in his life was probably in the years following the Antinomian crisis when he was the spiritual spokesman for New England and he articulated the polity of the "congregational way" in masterpieces of polemical prose, he was nevertheless most loved in his own day for his preaching. Moses Coit Tyler quotes a contemporary as saying, "Mr. Cotton had such an insinuating and melting way in his preaching that he would usually carry his very adversary captive after the triumphant chariot of his rhetoric." 79

Cotton Mather reports another contemporary estimate:

Mr. Wilson would say, "Mr. Cotton Preaches with such Authority, Demonstration, and of Life, that methinks, when he Preaches out of any Prophet, or Apostle, I hear not him; I hear that very Prophet and Apostle; yea, I hear the Lord Jesus Christ Himself speaking in my Heart." 80

To have Christ speak to the heart of his hearers was surely the goal of Cotton's preaching.

Cotton has not fared nearly so well at the hands of later generations of critics. Moses Coit Tyler in the nineteenth century confessed himself puzzled by Cotton's popularity as a preacher. Tyler finds in his published sermons

79 Tyler, p. 216.
80 Mather, Johannes in Eremo, pp. 55-56.
no remarkable merits in thought or style. One...is unrewarded by a single passage of eminent force or beauty, uncheered even by the felicity of a new epithet in the objurgation of sinners, or a new tint in the landscape-painting of hell.81

Everett Emerson is only slightly more kind in the twentieth century:

Cotton is clear enough, but the style is in no way distinguished, unless one finds in it a comforting kindness, an attractive gentleness.

Cotton's sermons have far more to say to the historian than to the student of literary art. Despite occasional vivid passages, the sermons surely would have little literary interest were it not for his having been claimed for American literature. Cotton's best prose is elsewhere, in his works on Congregationalism, for here he felt none of the restraint of the Puritan pulpit pattern, the endless quoting of Scripture, the tiresome thirdly's and fourthly's.82

Cotton may be vindicated in a number of ways.83 We

81 Tyler, p. 215.
82 Emerson, John Cotton, p. 105.
may, for instance, argue that the shaping power of his theory of preaching rhetoric certainly lends him importance in the eyes of literary scholars, or that his reputation among his contemporaries ought to outweigh the judgment of later literary tastes. It cannot be denied that, by the standards of later generations, the sermons of Shepard and Hooker are certainly more aesthetically satisfying than those of Cotton. But it is too extreme to claim that Cotton's lack any beauty or power even today. The appeal of Cotton's sermons may have been largely in the force of his presence, his personality and delivery. But it is in the sermons as well, in what his successor John Norton describes so well in his eulogistic tribute to Cotton:

Christ evidently held forth, is Divine Eloquence, the Eloquence of Eloquence. God will not have it said of Christ, as Alexander said of Achilles, That he was beholden to the pen of him that published his Acts. Tis Christ that is preached, not the tongue of the Preacher, to whom is due all praise. Such instances conclude, that Paul is more learned than Plato. We must distinguish between ineptness of speech, Carnal Rhetorick, and Eloquent Gospel-simplicity; between Ignorance, Ostentation, and Learning.84

Christ evidently held forth—that is the eloquent gospel—

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84 Norton, Abel being Dead yet Speaketh, p. 14.
simplicity of Cotton's preaching, and the framework for every aspect of his preaching theory.

II

Thomas Hooker and Thomas Shepard

Cotton is often represented as being the most idiosyncratic of the first generation of Puritan divines (with the glaring exception of Roger Williams, of course). The characterization is as true for his theory of preaching rhetoric as it is for his outlook in general. That is to say, he is idiosyncratic in that he alone differed in emphasis at a few points from the more or less unanimous consent of his colleagues. Of course, he shared with them the vast bulk of his beliefs. Still, he differed enough from the body of thought most of his fellow clergymen held in common to be considered, even in an analysis of the theory of preaching rhetoric, independently. The other two most renowned preachers of the first generation, Thomas Hooker and Thomas Shepard, are much more closely in accord at precisely those points at which Cotton differs from them. Thus we will consider them jointly, using Cotton's theory of preaching rhetoric as a point of reference and departure.
Both Hooker and Shepard were products of the renowned seminary of Puritanism, Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Hooker had attended during the heyday of the great Puritans, Richard Sibbes and William Ames, at about the same time that Cotton was in residence. He received his M.A. in 1611 and remained as lecturer and catechist until 1618. Hooker's distinguished career at Cambridge is summed up in Samuel Stone's epitaph for Hooker:

While he was in the University,  
His light did shine, his parts were very high.  
When he was fellow of Emmanuell,  
Much learning in his solid head did dwell....  
Dark Scriptures he most clearly did expound,  
And that great mystery of Christ profound....  
He made the truth appear by light of reason  
And spake most comfortable words in season.  

After leaving Emmanuel, Hooker earned a reputation as one of the most popular of all the Puritan preachers while he served the parish of Chelmsford during the 1620's.

At about the same time, Thomas Shepard began his successful ministry in the lectureship at Earles-Colne. Shepard had had a relatively undistinguished career at Emmanuel during the early 1620's. Like Cotton, Shepard was himself converted while at Emmanuel. Upon receiving his M.A. in 1627, he was influenced by Hooker's preaching in Chelmsford, and served as lecturer at Earles-Colne until the ever in-

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creasing effectiveness of Laud's restrictions effectively silenced the ministries of both Hooker and Shepard.

Upon being deprived of his lectureship, Hooker fled to Holland where he worked with William Ames. Hooker sailed for New England in 1633, aboard the same vessel as Samuel Stone and John Cotton. Shepard served as the chaplain for Sir Richard Darley, until he was forced into hiding in 1633. After several narrow escapes, he managed to escape to New England in 1635. He arrived at about the time that Hooker and his congregation were preparing to resettle at Hartford. Shepard and his flock occupied Hooker's newly vacated village of Newtown, soon to be renamed Cambridge.

The ministries of both Hooker and Shepard were characterized by their emphasis on the pastoral qualities of the minister. Cotton Mather records in his Magnalia that the pastoral emphasis was evidenced in Hooker's ministry by his reputation for resolving cases of conscience, his continued emphasis in his sermons on the nature of regeneration, and his general concern for the spiritual well-being of his parishioners. In Piscator Evangelicus, Mather notes that Hooker was especially renowned "for his Notable Faculty at the wise and fit management of wounded Spirits," and that he greatly endeared himself to his congregation by

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86 Mather, Magnalia, vol. 1, p. 347.
his accessibility as a spiritual counsellor. 87 Mather illustrates Shepard's essentially pastoral nature by quoting Peter Bulkley's punning epitaph for Shepard:

\[
\text{Nominis, Officiique fuit Concordia Dulcis;}
\]

\[
\text{Officio Pastor, Nomine Pastor erat.}
\]

Fitly his name and office were the same: 88 Shepherd by office—Shepard, too, by name.

The primacy of the pastoral role by no means suggests that either Hooker or Shepard shirked a care for doctrinal study, for articulation of their side of disputes regarding polity, or for active involvement in the affairs of ecclesiastical and civil government. But by and large, the fame and affection that attached to them came from the evidence that their overriding concern was for the physical and spiritual needs of their flocks. It is not surprising to find the pastoral element figuring prominently in their theory of preaching rhetoric, both in their theology of preaching and in their observations on style and content.

As noted above in connection with Cotton, English Puritanism moved gradually in the direction of increasing attention to the focus of personal salvation, and a correspondingly less vocal insistence on institutional or doc-

87 Mather, Johannes in Eremo, p. 7.

88 Mather, Magnalia, vol. 1, p. 386.
There was, of course, nothing unorthodox in such an emphasis in and of itself; but the emphasis on personal salvation culminated in a definition of the covenant that tended to focus less on free grace and more on the morphology of conversion. The stages in the process of conversion became a familiar litany in the spiritual life of every Puritan from the days of Perkins, Ames and Sibbes until the time of Jonathan Edwards, and even beyond. Conversion always began with the least empirical but the most fundamental step of all—election in God's immutable, predestined plan for his chosen remnant. God's elect responded to his vocation, his calling to repentance. This was the actual process of conversion; while it may be sudden and precisely identifiable, it was more likely a gradual process. The converted sinner then underwent the process of regeneration, in which he experienced justification (the forgiveness of sins), sanctification (leading a life marked by sanctified behavior, striving to restore the image of God), and, ultimately, glorification (living


among God's elect for eternity). To this process the Puritans appended an element that had little sanction in reformed orthodoxy--the stage of preparation, a process that preceded that of vocation. This stage alone attracted so much examination that a sort of "preparationist theology" developed among the English Puritans and their emigrant counterparts. Both Hooker and Shepard expounded on preparationist theory at great length, although, as we have seen, Cotton found such a doctrine incompatible with a belief in free grace.91

It is largely this emphasis on the morphology of conversion that gives the distinctly pastoral tone to the ministries of Hooker and Shepard. Their primary concern as it is expressed in their sermons is the salvation of the souls of their congregations. Their sermons minutely examine the details of each stage of the conversion process in order that each member of the congregation could search for evi-

dence of any given stage in his own life. It is therefore not surprising that their theology of preaching is colored by the same emphasis on the stages of conversion. Hooker explains in a collection of sermons appropriately entitled

The Soules Ingrafting Into Christ:

How then may we prepare for him? by what meanes may our hearts bee fitted and disposed to receive Christ Jesus? I answer, that a powerfull ministry is the onely ordinary meanes which God hath appointed soundly to prepare the heart of a poore sinner for the receiv-ing of the Lord Jesus.92

This is the same doctrine about preaching as the sole means of revealing God's word which had been articulated by the reformers and earlier Puritans, but with Hooker's distinctive refinement—the word of God preached serves not just as a vehicle for grace, but to prepare the heart for grace. Thus preaching of the word is necessary at every step of the conversion process:

First, the Lord hath ordained and set apart the preach-ing of the word, hee hath sanctified it, and set it apart to call the soule....Let a man study all the arts and tongues that can be levied, he never shall, nay never can, know one drop of God's mercy and goodnesse in Christ. Why but how then may a man know it? saith the Text, 'by the foolishnesse of preaching,' that is, wicked men count it foolishnesse.93

Hooker and Shepard are as insistent as had been their


93 Hooker, The Soules Effectuall Calling to Christ (London: Andrew Crooke, 1637), p. 64.
predecessors on the fundamental doctrine that the word is only accessible when it is preached. Shepard carefully explains that while men only receive their vocation by the voice of God, they hear that voice expressed in the Gospel preached:

I mean preaching at the first or second rebound, by lively voice, or printed sermons at the time of hearing, or in the time of deep meditation, concerning things heard; the Spirit indeed inwardly accompanies the voice of the gospel, but no man's call is by the immediate voice of the Spirit without the Gospel, or the immediate testimony of the Spirit breathes out of free grace without the word.94

The inward call comes only by the Scriptural word preached, not by special direct revelation. It is easy to hear echoes of Shepard's stance in the Antinomian controversy expressed in such a passage. Shepard is clearly aware that Cotton's emphasis on free grace could tend to the derogation of the preaching of the word as the vehicle for the dispensing of the Spirit. While Shepard's emphasis in no way denies the doctrine of free grace, it links the operation of God's gift of grace in the conversion process inseparably to the preaching of the word:

O, therefore, if ever you would have the Spirit dispensed to you, wait here upon the ministry of the gospel for it; neglect not private helps, books and meditations, etc., but know, if ever you have it dispensed, here it is chiefly to be had, buy at this shop.95

Hooker also addresses the Antinomian champions of free grace, whom he calls "Eatonists and Familists, that think they have the power of the Spirit in themselves, whereas God's Spirit goes alwaies with the word."96 God's gift of grace is free, but it is also bound to a specific and inviolable vehicle—the preaching of a plain and powerful ministry.

The voice of God that speaks in the ministry of the word must never be confused with the voice of the ministers, of course; this is the familiar careful distinction made by the forerunners of Hooker and Shepard:

This voice of the gospel is the voice of God in Christ, or the voice of Jesus Christ, although dispensed by men, who are but weak instruments for this mighty work, sent and set in Christ's stead; but the call, the voice, is Christ's; it is the Lord's call.97

Notice that in characterizing the operation of the Spirit in the preaching of the word, Shepard consistently refers to the "call" of Christ. This is in contrast to Cotton's

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96 Hooker, The Soules Effectuall Calling, p. 65.
understanding of the operation of the Spirit as a sword or arrow which would pierce the heart of the believer. While Shepard in no way lessens the primary fact that it is God's word which speaks in the ministry of the word and not that of men, the effectual capacity of the word preached is limited by the spiritual condition of the hearer.

It is wrong to assume on the basis of this that Hooker or Shepard sought to put human limitations on the operation of God's Spirit. An entry in Shepard's spiritual journal indicated that he ascribed all the effective power of the word to the power of the Spirit:

Jan. 12. On lecture day morning I began to feel my heart alight and vilify what I was to deliver. But the Lord put it into my mind that, though the truth is a poor, mean thing in itself, as every ordinance also is, yet very glorious, as it is appointed and separated of God for his own ends. Hence I came to see the glory of God's ordinances, where it did lie; and that was, not in themselves, but in God's sanctifying them for most sweet ends, to communicate his presence and his lovely pleasantness and this love operating with power.98

In one passage of The Application of Redemption, Hooker notes that the Law is a killing (i.e., condemning) letter, while the Gospel shows the way of life, but only if it is empowered by the Spirit of Christ:

Again remember this, The Word is but an Instrument or means, and therefore it works no further than the Lord Christ works with it by the operation of his Spirit:


Hooker is more explicit in The Soules Exaltation; there he explains that while the Spirit of course operates in the whole word, its operation is more effectual in the promises of the Gospel, because it operates there in such a way as to effect a union with Christ. 100 Shepard speaks in similar terms in his Treatise of Ineffectual Hearing the Word when he distinguishes an external hearing of the word (with the ears only) from an internal hearing of the word (with the heart). The internal hearing, however, can be either ineffectual, in which case the heart is addressed but the word fails to take root, or effectual, when the word is rooted in the heart and God's gift of grace may be imparted thereby. 101


100 Hooker, The Soules Exaltation. A Treatise containing The Soules Union with Christ, on I Cor. 6. 17. The Soules Benefit from Union with Christ, on I Cor. 1. 30. The Soules Justification, on 2 Cor. 5. 21 (London: John Haviland, 1638), p. 27.

101 Shepard, A Treatise of Ineffectual Hearing the
In order for the word to speak effectually in preaching, the heart must be in a sense prepared to receive it. Earlier advocates of the doctrine of the operation of the Spirit in the word preached, notably Calvin and Cotton, had spoken of hearts open or even receptive to the word. Their emphasis had been, however, on a state of passive preparedness. The imagery of the preparationist theologian was much more active:

The Elect of God are like trees of righteousness, the Word is like the Ax, that must be lifted by a skilful and strong arm of a cunning Minister, who like a Spiritual Artificer must hew and square, and take off the knotty untowardness in the Soul before we can come to touch close and settle upon the Lord Jesus as the Cornerstone: Paul calls the Saints "God's husbandry," I Cor. 3.9. A powerful humbling Ministry is like the Plow, to "plow up the fallow ground, the thorny" sensual hearts of sinful men to receive the immortal seed of the Word of Promise and the Spirit of Christ thereby. 102

In Cotton's imagery, it was the word itself that violently assaulted the heart, like a sword or an arrow. But in Hooker's terms, the heart is subject to the hewing, squaring or plowing of the minister in preparation to receive the word. This preparation is of the utmost importance as a necessary step on the path to salvation; without it, the sinner is almost certainly condemned:

Oh! take heed, when God's Ministers have been cutting the Hearts with Reproof, and yet finds here a crackt Heart, and there a stubborn Soul, that will not be

squared by the Word, lest then the Lord should say, "These will never be fitted and prepared for me, they are fit for nothing but the fire." Oh! take heed of it, for he that will not be fitted for Grace, shall be made a firebrand in Hell forever.\textsuperscript{103}

It is not only the preaching of the minister that serves to prepare the heart for Christ; it is also the effort of the individual in response to the preacher:

Is it so that a plain and powerful Ministry is the means of Preparing the soul of a poor sinner for the Lord Jesus? Why, then, when you hear the Word plainly and powerfully preached to you, labor that the Word may be so unto you as it is in itself: It is a preparing Word, labor you that it may prepare your hearts to receive Christ....Labour therefore to give unto the word of God, and suffer your Souls to be wrought upon by it.\textsuperscript{104}

The exhortation clearly implies that the labor of the individual is a necessary preliminary step to receive the word and, with it, God's gift of grace.

The process of preparation necessitates the kind of inward search for evidence of salvation that Norman Pettit asserts is Hooker's own innovation, an element not found in earlier English Puritanism.\textsuperscript{105} Hooker dramatizes such an introspective examination in the same passage we have been quoting:

Therefore all you that have lived under a powerful Ministry, and yet are not prepared, go home and reason with

\textsuperscript{103}Hooker, The Application of Redemption, p. 219.
\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., p. 220.
\textsuperscript{105}Pettit, "Hooker's Doctrine of Assurance," op. cit.
your souls, and plead with your own hearts, and say, Lord, Why am not I yet humbled and prepared? Shall I thus be always under the hacking and hewing of the Word, and never be framed? Such a man, and such a man was stubborn, and wicked, and prophane, and yet the Lord hath brought him home, and he is become a broken hearted Christian, what shall I think that am not fitted and prepared for Christ by all the means that I have had?106

There is nothing passive about such a preparation to receive the word; the preparationist theory of the word preached does not make preaching merely a vehicle for the word, but makes it an actively shaping force, and a measure against which one can determine the change wrought in his heart.

The consequences of failing to perceive any change are described in terms fully as anguished as any Jonathan Edwards employed a century later:

Therefore suspect thy own soul and say, Lord, will Exhortations never prevail? Will Instructions never do me good? Will Terrors and Reproofs never strik my heart? Why, I have heard Sermons that would have shaken the very stones I trod on, that would have moved the seat I sate upon, the very fire of Hell hath flashed in my face, I have seen even the very plagues of hell, I have had many Exhortations, Instructions, Admonitions, and Reproofs, and as powerful means as may be, which never yet did me any good. The Lord be merciful to such a poor soul, and turn his heart that he may lay hold of Mercy in due time.107

Hooker does not claim that such a self-examination can be absolutely reliable as evidence either that one is or is not of the elect; to claim such absolute certainty

107 Ibid., p. 220.
would have been heretical. "It cannot certainly be con­
cluded, but it is greatly to be suspected," he says, "That
the means of Grace will never profit that man" who has re­
sisted a powerful ministry. He repeats a short time later,

It is no absolute conclusion, but it is a great suspi­
tion that those who have lived under a plain and power­ful Ministry half a dozen years or longer, and have
got no good, nor profited under the same; I say, It's
a shrewd suspicion, that God will send them down to
Hell.108

Such a declaration no doubt left more than a few contented
parishioners squirming in the pew; it also opened the door
to the relatively easy step of confusing a "shrewd suspi­
cion" with an "absolute conclusion." To judge either one­
self or someone else as being among the elect or among the
damned on the basis of an individual's preparation to re­
ceive the gift of grace suggests that one is searching for
sanctification prior to justification. Small wonder that
Anne Hutchinson saw in preparationist theory one evidence
of a covenant of works.

Preaching has quite clearly assumed a role in Hook­
er's and Shepard's theology of the word that it had not
been called on to fulfill before. It is for Hooker and
Shepard, as it had been for Cotton and the Puritan and Re­
formed theologians before, the only means whereby God's
word can be revealed and operate as a means of grace. But

it now played a more participatory role in the process of conversion than it ever had before— it had become a necessary preparatory tool for the operation of the Spirit, and a test whereby the individual could determine his own fitness to receive the word. In a sense Hooker and Shepard had resolved the paradox that Calvin and Cotton had allowed to remain implicit in their theology of the word. The orthodox doctrine had described preaching as being at once a means of grace that acted upon the will and affections of the hearer, and a passive vehicle for the operation of the Spirit which could be expected to accompany the act of preaching. For Hooker and Shepard, preaching was quite clearly an active and not a passive device. Both the preacher and the hearer assumed an actively responsible role in the preaching of the word.

And yet both Hooker and Shepard were careful not to overstep the bounds of orthodoxy. Despite their close attention to preparation and conversion, they expressed their doctrine of the ministry of the word in terms that usually echoed those of their Reformed and Puritan forebears, and deviated only, as Cotton himself had believed, in emphasis, not in substance. Shepard says that the process of preparation requires prayer in which the individual asks the Lord to dispense his gift of grace. He emphasizes that the "ministers are but servants under the Lord; it is not
as they will, but as the Lord will dispense." Hooker at one point embellishes his description of the operation of the Spirit in the word preached by claiming that the Spirit's power always simultaneously accompanies the preaching of the word, even though sometimes the effect is delayed for a period of time: "Why is that? it sakes into the soule, as the snow in December sakes into the earth, but the fruit of it is not seene untill May." Shepard humorously warns that it is presumptuous to let the Lord assume full responsibility; the slothful who don't ever attend worship surely cannot benefit from the word as a means of grace: "If the Lord would set up a pulpit at the alehouse door, it may be they would hear oftener." The implication is that it takes only the minimal effort of attending church to benefit from the movement of the Spirit in the word preached.

In no sense do Hooker or Shepard ever deny that preaching is the only means by which the word is revealed to the hearts of men; Hooker affirms,

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111 Shepard, The Sincere Convert: Discovering the Small Number of True Believers; and the Great Difficulty of Saving Conversion (London, 1641), in Works, vol. 1, p. 67.
For observe we must, that the Word is but an Instrument in the hand of Christ, who dispenseth the same according to his good pleasure and the counsel of his own Will, working when, and upon whom he will, and what he will by it. It is so with the word which is the Sword of the Spirit. It is the savor of life unto life, but then and to those only to whom the Lord will bless the same; and the savor of death unto death, then and unto those when such a blessing is denied. 112

In this sense, Cotton was correct in regarding the difference between his theology of preaching and that of Hooker and Shepard to be simply one of emphasis. Cotton emphasized that the gift of grace came unsought, although expected; Hooker and Shepard argued that, since it was expected, it could also be prepared for. The grace itself was still wholly God's gift; its implantation was still wholly the work of the Spirit. The preacher and his expectant hearer merely sought to make the heart a more receptive host for the infusion of God's grace through the word.

This emphasis on the more activist, preparatory role of the ministry of the word is reflected in Hooker and Shepard's definition of the office of the ministry. In The Soules Ingrafting, Hooker says,

> It must be a powerful ministerie that is able by the power of the Lord to set fire on the hearts of men, to melt their soules, to pull downe their haughtie spirits, thereby to fit and prepare their soules for the receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ, that so they

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112 Hooker, The Application of Redemption, pp. 115-16.
might receive comfort and consolation from him."\textsuperscript{113} In this image the minister is likened to a goldsmith who must refine his metal, purify it of dross, to make it fit to be molded and cast into a fine piece of jewelry. In another passage, Hooker likens the task of the minister to that of Elijah and John the Baptist, to "tune the hearts of the people" and to prepare the way of the Lord:

The Lord prepares a fit workeman for this worke. John was to "prepare a people for the Lord," and therefore hee comes "in the spirit and power of Elias:" That is, hee had a wonderful abilitie bestowed upon him by God, whereby he might deliver the Word of God to mens hearts so powerfully, as thereby he might fit and prepare them for the receiving of the Lord Jesus.... And therefore this must be a special meanes soundly to prepare mens hearts for the entertaining of the Lord Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{114}

Shepard noted the dignity of the office of the ministry in terms similar to those employed since the Reformation: the ministers are "set apart" to heal, like the brazen serpent in the Sinai wilderness; they are not to be regarded as the same as "an ordinary Christian, but as an extraordinary ambassador, as it were in the room of the Lord Jesus himself."\textsuperscript{115} The ministers offer the reality of Christ in his absence,

\textsuperscript{113}Hooker, The Soules Ingrafting, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., pp. 68-69.
\textsuperscript{115}Shepard, The Parable of the Ten Virgins, in Works, vol. 2, p. 496.
and hence receiving of these ministers and embassadors of Christ is receiving of Christ; despising of them is despising of Christ....Your life and salvation, and certainty of mercy from Christ, hang upon your receiving their word; for men will say, If Christ were here, I durst believe his word; I tell you, the Lord hangs thy life upon believing their word spoken according to him.116

The conviction with which Shepard utters that final exhortation must not be taken to mean that he is confusing the role of preaching as the vehicle for the word with a heretical notion that the human effort of the minister is necessary for salvation. Far from it; while he recognizes the dignity of the office of the ministry and the fundamental necessity of its function, he ascribed none of its importance or effect to the ability of the individual minister. Quite to the contrary, he records in his journal a struggle to convince himself that his ministry is of any value at all:

June 13, On the Sabbath, being weak in my body and spirits, I asked, Can God make use of such a poor wretch to preach the gospel by? And I considered Paul. (1.) His presence was mean. (2.) His utterance was weak. (3.) His weakness much. He was with the Thessalonians in much weakness; and it may be meant of bodily infirmities, as well as bodily persecutions. (4.) The doctrine he delivered was but common—Repent and believe. (5.) He preached this in no wisdom of words, but plainly; and yet the Lord, accounting him faithful, blessed him. So the Lord could do by me most weak.117


Hooker also carefully articulated the restriction put on the human capacity of the minister to work any of the Lord's work:

The Lord hath delegated the dispensation of his Word (in a way of Explication and Application of it) to his faithful Ministers. Only here observe God's Order.
1. The Power resideth first in Christ and his Spirit.
2. From Christ and his Spirit it comes to the Word.
3. From the Word to the Administration thereof by the Dispensers....The Word is like a Burning-Glass; that which burns and heats is not the glass, but the beams of the Sun that pierceth through the Glass; so it is the Power of Christ in a Promise, in a Command, that makes it pierce to the heart. 118

Hooker and Shepard are both very clear on the point that the preaching ministry is merely an instrument of the Lord; while it may be used to prepare contrite hearts to receive him, the effectual credit always belongs to the Lord.

Nevertheless, the ministers must be possessed of certain gifts in order to perform as God's instruments. Shepard says, "There must be that knowledge which may make a man of God wise to salvation from the Scriptures, which can not be without knowledge of tongues and arts in some competency, and study about both." 119 It was no coincidence that Harvard was established at Cambridge, at the back door of Shepard who saw to it that the curriculum included a heavy dose of the secular classics as well as theological

studies. Since it is the duty of the preacher to explicate the text, he must have enough ability and knowledge to be able to do so thoroughly and accurately, as well as enough skill of expression to be able to explain it to the understanding of the common man. Hooker says that in explication, it is the responsibility of the preacher

to dwell upon the interpretation of the Text, so farre as the difficulty and intricacie thereof may require, and to cleare it to the capacity of the meanest, because this is necessary to the information of the judgements. 120

The minister's gifts include both learning and the skill to make learned insight plain.

The responsibility of a preaching ministry extends beyond the individual's gifts to the state of the ministry as a whole. Hooker and Shepard express themselves in the conventional way on the need for a preaching ministry:

So again Rom. 10. 17. "Faith cometh by hearing of the Word of God:" it is not meant that faith comes by hearing of the word read, for that kind of preaching is here meant for which a man is sent (vers. 15. "How can they preach, except they be sent?") but for bare reading no man had need to be sent. 121

In noting the sorry state of preaching while yet in England, Shepard observes,

Never had churches such preachers, such means; yet have we not some chapels and churches stand dark lanterns

without light, where people are led with blind, or idle, or licentious ministers, and so both fall into the ditch.\textsuperscript{122}

But once in New England, the concern for a preaching ministry is not a great one for Hooker and Shepard; they lived in a society which supported an abundance of preaching ministers, and since neither Hooker nor Shepard was as actively involved in arguing ecclesiastical polity with the homeland as Cotton was, neither of them wrote much on the necessity for a preaching ministry as such. They turned their attention to a deficiency which had much more bearing on their pastoral concern for the role of preaching in the conversion and salvation of the sinner. Hooker records in \textit{The Soules Ingrafting} that some ministers have begun to wonder why they see so little actual effect as a result of their ministry:

If the ministry of God were dispensed as it should, it would be as effectual as ever it was, it woulde worke to salvation. But where lies the fault? Alas that lieth in the ministers of God, who doe not performe the worke of the ministry as it should and with that power they ought. A sword in a childs hand, though never so sharp, will doe no harme: but if it be put into a strong mans hand, he will make it cut deeply. Too many of Gods Ministers have weak hearts, little affection have they to the people of God, little labor is there in their hearts to pluck men unto heaven, they doe not strive with souls as they ought to doe, they doe not struggle with the hearts of men: if they have

\textsuperscript{122}Shepard, \textit{The Sincere Convert}, in \textit{Works}, vol. 1, p. 57.
their profits and liberties, they care not. What is lacking in the ministry is the sense of powerful preaching. The concern for a powerful ministry is characteristic of both Hooker and Shepard. It did not, of course, originate with them; we have seen how it was an important feature of the English Puritan definition of both the theology and the practice of preaching. But it was not nearly so great a concern of John Cotton as it was for Hooker and Shepard; it is clear that the pastoral element in Hooker and Shepard's theology of preaching took partial expression in the call for a powerful ministry. It was simply another manifestation of their belief that conversion was an experience that must be sought and actively prepared for. It was the role of the minister, by means of powerful preaching, to hew the sturdy lumber of the unregenerate heart and plow up the fallow ground of the complacent heart. Hooker minces no words in identifying the reason that so few hearts had been prepared to receive Christ:

123Hooker, The Soules Ingrafting, pp. 84-85.

124In The Soules Ingrafting (p. 71), Hooker explains that some souls are "sturdy like Oakes" or "lofty like Cedars;" the "fallow ground" of such souls [Hooker's metaphors are often hopelessly mixed] must be plowed and tilled to receive the seed: "'You are God's husbandrie;' and therefore God by his word must plow-up the weeds of sinne and corruption which are in you, before he can sow the graces of his holy Spirit in your hearts."
Such as be Ministers may hence see the Reason, of that little success we find, that little good we do, in the Vineyard of the Lord: Our Pains prosper not, our Preaching prevails not, with the hearts of men, not one mountain levelled, not a crooked piece squared, not one poor Soul prepared for a Christ, after many months, quarters, years travelling in the work of the Ministry....What is the Reason? God is as Merciful as ever, his Word and Ordinances as effectual as ever they were: I need not enquire as he, Where is the Lord God of Elias? No, brethren, I must rather ask, Where is the Spirit and Power of Elias? We want Power, and Spirit, and then no wonder we do not, nay, upon these terms in reason we shall never prepare a people for the Lord.125

To a very large extent, then, the powerful ministry of the word which Hooker and Shepard call for is a function of the minister himself and is dependent upon his ability and inclination. Shepard says that the "effectual hearing" of the word is aided by the preaching of the ministers, if they take care to choose the right matter about which to preach:

Preach truth, and gospel truth, fetched from heaven with many prayers, and soaked truth with many tears. "Ye shall know the truth, and that truth shall make you free." Convincing truth. "We preach," saith the apostle, "in the demonstration of the Spirit. The Spirit of God, when he cometh, he convinceth the world of sin." Let ministers do so. Preach convincing truth and gospel truth, fetched from heaven, and bathed in tears. O brethren, let the fire burn clear; let there not be more smoke than fire; it will never come with power then.126

Hooker is clearly aware of the minister's responsibility in

125 Hooker, The Application of Redemption, p. 216.
the psychology of preaching when he says,

When the heart of a minister goeth home with his words, then he delivers the word powerfully and profitably to the hearers....And observe that when a man speaks from the heart, he speaks to the heart: and when a man speaks from the head onely, and from the teeth outward, (as wee use to say) hee speakes to the eare onely, he speaks to the conceit onely.\textsuperscript{127}

Hooker observes in \textit{The Application of Redemption} that a sure indication that the ministers do not speak from the heart is the timidity with which they avoid exhorting their flocks, their tongues "cleaving to the roof of their mouths." They are like children sent to deliver a message who are easily put off by the slightest obstacle; it is their duty to be like bold messengers who will not leave until the message is delivered: "I came to speak with your hearts, and I will speak with your hearts."\textsuperscript{128} Shepard identifies such timid preachers as false teachers, who give a false sense of a safe conscience. The minister who avoids exhorting his flock in order that they maintain a good opinion of him does them no service, for "so they go out of the world, and die like lambs, wofully cheated." Such ministers are like the 400 optimistic prophets who "miserably cheated" King Ahab. In sparing their charges the warning exhortations they need, "they give others false charts to sail by, false rules

\textsuperscript{127}Hooker, \textit{The Soules Ingrafting}, p. 77.

\textsuperscript{128}Hooker, \textit{The Application of Redemption}, p. 218.
to live by; their unconscionable large charity is like a gulf that swalloweth ships (souls I mean) tossed with tempests and not comforted.\textsuperscript{129}

The preacher's responsibility for the powerful preaching of the word lies not only in the process of preparation for conversion, but in confirming the doctrines of God's word in those hearts open to receive it. The preacher's task is, above all, to exhort,

\begin{quote}
to work upon the will and affections and by savoury, powerfull, and affectionate application of the truth delivered, to chase it unto the heart, to wooe and win the soul to the love and liking, the approbation and practice of the doctrine which is according to godli­ness.\textsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

Thus again we have that emphasis we saw among the English Puritans, that powerful preaching is a necessary element in the Uses, the application of the word preached. It is in the application of the word that the will and affections of the hearts are most susceptible to being influenced, and it is here that powerful preaching bears the most fruit.

It is also in the context of the application that the preacher's ambivalent role in the whole business of powerful preaching is clarified. Since powerful preaching is seen as a necessary tool for preparing and confirming


\textsuperscript{130}Hooker, A Survey of the Summe of Church-Disci­pline, vol. 2, p. 19.
the process of conversion, and since Hooker and Shepard ascribe the sole responsibility for the effectiveness or failure of a truly powerful ministry to the skill and character of the ministers, we once again confront a situation in which it appears that the operation of God's grace is dependent upon a human intermediary. But Hooker and Shepard are careful never to ascribe to the ministers the effectual power of the Gospel; the ministers simply play a role that is sanctioned both by Scripture and reformed theology. Their definition of the importance of powerful preaching in the application of the word shows this; Shepard says,

If ministers shall preach the remedy before they show misery, woe to this age...You must first preach the remedy; that is true; but you must also first preach the woe and misery of men, or rather so mix them together, as the hearts of hearers may be deeply affected with both; but first with their misery.\textsuperscript{131}

Hooker puts it more concisely: "When a man preaches powerfully, he preaches as if hee were in the bosom of a man: he may tell him things in his eare which he thinks no man knows of."\textsuperscript{132} It is the role of the preacher in carrying the application of the word close to the heart of the hearer to put that hearer in awe of his sin. In other words,


\textsuperscript{132} Hooker, The Soules Ingrafting, p. 80.
Hooker and Shepard's concept of the importance of a powerful ministry is a reflection of the orthodox Calvinist, thoroughly scriptural understanding of how the Gospel is meaningful only in the light of the Law. Powerful preaching is the process of stating the requirement of the Law, of showing the hearer how he is condemned, so that the force of the Gospel can break upon a humbled and contrite heart rather than a haughty and stony heart. And while the Law is no less a part of God's revelation than the Gospel, it had traditionally been the responsibility of God's messengers to state the requirements of the Law. This was not to say that the good news, the gift of grace, was in any sense dependent upon the agency of those finite humans sent to exhort the people. But God's message of salvation was meaningful only insofar as His judgment was also clear. And it was the duty of his messengers to proclaim the judgment of the Law. This is what a powerful ministry sought to accomplish.

The ministers were performing a role similar to that performed by the prophets of the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophets denounced the sin of the people and their indifference to both God's rule for their lives and His continued mercy toward them. The promise of the future was foretold, but it could only become theirs if they repented in the light of God's condemning judgment. Hooker
and Shepard are careful to maintain the important distinction that, while the prophets of the Old Testament directly revealed the word of God, the ministers of the church simply restated that once-for-all-time revelation; they never claim that the ministers' message is a new revelation.

There is a further, and very important distinction, in that Hooker and Shepard's concept of powerful preaching is directed at the individual rather than at the community. The second and third generation of New England preachers more closely imitated the Old Testament rhetorical stance by directing their jeremiads at the sin and indifference of the people collectively. But Hooker and Shepard's notion of the use of powerful preaching is like the exhortation of the Old Testament prophets in an essential sense—it was to direct the attention of the people to the requirement of God's justice, enabling them either to prepare for the Gospel or to be condemned for their hardheartedness. The working out of the covenant was in no way dependent upon the reaction of the people nor upon the agency of God's messengers; no human act of will in choosing either to repent on the one hand or to preach on the other bound God's hand. The Gospel was eventually revealed to an unrepentant, unbelieving people, who did not heed the prophets and who understood only the external mechanics of the Law and not its inner spirit in light of the Gospel. This historical
fact proved that God's revelation and his acts of grace do not await the consent of his hardhearted people. Nevertheless it is also historically observable that his prophets proclaimed his judgment before his gospel is revealed--this was the type upon which the first-generation Puritan divines modeled their antitype in "powerfully preaching" the application of the word.

The doctrine of preparation and the pre-and-post-conversion role of preaching in preparing for and confirming the word of God do not imply, then, that Hooker and Shepard heretically made the gift of grace dependent, even in part, on the efforts of the preacher. Their only role is to present the word; they take none of the credit if it serves to prepare or confirm God's regenerative act. They are quick to acknowledge that they have no hope of having any effect upon the non-elect. Indeed, the close application of the word to such a one's heart, revealing as it does the depth of his depravity, causes such a sinner to avoid the word altogether. Of course, there is no sure way to judge who is among the elect, since all men are sinners. But those to whom the gift of God's grace is granted will respond to the word; the "graceless" will shun the word altogether:

And if the Word come home to his Conscience, enlightening his Heart, and reproving him of his Ways: Then he cries out: ...comfort me; ...resolve me; ...teach me; ...humble me....Contrarily, a wicked, graceless Person
is never better than when the Word workes least, or never a whit upon him. But when he thinks the minister will come close to his home and Soul, he will not be at home that Day, he will be sure to be out of Town, or not in Place.  

The role of preaching here is quite clearly that of convincing as well as convicting a man of his sin, as Shepard also emphasizes: "The word is like an exact picture; it looks every man in the face that looks on it, if God speaks in it." Shepard goes on to say that the word not only speaks powerfully when the voice of God is heard in it, but it speaks particularly to the individual. It is possible, says Shepard, for an individual to hear the words of the preacher but not the voice of God—even the saints may fail from time to time to be moved by the preacher as he proclaims the word. The word is powerful (and particular) when the voice of God, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, speaks in it.

As we have seen before, it is in the definition of a powerful ministry that the theology of preaching and the rhetoric of preaching meet and overlap. And, as we have

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133 Hooker, The Poor Doubting Christian Drawn to Christ, Wherein The main Hindrances, which Keep Men from coming to Christ, are discovered. With special Helps to recover God's Favour (Boston: Green, Bushell, and Allen, 1743), p. 47.


135 Ibid., p. 367.
also observed, for the Puritans it is a false distinction
to differentiate between the abstract doctrine of preaching
and the structure and style which are the external mani-
festations of the doctrine. When Hooker defines the opera-
tion of the word as a vehicle for grace, he says of it,

Secondly, it is the 'Word in the Ministry of it,' the
Word published and preached, the 'Word rightly divided'
as the Apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 2.15. that is, when the
Word is rightly opened and rightly applied, it works
then more powerfully, because dispensed according to
the Will of the Principal Agent, and according to the
weakness of them to whom it is delivered, as the chew­
ing of meat fits it for the Stomach, and therefore it
nourisheth more, the pounding of Pouder makes it smel
more: so it is with the Word when opened and applied
according to the mind of God, it is "the savour of
Life unto Life," 2 Cor. 2.16.136

The form in which the word is presented, the rhetoric of
preaching, is determined by the attitude the preacher as-
sumes toward the duty and significance of the ministry, and
is an inescapable consequence of that theology of the word.
At the same time, the broad outlines of the Puritan theol-
ogy of preaching can be read in the requirements for struc-
ture and style which the Puritan preachers articulate.

This interrelatedness of form and function is espe-
cially illustrated in Hooker's remarks regarding sermon
style. Hooker shows that the effect of powerful preaching
is dependent upon the rhetorical stance the preacher assumes;
quoting Paul, he explains,

"The kingedome of God consisteth not in words, but in power."...Now this consisteth not in words onely, not in a company of fine gilded sentences, where there is nothing but a jingling and a tinkling, nothing but a sound of words; there is no kingedome all this while, no power all this while in such a kind of preaching: this will not worke effectually in the hearts and consciences of men. It is with this kind of preaching as it is with rotten buildings, which are all painted over, but have scarce a sound beame, or any other timber to bear up the house: so it is in this case, all the jingling and tinkling of words may delight the eares of the hearers, but the power is wanting that should drive men to a stand.\textsuperscript{137}

The stylistic prescription here grows out of a pastoral concern; this had been a trademark of the plain style since its inception, but Hooker goes to greater lengths than any other Puritan preacher to show that the rhetorical style of plain and powerful preaching is a crucial element in the conversion process. It is not surprising that the Puritan divine who made the process of conversion more central to his theology than most of his predecessors should have directed more attention to the role of sermon style in that same conversion process.

Hooker devotes a lengthy section of The Application of Redemption, his re-working of the conversion-process series of sermons he had delivered more than once in the course of his career, to the role of "a plain and powerful Ministerie" in preparing the heart to receive the word, and confirming the word once it is offered. He is very speci-\textsuperscript{137}Hooker, The Soules Ingrafting, p. 76.
fic in defining the style to be applied:

The plaine­ness of the Ministry appears, when the Lan­guage and Words are such as those of the meanest Ca­pacity have some acquaintance with, and may be able to conceive; when the Preacher accomodates his Speech to the shallow understanding of the Simplest Hearer, so far as in him lies, alwayes avoiding the frothy tink­ling of quaint and far fetched Phrases, which take off, and blunt as it were the edge of the blessed Truth and Word of God.138

The image Hooker applies is a familiar one; elsewhere in Puritan literature, a rhetorically embellished sermon is described as a "jewelled scabbard" or a "velvet scabbard" that keeps the unencumbered sword of the word from cutting keenly.

In the same passage, Hooker warns briefly that "pom­pous gaudiness and elegancy of Speech" are to be avoided not only because they obscure comprehension, but because they are sinful devices in themselves. He likens them to sugar added to a medical potion; by diluting the mixture, the sugar becomes a kind of poison, even though it pleases the palate. Alluring admixtures are dangerous beguil­ers in themselves. It is significant that, in a Latin marginal note, Hooker cited as sources for these observations Paul and Calvin. Calvin's typically reformational doctrines of sola scriptura and of the word as a vehicle for God's grace are never far from Hooker's mind.

Hooker goes on, moreover, to explain once again that "the excellency of Eloquence, and enticing words of humane Wisdom" do in fact work to the detriment of "the saving success of the Gospel."\textsuperscript{139} He concedes that a certain clarity and vividness of expression is necessary to achieve the same end that eloquence obscures: "...so much sweetness of words as may make way for the efficacy of the Gospel, may be admitted, and no more." But his concession is qualified by the firm assertion that "the pompe of enticing words must not be discovered if we would have the Spirit in the powerful work of it be demonstrated and made to appear."\textsuperscript{140} The motivation for such a concern is clear: "He that hath a Pastoral heart must be so affected in dispensing the Doctrine of Grace...to reach out mercy and comfort to every soul in the congregation, by every sentence he delivers, as much as in him lies."\textsuperscript{141} That statement epitomizes the relationship between a pastoral ministry and the function of a plain style.

More clearly than any other Puritan rhetorician, Hooker relates his theory of the plain style to something approaching a theory of the nature of language itself, when

\textsuperscript{139}Hooker, \textit{The Application of Redemption}, pp. 206-07.
\textsuperscript{140}Ibid., p. 207.
\textsuperscript{141}Ibid.
he says: "Words are appointed by God in his Providence, to be Carriers as it were, by whose help the thought of our minds and the savory apprehensions of truth may be communicated, and conveyed over to the understanding of others."\textsuperscript{142}

It would be too simplistic to reduce this statement in order to see it as an expression of the utilitarian nature of Puritan literary theory. Rather it is an acknowledgement that literature, language manipulated in order to communicate a vision of the created universe and God's plan for his creation, is ordained by God, and occupies a legitimate sphere in the structure of the cosmos. This may seem to be a rather grand overstatement of a simple observation, but it does not do violence to the spirit of Hooker's observation. He is saying that words, as a gift of God, fill an integral role in the sphere of creation, and that their use as vehicles of communication is sanctioned by and falls within the realm of a divine ordinance. The full meaning of this sphere of creation, the use of words to convey a true picture of the cosmonomic scheme, is not limited merely to the utility of the words for those who hear them. The use of words serves an end for the preacher as well—God's purpose is served for the framer of words as well as for those who attend to them:

\textsuperscript{142}Hooker, The Application of Redemption, p. 207.
...by mystical and dark sentences he that comes to hear can by no means profit, because he cannot conceive, and so both Hearer and Speaker must needs miss their ends and lose their labor, since the one doth no good in his Speech, because he so speaks that the other can receive no benefit.¹⁴³

Thus God's ordinance for the use of words is not simply directed to the pragmatic end; it addresses the means as well. The preacher, by his self-conscious arrangement of words, acts within the confines of and toward the fulfillment of a sphere of God's creation that has been created with its own set of norms. The norms apply not only to the words themselves and to the pragmatic, utilitarian end that they serve, but also to the way in which the preacher, the agent of the words, uses them. Hooker offers us here a succinct definition of a Puritan sense of literature in general as well as of the rhetorical style of preaching—literature is ordained by God to serve an end of some sort, but God's ordinance also addresses the means by which art serves that end.

Hooker and Shepard are, nonetheless, ever watchful that the means do not obscure the end. They share with their English Puritan forebears and contemporaries the ambivalent stance with regard to the use of rhetorical devices that marked earlier expressions of the rhetorical theory of the plain style. On the one hand as we have seen, Hooker

¹⁴³ Hooker, The Application of Redemption, p. 207.
and Shepard acknowledged the need for classical learning—it was Shepard who urged the establishment of the Greek and Latin curricula at Harvard for the benefit of future ministers, and Hooker, Shepard and Cotton all used the occasional Latin epigram or the appeal to classical or patristic authority as evidence for their argument. On the other hand, Hooker and Shepard freely deprecated the use of both classical learning and rhetorical figures of speech in preaching a sermon. Shepard asserts "it is a rule never to fly to metaphors where there can be a plain sense given," and Hooker approvingly quotes Erasmus' reference to Jerome's style: "Ciceronianus non Christianus."

Hooker occasionally tends to apologize for what he terms his "rudeness," especially in such material as is intended for publication and distribution overseas.

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148 Kenneth Murdock, in explaining the tendency of New England divines to apologize for the lack of rhetorical embellishments in their published works, asserts that the apologies were an acknowledgement that the New England
though he partly ascribes such "rudeness" to his condition in the wilderness, he always argues that the plainness is in fact a virtue and not a defect, as he explains in the Preface to *A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*:

...plainesse and perspicuity, both for matter and manner of expression, are the things, that I have conscientiously indeavored in the whole debate: for I have ever thought writings that come abroad, they are not to dazle, but the chiefest part of Judicious learning, to make a hard point easy and familiar in explication.\(^{149}\)

The only reliable authority upon which a sermon may rest is, of course, the proof of Scripture. The structure of the sermon all but precludes the temptation to indulge in rhetorically convoluted divisions or fanciful amplifications. The meaning of the text is proclaimed in the Doctrines. They, in turn, are supported by reasons which are derived, not by tricks of human persuasion or arrangement,

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Puritans felt they could not compete with the ornamental skills of their contemporaries. The New England preachers, says Murdock, believed that what they lacked in talent they made up for in simplicity and power. It is clear, however, that the New England preachers did not turn to the plain style out of any sense of inadequacy, but as a conscious theological/rhetorical choice. The apologies were undoubtedly conventions intended either a) to appease audiences with a taste for more ornate prose; or, more likely, b) to direct attention to their own prose style, consciously grounded in a carefully thought out rhetorical theory. Cf. Kenneth B. Murdock, *Literature and Theology in Colonial New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 46-47.

but by the apodictic proof of Scripture. The Ramist logic of the analogy of faith which argues that this is true which is known to be true leads Hooker to explain that the truth of a sermon is measured by the extent to which it is preached "out of soundnesse of argument, and plaine evidence of the will of God, and the spirit of God" and "when a mans doctrine goeth so guarded and confirmed with Scripture, and sound and plaine demonstration of argument, that they stand as Mount Sion, and are undeniable."\textsuperscript{150} It is not surprising that Hooker advised young preachers to adopt William Ames' method of systematizing theology in outline form and keeping a notebook of appropriate Scripture passages for every point in the outline.\textsuperscript{151} Obviously, no argument based on man's reason or inventive playing with words is as convinc- ing as the "evident sense" of Scripture. The Doctrines and Reasons structure encourages reliance on a rhetoric that expresses doctrine in such a way that it is as undeniable as Mount Zion.

Up to this point, the sermon borrows its structure to a certain extent from the "spoils of the Egyptians," for despite Erasmus' observation that that which is Ciceronian is not Christian, there is something of the Ciceronian—

\textsuperscript{150}Hooker, \textit{The Soules Ingrafting}, pp. 75.76.

\textsuperscript{151}Mather, \textit{Magnalia}, vol. 1, p. 347.
ian dispositio in the Puritan sermon. The preacher, like Cicero's orator, selects his topic (text), states his intention (doctrine), and analyzes and confirms his argument by means of illustration and authority (reasons), which in this case are drawn from the evident sense of Scripture.¹⁵² It is drawing the analogy too far, however, to argue, as Josephine Piercy does, that the Uses, the application of the Doctrines and Reasons, corresponds to the conclusion of a Ciceronian oratory.¹⁵³ In the first place, the Use must follow each Doctrine; if a sermon explicates three doctrines in a text, there will be three sets of uses, one after each doctrine, and not simply a single concluding peroration.

More importantly, the intended function of the Ciceronian peroratio and the plain style's Uses is vastly different. A Ciceronian conclusion is expected to offer a summation, to arouse the emotions of the audience by a brief and pithy recapitulation of the overall thrust of the oration. The Uses of a plain style sermon are certainly intended to arouse the emotions of the congregation, but they are not at all brief and they introduce new subject matter not alluded to earlier. Hooker makes it clear that

¹⁵² Cf. Piercy, p. 252.
¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 156.
the function of the Uses is much more central in the structure of the plain style sermon than is the function of the conclusion of a Ciceronian oration: "The explication of the point is nothing else but the drawing out of a sword: and the particular application of it to the hearts of the people is like the striking of the blow."¹⁵⁴ "The explication of the point" is the heart of a Ciceronian oration—how well the point is explicated is the blow that is struck. The conclusion simply adds the finishing flourish. But for Hooker, the Doctrines and Reasons are like a sword waving in the air; they do no harm until the Uses drive them home:

Even so it is here with the Ministers, little good will they doe if they doe onely explicate, if they doe onely draw out the sword of the Spirit: for unless they apply it unto the peoples hearts particularly, little good may the people expect, little good shall the Minister doe.¹⁵⁵

Unapplied explication is like the noise of the storm that surrounded the complacently sleeping Jonah:

The common delivery of the word is like that confused noise: there is matter of heaven, of hell, of grace, of sin spoken of, there is a common noise, and all this while men sit and sleep carelessly, and never looke about them, but reste secure: but when particular application comes, that shakes a sinner, as the Pilot did Jonah, and asks him, What assurance of God's mercy hast thou? what hope of pardon of sinnes, of life, and happiness hereafter? You are baptized,

¹⁵⁴ Hooker, The Soules Ingrafting, p. 73.
¹⁵⁵ Ibid.
Hooker carried out his suggestions regarding the Uses in practice; Mather says of him, "He had a most excellent Faculty at the Applications of his Doctrine; and he would therein so touch the Consciences of his Auditors, that a Judicious Person would say of him, 'He was the best at an Use that ever he heard.'"  

The structure of the sermon, like the style, is part and parcel of the theory of the ministry of the word. We have seen that for Hooker and Shepard, an essential function of the preaching of the word was to illustrate to the sinner his condition in the light of God's law. The Doctrines, Reasons and Uses structure serves this end—the word of God is defined and clarified in the Doctrines and Reasons, and, in the light of this explication, the sinner's condition is made real to him in the Uses.

The sermons generated by Hooker and Shepard's theory of sermon rhetoric were the finest the first generation of New England preachers had produced. They were also

156 Hooker, *The Soules Ingrafting*, pp. 73-74.
among the longest; Moses Coit Tyler, whose irascible attitude toward Puritan preaching helped to foster the decades of patronizing or neglect that hindered its appreciation, observed of the Puritans that "In the presence of God and of his appointed ministers, it was not for man to be impatient....When they came to church, they settled themselves down to a regular religious siege." 159 Mather reports that on one occasion, Hooker had trouble gathering his thoughts and briefly excused himself from the pulpit. He shortly returned, and "Preached a most admirable Sermon, wherein


159 Tyler, p. 189.
he Held them for two Hours together in an extraordinary Strain, both of Pertinency and Vivacity." Shepard makes occasional references to sleeping during sermons, and confesses that some sermons ought to be slept through, especially those that exceed one hour and are tedious to boot. In such sermons, he says, the subject matter "may be delivered in one hour which is stood upon an hour and a half." But he has no patience with those scoffers who were circulating the joke that since it was Paul's preaching which put Eutychus to sleep, it was a long sermon that caused the man to fall to his death. To carp at long sermons is "sinful language," says Shepard.

Though they may have been long, Shepard's sermons were never dull, at least to his devoted hearers. This was partly the result of the studious attention he devoted to each sermon, and partly the result of that same pastoral note discussed earlier. Mather quotes Shepard as saying:

God will curse that man's labours, that lumbers up and down in the world all the week, and then upon Saturday in the afternoon goes to his study; when as God knows, that time were little enough to pray in and weep in, and get his heart into a fit frame for the duties of the approaching Sabbath.

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160 Mather, Johannes in Eremo, p. 25.
162 Mather, Magnalia, vol. 1, p. 390.
Shepard would work at preparing his sermon all week long in order to be able to clear his desk of all work by two on Saturday afternoon, allowing him ample time for prayer and meditation to prepare the proper frame of mind with which to enter the pulpit. His contemporaries called him a "Chrysostom in the pulpit" and a "soul-melting preacher." Mather spoke of Shepard's "powerful and enlightening ministry," and observed that it was fortunate that Cambridge was chosen as the site of Harvard, "out of which there proceeded many notable preachers, who were made such very much by their sitting under Mr. Shepard's ministry." 163

If anything, Hooker's reputation surpassed that of Shepard. In his frequently repeated series of sermons on the various steps of the process of conversion, Hooker addressed New England's most burning theological issue—the state of the individual's soul. And Hooker was, by all contemporary accounts, a stirring orator. The quality most often alluded to was his "liveliness," the vitality which commanded his voice and gestures. We have already noted the observation that "He was the best at an Use that ever he heard," 164 and it was reported (a not unusual anecdote in Puritan hagiographies, it should be observed) that even

those who had come intending to scoff were shaken and converted. Tyler quotes a contemporary as observing, "He was a person...who when he was doing his Master's work, would put a king into his pocket."\textsuperscript{165} Cotton's epitaph compared Hooker's preaching to that of Paul and Calvin, among others,\textsuperscript{166} and Mather summarizes, "There was a rare mixture of Pleasure and Profit in his Preaching; and his Hearers felt those penetrating Impressions of his Ministry upon their Souls, which caused them to Reverence him, as, A Teacher sent from God."\textsuperscript{167} Mather quietly alludes to the concern felt in Massachusetts Bay at the time of Hooker's departure for Hartford that his immense popularity among

\textsuperscript{165}Tyler, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{166}Cotton's epitaph is included in the Preface to an edition of Hooker's A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline published in 1648, the year after Hooker's death. The epitaph reads in Part:
Paul in the Pulpit, Hooker could not reach, 
Yet did He Christ in Spirit so lively Preach: 
That living Hearers thought he did inherit 
A double portion of Pauls lively spirit.

... 

Twas of Genevahs Worthies said, with wonder, 
(Those Worthies Three:) Farell was wont to Thunder; 
Viret, like Rain, on tender grasse to shower, 
But Calvin, lively Oracles to pour.

All three in Hookers spirit did remain: 
A Sonne of Thunder, and a shower of Rain, 
A pourer-forth of lively Oracles, 
In saving souls, the summe of miracles.

\textsuperscript{167}Mather, Johannes in Eremo, p. 9.
his congregation was a potential danger which could tempt Hooker to establish himself as a special messenger from God, a wilderness Anne Hutchinson. It was a temptation to which, even if it were real, Hooker never succumbed.

There were other popular preachers in the first generation, but none with the reputation, either in their own day or in more recent years, of Hooker and Shepard. As scholars have long (and fruitlessly) speculated, it is possible that the lost sermons of other first generation preachers match or exceed the quality of those of Hooker and Shepard, but of those that survive, Hooker's and Shepard's are the most aesthetically satisfying. Our concern has not been with the sermons themselves, but with the rhetorical theory that underlay their production. The success of the sermons and the reputation of the preachers is closely related to the importance of the theory of preaching rhetoric of Hooker and Shepard, however. It is a partial measure of the influence their theory of sermon rhetoric had on their contemporaries and on the succeeding generation of preachers. Their popularity is most often accounted for in terms of the pastoral nature of their ministries, and the effect of this quality on their theory of preaching rhetoric identifies the area in which their most important influence lies. A theory of pastoral preaching rhetoric was one which focused on certain quali-
ties which, while they were qualities Hooker and Shepard held in common with Cotton and with earlier Puritan preachers, began to assume a greater importance than they had before. From Hooker and Shepard's time, Puritan preaching was to be more concerned with the examination of the process of salvation, more concerned with Uses that showed the judgment of the law upon the unconverted, more concerned in general with the human role both in the process of preaching specifically and the process of salvation generally. These are areas of greater concern only; they are not heretical new notions, but simply older, already sanctioned concepts upon which a new emphasis is laid.

This difference in emphasis between the preaching theories of Cotton and of Hooker and Shepard would culminate in the rhetoric of the jeremiad, would contribute to the preaching rhetoric of Wigglesworth, Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards, and, in the end, would foster a greater Puritan sense of the validity of conscious human artistry.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

We have quoted Moses Coit Tyler in the preceding pages partly as an example of a nineteenth-century estimate of the figures we have examined whose influence extended to and partly shaped more recent criticism. Tyler offered a lengthy observation on Puritan sermons that ought to be noted:

Without doubt, the sermons produced in New England during the colonial times, and especially during the seventeenth century, are the most authentic and characteristic revelations of the mind of New England for all that wonderful epoch. They are commonly spoken of mirthfully by an age that lacks the faith of that period, its earnestness, its grip, its mental robustness; a grinning and a flabby age, an age hating effort, and requiring to be amused. The theological and religious writings of early New England may not now be readable, but they are certainly not despicable. They represent an enormous amount of subtile, sustained, and sturdy brain-power. They are, of course, grave, dry, abstruse, dreadful; to our debilitated attentions they are difficult to follow; in style they are often uncouth and ponderous; they are technical in the extreme; they are devoted to a theology that yet lives in the memory of mankind only through certain shells of words long since emptied of their original meaning. Nevertheless, their writings are monuments of vast learning, and of a stupendous intellectual energy both in the men who produced them and in the men who listened to them. Of course they can never be recalled to any vital human interest. They have long since done their work in moving the minds of men. Few of them can be cited as literature. In the mass, they can only be labelled by the antiquarians and laid away upon shelves to be looked at occasionally as curiosities of verbal expression, and as relics of an intel-
lectual condition gone forever. They were conceived by noble minds; they are themselves noble. They are superior to our jests. We may deride them if we will; but they are not derided.  

We must ourselves be cautious not to deride what we might too hastily regard as simply the quaint condescension of an unenlightened critic. Tyler is on the mark when he notes that the sermons of seventeenth-century New England "are the most authentic and characteristic revelations" of the Puritan minds of that period. And we must confess that the perusing of Puritan sermons can indeed become a task that is "grave, dry, abstruse, dreadful." However "debilitated" our attentions, though, Tyler has been proven wrong in his assertion that the sermons of that age "can never be recalled to any vital human interest." The theory of preaching rhetoric that undergirds those sermons must be of the greatest interest to the student of not only colonial American literature, but American literary history in general.

Among the lines of development we have traced in the formulation of the colonial theory of sermon rhetoric was that which articulated a theology of the ministry of the word. For Augustine, the dominant characteristic of the act of preaching was its pastoral nature--it was an act of love which bound the preacher to the welfare of the

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1 Tyler, pp. 192-93.
hearts and souls of his congregation. It was this characteristic of preaching that set Augustine's use of the Ciceronian "spoils of the Egyptians" apart from secular rhetoric. It was also a concern that characterized the contributions of Gregory the Great and Guibert de Nogent to the history of the theory of preaching rhetoric. The *ars praedicandi* authors wrote their treatises in part as an attempt to bolster the faithful exercise of the preaching of the word. It was on this score, the insistence on the importance of the role of the ministry, that Wyclif, Luther and Calvin were most in line with the *ars praedicandi* heritage. Tyndale spoke emphatically of the need for a preaching ministry, and the issue became both a theological and a political focal point for the English Puritans. Given this context, it is easier to understand the way in which Hooker and Shepard's definition of the pastoral role of the ministry became a determinant factor in their theory of preaching rhetoric. Their rhetoric of preaching emphasized the structural element (the application, or *Uses*) and the stylistic element (plain, perspicuous, and above all, powerful) that were most in keeping with a pastoral concern for the spiritual welfare of their people. This was not merely a matter of personal preference or the product of a specific circumstance. It was that, but it was more—it was a point along a continuum as well, as this study
has demonstrated.

We have illustrated a similar conclusion with regard to the theology of the word. The theory of sermon rhetoric that Hooker and Shepard operated within assumed that the word preached was a necessary instrument for the operation of God's grace. Since the preaching of the word played a crucial role in the process of conversion it required a rhetorical structure that applied the word most directly to the heart of the man in the pew, and a rhetorical style that was most efficiently able to open the word and present it powerfully. These rhetorical requirements were determined by the theology that underlay the practice of preaching the word. And what sets the theology of the word of Hooker and Shepard apart from Cotton's can only be fully understood by perceiving what sets them apart from the English Puritans in general. The context of that understanding is enhanced, in turn, by recognizing that Cotton's theology of the word was nearer that of Calvin than was Hooker and Shepard's although Hooker and Shepard shared with Calvin the fundamental notion that preaching was necessary for the revelation of God's word. That the word of God needed to be opened in the corporate service of worship was a concept that had determined the preaching rhetoric of the *ars praedicandi* tractates as well, and is a notion that is first clearly expressed in Augustine.
Of course, the medieval *ars praedicandi* authors and the reformers expressed their theology of the word in starkly contrasting rhetorical styles. Yet the history of the theory of preaching rhetoric, as illustrated here, underscores the fact that the theology of the word traditionally had played a formative role in determining the rhetoric of the sermon—whether in medieval preacher's manuals, reformational prescriptions, or colonial New England pulpit practice.

Another important line of development that we have traced is the influence of exegetical principles on the rhetoric of preaching. Augustine's implicit nod toward allegorical as opposed to typological exegesis supported the elaborate amplification devices of the *ars praedicandi* tradition. The reformers, whose theology of the word demanded a close adherence to the literal sense of scripture, turned to typological exegesis. The use of allegorical techniques had played an important role in the rhetoric of the *ars praedicandi* tradition. Typological exegesis was rhetorically expressed in a manner that was "plain" only in the sense that it sought literal rather than spiritual correspondences. Typology in no way precluded the use of rhetorical figures; if anything, as we saw especially in the case of Cotton, it allowed for a great deal of leeway in making whatever identifications the preacher
thought were called for. Allegorical and "mystical" interpretations were not within the scope of a typologically-determined rhetoric. But a great variety of rhetorical figures of speech were still available, as was a wealth of imaginative type/anti-type parallels.

The examination of such lines of development was valuable for the insight it afforded on the way in which these corollary aspects of preaching had an impact on the rhetoric of the sermon. We have also looked specifically at the development of the rhetoric of preaching itself (always, of course, in the context of those issues that defined the rhetoric), and are able to make some previously obscured assertions. The relationship between classical rhetorical traditions and the rhetoric of preaching has hitherto been examined only in piecemeal fashion. We have noted how Augustine argued for the option to use classical rhetorical techniques, the spoils of the Egyptians, at the same time that he moved beyond them in important ways in applying those techniques to the preaching of the word.

The relationship between the preacher and his audience was significantly different from that of the classical orator and his audience. Perhaps even more importantly, the relationship between the preacher and his material was also fundamentally different. The rhetorical stance of the secular orator was simply that he needed to convince an
audience of the truth of a proposition (which he either did or did not believe to be in fact true) by the use of whatever techniques and devices he perceived to be most appropriate to that audience. His success depended on his own powers as a logician and stylist, and on the capacity and inclination of the audience. The ecclesiastical orator, on the other hand, was under no obligation to demonstrate the truth of his material; the divine word that he opened was assumed to be infallible. He was under an obligation to bring certain gifts to his exposition of the word, but the "success" of his message was determined, not by any quality either of his own or of the audience, but by the operation of God's Spirit in the act of preaching.

Preaching rhetoric shared certain qualities in common with classical, secular rhetoric. Both focused primarily on the inventive process—the selection and arrangement of materials. In the *ars praedicandi* method, certain structural elements of the sermon corresponded to similar divisions of the classical oration. Despite the persistence of some such similarities, particularly the emphasis on invention, the preachers of the Reformation highlighted some of the differences that had been distinguished already in Augustine. The operation of God's Spirit in the preaching of the word became a more significant feature of preaching rhetoric as the reformers sought to derogate
the human intermediary role. The difficult question of
the role of the preacher as a human agent for divine truth
became a problem for the rhetoric of preaching; it was a
problem that was, of course, foreign to secular, classical
rhetoric. The theology of the word had carried preaching
rhetoric into difficulties never posed for the "spoils of
the Egyptians" rhetoricians.

One of the most noteworthy insights afforded by this
perspective on the history of the theory of preaching rhet­
oric is a more complete understanding of the use of the
relationship between Ramist logic and the rhetoric of
preaching. Ramist logic posed the question of the rela­
tionship between the preacher and his material in terms
that neither Ciceronian rhetoric nor Aristotelian dialectic
afforded the preachers. The apodictic truth of the preach­
er's message could be established by means of the analogy
of faith, which was nothing more than a preacher/theolo­
gian's employing a specific application of Ramist "method"
on his particular subject matter. Beyond this, however,
the significance of Ramist logic and rhetoric has been
overemphasized for its influence on the Puritan plain style.
In the first place, Ramist rhetoric consists of little more
than a catalogue of the specific devices that may be used
to flesh out an outline formed by the use of Ramist dia­
lectic. This rhetorical catalogue was only rarely applied
to the plain style—and that was well after the plain style had been defined. More importantly, most of the supposed "contributions" of Ramist logic to the development of the plain style had been features of various theories of preaching rhetoric, in varying degrees, long before the plain style developed.

This dissertation has assumed that preaching rhetoric was always a point along a line of development—no rhetoric of preaching in any age emerged full-blown in that age, as has often been asserted by more historically constrained studies of the preaching rhetoric of the *ars praedicandi* authors, the reformers, and the Puritans. The trail that led to New England was as important as the rhetorical landscape uncovered there. And by the same token, the preaching rhetoric of the first-generation of New England divines was itself a stage in a continuing development. The points at which Hooker and Shepard differed from Cotton and his predecessors, both immediate and distant, were points that were to figure prominently in the later evaluations of colonial rhetoric. The increased awareness by Hooker and Shepard of the pastoral function of the word preached, and the corresponding accentuation of the application of the sermon and the "powerful" style, were necessary elements in the development of the rhetoric of the jeremiad. The concept that the word preached was necessary to pro-
claim the judgment of the law in order that the grace of
the gospel could function also anticipates the increasingly
strident calls for repentance and reformation that marked
the rhetoric of later Puritan polemics. Hooker and Shep­
ard's rhetoric incorporates their preoccupation with the
conversion process and the pragmatic benefit preaching
could serve in preparing for conversion and in mirroring
its progress in the individual. This functional empiricism
is more and more an element of colonial Puritan rhetoric,
as is apparent in Wigglesworth, Cotton Mather, and finally
in the neo-Lockean stance of Jonathan Edwards. A rhetoric
that makes literature a means of definitive self-examina­
tion, as this theory of preaching rhetoric does, is also
a necessary rhetorical precondition for the meditative
poetry of Edward Taylor.

It is the glory of the early New England theory of
sermon rhetoric that it imposes a unifying perspective on
created reality. In the short view, it breaks down the
distinction between theology and rhetoric, between theory
and practice--rhetorical theory and practice are a
natural consequence of faith and dogma. The art of preach­
ing reveals God's word joined in an organic whole with the
faith, reason, and creativity of man. And in the longer
view, such a rhetoric breaks down the distinction between
sacred and secular that characterizes a less "robust" and
"earnest" (to use Tyler's terms) world-and-life-view. Rhetoric is both shaped by and shapes the perspective of its employer. The preaching rhetoric of every era we have traced—whether it be the middle ages, the Reformation, the fifth century or the seventeenth century—has always demonstrated its special quality of seeing disparate entities (belief, logic, language, art) as parts of a single whole. This is the vision of God's world that emerges when the rhetoric of the New England preacher frames a coherent, objective symbol of the created order. It reveals the fundamental unity of a universe ordered in every detail by a sovereign God, and redeemed by Christ.
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4/23/79

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