JAROSLAV PELIKAN

DIVINE RHETORIC

The Sermon on the Mount as Message and as Model in Augustine, Chrysostom and Luther

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Contents

Abbreviations

ABD   *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

ACW   Ancient Christian Writers. Westminster, MD, 1946—.

ANF   The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Reprint edition. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957.

Aug   Augustine of Hippo. *The Preaching of Augustine: Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Translated by Francine Cardman. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. (Cited by chapter and verse in the Gospel of Matthew.)

Chrys   John Chrysostom. *The Preaching of Chrysostom: Homilies on the Sermon on the Mount*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967. (Cited by chapter and verse in the Gospel of Matthew.)

LCL   Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912—.

Luth   Martin Luther. *The Sermon on the Mount*. Translated and edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. *Luther's Works*, volume 21. St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956. (Cited by chapter and verse in the Gospel of Matthew.)

LW   Luther's Works: The American Edition. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann. 55 vols. St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955—.

NPNF   A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. First and Second Series. Reprint edition. 22 vols. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956.

Rhet   Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Edited and translated by George A. Kennedy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. (Cited by book, chapter, and paragraph, plus Bekker number.)

Tanner   Tanner, Norman P., ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. 2 vols. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990.

WA   *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Weimar: Böhlau, 1883—.

To my grandsons, MATTHEW and STEFAN:
named for the Evangelist who was the first to write down the Sermon on
the Mount,
and for the Pioneer of those who have given it the last full measure of
devotion.

Preface

Divine Rhetoric combines two related but distinct scholarly interests: my lifelong research into the history of doctrine and biblical exegesis; and my study of classical rhetoric, as this was deepened when, upon retiring after fifty years as a professor, I began teaching the history of classical rhetoric as a visiting professor at the Annenberg School for Communication of the University of Pennsylvania. That experience has enabled me to return to my earlier study of the history of Christian rhetoric as exhibited in the interpretation of the most universally acknowledged piece of rhetoric in the history of the West, the Sermon on the Mount set down in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the Gospel according to St Matthew. I had edited commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount by the celebrated rhetors of the three main Christian traditions (in reverse chronological order): for Reformation Protestantism, Martin Luther, in 1956; for Greek-speaking Orthodoxy, St John Chrysostom, in 1967; and for Latin-speaking Catholicism, St Augustine of Hippo, in 1973. Renewing and intensifying my study of the classical rhetorical tradition has therefore given me a way of organizing material on which I have been working, off and on, for a third of a century. In my introduction of 1967 to Chrysostom's homilies on the Sermon, I suggested that "a comparison of the three commentaries by Chrysostom, Augustine, and Luther would be a worthy and quite rewarding project"; in my introduction of 1973 to Augustine's, I said that "I have begun to work out the comparison and hope to publish it soon." During this unexpectedly long interim, I have been presenting various aspects of this comparison in guest lectures at (listing the sponsors in alphabetical order): Acadia University in Nova Scotia, the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (as the St John Chrysostom Lectures for 1984), the Department of the Classics at the University of Illinois, the Orthodox Theological Society of America (as the Florovsky Lecture for 2000), and Vanderbilt University (as the Cole Lectures for 1973).

In the course of translating and editing the expositions of the Sermon on the Mount by Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther, and of teaching Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in the fall semester of 1999 to faculty from several departments and schools of the University of Pennsylvania, I have, of course, worked through all these texts several times in the original languages, as well as consulting various earlier translations. But the book is intended also for readers who are unencumbered by the knowledge of any other language than English, and I have therefore held down the number of secondary works even in French and German; because each of these three commentators is, arguably, the subject of more publications than any other thinker in his tradition, I have not even attempted to encompass the ever-burgeoning list of secondary works, but have concentrated on the three expositions themselves. These I have usually quoted here from my own editions of them, citing them in the footnotes by chapter and verse in the Gospel of Matthew (so that the reader may find the passages in any edition of any of the commentaries) and exercising an authorial license to make minor changes and revisions without pedantically calling attention to these each time; I have also taken the liberty of recycling and adapting some of the introductory material that I had originally prepared for my editions. I am grateful to the original publishers, Concordia Publishing House and Augsburg Fortress Publishers, for graciously permitting me to make it available in this new form. For the Bible, I have employed the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated. For most Greek and Latin classics, I have usually quoted the Loeb Classical Library. But for Aristotle, I have ordinarily quoted from the translation by George A. Kennedy (published in 1991), and where no translator is identified this is the one being cited; occasionally I have utilized the rendering of one or another of the English translations listed in the Bibliography, indicating each time which of them it is. Even beyond that edition, my debt to Professor Kennedy's scholarship will be evident throughout.

I

Rhetoric Human and Divine

Although the ability to use language as a means of persuasion is a universal human trait, and one that is, as Aristotle noted, "more characteristic of humans than is use of the body,"[1] it is to classical Greece and Rome that we owe the systematization of critical reflection about it.[2] Both the problems and the possibilities of persuasive speech occupied the careful attention of the Greeks and Romans, and their debates about "rhetoric"—which as they were well aware,[3] were often instances of what Garry Wills, describing both Cicero and St Augustine, has recently called "the great rhetorician rhetorically dismissing rhetoric"[4]—can and should be read even by those who have no great interest in classical antiquity as such. For without artificially forcing the categories of the classical rhetoricians on texts coming from cultures altogether alien to the Greeks and Romans, it is possible to illuminate examples of persuasive speech from other traditions by a careful consideration of such texts with the aid of tools provided by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.

Infinitely more does this interpretive possibility apply, of course, to texts that arose in cultural settings in which the classical tradition had shaped the very language:

> It remains one of the most momentous linguistic convergences in the entire history of the human mind and spirit that the New Testament happens to have been written in Greek—not in the Hebrew of Moses and the prophets, nor in the Aramaic of Jesus and his disciples, nor yet in the Latin of the imperium Romanum, but in the Greek of Socrates and Plato, or at any rate in a reasonably accurate facsimile thereof, disguised and even disfigured though this was in the Koine by the intervening centuries of Hellenistic usage.[5]

1 *Rhet* I.i.12 1355b.
2 Cicero *Brutus* vii.26.
3 Cicero *De oratore* III.xxxi-xxxii, xvi.
4 Wills 1999, 28.
5 Pelikan 1993, 3.

This convergence suggests that of the many themes that classical anti-
quity and early Christianity, for all their profound—and ultimately de-
cisive—differences, had in common, including their zeal for justice
and their devotion to wisdom, none was to be more influential than
their love of language. It was Aristotle and the other Greek and Roman
rhetorical theorists who, more than anyone else, called the attention of
later generations in the West to the importance of speech and
language.[6]

When the author of the Fourth Gospel needed a comprehensive
metaphor in Greek to describe the eternal significance of Jesus Christ,
he turned to the phenomenon of speech, calling Him the Logos, the
Word and the Reason of God, through whom the universe was made
and by whom it was upheld.[7] And when the author of the Epistle to the
Hebrews needed to identify the locus of continuity between Jesus
Christ and Israel, the ancient people of God, he found this, too, in
speech: "In many and various ways God *spoke* of old to our fathers by
the prophets; but in these last days he has *spoken* to us by a Son."[8] The
author of the Acts of the Apostles, St Luke, having presented in his
Gospel the narrative of the words and deeds of Jesus, went on to
describe the spread of the message about Jesus throughout the Mediter-
ranean world, where the appropriate form for presenting the message
and the narrative had been shaped by the traditions of classical and
Hellenistic rhetoric.[9]

What would happen when these two systems of interpreting per-
suasive language, the classical and the Christian, collided—and yet in
some sense converged?

6 Cole 1991.   8 Heb 1.1-2.
7 Jn 1.1-3.   9 Dibelius 1956, 138-85.

I

The Search for a "Rhetoric to Please God Best"

The Christian rhetoric of the early centuries in St Augustine and St John Chrysostom, as well as that of the Renaissance and Reformation in Martin Luther, was consciously grounded in the classical rhetorical tradition. That was true above all of its techniques, which Christians unabashedly borrowed from their classical, pagan predecessors. More profoundly, however, it was true of the very definition and conception of rhetoric itself. According to Aristotle,[1] a discourse usually ought to open with a *prooemion,* or prologue, and close with an *epilogos,* or summary conclusion. That is what we have done here, with a consideration of classical rhetoric serving as the *prooemion* for this examination of Christian rhetoric.

The Socratic Dilemma

"Mankind can hardly be too often reminded," John Stuart Mill once declared, "that there was once a man named Socrates."[2] As it is with so many of the questions for which we still find ourselves turning to the ancients, the critical study of the problems of rhetoric must begin with Socrates. He occupied a special place in the attention of the early Church, also because of the striking parallels between him and Jesus: both were teachers who wrote nothing themselves but were known only through the writings of their disciples; both clashed with the ruling authorities of their peoples; both were innocently put to death; both have continued to exercise great influence in every subsequent generation.[3] There are at least two of the Socratic dialogues of Plato that especially address the question of rhetoric, *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus.* The concentration here will be on *Phaedrus,* also because in it Socrates

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1   *Rhet* III.xiii.4 1414b.   3   Harnack 1906.
2   John Stuart Mill *On Liberty.*

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combines a critical analysis of rhetoric with several samples of his own rhetoric in action, the best known such samples we have, except, of course, for his self-defense in Plato's *Apology*.[4] So devastating was this attack of *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* on what Socrates called "the rhetorical manner"[5] that three centuries later, and in Rome, Socrates, who was "by the testimony of all the learned, and the judgment of all Greece, the first of all men as well in wisdom and penetration, grace and refinement, as in eloquence, variety, and copiousnesss of language on whatever subject he took in hand," was still being cited, with a mixture of annoyance and awe, for having "spoken of the orator with ridicule and sarcasm," for having "separated in his discussions the ability of thinking wisely and speaking gracefully, though they are naturally united," and thus for having contributed to "that divorce, as it were, of the tongue from the heart, a division certainly absurd, useless, and reprehensible."[6]

The central issue in the *Phaedrus* is whether the rhetor cares (or even ought to care) for "the truth about the matters of which he is to speak," or only about opinion and reaction to it; for "they say that persuasion comes from what *seems to be* true, not from the truth."[7] To the rhetorician's somewhat defensive (though accurate) response, that truth was important but that by itself it was not enough for persuasion, Socrates, who could still define rhetoric formally as "an art which leads the soul [*technê psychagôgia*] by means of words," came closer to his own assessment when he characterized it as in fact "not an art, but a craft devoid of art";[8] for, as Griswold observes, "Socrates does not use the word 'technê' with absolute consistency in the *Phaedrus*, as [in some passages] ... the word has an almost nontechnical meaning, so to speak."[9] And so for Socrates and his hearers there remains the moral dilemma of rhetoric and virtue, the question of what becomes of good and evil at the hands of the communicator. Rhetors, he observes, have the power to take "things that are just according to their very being" and make them "seem" unjust, and vice versa,[10] or, as he puts it a little later, the power to "make small things seem great and great things small by the

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4   Ferrari 1987; Griswold 1986, 157-201.
5   Plato *Phaedrus* 235a.
6   Cicero *De oratore* III.xxxi-xxxii, xvi.
7   Plato *Phaedrus* 259e-260a; italics added.

8   Plato *Phaedrus* 261a, 260e.
9   Griswold 1986, 273.
10 Plato *Phaedrus* 259e-261d; translation my own.

power of their words"[11]—and, for that matter, the power to make evil things seem good and good things seem evil by the power of their words. Turning to such teachers of such rhetoric and to "those who write treatises on the art of speech nowadays," Socrates charged them with being "deceivers [who] conceal the nature of the soul, though they know it very well"; for it was the responsibility of any rhetorician who pursued the study "scientifically" and whose teaching of eloquence was written "by the rules of art" to "explain accurately the nature of that to which his words are to be addressed," which was the soul.[12]

That was what set Pericles of Athens apart from these glib wordsmiths and rhetorical hacks.[13] "I suppose Pericles is the most perfect orator in existence," Socrates says, because he was imbued with the higher philosophy and because, making use both of "his great natural abilities" and of those philosophical and ethical resources of "high speculation about nature," he "drew and applied to the art of speaking what is of use to it."[14] The young Isocrates, too, showed promise of "so excell[ing] in his present studies that all who have ever treated of rhetoric shall seem less than children"—and the further promise of then going on to even higher things.[15] But that contrast between Pericles or Isocrates and the Sophists and wordsmiths only deepens the dilemma of rhetoric and virtue, and raises the question with new urgency. Socrates phrases the dilemma in a formulation that is challenging, not only philosophically but rhetorically: "We have, then, said enough about the art of speaking and that which is no art... Do you know how you can act or speak about rhetoric so as to please God best?"[16]

For a consideration of this dilemma, there is special force and poignancy to the "Socratic problem," which was brilliantly formulated in 1815 by Friedrich Schleiermacher, who was both a translator of Plato into German and, as the leading Protestant theologian of the nineteenth century, a careful student of the analogous problem of the relation between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John: "What *can* Socrates have been, in addition to all Xenophon says he was, without contradicting the characteristic qualities and rules of life that Xenophon

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11 Plato *Phaedrus* 267a-b.
12 Plato *Phaedrus* 271c; 270e.
13 Plato *Phaedrus* 257c.

14 Plato *Phaedrus* 269e-270a.
15 Plato *Phaedrus* 279a.
16 Plato *Phaedrus* 274b.

definitely declares to have been Socratic; and what *must* he have been, to give Plato the impulse and the justification to portray him as he does in the dialogues?"[17] For what would we give to have had from the hand of Plato-as-ethical-philosopher a theoretical discussion of the literary creations of Plato-as-rhetorical-author, of whom a Roman proverb used to say that "Jupiter would speak with [Plato's] tongue if he spoke Greek"?[18]

The Aristotelian Resolution

In the event, however, the challenge of Socrates, "Do you know how you can act or speak about rhetoric so as to please God best?" was not addressed as such by Plato in his own name, but was taken up, more or less directly, by Plato's pupil Aristotle. Whether the dilemma of rhetoric and virtue was resolved by the Aristotle who composed the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a discussion of the normative issues of virtue and the Good, or instead by the Aristotle who also composed the *Physics* and other scientific works as empirical descriptions of "the real world," is, to be sure, quite another question. Therefore George A. Kennedy speaks of "a kind of dialogue in Aristotle's mind between two views of rhetoric, one making strong moral and logical demands on a speaker, one looking more toward success in debate."[19]

That "dialogue" or tension from within the corpus of Aristotle's total oeuvre makes itself felt already in the very first chapter of Book I of the *Rhetoric*, when Aristotle defends rhetoric as "useful [*chrêsimos*]" on the grounds that "the True" and "the Just" are "by nature" stronger than their opposites.[20] For by this appeal simultaneously to "nature" and to "justice" we are left to wonder whether the treatise, as a treatment of the "ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion,"[21] will turn out be a *de*scriptive consideration of "nature" as things really are (à la the *Physics* or *On the Parts of Animals*) and therefore of what is "useful" out there in the law courts and the public forum, or a *pre*scriptive consideration of the "True" and the "Just" (à la the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*) as norms for what ought to be acceptable behavior also in the use of the art of persuasion by the rhetor.

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17 As quoted in Jaeger 1943-1945, 2:21-22.   19 Kennedy 1991, xi.
18 Quoted by Cicero *Brutus* XXXII.120.   20 *Rhet* I.i.12 1355a.
                                                     21 *Rhet* I.ii.1 1355b.

Perhaps the closest he comes to encompassing the dilemma in both of its aspects is his early quasi-definitional observation that "rhetoric is a compound of the science of dialectic and the deliberative study of morality [*ek te tês analytikês epistêmês kai tês peri ta ethê politikês*]."[22] Thus it included two of the three types of propositions identified by Aristotle the logician,[23] the "logical" and the "ethical," but not the "physical."

In all three books of the *Rhetoric* Aristotle sometimes shapes his discourse in such a way as to be descriptive, with moral judgment apparently suspended.[24] Coming right up to the subject of virtue in Book I, he postpones it and turns instead to a consideration of what is "expedient."[25] And when he goes on a bit later in Book I to say that "virtue is a greater thing than nonvirtue, and vice a greater thing than nonvice,"[26] this is taken by his nineteenth-century commentator E. M. Cope to mean that "moral considerations are altogether laid aside, and Rhetoric is here permitted (not recommended) to take the immoral side of the question," a comment that his twentieth-century commentator William M. A. Grimaldi sees as an example of how "a misunderstanding of the text will ascribe to A[ristotle] a view of rhetoric which cannot be justified from the treatise."[27] In Book II he seems to be expanding on the criterion of the useful when he recommends, even in an area that he admits is "replete with fallacy" concerning the nature of the True, that "the orator should practice whatever method is more available to his purpose."[28] And in Book III he urges: "Do not use all analogous effects [of sound and sense] together; for thus the hearer is tricked."[29]

But in each of the three books of the *Rhetoric* Aristotle likewise finds it unavoidable to introduce this problem of "a rhetoric to please God best." Already in the definitional second chapter of Book I he identifies "the *êthos*," the "character" (so Kennedy) or even "moral character" (so Freese), of the speaker as the first of the "proofs" that make a speaker credible.[30] Immediately after the defense of rhetoric just cited, Aristotle adds, almost as an *obiter dictum*, that "one should not persuade what is

22 *Rhet* I.iv.5 1359b (Lawson-Tancred).
23 Aristotle *Topics* I.xiv 105b.
24 Hill 1981.
25 *Rhet* I.vi.1 1362a.
26 *Rhet* I.vii.16 1364a.

27 Grimaldi 1980-1988, 1:157-58.
28 *Rhet* II.xxiv.3 1401a (Buckley).
29 *Rhet* III.vii.10 1408b.
30 *Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a.

debased [*ta phaula*]."[31] Having defined "happiness [*eudaimonia*]" as "success combined with virtue,"[32] he goes on early in Book II to list the three necessary components of the communicator's case as "practical wisdom and virtue and good will [*phronêsis kai aretê kai eunoia*],"[33] which John Henry Freese translates as "goodsense, virtue, and good-will," and Theodore Buckley as "prudence, moral excellence, and the having our interests at heart." In isolation from the other two members of this triad, *eunoia* could conceivably be taken to mean no more than the skill of making a good impression, even though it may be a false impression. But the middle term is still *aretê*, which to any reader of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* must make this analysis of persuasion an ethical one—more than ethical, to be sure, but not less than ethical. And in Book III of the *Rhetoric* we are told that such stylistic methods as amplification "may be applied to things good or bad, in whichever way it may be useful";[34] but the very next paragraph urges the importance, even for propriety of style, of "the emotional *and* the ethical."[35]

Therefore the summary judgment of the editor and translator of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, George A. Kennedy, seems to hold true:

> The most satisfactory response to the moral enigma of *On Rhetoric* is probably to recognize that it is a "formalistic" treatise, largely an objective nonjudgmental analysis of the forms that rhetoric took in his time and in this sense more like his scientific than his ethical writings. His dispassionate analysis of rhetorical techniques is thus analogous to his analysis of the forms of plants and animals in his biological works, or of constitutions, and even of poetry. In the *Poetics*, as in *On Rhetoric*, there are judgments of what is effective art but only a few observations that relate to the value of poetry in society.... Similarly, throughout most of *On Rhetoric* Aristotle describes the "available means of persuasion," preserving objectivity and keeping an emotional distance from his subject as he might in dissecting an animal.[36]

And so we are still left with the dilemma and the question of Socrates, "Do you know how you can act or speak about rhetoric so as to please God best?" and with the seemingly naive but actually very profound response of his disciple, "Not at all; do you?"[37]

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31 *Rhet* I.i.12 1355a.
32 *Rhet* I.v.3 1360b.
33 *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.
34 *Rhet* III.vi.7 1408a (Freese).

35 *Rhet* III.vii.1 1408a; translation my own.
36 Kennedy 1994, 56.
37 Plato *Phaedrus* 274b.

The Roman Response in Cicero and Quintilian

It is part of conventional scholarly wisdom that, in the familiar formula of Horace, "Greece, once overcome, overcame her wild conqueror, and brought the arts into rustic Latium,"[38] and that the last and most important of these arts, as Cicero said in his history of orators and oratory, "in which conquered Greece still remained our conqueror, [which] we have now wrested from her," was rhetoric.[39] Like Horace, other Romans perpetuated the view of themselves as pupils of the Greeks, as this was evidenced by Vergil's dependence on Homer as well as by the derivative character of Latin philosophy. "It was," they knew, in Athens "that the orator first made his appearance, and there first that oratory began to be consigned to written records," as well as to critical analysis.[40] And although the circulation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in Rome was considerably more limited than is sometimes supposed, those who did know the work, who were probably echoed also by many who did not but only knew about it, paid somewhat reluctant tribute to him because "he, with the same acuteness of intellect with which he had penetrated the qualities and nature of things throughout the universe, saw into every thing that pertained to the art of rhetoric—which he thought beneath him."[41]

But in another comment later in the same Latin dialogue, the contrast between Greece and Rome is taken to be a rather different one: whereas among the Greeks we are to look for "examples of learning [*doctrinae exempla*]," we are to look for "examples of virtue [*virtutis exempla*]" among the Romans.[42] Coming as it does in a lengthy book on rhetoric, that formulation of the contrast is addressed to this very search for "a rhetoric to please God best." For, in a manner that runs contrary to the conventional wisdom about ancient cultural history, it was Romans more than Greeks, Cicero and Quintilian more than Aristotle, who applied all four of the classical (later to be called "cardinal") virtues to the search for "a rhetoric to please God best":[43] taking them here in the order

38 "*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes / intulit agresti Latio.*" Horace *Epistles* II.i.156-57.
39 Cicero *Brutus* lxxiii.254. See Clarke 1953.
40 Cicero *Brutus* vii.26.
41 Cicero *De oratore* II.xxxviii.160; also III.xxxv.141.
42 Cicero *De oratore* III.xxxiv.137.
43 Pieper 1966.

in which they appear in Plato's *Laws*, *phronêsis-prudentia*-practical wisdom; *sôphrosynê-temperantia*-sense of discretion; *dikaiosynê-aequitas*-justice; and *andreia-fortitudo*-moral courage.[44] That enabled Cicero to go so far as to claim, in a declaration from that same treatise that might seem to be rhetorical hyperbole, "Eloquence is one of the most eminent virtues [*Est enim eloquentia una quaedam de summis virtutibus*]."[45] That view of *eloquentia* as a *virtus*, and the characterization of the rhetor based upon it, was to be summarized best in Quintilian's frequently reiterated formulation: "My aim, then, is the education of the perfect orator. The first essential for such an one is that he should be a good man [*vir bonus*]."[46] But in this prescription of "bonus vir bene loquens," as in much of his rhetorical and educational theory, Quintilian was consciously drawing upon the tradition of Cato, and above all on Cicero, whose "concept of *virtus*," as Thomas N. Mitchell has put it, "in the strictly moral sphere... served to describe both the morally right and the qualities of character individually and collectively that enabled a person to recognize and follow the way of right conduct."[47]

The identification of *eloquentia* as a *virtus* entailed, first of all, the practical wisdom[48] to attempt to make Aristotle's combination of "practical wisdom, virtue, and good will"[49] fundamental to the education and training of the young orator. Romans—and *a fortiori* Roman orators and rhetoricians—were no less conscious than were the Greeks of the potential sorcery of the spoken word: "There is nothing so pliant, nothing so flexible, nothing which will so easily follow whithersoever you incline to lead it, as language."[50] It was characteristic of many rhetoricians, however, that they ignored the real issues in favor of the tricks of the trade:

> For a man who is ignorant of these and other similar laws of his own country to wander about the forum with a great crowd at his heels, erect and haughty, looking hither and thither with a gay and assured face and ear, offering and tendering protection to his clients, assistance to his friends, and the light of his genius and counsel to almost all his fellow-citizens, is it not to be thought in the highest degree scandalous?[51]

44 Plato *Laws* I 631c-d.
45 Cicero *De oratore* III.xiv.55.
46 Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* I.9.
47 Mitchell 1991, 15.

48 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.5 1140a.
49 *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.
50 Cicero *De oratore* III.xlv.176.
51 Cicero *De oratore* I.xl.54; also I.xix.27-28.

Although it therefore remained a serious pedagogical question, which these practitioners and the professional teachers and handbooks of rhetoric only made more rather than less problematical, whether or not authentic oratory could be taught,[52] as of course it had long been a question whether virtue could be taught,[53] it was evident from experience that language certainly could be. In this process of teaching language and of transmitting a quality control in its use, moreover, it was the influence of the home and of women, rather than that of men, that was primary and fundamental.[54] In fact, their very isolation from popular culture and from the slang of the Roman streets made women more fit as arbiters, as well as more skilled as teachers, of both grammar and vocabulary, and thus of grace and good taste in speech.[55]

Cicero had said in the first chapter of his teenage work, *De inventione*, that "wisdom without eloquence does too little for the good of states, but eloquence without wisdom is generally highly disadvantageous and is never helpful."[56] Because, therefore, there were "more instances of mischief than of benefit done to public affairs by men of eminent eloquence,"[57] it was essential for the rhetorician and orator to cultivate a *sôphrosynê-temperantia*-sense of discretion.[58] Such a sense of discretion would follow through on Aristotle's definition of a "useful" rhetoric as not simply one that worked for the "technicians [*operarii*] with glib and well-practiced tongues,"[59] but one in which true things and "just things" truly would be allowed to be "by nature" stronger than their opposites, as Aristotle had promised,[60] and would prevail in an oration—and, if possible, even as the result of an oration; for "orators... are the deliverers of truth itself."[61] But even on the basis of Aristotle's standard of *to chrêsimon* as what "may be applied to things good or bad, in whichever way it may be useful,"[62] it was possible, because "the speech seems to represent, as it were, the character of the speaker," to make the case for virtue on purely pragmatic grounds: that "it

52 Cicero *De oratore* III.xxiv.93; III.xxx.118.
53 Plato *Protagoras* 320b.
54 Cicero *Brutus* lviii.210-11.
55 Cicero *De oratore* III.xii.
56 Cicero *De inventione* I.1.
57 Cicero *De oratore* I.ix.38.

58 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* II.7 1107b.
59 Cicero *De oratore* I.xviii.83; also lxii.263.
60 *Rhet* I.i.12 1355a.
61 Cicero *De oratore* III.lvi.214.
62 *Rhet* III.vi.7 1408a (Freese); on this standard of usefulness, see also *Rhet* I.i.12 1355a; I.i.14 1355b; II.i.4 1377b.

contributes much to success in speaking that the morals, principles, conduct, and lives of those who plead causes, and of those for whom they plead, should be such as to merit esteem, and that those of their adversaries should be such as to deserve censure."[63] Cynically, therefore, it was possible as well to describe rhetoric as dependent "not on knowledge, but on opinion," and therefore as "a subject which is of a character to defend falsehood, which rarely arrives at knowledge, and which is ready to take advantage of the opinions and even error of mankind."[64] Ideally, a bit later, there is nevertheless said to be "such force in those thoughts and sentiments which you apply, handle, and discuss in speaking, that there is no occasion for simulation or deceit."[65] Commenting on his translation of *De officiis*, therefore, Michael Grant has identified Cicero's "three quite separate hypotheses about expediency and morality" as: "1) moral right that is expedient, 2) moral right that appears to be inexpedient, 3) expediency that appears not to be morally right."[66] All three of these were pertinent also to the training and the practice of the orator.

The cultivation of a sense of discretion necessarily implied the commitment to justice.[67] For "by the judgment and wisdom of the perfect orator not only his own honor, but that of many other individuals, and the welfare of the whole state, are principally upheld."[68] That nexus between rhetoric and the common good of the *universa res publica* was what made—or could make—the profession of the communicator and the practice of rhetoric noble and "pleasing to God," and conversely, could make it so dangerous. In what has been called "the earliest considerable piece of autobiography that has come down to us from antiquity,"[69] and one of the most touching passages in his oratorical writings, reminiscent of his language about the death of his daughter Tullia in 45 B.C., Cicero near the end of his life reflected on the death of his friendly rival Hortensius, who was also the subject of a dialogue by Cicero, now lost. The passing of Hortensius was the occasion for a more than private grief to Cicero:

63 Cicero *De oratore* II.xliii.184, 182.
64 ap. Cicero *De oratore* II.vii.30.
65 Cicero *De oratore* II.xlvi.191.
66 M. Grant 1971, 124.

67 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* V.5 1133b-1134a.
68 Cicero *De oratore* I.viii.34.
69 Hendrickson 1962, 260-61.

> That felicity, peculiarly his own, which attended him all his life, interposed, it would seem, to shield him by a timely death from the calamities which have followed. The voice of Hortensius was silenced only by his own death, mine by the death of the republic. With the death of Hortensius we are left to be the guardians of orphaned eloquence.[70]

Even with due attention to the complexities in the development of Cicero's position as a politician and to the ambiguities of the situation in what Erich S. Gruen has called "the last generation of the Roman Republic,"[71] it seems fair to interpret Cicero's language here as standing in the legitimate succession of the moral indignation of Socrates over those communicators and teachers of rhetoric who, relying on "how things seem," perverted "things that are just according to their very being,"[72] to the detriment "not only of [their] own honor, but that of many other individuals, and the welfare of the whole state," where justice should have been principally upheld "by the judgment and wisdom of the perfect orator."[73]

What was called for, in short, was the moral courage[74] to face, more directly than Aristotle had, the full implications of what he had meant when he said that "one should not persuade what is debased."[75] The history of rhetoric in the Roman republic in the context of the history of Roman politics provided Cicero with cautionary tales aplenty on which to base such implications, for example, the turmoil and civil unrest associated with the agitation of the Gracchi: "Would that Tiberius Gracchus and Gaius Carbo [who "was accounted the best advocate of his time"] had possessed minds as well disposed to the right conduct of affairs of state as they possessed genius for eloquence!"[76] Those words were written near the end of Cicero's public life, perhaps in 48 B.C., about five years before he died. But Cicero may already have been thinking of these examples when, in November and December of 63 B.C., he had inserted into the third of his diatribes against the character as well as the conspiracy of Catiline a seemingly grudging tribute to his oratorical skills,[77] or when, in a height of rhetorical transport in

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70 Cicero *Brutus* xcvi.329-30.
71 Gruen 1974, 136-41.
72 Plato *Phaedrus* 259e-261d.
73 Cicero *De oratore* I.viii.34.

74 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* III.7-8
   1116a-1117a.
75 *Rhet* I.i.12 1355a.
76 Cicero *Brutus* xxvii.103, 106.
77 Cicero *In Catilinam* III.16.

the *Second Catalinarian* (which was addressed not to his sophisticated colleagues in the senate but to the Roman populace), he had enumerated the four cardinal virtues, portraying each of them as personified and arrayed in battle against Catiline: "All the virtues contend with all the vices."[78] Such language reflected not only the penchant of Roman rhetoricians for military metaphors to describe oratory,[79] by contrast with the Greek fondness for metaphors drawn from athletic contests,[80] but also the appropriateness of the virtue of moral courage to the vocation and the education of the orator.

But it would be a deception or a self-deception—and one to which Cicero himself proved not to be immune—to suppose that dealing philosophically and even pedagogically with the search for "a rhetoric to please God best" will attain the goal of the search.[81] We have no call to imitate the Renaissance in virtually canonizing Cicero as a kind of secular saint, on the grounds that anyone whose Latinity was so pure had to have special moral qualities. Nor, on the other hand, do we have to join in the condescending dismissal of him as a political "trimmer" and hypocrite, which was widely prevalent in the early twentieth century.[82] Neither of these stereotypes does justice to the contrasts, some of them quite subtle and some of them altogether blatant, between his theory in the treatises on rhetoric and his practice in the orations as well as in his political career. Aristotle escapes the drawing of such contrasts, unfortunately for us though perhaps fortunately for him, because no oration by him has survived—and it would hardly be fair to use the political career of his pupil Alexander the Great as a basis for judgment! From Cicero, on the other hand, we have fifty-eight surviving orations, which give us plenty of opportunity to pit theory and practice against each other. Perhaps it would be best, in the light of his practice, to take him at his word when he stipulates (or, rather, has one or another of the characters stipulate), from one end of the *De oratore* to the other, that when he speaks about the relation between rhetoric and virtue he is considering the *perfectus orator*, as he says near the beginning of Book I,[83] or the *doctus orator*, as he says near the end of

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78 Cicero *In Catilinam* II.25.
79 Cicero *Brutus* xxxvii.139.
80 *Chrys* 6.16; see Sawhill 1928.
81 May 1988.
82 See the summary in Mitchell 1979, 106.
83 Cicero *De oratore* I.viii.14.

Book III;[84] halfway between these two passages, he has Crassus disavow, a bit fatuously, any intention "to set forth any system of rhetoric."[85] For himself, he occasionally betrays an awareness, despite all the posturing and the pomposity, that "every subject has the same susceptibility of ambiguity," whether in "knowledge or in action,"[86] which suggests at least some awareness of his own entanglement in "ambiguity." But because such "ambiguity" is what flesh is heir to, also the flesh of the rhetorician, there remains considerable benefit in the enterprise of pushing the empirical study of rhetoric as far as we can—but then of going on to pose the Socratic dilemma.

Cicero was to be of great importance for Christian Latin literature, and particularly of course for Christian Latin rhetoric. St Jerome's account of the dream he had about this problem, perhaps in 373, is well known:

> Poor wretch that I was, I used to fast and then read Cicero... About Mid-Lent a fever attacked my enfeebled body... Suddenly I was caught up in the spirit and dragged before the tribunal of the Judge... Upon being asked my status I replied that I was a Christian. And He who sat upon the judgment seat said: "Thou liest. Thou art a Ciceronian, not a Christian. 'Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.'"[87] ... I began to take an oath, swearing by His name, saying: "O Lord, if ever I possess or read secular writings, I have denied thee."[88]

Whatever may be the accuracy of that account or the consistency of Jerome's renunciation over the years that followed, it does call attention to the dominant position of Cicero. The verdict of the Judge, moreover, "Thou art a Ciceronian, not a Christian," applied even more tellingly to Augustine as a pagan rhetor than it did to Jerome as a Christian; for it was to Cicero, "whose language (but not his heart) almost everyone admires," and specifically to his dialogue *Hortensius*, that St Augustine was to attribute his having turned to the true God.[89]

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84 Cicero *De oratore* III.xxxv.143.
85 Cicero *De oratore* II.xli.175.
86 Cicero *De oratore* III.xxix.111.
87 Mt 6.21.
88 Jerome *Letters* 22.30 (ACW 33:165-66). But see the commentary of Thomas

Comerford Lawler, the editor and translator, on this passage (ACW 33:243-44), including the warning that "the account of the dream is hardly to be taken as the last word of Jerome."
89 Augustine *Confessions* III.iv.7 (Chadwick 1992, 38-39); see also p.59 below.

And long after his conversion to Catholic Christianity Augustine the rhetorician would have had to admit to being, in this sense at any rate, "both a Ciceronian and a Christian."[90]

The Legacy of Libanius the Sophist

But what Cicero the orator was to Latin Christian rhetoricians, especially to St Jerome and above all to St Augustine, Libanius the Sophist (314-ca. 393 A.D.) was to Greek Christian rhetoricians like St Basil—only more, because Libanius was not only their literary model but their personal mentor. Libanius was one of the most eloquent spokesmen of his day for the educational ideals of classical Greek paganism.[91] These he defended against the incursion of Roman paganism, by refusing to pay his worship to Roman gods or his respects to Roman literature, and against the rising tide of Christianity, by clinging to Greek astrology and other practices of Greek religion. As Kennedy has said,

> We have more detailed information about the career, works, and personality of Libanius than about any other Greek of antiquity. The corpus of his preserved works comprises fifty-one declamations; ninety-six progymnasmata; sixty-four orations; the *Hypotheses*, or introductions, to the speeches of Demosthenes; and about sixteen hundred letters. He wrote excellent Attic Greek and represents the fading tradition of pagan classical culture of his age in its purest form.[92]

His *Autobiography* [*Peri tês heautou tychês*] is especially useful in understanding his place in the search for "a rhetoric to please God best," as well as his continuing legacy to the Byzantine and Christian culture of later centuries.

Libanius belonged to the traditionalists of the third and fourth centuries after Christ who were known, also to themselves, as "Sophists," and from whom this period in the history of rhetoric and culture has acquired the name "the Second Sophistic," to distinguish them from the ancient "Sophists" of Athens against whom Socrates had directed his critique of rhetoric.[93] Libanius the Sophist was devoted to the Greek rhetorical tradition and conscious of having come from a family

90 Testard 1958, 1:219-29.
91 Festugière 1959, 91-139.
92 Kennedy 1994, 248.
93 Bowersock 1969; Anderson 1993.

of orators.[94] But despite his early demonstration of verbal facility, he says, "[I] restrained my mind from composing, my tongue from speaking, and my hand from writing, and I concentrated upon one thing only—the memorization of the works of classical authors."[95] These became, for the rest of his life, "the models for my oratory."[96] Even as an established master of the rhetorical craft, he continued to be "engrossed in Demosthenes,"[97] to whom he devoted an entire work called *Hypotheses*. That devotion to the classics and to Greek antiquity was focused on Greek polytheism, so that he could describe one of his rivals as one who "personally was a worshiper of the gods" but who "spoke in praise of him who had set himself against them," meaning Jesus Christ, who, his editor notes in commenting on these words, is "never mentioned by name in Libanius."[98] That is why the accession of the emperor Julian "the Apostate" and his renunciation of Christianity not only meant that paganism was once more in charge, but that "the art... of oratory [came again] to be admired."[99] Therefore "he petitioned Julian, he advised the citizens to have regard for the emperor's anger, and he mourned his death."[100] And, according to Libanius, the emperor returned the compliment: "Your eloquence puts you among the rhetoricians, but your actions have enrolled you among the philosophers." Reporting these words of Julian, Libanius added: "I rejoiced..., for this was uttered by one who consorted with heaven [*hypo tou theois synoikountos*]."[101]

Julian's linking of "rhetorician" with "philosopher" was reminiscent of the youthful Cicero's linking of "eloquence" with "wisdom."[102] It also represented Libanius's, and presumably Julian's, answer to the Socratic dilemma of rhetoric and virtue, for he believed that "eloquence... is the helpmate of justice."[103] Likewise reminiscent of Cicero's grief over "orphaned eloquence" and the decline of rhetoric in the Roman republic[104] was Libanius's growing sense that he was "giving

94 Libanius *Autobiography* 2 (LCL 478:55).
95 Libanius *Autobiography* 8 (LCL 478:61).
96 Libanius *Autobiography* 23 (LCL 478:81).
97 Libanius *Autobiography* 237 (LCL 478:293).
98 Libanius *Autobiography* 39 (LCL 478:100-101).
99 Libanius *Autobiography* 119 (LCL 478:185).
100 Bowersock 1978, 4; see also Martig 1990.
101 Libanius *Autobiography* 131 (LCL 478:197-99). See Scholl 1994 and Wiemer 1995.
102 Cicero *De inventione* I.1.
103 Libanius *Autobiography* 153 (LCL 478:221).
104 Cicero *Brutus* xcvi.329-30.

lessons in rhetoric while rhetoric is sick, disparaged, and reviled."[105] It is an irony, however, that Libanius associated this condition of rhetoric being "sick, disparaged, and reviled" with the ascendancy of Latin, the language of Cicero.[106] Under these conditions, he laments, "the whole course of my life was changed and my previous devotion to rhetoric had given way to other considerations."[107] He found his final consolation in teaching. During his own lifetime his textbooks of rhetoric had been widely adopted by other teachers; as the goddess Tyche said to him, "Every school of rhetoric reveals that your works are thumbed by pupils and teachers alike."[108] And near the end of his life, "though I was unable to appear in the lecture room, I duly fulfilled my duties toward my students"; as his editor reports, "he was still working in his schoolroom in 392."[109] By an even more bitter irony, the most influential and the most eminent of those students toward whom he duly fulfilled his duties were Christian rhetors.

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105 Libanius *Autobiography* 154 (LCL 478:221).
106 Libanius *Autobiography* 214 (LCL 478:275).
107 Libanius *Autobiography* 277 (LCL 478:329).

108 Libanius *Autobiography* 155 (LCL 478:221-23).
109 Libanius *Autobiography* 280 (LCL 478:331-33).

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"Good Words in Treating of the Word": A Christian Rhetoric

The word *rhetoric* does not appear in the New Testament at all. There is, moreover, only a single reference to someone as a *rhêtôr*, one Tertullus, who directed an accusation against St Paul as "a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."[1] Both Paul's response to that *rhêtôr* before Felix the governor and his other speeches in the Book of Acts clearly stand in the classical and Hellenistic rhetorical tradition.[2] The same is true of the forms of argumentation in such texts of his as the Epistle to the Romans.[3] That is particularly true of the speeches of Paul in Acts that are addressed to a Greek or Roman audience rather than to a Jewish one, and above all of his speech on the Areopagus ("Mars Hill") in Athens.[4] As Wilckens has shown in a careful analysis, the author of the Book of Acts, following a classical rhetorical precedent that went back to Thucydides,[5] employed the missionary speeches of Paul and the other apostles as both a historical and an apologetic device, to carry the story line of his narrative.[6] In an earlier analysis, which proved to be a pioneering contribution, Rudolf Bultmann had related "the style of the Pauline proclamation" to the Greek rhetorical and argumentative genre known as the *diatribê*, as this was practiced by the Cynics and the Stoics in the Hellenistic period.[7]

Therefore each of the "three genera of rhetorics, *symbouleutikon* ['deliberative'], *dikanikon* ['judicial'], *epideiktikon* ['demonstrative']," as Aristotle had defined them,[8] was represented in the epistles of Paul.[9]

1 Acts 24.1-8.
2 Dibelius 1956, 138-85.
3 Donfried 1974.
4 Acts 17.16-34.

5 Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* I.22.
6 Wilckens 1961.
7 Bultmann 1910.
8 *Rhet* I.iii.3 1358b.
9 For a general overview, see *ABD* 5:710-19.

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(Although that is the order Aristotle gives initially, he goes on in the body of Book I to discuss them in the order: deliberative, epideictic, judicial; this is also the order we shall be following in the present chapter.) Deliberative rhetoric is exhibited in the brief Epistle to Philemon about how to deal with a runaway slave: appealing both to the authority of character (*êthos*) and to the frame of mind of the recipient (*pathos*), it employs the standard steps of "introduction, proof, and conclusion [*exordium, probatio, peroratio*]" that are appropriate to deliberative rhetoric in its attempt to persuade the hearer to adopt a particular course of action.[10] In his most comprehensive *apologia pro vita sua*, the Epistle to the Galatians, St Paul proceeds as though he were on trial (as in a real sense he was), and therefore it is the five component parts of this genre of judicial or forensic rhetoric that shape this epistle: *exordium, narratio, propositio, probatio*, and *peroratio*.[11] Argumentative though it certainly is, the Epistle to the Romans has nevertheless been identified as epideictic rhetoric, primarily because of its appeal to the "*pathos* of love."[12]

The period of the New Testament, therefore, occupies a unique position in the area of rhetoric, as it does in all other areas of Christian thought.[13] It is nevertheless the case that for the history of Christian rhetoric, as for the history of Christian institutions and for the history of Christian thought, the century that followed the conversion of the emperor Constantine was in many respects the most momentous and decisive of all.[14] Into that century fall the major parts of the careers of those Greek and Latin church fathers who shaped the subsequent development of the Church and of dogma more decisively than any since the apostles: Eusebius, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Jerome, Hilary—and Augustine and John Chrysostom, the two rhetor-theologians from the early Church who will be under consideration here. What ecumenical Christian doctrine officially became in the century and a quarter from the Council of Nicaea in 325 to the Council of Chalcedon in 451, it has remained to the present day in both East and West, in Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman

10 Church 1978, 20-31.   13 Wilder 1964.
11 Betz 1975.   14 Cameron 1991.
12 Wuellner 1976, 342-51.

Catholicism, and mainline Protestantism. Underlying the codification of the dogma was the establishment of the Church as Christendom, dominating the culture and allied with the state. Before Constantine, Christian rhetoric and preaching had served as a witness to the truth of the gospel, which was directed to the faithful on the inside for their edification and to the unbelievers on the outside for their conversion—or for the defense of Christianity against "the cultured among its despisers." Now that Christianity was socially respectable and eventually even fashionable, unbelievers began to appear inside the walls of the churches also; and preaching was obliged to undertake the pedagogical responsibility, which was also a rhetorical responsibility, of instructing in the rudiments of Christian doctrine those who had often been baptized without adequate catechetical instruction, of training them in at least the minimum requirements of the Christian ethic, and of maintaining the ecclesiastical establishment, sometimes with the help of the secular arm and sometimes against interference from it.

But the "three genera of rhetorics, *symbouleutikon* ['deliberative'], *dikanikon* ['judicial'], *epideiktikon* ['demonstrative'],"[15] were also fundamentally affected by this radical change in society and culture, acquiring a new subject matter, a new point of reference, and a new rhetorical style. Each of them nevertheless maintained its continuity with the classical tradition as it continued its existence under the new auspices of the Church, but at the same time it united itself with precedents that came from from the Old and the New Testament. The new deliberative rhetoric of the ecumenical council could take as its model the "apostolic council" described in the fifteenth chapter of Acts as having been held in Jerusalem.[16] There the continued authority of the Jewish ceremonial law had been debated and the portentous formula, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," invoked.[17] The judicial rhetoric of doctrinal controversy, which pronounced an anathema on false teachers, could claim to be following the example of St Paul, who had pronounced the sentence "Let him be anathema" both against "anyone [who] has no love for the Lord" and against "any one [who] is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received," thus

15 *Rhet* I.iii.3 1358b.   17 Acts 15.1-29.
16 See *ABD* 3:766-68.

against both moral and doctrinal error.[18] The epideictic rhetoric that expressed itself in Christian valedictories drew heavily on on such valedictories as St Paul's touching farewell to the elders of Ephesus, also recorded in the Book of Acts,[19] as well as on the New Testament's "roll call of the saints."[20] Christian epideictic drew upon the imagery of the Psalms and the language of the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, for example the words of Sirach: "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers in their generations. The Lord apportioned to them great glory."[21] In addition to the Aristotelian "three genera of rhetorics," the most typically Christian rhetorical genre of all came into being with the sermon or homily based on a text of Scripture, which went on to dominate the rhetoric of the Christian pulpit.[22] It had classical as well as Jewish precedent and could participate in the characteristics of all three of the classical types, but in its own distinctive way; for this *lectio divina*, the exposition of the biblical text in the sermon of St Stephen the Protomartyr in the Book of Acts could be said to have set a pattern.[23]

All of these genera, and the last of them in a special sense, were put into the service of the new rhetoric. One of its outstanding practitioners, Gregory of Nazianzus, succinctly formulated its charter and its mission, as a "law for all stewards of soul and dispensers of the Word," in an oration that he delivered in 381: "to be of good words in treating of the Word, and in neither direction to overstep the mean."[24] It was a classical, and especially an Aristotelian, principle that "every art does its work well by looking to the mean and judging its works by this standard."[25] That applied in a special way to the art of rhetoric, and now to Christian rhetoric, to "walk along the royal road which lives between the two extremes, which is the seat of the virtues, as the authorities say,"[26] and thereby to find apt and "good words" for the "treatment of the Word."

18 1 Cor 16.22; Gal 1.8-9.
19 Acts 20.17-38.
20 Heb 11.
21 Ecclus 44.1-2.
22 *ABD* 3:280-82.
23 Acts 7.2-53.

24 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.13 (NPNF-II 7:390).
25 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* II.vi 1106b.
26 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.17 (NPNF-II 7:391).

A New Christian Venue for Deliberative Rhetoric: The Ecumenical Council

Even before the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, the Roman senate, which was the principal setting for deliberative rhetoric in the age of Cicero and had been the staging area for so much of his own deliberative rhetoric, had begun to decline in importance.[27] Cicero's lugubrious words about his rhetoric having been silenced by "the death of the republic," by which he and his fellow rhetoricians had been "left to be the guardians of orphaned eloquence,"[28] became increasingly accurate as the centralization of political authority in the Roman principate developed, so that the Roman senate became a kind of debating society. Although the transfer of the capital from pagan Old Rome to Christian New Rome entailed also the construction of a new senate building in Constantinople, that should not be taken to have represented a new lease on life for the senate itself. For as Ostrogorsky says, "the senate of Constantinople as constituted under Constantine was above all an advisory body, [and] ...its influence dwindled still further in Byzantium."[29] Consequently, in Warren Treadgold's words, "the senate of Constantinople was important not as an assembly, though it did sometimes meet for ceremonial purposes, but as a select and privileged social class."[30] Therefore Libanius, the outstanding pagan orator and teacher of rhetoric in the fourth century, had reason to lament the circumstance that under the Christian emperors "my audiences were not now, as they used to be, formed of the governor and the great numbers he used to bring from the many provinces"; and he added, sadly: "That put a blight on my oratory."[31]

The conversion of Constantine had a manifold and profound effect on the art of rhetoric, first of all because of his own dedication to its practice. According to Eusebius, "much of [Constantine's] time was spent in composing discourses, many of which he delivered in public"; "the Emperor," he continues a little later, "was in the habit of composing his orations in the Latin tongue, from which they were translated

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27 On its composition in this period, see Gruen 1974, 508-23.
28 Cicero *Brutus* xcvi.329-30.
29 Ostrogorsky 1969, 38.
30 Treadgold 1997, 117.
31 Libanius *Autobiography* 254 (LCL 478:307).

into Greek by interpreters appointed for this special service."[32] The most substantial oration attributed to him by Eusebius is usually referred to under its Latin title *Ad coetum sanctorum*.[33] Not only in its many references to Greek and Latin literature (including Plato's *Timaeus* and Vergil's *Aeneid*, as well as the *Sibylline Oracles*) as an anticipation of the Christian gospel, but in its rhetorical form, it demonstrates its twofold debt to the classical and the biblical sources of Christian oratory.[34]

But the greatest contribution that Constantine's conversion made to rhetoric was to provide it with a new set of players: Christian bishops and preachers. Gibbon's somewhat surprising compliment to Athanasius, that "although his mind was tainted by the contagion of fanaticism, Athanasius displayed a superiority of character and abilities, which would have qualified him, far better than the degenerate sons of Constantine, for the government of a great monarchy,"[35] suggests that in the Christian Roman empire the priesthood and episcopate of the Church as a profession required—and sometimes drew—many of the intellectual and administrative talents that in the days of the pagan Roman republic had found their way into public service in the senate. The trajectory of the career of the Christian rhetor and public servant St Ambrose of Milan, from governor of Aemilia-Liguria to bishop of Milan to the emperor's loyal but unshakeable opposition, is a particularly illuminating example of the shift.[36]

Not only did this shift make the Christian bishop and preacher the heir of the classical rhetorical tradition, as for example Ambrose clearly was even to Augustine as a pagan rhetorician;[37] but the Christian bishops in council assembled became the new venue for deliberative rhetoric, in which, as Aristotle had described it, "someone urging something advises it as the better course and one dissuading dissuades on the ground that it is worse."[38] Unfortunately, we are not in as good a historical position as we might be to study these deliberations; for a recent

32. Eusebius *Life of Constantine* IV.29; 32 (NPNF-II 1:547-48).
33 Quasten 1951-86, 3:324-26.
34 Constantine *To the Assembly of the Saints* (NPNF-II 1:561-80).
35 Gibbon [1776-88] 1896-1900, 2:362 (ch. xxi).
36 McLynn 1994.
37 Augustine *Confessions* V.xiv.23-24 (Chadwick 1992, 87-89).
38 *Rhet* I.iii.5 1358b.

description of the state of the existing sources about the First Council of Nicaea in 325 applies to many of the later ecumenical councils as well: "No authentic acts of the council exist. If there were any minutes of the meetings taken, they have not survived. The only documents unquestionably coming from the council are the symbol of faith, the twenty canons, the certainly incomplete list of members, and a synodal letter addressed to the Church of Alexandria."[39] The situation is no better for the First Council of Constantinople in 381.[40] For the third ecumenical council, that of Ephesus in 431, however, the historical documentation becomes "incomparably better, but it is far from complete. The proceedings are set out in documents gathered together after the fact with clear apologetic intentions; they contain many blank spots, some of which are intentional."[41] But we are fortunate in having, for the Council of Chalcedon in 451, "a good record of the proceedings of the council itself, thanks to the minutes that have been preserved."[42] And for our purposes here that is enough, so that we can use the Council of Chalcedon as a test case of how the ecumenical council became a new venue for Christian deliberative rhetoric.

For from the preserved snatches of the deliberation out of which the doctrinal decrees and disciplinary canons of this fourth ecumenical council emerged we are able to see the workings of such a new deliberative rhetoric. Perhaps its most prominent feature was its reliance on the authority of Tradition, including Holy Scripture. Aristotle had discussed the role of "witnesses [*martyres*]" (including "poets, oracles, proverbs, and well-known persons" past and present) under judicial rather than under deliberative rhetoric; but when he laid it down as a rule that "ancient witnesses are the most credible [*pistotatoi d' hoi palaioi*]," he was enunciating a probative principle that could apply in the deliberative assembly at least as much as in the courtroom.[43] In the deliberations of the Roman senate, too, the *mos maiorum* had an important rhetorical role.[44] But in Christian deliberative rhetoric Tradition became decisive. One after another of the ecumenical councils included an explicit cross-reference to its predecessors: the Council of

39 L'Huillier 1996, 21.
40 L'Huillier 1996, 105.
41 L'Huillier 1996, 146.
42 L'Huillier 1996, 187.
43 *Rhet* I.xv.17 1376a.
44 Bloomer 1992.

Chalcedon in 451 first recited the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, and then opened its own dogmatic decree with the formula "Wherefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one voice teach," and closed it with the formula "even as the prophets from ancient times spoke of Him, and as Jesus Christ Himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed down to us."[45] In the debates and deliberations of the councils, one set of patristic quotations would be pitted against another, with the assembled fathers of the council being asked to adjudicate between them. Sometimes they even sent delegations to libraries and archives to authenticate the sources and avoid forgeries.

More ambiguous than the authority of the past and of Tradition is the question of the role of living authority in the deliberative rhetoric of an ecumenical council. In the light of later history it seems necessary to ask: In a council consisting of bishops assembled as equals, were some of them (and specifically the bishop of Rome), in the oxymoron made memorable by George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, "more equal than others"? Without addressing this as a theological question dividing East and West—at least here—we may observe that the rhetorical practice of the councils was hardly consistent. Therefore the bishops of the fourth ecumenical council at Chalcedon in 451 could hail "the letter of the primate of greatest and older Rome, the most blessed and most saintly Archbishop Leo," which was addressed to Flavian, primate of New Rome, in 449, on the grounds that "it is in agreement with great Peter's confession," so that Peter was speaking through the mouth of Leo.[46] But on the other hand, the bishops at the sixth ecumenical council at Constantinople in 680-681 could denounce as heretics both "Honorius, pope of elder Rome" and "Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, and Peter, who were bishops of this imperial city" of Constantinople, or New Rome.[47]

A Special Occasion for Epideictic Rhetoric: The Christian Valedictory Oration

The ecumenical council as a forum for Christian deliberative rhetoric could also sometimes provide an occasion for Christian epideictic

45 Tanner 1:84, 86-87.   47 Tanner 1:125.
46 Tanner 1:85.

rhetoric. For just as St Gregory of Nazianzus, usually surnamed "the Theologian" (as is the apostle and evangelist St John), is "the most important figure in the synthesis of Greek rhetoric and Christianity,"[48] so also one of the masterpieces among the texts of early Christian rhetoric is Gregory's valedictory to Constantinople composed in 381, Oration 42 in the standard collection, which is subtitled "The Last Farewell" in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church.[49] Except for its inadequate references to "the one hundred and fifty Bishops of the *Eastern* Church who took part in the Council" and "the Synod of its assembled Bishops," which is in fact accepted as a council of the Universal Church both Eastern and Western, the characterization of the oration in the introduction by the editors of that collection identifies its rhetorical and its personal qualities so succinctly that it deserves to be quoted in full:

> Historical as well as personal motives render the occasion of the deepest interest. The audience consisted of the one hundred and fifty Bishops of the Eastern Church who took part in the Council, and of the speaker's own flock, the orthodox Christians of Constantinople. He had by his own exertions gathered that flock together, after it had been ravaged by heretical teachers. He had won the admiration and affection of its members, by his courageous championship of the Faith, his lucid teaching, and his fatherly care for their spiritual needs. He had been, against his will, enthroned with acclamation in the highest ecclesiastical position in the Eastern Church, and called to preside over the Synod of its assembled Bishops.
>
> Finding himself unable to guide the deliberations of the Council in regard to a question of the highest importance, and perceiving that he himself and his position were made by some of the Bishops a fresh cause of dissension, he felt bound to resign his high office, and endeavor by this personal sacrifice to restore peace to the Church.
>
> His language is worthy of the occasion. Obliged to deal with the topics which had caused dissension, he handles them with gentle and discriminating tact; he speaks with great self-restraint in his own defense; he sets forth with tenderest feeling the common experiences of himself and his flock; he gives with dignity and clearness his last public exposition of the Faith; and finally, in language of exquisite beauty, spoken with the quivering tones of an aged man, he bids a tender farewell to his flock, his cathedral, and his throne, with all their affecting associations.

48 Kennedy 1994, 261.   49 NPNF-II 7:385-95.

It was an occasion whose pathos is unsurpassed in history. Orator and audience were alike deeply moved, and the emotion has been renewed in all those who have read his words, and realized the scene of their delivery.[50]

In masterful fashion, all three of the *pisteis* or "proofs" that Aristotle prescribed for an oration were marshaled here in the service of this historic occasion:[51]

Êthos. Striving for the mean, which he defined as a Christian humility without excessive "submissiveness" and a no less Christian self-assertion without "harshness,"[52] Gregory made clear, both theologically and autobiographically, just who and what he was as a bishop and theologian, and therefore what gave him the right—indeed the obligation—to speak as he did. He described himself as a "reconciler."[53] At the same time, by contrast with those "professors of the Divine philosophy [who] keep their piety entirely secret and hidden within themselves," he characterized himself as one of those "who make public their treasure, unable to restrain themselves from giving birth to their piety, and not considering that to be salvation which saves themselves alone, without bestowing upon others the overflow of their blessings."[54]

Pathos. Coming to the rhetorical assignment out of his pastoral experience and out of his involvement in the dogmatic controversies of the preceding decades, St Gregory addressed his valedictory to the "lovers of my discourses," with their "pencils seen and unseen," who had been listening to his orations and transcribing them.[55] He rang the changes of various "emotions [*patheis*]" catalogued by Aristotle in Book Two of the *Rhetoric*. "Confidence [*tharsos*]" was defined by Aristotle as "hope of safety accompanied by an imagination that it is near";[56] St Gregory was able to appeal to their sense of confidence in being citizens of Constantinople, this "mighty, Christ-loving city," which was "the eye of the universe, in its exceeding strength by sea and land, which is, as it were, the link between the Eastern and Western shores."[57] "Shame

50 NPNF-II 7:385.
51 *Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a.
52 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.13 (NPNF-II 7:390).
53 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.16 (NPNF-II 7:391).
54 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.14 (NPNF-II 7:390).
55 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.26 (NPNF-II 7:394).
56 *Rhet* II.v.16 1383a.
57 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.27; 10 (NPNF-II 7:394; 389).

[*aischynê*]" was defined by Aristotle as "a sort of pain and agitation concerning the class of evils, whether present or past or future, that seem to bring a person into disrespect";[58] Gregory the Theologian chided them over their inconstancy in the dogmatic disputes of the 360s and 370s, with its "rage for rivalry in expense and party spirit," as this was expressed both in church and at the hippodrome.[59] Aristotle had defined "pity [*eleos*]" as "a certain pain at an apparently destructive or painful evil happening to one who does not deserve it";[60] Nazianzen evoked this by recalling to them what they had done to him and how they had treated him.[61]

Logos. Because, as Aristotle specifies, persuasion deals with "things that seem to be capable of admitting two possibilities," and therefore with "things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are," rather than with "things incapable of being different either in past or future or present...; for there is nothing more to say" about such things,[62] Gregory appealed to bishops and people to preserve, protect, and defend loyalty to the sacred Tradition at all costs. To that end, he invoked the authority of "witnesses":[63] his hearers, "on behalf of whom and in whose presence I speak," were "my defense, my witnesses, and my crown of rejoicing";[64] beyond that, however, "following the Divine Scriptures, and removing out of the way of the blind the stumbling blocks contained in them," he spurned as "a very shameful thing for me at this time to be gathering together proofs for what has all along been believed."[65]

A special form of early Christian valedictory was the funeral oration of the Church, of which St Gregory of Nazianzus and St Ambrose of Milan were both outstanding practitioners.[66] These orations clearly stood in the classical tradition of the epideictic oration, as this was applied to the commemoration of the dead; the best-known example was the funeral oration of Pericles as reported by Thucydides.[67] (Later examples with clear affinities to this classical tradition are Mark

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58 *Rhet* II.vi.2 1383b.
59 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.22 (NPNF-II 7:392).
60 *Rhet* II.viii.2 1385b.
61 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.25 (NPNF-II 7:394).
62 *Rhet* I.ii.12-13 1357a.
63 *Rhet* I.xv.13-17 1375b-1376a.
64 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.2 (NPNF-II 7:386).
65 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.18 (NPNF-II 7:391).
66 McGuire 1953.
67 Thucydides *Peloponnesian War* II.34-46.

Antony's funeral oration for Julius Caesar in Act II of Shakespeare's play, and Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address of November 19, 1863.) But in the Christian version, the praise of the deceased for piety and orthodoxy is blended with the Christian confession expressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, "I look for the resurrection of the dead," to produce some of the most stirring literary gems, both Greek and Latin, to have come from Christian writers.

A Characteristic Christian Medium for Judicial Rhetoric: Doctrinal Controversy

In judicial rhetoric, according to Aristotle's definition, the important consideration was "the past, for [the speaker in court] always prosecutes or defends concerning what has been done"; therefore "a judicial speaker [might not deny] that he has done something or done harm, but he would never agree that he has [intentionally] done wrong."[68] The use of judicial rhetoric in such prosecution and defense took on a characteristically Christian quality with the edict that Emperor Theodosius I issued on February 27, 380 and that was then embodied in the *Theodosian Code*:

> ...that according to apostolic discipline and evangelical teaching, we should believe in one Deity, the sacred Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be worshiped in equal majesty. And we require that those who follow this rule of faith should embrace the name of Catholic Christians, adjudging all others madmen and ordering them to be designated as heretics... condemned as such, in the first instance, to suffer divine punishment, and, therewith, the vengeance of that power which we, by celestial authority, have assumed.[69]

This made deviation from orthodoxy in doctrine a crime politically as well as a sin doctrinally and morally, and the accusation of heterodoxy together with the response to such an accusation required not only the skills that had been developed in the history of Greek and Roman philosophical controversy (which is what historians have usually studied), but, in Aristotle's terms, a rhetorical "prosecution or defense concerning what has been done."

68 *Rhet* I.iii.4, 6 1358b.   69 *Theodosian Code* 16.1.2.

When the defender of orthodoxy against heresy was himself a trained Christian rhetor, this style of judicial rhetoric in the prosecution of false teaching and of false teachers took on a special identity. Among the many examples that could be examined, including the writings of Augustine the rhetor against the Manichaean, Donatist, and Pelagian heresies, the five *Theological Orations* of Gregory of Nazianzus, which are Orations 27-31 in the corpus of his rhetorical works, are an especially apt illustration, also because of the eminence of their author as "the greatest Greek orator since Demosthenes."[70] He shows his reading of Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which, as we have noted earlier, Socrates criticizes the rhetoric of the sophists and asks, "Do you know how you can act or speak about rhetoric so as to please God best?"[71] In these orations he makes full use of the enthymeme, which Aristotle called "a rhetorical syllogism,"[72] as a way of refuting the claims of his neo-Arian opponents, and he "also ridicules his adversaries' lack of ethics and moral purity, at least emphasizing Aristotle's sense of the speaker's *êthos*."[73] Therefore he sounds the rhetorical and the theological tone in his opening words: "I shall address my words to those whose cleverness is in words."[74] Clearly he was setting this sophistic and heretical rhetoric into contrast with his own rhetorical-theological principle: "to be of good words in treating of the Word."[75]

A Distinctive Genre for Christian Rhetoric: The Scriptural Homily

It was inevitable that these three Aristotelian "genera of rhetorics, *symbouleutikon* ['deliberative'], *dikanikon* ['judicial'], *epideiktikon* ['demonstrative'],"[76] would be profoundly modified when that principle of "good words in the treating of the Word" was superimposed upon them. But in the history of Christian rhetoric, all three of them put together, important though they have been, do not compare in sheer volume with the rhetoric of the homily based on a text of

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70 Kennedy 1983, 241.
71 Plato *Phaedrus* 274b.
72 *Rhet* I.ii.8 1356b.
73 Norris 1991, 35.

74 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 27.1 (Norris 1991, 217).
75 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.13 (NPNF-II 7:390).
76 *Rhet* I.iii.3 1358b.

Scripture. All three genera also made their contributions to the homily, in which, as these commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount by Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther all amply document, the preacher and theologian has denounced false doctrine, praised and commemorated the saints, and participated in the deliberations and decisions of the day, ecclesiastical and political. Most of the time, however, the rhetoric of the homily has been intended for the instruction and edification of the faithful in their day-by-day believing of the Christian message, their living of the Christian expectation of salvation, and their practice of Christian obedience—"faith, hope, love, these three."[77] Its use of "the available means of persuasion,"[78] therefore, developed its own distinctive modality.

The most notable characteristic of the Christian homily, not only theologically but also rhetorically, is its dependence on the biblical text. Statistically preponderant among the homilies of twenty centuries of Christian history has been the use of a text assigned for the particular Sunday or feast day. As the church year developed, prescribing the liturgical observance of the principal events in the life of Christ from Advent, Nativity, and Theophany to Passion, Pascha, and Ascension, as well as days devoted to particular saints and above all to Mary the Theotokos, the portions of the Gospels and Epistles appropriate to each gradually—but only gradually—became fixed.[79] Eventually, many of the Sundays acquired their special designation from the Gospel text (or "pericope," as it was finally called) that was read and preached upon on that day. The readings for the year could then be collected into a "lectionary." This practice makes it possible for the historian of biblical interpretation, and for the historian of Christian rhetoric, to follow the homiletical exegesis of a parable or miracle story from one century to the next, noting the continuities and changes as they were communicated to worshiping congregations.

Alongside such preaching on the "propers" for Sundays and holidays, however, the Church never gave up two other homiletical styles: the topical sermon, which strove to be biblical in its content and in its quotations from the Old and New Testament but which did not necessarily base itself

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77 1 Cor 13.13.
78 *Rhet* I.ii.1 1355b.

79 A splendid representative collection in Daley 1998.

on one specific passage; and the expository *lectio continua*, in which the preacher worked his way, verse by verse, through an entire book of the Bible, or at any rate several chapters. It is to that method of preaching that we owe all three of the expositions of the Sermon on the Mount being examined here. The special rhetorical style of that method, especially when the text in hand was from the Gospels, required the preacher to pay explicit attention to the rhetorical issues of *êthos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, not only in his own speaking, but supremely in that of the divine Speaker Himself. And nowhere in all the Gospels was the rhetorical challenge of handling these issues more formidable than in the Sermon on the Mount.

3

The Rhetorical Challenges of the Sermon on the Mount

If, as he claimed, Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* was discovering "the available means of persuasion,"[1] not inventing them, so that, as George A. Kennedy says, "his dispassionate analysis of rhetorical techniques is thus analogous to his analysis of the forms of plants and animals in his biological works, or of constitutions, and even of poetry... preserving objectivity and keeping an emotional distance from his subject as he might in dissecting an animal,"[2] there would appear to be nothing wrong with applying its definitions even to so monumental an example of divine rhetoric as the Sermon on the Mount. This was what, in the seventeenth century, Cornelius Norwood attempted on an ambitious scale in his *Divine Eloquence, or, An essay upon the tropes and figures contained in the Holy Scriptures and reduced under the proper titles and rhetorick*, finding illustrations in the biblical text for the various tropes and rhetorical figures familiar in classical manuals such as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.[3] Because, in Aristotle's opening definition, "Rhetoric is an *antistrophos* to dialectic" or logic,[4] this application of rhetorical categories to as sacred a text as the Sermon on the Mount would likewise seem to be analogous to the "instrumental use [*usus organicus*]" of logic and "true dialectic" in theology, as this was analyzed and defended, for example, by Clement of Alexandria, who urged that "those who hunt after the connection of the divine teaching must approach it with the utmost perfection of the logical faculty."[5]

The Sermon on the Mount as Challenge

"Nowhere in literature is there anything to match the Sermon on the

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1   *Rhet* I.ii.1 1355b.
2   Kennedy 1994, 56.
3   Norwood 1694.
4   *Rhet* I.i.1 (1354a).
5   Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* I.28 (ANF 2:340-41).

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Mount: if there is, let men bring it forward." Quoting this challenge from the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, a recent anthology of preaching through the ages has said of the Sermon on the Mount: "Its grandeur and its epitomization of an entire faith are astonishing." "This sermon of sermons," John F. Thornton and Katharine Washburn, the editors of that anthology, conclude, "remains for men and women of faith a standard by which all religious speech may be measured."[6] The Sermon on the Mount has been such a standard for Christian believers through the centuries. It is the Sermon on the Mount, more perhaps than any other portion of the Gospels, that has provided them with the content of Christian obedience to the welcoming invitation and the demanding summons of Christ that is recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, "If any would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."[7] The Sermon has at the same time issued a challenge to them by the extreme stringency of its requirements, for example: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away... And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away."[8] In response to the challenge of such demands, conscientious disciples of Christ in every age have repeatedly joined the first disciples in being "greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'"[9]

The challenge of the Sermon on the Mount has taken on special force for the professional practitioners of what Thornton and Washburn call "religious speech" in the Church, those Christian rhetors coming after Jesus who have undertaken to expound and to apply the "proclamation and exhortation"[10] of His Sermon on the Mount—or portions of it, such as the Lord's Prayer[11]—to their own hearers in their own time and place. Already in the early Church, the effort to understand the Sermon and—certainly no less difficult an assignment—to communicate that understanding to an often heterogeneous audience proved to be a formidable task for the Christian thinkers, writers, and preachers of the second and third centuries.[12] Their hearers would have been more or less familiar with the somewhat

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6 Thornton and Washburn 1999, 53.
7 Mt 16.24; Mk 8.34; Lk 9.23.
8 Mt 5.29-30; see pp. 138-40 below.
9 Mt 19.26.
10 Lambrecht 1985.
11 Simpson 1965.
12 R. Grant 1978.

similar techniques of Greco-Roman oratory past and present, as these were being practiced by politicians, philosophers, and moralists in deliberative assembles, in lawcourts, and in public gatherings.[13] If, as is often surmised for example in the case of Tertullian at the end of the second century,[14] the practitioner of Christian persuasion had come to the Christian faith from a career as an advocate, rhetorician, or lawyer, the Christian way of persuading would have much in common with the classical tradition of persuasive argument. But the Christian version of persuasive argument included the extremely important addition of the distinctively Christian emphasis, inherited from Jewish preaching, on the authority of the truth of divine revelation: in Tertullian's rhetorical formula against heresy, "They have the knack of persuading men before instructing them, although truth persuades by teaching, but does not teach by first persuading"—a distinction that has, to say the least, not always been easy to preserve in the history of Christian rhetoric.[15]

Nevertheless, the everpresent challenge of the Sermon on the Mount has become especially intense—and the study and interpretation of the Sermon, therefore, especially problematical—in the modern period. Ironically, many of those moderns who have been the most deeply alienated from the liturgy of the Church and who have been the most sharply critical of its dogma, especially its dogmas about the Trinity and the Incarnation, have insisted that they were more loyal than ever to the person of Jesus of Nazareth and to His authentic message, as this message was epitomized above all in the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and its Golden Rule.[16] The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow devoted the "Prelude" of his *Tales of a Wayside Inn* to such a modern disciple and expositor of that message:

> Skilful alike with tongue and pen,
> He preached to all men everywhere
> The Gospel of the Golden Rule,
> The New Commandment given to men,
> Thinking the deed, and not the creed,
> Would help us in our utmost need.

13 Bultmann 1910.
14 Quasten 1951-86, 2:246-48.

15 Tertullian *Against the Valentinians* 1 (ANF 3:504). See Sider 1971.
16 Mt 7.12; Lk 6.31.

As a result, it is probably fair to say that during the twentieth century, in the welter of the interpretations that have been charted by Ursula Berner, the Sermon on the Mount engaged the attention both of professional scholars and of general readers as it never had before.[17]

Yet it must be remembered at the same time that many, though not all, of the questions connected with the Sermon on the Mount that have been raised with special acuteness in the modern period have actually been relevant to every stage in the history of its interpretation.[18] Therefore the titles of three twentieth-century monographs about the Sermon and its Speaker can be used to provide a convenient basis for examining several exegetical issues and their perennial rhetorical challenges, including also the challenges that they represented for Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther, the three Christian rhetors being studied here.

The Quest of the Historical Jesus:[19]
The Strange New World Within the Bible

The most basic challenge of all that the Sermon on the Mount has always addressed to the Christian rhetor was the unavoidable circumstance that it remained located in a past that had to be recognized as in some significant sense an alien past, regardless of how close or how distant the rhetor himself might have been in time from the original event. In the words of the title of an influential modern monograph on the practice and the problems of historiography, "the past is a foreign country," and that is what it always remains.[20] To be able to say, as St John Chrysostom did, that in its written form a Sermon originally addressed to first-century hearers on a mountain in the Galilee "was intended for all men afterwards," past, present, or future,[21] was to assume that the great divide between past and present could be bridged and that anyone in any age and in any place could gain access to becoming a contemporary of the Speaker of the Sermon. That was, of course, one of the root assumptions of Christian faith: St Paul could dismiss a

17 Berner 1985. For specific studies, see   19 Schweitzer [1906] 1961.
    Dibelius 1948; Jeremias 1961; Betz 1985.   20 Lowenthal 1985.
18 Kissinger 1975 has assembled an extensive   21 *Chrys* 5.1-2.
    bibliography.

strictly chronological contemporaneity with the historical Jesus as secondary in importance and value to the union with Christ that was available to all, here and now (and in any here and now); for "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more,"[22] because the knowing "after the flesh" had been superseded by his union with Christ, and that of the Corinthians to whom he was writing decades after the original events of the life of Jesus. Therefore he could, without missing a beat, list his own encounter with the risen (and ascended) Christ as the last event in the catalogue of the other appearances that had taken place right after the Resurrection and before the Ascension.[23] For this encounter had made him contemporary to Christ, so that "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."[24]

The history that Albert Schweitzer—or, rather, the translator of his book into English, W. Montgomery—called "the quest of the historical Jesus" (the original title of the German version having been *History of Research into the Life of Jesus: From Reimarus to Wrede*) was a series of varied theological and historical methods, most of them coming out of liberal German Protestantism, for reaching a kind of contemporaneity with Christ. It would be possible, moreover, to multiply the number of portraits in Schweitzer's account by a factor of five or ten or more. For as the German title indicates, this is a history of the work of New Testament scholars, who have employed historical-critical methods in trying to find the historical figure described by the evangelists. The more strictly systematic-theological works of the same nineteenth-century period were also a "quest of the historical Jesus," which was intent on discovering new and supposedly more adequate ways to describe His significance. Beyond and behind such works was the vast body of rhetorical, homiletical, devotional, and liturgical expressions of "the quest" in many cultures and many languages. For example, Charles Monroe Sheldon's novel, *In His Steps*, which was first published in 1896 and which sold millions of copies in twenty-three languages, described a radical experiment in which a Protestant minister led an entire

22 2 Cor 5.16 (AV).   24 Gal 2.20.
23 1 Cor 15.3-8.

Christian community to achieve contemporaneity with Christ by applying His teachings and His example to every situation in life. All of these authors, whether scholarly or devotional, could be said to have engaged in a "quest of the historical Jesus" for the sake of achieving contemporaneity with Him.

Yet the rhetor in any period could not simplistically carry over that contemporaneity into his message. This was true in the first instance because of the barrier of language. Most New Testament scholars today assume that the original language of the Sermon (or of its oral sources) was Aramaic, a Semitic language related to but not identical with Hebrew.[25] Few of them, however, would still accept in its older form the theory of an original Aramaic Gospel, which had been based on a statement attributed to Papias and transmitted by Eusebius, that "Matthew wrote his oracles in the Hebrew language," that is to say, in Aramaic.[26] If the assumption that Christ spoke Aramaic is correct, the process of transposing the Sermon on the Mount from Aramaic into the present Koine Greek of the New Testament had already erected one such linguistic barrier. It is symbolized by the Aramaic word *Raca* in the warning of the Sermon, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."[27] All three of our Christian rhetors struggled to understand the word.[28] The Greek text on the basis of which Chrysostom prepared his commentary, the Latin translation on the basis of which Augustine prepared his commentary, the German translation that Luther himself had produced about a decade before he prepared his commentary, and the Authorized (King James) Version of the English Bible—all of these simply kept the original Aramaic word without attempting to translate it; and even after all the scholarly research of the twentieth century, the editors and translators of the Revised Standard Version were still unable to become more precise than to characterize it in a footnote as "an obscure term of abuse" and to translate the saying with "whoever insults his brother."[29]

That Aramaic vocable is only a trivial example of the deeper problem:

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25 *ABD* 4:173-78.

26 Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* III.xxxix.16 (NPNF-II 1:173).

27 Mt 5.22 (AV).

28 *Aug* 5.22; *Chrys* 5.22; *Luth* 5.22.

29 See *ABD* 5:605.

Should Christian rhetors, to achieve contemporaneity with the Speaker and the Sermon, speak in such a way as to transport the imagination of their hearers to first-century Palestine, or should they take the great risk of paraphrasing the Sermon into not only the language but the worldview of their own time and place? Luther's typically pungent criticism of "crazy saints who think that everyone is master of the whole world and is entitled to be delivered from all suffering, to roar and bluster and violently to defend his property" was directed against what he regarded as an overly facile resolution of this challenge by some interpreters of the Sermon in his time.[30] On the other hand, it is essential to note that separating all three of these commentators on the Sermon from the problems raised by the liberal scholars catalogued in Schweitzer's "quest of the historical Jesus" was their shared acceptance of the Orthodox teachings of the creeds of the ancient ecumenical councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, which Schweitzer, sharing in this way the position of most of his sources, called "the grave-clothes of the dogma of the Dual Nature."[31] The presupposition of that dogma was the Pauline teaching that being baptized identified the believer with the Death and the Resurrection of Christ.[32] Nevertheless, this presupposition did not dispose of the many obstacles between first-century Palestine and any later venue, be it fourth-century North Africa or the fourth-century Middle East or sixteenth-century Germany, as those obstacles were faced by Christian faith and in a unique way by Christian rhetoric.

The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount:[33] *Jesus and Judaism*

A special dimension of this problem of making the Sermon on the Mount contemporary was the additional unavoidable circumstance that in certain important respects the Sermon not only belonged to the "foreign country" of the past in general, but to a particular past and a specific context that most of Christian history, including all three of our commentators, looked upon as foreign: the worldview of Judaism. When the

30 *Luth* 5.5.
31 Schweitzer [1906] 1961, 3.
32 Rom 6.3-11.
33 Davies 1964.

second-century Christian writer St Justin Martyr, in his debate with Trypho the Jew, referred to the Bible of Judaism as "your Scriptures, or rather not yours, but ours,"[34] he was not only assigning to the collection of sacred books that Christians would eventually call "the Old Testament" a normative position in the Church that the attacks of Marcion and the Gnostics would not be able to undermine; he was also documenting the widening chasm between Judaism and Christianity, and was seeking to locate "the Old Testament" (albeit in the Greek of the Septuagint) on the Christian side of that chasm by appropriating it as exclusively Christian Scripture. Even wider, of course, was the chasm between Judaism and the New Testament, a chasm that Christian interpreters and translators of the New Testament have often taken every opportunity to emphasize and even to exaggerate. In the first chapter of St John's Gospel, the statement, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth through Jesus Christ," as it is rendered in the Revised Standard Version and most other contemporary English translations, appeared in the Authorized Version as: "For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," with the contrasting conjunction "but" gratuitously supplied by the translators.[35]

But one of the major achievements of New Testament scholarship in the twentieth century was the rediscovery of the Jewish setting of Jesus and the early Church. For one New Testament word after another, the articles in Gerhard Kittel's multi-volume *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* showed how steeped the writers of the Gospels and Epistles were in the vocabulary and imagery of the Jewish tradition—not only of the Hebrew Scriptures (though usually in the Septuagint Greek translation) but even of postbiblical Jewish literature. New scholarly attention to that literature, especially the Talmud, uncovered surprising analogies between the reading of Moses and the prophets in Jewish exegesis and the methods of interpretation at work in the New Testament. The writings of the Greek-speaking Jewish exegete and philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, who was a contemporary of Jesus and Paul, provide many striking parallels to various New Testament passages.[36] The rediscovery, by Christian scholars, of the Jewish

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34 Justin *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 29.2   35 Jn 1.17.
        (ANF 1:209).   36 Pelikan 1997, 67-87.

liturgical tradition has made it possible to find many echoes of it in early Christian ritual, including the rituals traced to the institution of Christ such as Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the washing of feet. Even the Pharisees, whom the Gospels consistently portray as the antagonists of Jesus and from whose teachings Paul describes himself as having been converted to the gospel, have come to be seen as bearing a much more complex relation to the ways of belief and practice of Christ and His disciples.[37] This reinterpretation of the Jewish setting has redefined the terms for reading the New Testament, including the Pauline corpus.[38]

The study of the Sermon on the Mount could not escape being fundamentally affected by these developments. Its language about contrast with the Old Law had been taken by the exegetical tradition, including our three commentators,[39] as an attack not on the law of Moses as such, which heretics such as Marcion had tried to make it, but on the Jewish, especially the Pharisaic, interpretation of the law of Moses. Its admonition to practice a righteousness that "exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees,"[40] combined with the polemic that immediately followed against "the men of old,"[41] had encouraged Christian preachers, who were almost always addressing a Christian audience made up of Gentiles (and were Gentiles themselves), to accentuate the differences of the Sermon from Judaism. But those differences have been shown to be only half of the story. Among the Christian scholars who have examined the Sermon on the Mount in this light, W. D. Davies, in his magisterial volume of 1964, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, has brought together materials which, for one verse of the Sermon after another, identify the theme of "New Exodus and New Moses" in the Sermon.[42] Jewish interpreters of the law of Moses, too, were intent on emphasizing that its prohibition of murder or adultery pertained not only to the outward physical act but to the inner mental disposition.[43] Davies himself was aware of the problem and the challenge that this investigation posed for the Christian interpreters of the Sermon, and

37 Bowker 1973.
38 Davies 1948.
39 See pp. 121-22, 126, 131 below.
40 Mt 5.20.

41 Mt 5.21; also Mt 5.27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44.
42 Davies 1964, 25-86.
43 Mt 5.22, 28.

he provided careful guidelines for also understanding how the "Mosaic categories [were] transcended."[44]

But the challenge remains, and has actually become more acute in important ways, for there have been radical changes in the relationship between Judaism and Christianity during the twentieth century. Above all, the Nazi Holocaust has raised for Christians, not only in Germany but throughout the world, the question of whether there was any complicity of Christian teaching, and specifically of Christian biblical exegesis, in creating a moral atmosphere within which anti-Semitism had flourished. Out of that new sensitivity came such fundamental reconsiderations of the relationship to Judaism as the declaration of the Second Vatican Council, *Nostra aetate*, promulgated on October 28, 1965, that "the Church... mindful of its common inheritance with the Jews and motivated not by political considerations but by the religious charity of the gospel, deplores feelings of hatred, persecutions, and demonstrations of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at whatever time and by whomsover," this "by whomsoever" including by implication some who had occupied the very highest places within the Church.[45] There have also been corresponding actions by other Christian groups. As a result both of the work of New Testament scholars and of the changes in Christian attitudes toward Judaism, the exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount has become increasingly complex for its Christian interpreters. That complexity is, however, the reinforcement of the challenge that the Jewish setting of the Sermon and of the entire New Testament has in fact represented all along for both theology and rhetoric. So many of the customs, beliefs, and technical terms of Judaism that the Gospel writers (and in some respects St Matthew most of all, as in the Sermon on the Mount) felt able to take for granted in the first generations of the Church had to be explained for the generations that followed. Even within the New Testament, the account of the marriage at Cana in St John's Gospel, for example, is obliged to explain to its Greek Christian readers that in an observant home jars of water were kept "for the Jewish rites of purification," prescribed by the law of Moses.[46] Each step in the increasing "de-Judaization of Christianity"[47] during the centuries since

44 Davies 1964, 93-108.   46 Jn 2.6; see also Mk 7.3-4.
45 Tanner 2:971.   47 Pelikan 1971-89, 1:12-24.

then has set up another barrier between the Christian hearer listening to a homily based on the Sermon on the Mount—or, for that matter, the Christian rhetor expounding the Sermon in a homily—and the Jewishness of the Sermon itself.

Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus:[48] *Interim or Universal?*

Although the actual phrase "eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus" comes from the title of a book by Amos N. Wilder, the challenge it represents is associated most closely with the names of Albert Schweitzer and, before him, of Johannes Weiss.[49] They held that the message of Jesus was essentially an apocalyptic one: it was grounded in the belief that (conflating two petitions of the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount) the "kingdom" of God was soon to come "on earth as it is in heaven,"[50] bringing on the end of the world and of history; and that Jesus chose to undergo suffering and death as a means (which proved to be mistaken and futile) to bring on the coming of the kingdom.[51] Based as it was on this vision of the kingdom, the ethic of Jesus, especially in its more extreme demands,[52] was seen by these interpreters not as a universal system of ethics to be followed in all times and places, but as an "interim ethic" for those who (mistakenly) awaited the end in their own lifetime. The lead of Weiss and Schweitzer has been followed by an entire school of exegesis, usually labeled "consistent eschatology." The theory of "realized eschatology," articulated especially by C. H. Dodd, was a direct response to it: in the teachings of Jesus, as epitomized in their most distinctive form, which was the parable, the kingdom of God—which sometime "falls well within the framework of contemporary Judaism," but sometimes goes beyond it[53]—was announced as a present reality, which was at work in the here and now as "the manifest and effective assertion of divine sovereignty against all the evil of the world."[54] Taking off from the assumptions of "consistent eschatology,"

48 Wilder 1939.
49 Weiss [1892] 1971.
50 Mt 5.10.
51 Perrin 1964 and Chilton 1984 review the various schools of interpretation; for a

brief analysis of the vast body of scholarship, see *ABD* 2:594-609.
52 For example, Mt 5.29-30.
53 Dodd 1961, 34-35.
54 Dodd 1961, 41.

Martin Werner interpreted the disappointment of "the postponement of
the *parousia*" and the consequent "de-eschatologization [*Enteschato-
logisierung*]" of the Christian message in the second and third centuries
as the decisive crisis that brought on both the stabilization of such Chris-
tian institutions as the monarchical episcopate and the movement to-
ward fixed formulas of teaching and dogma.[55] But the evidence for this
supposed crisis is in fact extremely slim in the sources of the first two or
three centuries, so that it is more satisfactory, even on historical grounds,
to view the eschatology of the Gospels and the Sermon on the Mount,
and following it that of the early Church, as a dialectic between "already"
and "not yet."[56]

Not only historically but also rhetorically, such a dialectic between
"already" and "not yet" was the dominant method in all three of the
commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount being studied here for
interpreting and communicating the challenge of the relation between
"eschatology and ethics." Of the three, St John Chrysostom was in
many respects the most articulate in formulating what might be called
a "rhetoric of the kingdom."[57] For as Leduc has shown, eschatology was
"a central preoccupation" of Chrysostom's thought and preaching, not
only in this commentary but throughout his expositions of Scripture.[58]
The rhetoric of St Augustine, too, preserved the dialectic, as in his
insistence that "the coming of His kingdom, in which He will come in
splendor, will be manifested not from the time the world has ended,
but in the ending of the world."[59] And Luther's theory of "the two
kingdoms" was both a theological and a rhetorical tool for coping with
the dialectic and for formulating an ethic that could be universal and
particular at the same time.[60]

An apt illustration of the dialectic of "already" and "not yet" in the
text of the Sermon on the Mount, as well as of the alternative rhetorical
methods for coping with it, is the contrast between the two New Testa-
ment versions of the text of the first Beatitude: Should it read as it does
in St Matthew's version, "Blessed are the poor *in spirit*, for theirs is the
kingdom of heaven," or as it does in St Luke's version, "Blessed are *you*

55 Werner [1941] 1957.   58 Leduc 1969.
56 Pelikan 1971-89, 1:123-32.   59 *Aug* 6.13; see pp. 135-36 below.
57 See pp. 139-40 below.   60 See pp. 145-46 below.

poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"?[61] For even from the point of view of purely literary investigation, one of the most fascinating problems in the study of the Sermon on the Mount in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St Matthew is its relation to the "Sermon on the Plain" in the sixth chapter of St Luke.[62] A careful examination of parallels and differences and of their possible sources by C.F. Georg Heinrici at the beginning of the twentieth century brought together in a useful format much of the material for a comparison of the two sermons.[63] Those who have regarded both versions as, essentially, stenographic accounts of the *ipsissima verba* of the proclamation of Jesus have interpreted them as in fact two distinct sermons that shared some common material, which were delivered on two separate occasions and in two different places, while those who interpret the Gospels primarily as texts coming out of the memory and the experience of the early Church have accounted for the differences partly on the basis of the Jewish-Christian audience of Matthew and the Gentile-Christian audience of Luke.[64]

The contrast between the two has been sharpened in modern times by the rhetorical accents of Roman Catholic "liberation theology." Liberation theology has used the version in St Luke's Sermon on the Plain, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," as an antidote to the excessively "spiritual" and socially quietistic ethic that traditional exegesis (including that of our three rhetoricians) found in the language of the first Beatitude in the more familiar words of the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That has made Luke's Gospel, and especially this Beatitude, a major support of the "option for the poor," which has gained a wide following across the traditional denominational divisions of the Western Church between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.[65] To identify precedents for its emphasis, this method of interpreting the Sermon on the Mount as "proclamation and exhortation"[66] has not turned primarily to the traditions of both Eastern and Western "divine rhetoric" that are represented by our three rhetoricians, Augustine,

61 Mt 5.3; Lk 6.20.
62 Feine 1885.
63 Heinrici 1900-1905.
64 *ABD* 5:1106-12.
65 Lohfink 1986.
66 Lambrecht 1985.

Chrysostom, and Luther. Instead, it has been chiefly to the figure of St Francis of Assisi and to his radical theology of poverty that liberation theology has been drawn. As Beyschlag has shown, the demands of the Sermon on the Mount shaped the spirituality of Francis in decisive fashion.[67] This issue, too, is part of the rhetorical challenge of the Sermon on the Mount as it sets forth "eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus": In speaking to the poor or about the poor, should the Christian preacher-rhetor present the promise of the "the kingdom of God" in the Beatitudes and throughout the Sermon primarily as a ground for eschatological hope or as a call to action, perhaps even to revolutionary action?[68]

The Sermon on the Mount was both a message for the Christian rhetorician to deliver to his particular audience and a model to the Christian rhetorician of how the supreme Rhetor proceeded when He was delivering His message to His audience. Therefore we need to pay attention, first, to the rhetors themselves, and then to the rhetoric of the Sermon and the Speaker as the rhetors interpreted it.

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67 Beyschlag 1955.   68 *ABD* 5:414-24.

II

The Rhetors and the Sermon
on the Mount

A job census of the Christian church fathers discloses a truly impressive number of rhetoricians (or, as they would have put it, ex-rhetoricians) among them. The "three hierarchs" (St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian, and St John Chrysostom), to whom many churches are dedicated, are united chiefly not by their theology, which (with Chrysostom joining the two Cappadocians) rather demonstrates the diversity that was still possible within the borders of post-Nicene Orthodoxy, but by their Christian rhetoric. St Basil, as Johannes Quasten describes him, "received his elementary training from his father Basil, a famous rhetorician at Neocaesarea in Pontus..., attended for his higher education the schools of rhetoric at his native Caesarea, at Constantinople, and finally, after 351, at Athens... He returned to his native city about 356 and began his career as a rhetorician."[1] St Gregory of Nazianzus has been called "the most important figure in the synthesis of Greek rhetoric and Christianity."[2] And St John Chrysostom earned that sobriquet by becoming the rhetorical ornament of Antioch and Constantinople.[3]

To understand these and other church fathers, therefore, we must connect them not only to the tradition of classical philosophy, which is the way they have usually been read, but likewise to the tradition of classical rhetoric, and specifically to the dilemma of "rhetoric and virtue" in that tradition, as this has been described earlier.[4] For both of the terms in that dilemma took on radically new meanings when Christian thinkers were handling them. "Virtue" meant not only the four classical or "cardinal" virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, as Plato, Aristotle, and the later Greek and Latin moralists had considered them,[5] but in addition the three distinctively Christian or "theological" virtues of "faith, hope, and charity," as St Paul had

1   Quasten 1951-86, 3:204.
2   Kennedy 1994, 261.
3   Florovsky 1972-89, 7:240-41.
4   See pp. 3-18 above.
5   Pieper 1966.

articulated them;[6] eventually this produced seven virtues, to which then the seven cardinal sins were set as a demonic parallel. And "rhetoric" now was taken to mean not the practice of the tricks of the trade or the display of eloquence, which Socrates had accused the Sophists of practicing and which Aristotle simultaneously scorned and studied, but a measured use of "good words in treating of the Word."[7] Both the rhetoric and the virtue, moreover, had found their supreme embodiment in the the same place, namely, the person and the message of Jesus Christ; and of all the statements of that message, none could be compared with His Sermon on the Mount. In the summary statement of Augustine:

> If anyone piously and soberly considers the sermon which our Lord Jesus Christ preached on the mount, as we read it in the Gospel according to Matthew, I think that he will find in it, as regards the highest morals, the perfect measure of the Christian life.... All the precepts which have to do with shaping this life are in it.... This sermon is filled with all the precepts by which the Christian life is formed.[8]

This is an examination of three sermonic expositions of the Sermon on the Mount, representing the Latin and Catholic tradition (St Augustine), the Greek and Orthodox tradition (St John Chrysostom), and the Reformation and Protestant tradition (Martin Luther). Each is acknowledged in his tradition, and well beyond it, as a "prince of the pulpit." The most distinctive feature of these three Christian rhetors, so obvious that it can easily be overlooked, is that in their rhetorical commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount they were interpreting Holy Scripture, and therefore expounding the rhetoric of Another. For each of the themes that will be considered in "The Rhetoric of the Sermon on the Mount," Part III of this book—"*Êthos*: The Authority of the Speaker"; "*Pathos*: The 'Frame of Mind' of the Audience"; "*Logos*: The Argument of the Message"—they were therefore concerned in the first instance with Christ's authority, with Christ's audience, with Christ's message. Each of these, in turn, provided each of them with an occasion, and a foil, for a consideration of the rhetor's own situation—his authority, his audience, and his message.

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6 1 Cor 13.13.   8 *Aug* 5.1.
7 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 42.13
   (NPNF-II 7:390).

4

Augustine: "Professor of Rhetoric"

St Augustine of Hippo is surely one of the two or three most important and influential figures in the history of Christian doctrine. Although the nominations for this category would vary greatly from one scholar to another, it is safe to say that Augustine's name—and perhaps his alone—would be on everyone's list. His formulation of the doctrine of the Church and the Sacraments against Donatism laid the foundations for sacramental theology in the Medieval West, even though he was much clearer in his ideas about Baptism than he was in his eucharistic theology. His doctrine of sin and grace, worked out most fully during the conflict with Pelagianism, has shaped the thought of Western theologians as different from each other as Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. It was his idiosyncratic version of the Catholic and Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, specifically on the procession of the Holy Spirit not from the Father only but also from the Son, *ex Patre Filioque*, that became the principal dogmatic difference between the Eastern and the Western Church. Even from the perspective of secular literature and thought, his great masterpieces of reflection, the *Confessions* about the individual and the *City of God* about world history, would belong in any library of the great books of Western civilization, in a way that very few other works by theologians would. In the words of von Campenhausen, "Augustine is the only church father who even today remains an intellectual power. Irrespective of school and denomination, he attracts pagans and Christians, philosophers and theologians alike by his writings and makes them come to terms with his intentions and his person."[1]

The life and the writings of Augustine are dominated by themes coming from the Bible. From his several expositions of the Book of

1   Campenhausen 1964, 183.

Genesis to his massive *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, undertaken as he was also composing his treatise *On the Trinity* and shaping the exegetical arguments in that treatise, he was unremittingly engaged in seeking to make sense of the biblical text. That meant primarily the Latin text, for his grasp of Greek, even of New Testament Greek, never reached the level of scholarly competence that he himself would have desired. The very event of Augustine's conversion to Orthodox and Catholic Christianity—which modern historians, theologians, and even psychoanalysts have sought to explain on a great variety of grounds—actually came through a direct confrontation with a text of the Bible. When he heard the voice of a child in the garden telling him "Pick up and read [*Tolle, lege*]," it was a text of St Paul that he took and read: "not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."[2] He did not need to read any further, he explained.[3] But he would actually devote the rest of his life to "taking and reading," both by obeying that imperative and by trying to understand the text of the Bible.

The Theologian as Preacher and Biblical Interpreter

The history of Christian doctrine is the record of how the Church has interpreted the Scriptures. In fact, as Gerhard Ebeling has suggested, not only the history of Christian doctrine but the entire history of the Christian Church could be read as the account of its efforts to find and to articulate the meaning of the Scriptures among the manifold changes of its historical development.[4] For example, the history of monasticism could be seen as a lengthy commentary on the statement of St Peter to Christ: "We have left everything and followed you."[5] The history of papal claims to supremacy over the Church, conversely, is a lengthy commentary on the statement of Christ to St Peter: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."[6] In this way it would be possible to interpret many aspects of the Church's history in the light

2   Rom. 13.13-14.   4   Ebeling 1947.
3   Augustine *Confessions* VIII.xii.29   5   Mt 19.27.
     (Chadwick 1992, 152-53).   6   Mt 16.18.

of the particular biblical imperative to which they have sought to give expression. The history of doctrine is, of course, the most obvious aspect of Christian history in which the interpretation of the Scriptures has figured very prominently—especially if the history of doctrine includes, as the example of Augustine shows that it must, the history of preaching.

As an interpretation of what has actually happened in the development of the Church and of its doctrine, however, this generalization is true, and it is not true. It is true that the history of doctrine has been dominated by themes and issues set down in the Scriptures, and that the theologians of the Church have repeatedly found it necessary to reappropriate these scriptural themes and issues. At the same time, some scholars have concluded that the generalization as it stands seems to assign to other decisive factors of theological and ecclesiastical history only an ancillary function in relation to the exegesis of the Scriptures. In the judgment of H. Richard Niebuhr, for example,

> Opinions as to church polity, varying from denomination to denomination, have been based in theory on New Testament reports of primitive church organization. The episcopal, the presbyterian, and the congregational forms have each been set forth as representing the original and ideal constitution of the Christian church. Yet the relationship of these forms to the political experience and desire of various groups is considerably more pertinent than is their relationship to the New Testament.[7]

One may or may not wish that it were accurate to describe the history of Christian thought and institutions as the record of the history of exegesis. But it remains true that any such interpretation would fail to account for the variety of motifs and movements in the history of the Christian community.

This much, however, seems sure: the interpretation of the Scriptures *has* played a role of greater import and influence in the history of Christian doctrine than it does in the histories of dogma and doctrine composed by many modern historical theologians. Entire histories have been written—histories of a whole section of the Church, of an entire era in church history, or of a major theological problem—which do not seriously consider the possibility that at least one of the decisive

7 Niebuhr 1929, 14-15.

elements in the thought and action of a Christian individual or group
may have been the way they interpreted the Bible.[8] And this in the face
of the fact that these individuals and groups frequently made the claim
that they were speaking and acting as expounders of the Sacred Scrip-
tures. Influenced by recent trends in systematic theology and influenc-
ing them in turn, church history and the history of doctrine have
begun to reappraise the significance of exegesis for the development of
Christian doctrine. This reappraisal is one of the principal shifts in the
study of the history of doctrine since the middle of the twentieth cen-
tury. As Gerhard Ebeling predicted at that time, "It will be necessary to
correct the one-sided emphasis upon the history of dogma characteris-
tic of previous research in church history, in favor of the history of her-
meneutics and biblical interpretation."[9]

That shift from "the history of dogma" to "the history of hermeneu-
tics and biblical interpretation" makes it possible to see a figure such as
St Augustine more completely and more fairly. For it is striking to note
that the only treatise that Augustine wrote with the word "doctrine" in
its title was *De doctrina christiana*, which does not deal with what we
would now call "doctrine" or "dogma," but with hermeneutics and
with homiletics, first with the principles and methods of biblical inter-
pretation and then with the principles and methods of Christian com-
munication. The fourth and final book of that treatise, which he added
in 426, only a few years before his death, is basically a manual of Chris-
tian rhetoric for the preacher. It was intended, as he said in his *Retracta-
tions*, "to give directions about the method of communicating our
interpretation,"[10] after the first three books had dealt with the methods
of sound biblical interpretation as such. The true theologian and inter-
preter of Scripture had to be a preacher.[11] It was, according to Augus-
tine, the greatness of St Paul that he combined soundness of content
with effectiveness of form, even to the point of following, perhaps
unconsciously, the classical rules of eloquence.[12] For although such
rules were useful and proper also for the Christian rhetor, the most

8 Elert 1957, 313-33.
9 Ebeling 1947, 25-26.
10 Augustine *Retractations* ii.4.

11 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* IV.iv.6
    (NPNF-I 2:576).
12 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* IV.vii.11
    (NPNF-I 2:577-78).

important characteristic of his public speaking was its instruction of the faithful. And this is what *doctrina* meant to Augustine: not the devices of rhetoric for their own sake, nor the erudition of dogmatics for its own sake either; but the happy wedding of content with form in the communication of the Christian message. *On Christian Doctrine*, therefore, turns out to be anything but a miniature systematic theology, because for its author "doctrine" meant, above all, preaching. George Howie, with considerable justification, translates the title as *Christian Education*, and Garry Wills as *Instruction*.[13] What Karl Barth once said of F.D. Schleiermacher can be said also of Augustine (as of Chrysostom and of Luther), that he "was not one of those theologians who are in the habit, under some pretext or other, of dissociating themselves from the most difficult and decisive theological situation, that in which the theologian, without security of any kind, must prove himself solely as a theologian. I refer to the situation of the man in the pulpit."[14]

It seems safe to say that later students of St Augustine have not put the same emphasis on his preaching and his biblical exegesis that he did. In some library stacks, the volumes of Augustine's polemical writings have been rebound several times, but the sermons and exegetical works still stand there gleaming in their original bindings—and occasionally even with some of their pages uncut! Editions and translations of the *City of God*, and especially of the *Confessions*, continue to proliferate—some of them, notably the nearly simultaneous critical edition of the *Confessions* by James J. O'Donnell and English translation of it by Henry Chadwick, being major works of scholarship and literature in their own right[15]—while some of his most important works of preaching and biblical exposition are only now being put into English for the first time. It has been suggested that one reason for this difference of emphasis is that although "Augustine's pre-eminent influence as a theologian and doctor of the Church has been felt in every age," his work as a pastor and preacher "was experienced chiefly during his lifetime."[16] An even deeper reason, however, seems to lie in the shift of interest among historians of Christian doctrine from the understanding of *doctrina* reflected in the title of Augustine's treatise to the understanding of the word that

13 Howie 1969, 338-89; Wills 1999, 70-73.
14 Barth 1959, 310.
15 O'Donnell 1992; Chadwick 1992.
16 Joseph Bernardin, in Battenhouse 1955, 85.

theology shares with philosophy. As the historian of medieval philosophy Etienne Gilson once observed, "during the past hundred years the
general tendency among historians of medieval thought seems to have
been to imagine the middle ages as peopled by philosophers rather than
theologians." As a result, he asks, "in the midst of such an abundance
of histories of medieval philosophy, how many histories of medieval
theology are there to be found? As against twenty volumes on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, how many historical expositions of his
theology are there?"[17] The literature on Augustine is by no means as
lopsided as is that on Aquinas; as it happens, one of the few first-rate
interpretations of the philosophy of Augustine, as distinguished from
his theology, was written by Etienne Gilson.[18] But with some notable
exceptions, the theology of Augustine has been related much oftener to
his Neoplatonism than to his exegesis, not to mention his preaching.
There does, for example, seem to be something askew in an interpretation of Augustine's relation to his predecessors which can dismiss the
exegetical arguments in the first half of *On the Trinity* as "the *mere*
proof of the dogma from Scripture."[19] At the very least, this would
appear to be a fundamental revision of what Augustine himself understood to be the role of the proof from Scripture in the formulation of a
theology—which was anything but "mere"—and hence of the role of
biblical preaching as a theological task and a theological resource.

Augustine as Pagan Rhetorician

Of the three Christian rhetors being examined here, Augustine was the
only one who not only practiced rhetoric but had taught it. He was, as
he himself says in the *Confessions*, a "professor of rhetoric," and was engaged in "the profession of rhetoric" before he became a Christian.[20] He
was also the only one of the three who not only taught rhetoric and practiced it, but who then, as a Christian theologian, went on to compose a
formal treatise on the subject. All of this puts him into a unique position.

Describing the eight or so years during which he had been a Manichaean, Augustine, now a Catholic Christian, explained in the *Confessions*:

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17 Gilson 1957, 156.
18 Gilson 1969.

19 Schindler 1965, 129; italics added.
20 Augustine *Confessions* VI.vii.11; IX.iv.7
    (Chadwick 1992, 99; 159).

> During those years I used to teach the art of rhetoric. Overcome by greed myself, I used to sell the eloquence that would overcome an opponent. Nevertheless, Lord, as you know, I preferred to have virtuous students (virtuous as they are commonly called). Without any resort to a trick I taught them the tricks of rhetoric, not that they should use them against the life of an innocent man, but that sometimes they might save the life of a guilty person.[21]

He resisted the temptation here in his *Confessions* simply to lump the teaching and practice of the art of rhetoric with the other sins of his youth, from concubinage to the notorious theft of fruit, all of which he repented and was now confessing so publicly.[22] But, in what may be the reminiscence of a real-life incident, he acknowledges that what he taught his students as "the tricks of rhetoric" had been used on at least one occasion to thwart justice by preventing the execution of a man who deserved to die; for with Cicero he believed that it was better for a guilty person to go free than for an innocent person to be condemned.[23] From the careful researches of Testard it seems safe to conclude that also as a pagan rhetorician Augustine had been a Ciceronian.[24] His reading not only of Cicero's rhetorical works but also of his philosophical writings is evident from his tribute to Cicero's *Hortensius* (now lost), which, he says to God, the true God, "altered my prayers, Lord, to be towards you yourself. It gave me different values and priorities."[25] He manifested the sometimes ambiguous combination of moral concerns with technical rhetoric that had characterized Cicero:[26] the teaching of technical rhetoric, he admitted, had been the result of his "desire for gain"; nevertheless he had been interested in having "virtuous students." For Augustine the pagan rhetorician, as for Cicero, his mentor and model, it was not easy to hold these together.

The years that Augustine spent as a pagan rhetorician left a permanent mark on his later years as a Christian priest and bishop. He himself made the connection between the two in several ways. He was speaking as a former professor of rhetoric when he described himself as one who had already begun to realize that "fine style does not make something

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21 Augustine *Confessions* IV.ii.2 (Chadwick 1992, 53).

22 Augustine *Confessions* II.iv.9-II.x.18 (Chadwick 1992, 28-34).

23 Cicero *De officiis* 2.51.

24 Testard 1958, 1:41-79.

25 Augustine *Confessions* III.iv.7 (Chadwick 1992, 38-39).

26 See pp. 14-15 above.

true, nor has a man a wise soul because he has a handsome face and well-chosen eloquence,"[27] but who still found himself emphasizing form more than content. That it was that led him, upon being appointed a teacher of rhetoric in Milan, to go to hear the most cele-brated public speaker in that city, formerly a civil servant and now its Catholic bishop, St Ambrose.[28] While listening to Ambrose preach the gospel, Augustine "hung on his diction in rapt attention, but remained bored and contemptuous of the subject-matter. My pleasure was in the charm of his language." And yet in spite of himself, "together with the words which I was enjoying, the subject matter, in which I was uncon-cerned, came to make an entry into my mind.... While I opened my heart in noting the eloquence with which he spoke, there also entered no less the truth which he affirmed, though only gradually,"[29] the mes-sage of the Christian faith which Ambrose was using his eloquence to proclaim and which changed Augustine's life forever. And now he turned away from the rhetorical emphasis on form to the content of the message instead. In this sense Augustine's professional interest in classical rhetoric and in its practitioners, even if they happened to be Christian clergy, contributed directly to his conversion.

It was also as a former professor of pagan rhetoric though now a Catholic bishop, with a practiced eye for gauging the reactions of audiences and their "frame of mind,"[30] that he described what was going on with the Christian preaching of his own day:

> The masses flock to the churches..., where they learn how they may so spend this earthly life as to merit a blessed eternity hereafter, where Holy Scripture and instruction in righteousness are proclaimed from a raised platform in presence of all, that both those who do the word may hear to their salvation, and they who do it not may hear to judgment. And though some enter who scoff at such precepts, all their petulance is either quenched by a sudden change or is restrained through fear or shame.[31]

From that closing sentence it seems safe to conclude that by the time he wrote these words in his *City of God*, he had had the same experience

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27 Augustine *Confessions* V.vi.10 (Chadwick 1992, 77-78).
28 McLynn 1994.
29 Augustine *Confessions* V.xiii.23-xiv.24

(Chadwick 1992, 87-88).
30 *Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a (Freese).
31 Augustine *The City of God* II.28 (NPNF-I 2:41).

with others that Ambrose had had with him. And Augustine was also speaking as a former professor of pagan rhetoric who had now become a practitioner of Christian rhetoric when he described Christ as the master Rhetor, and supremely so in the Sermon on the Mount.[32]

Augustine's Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount

In the corpus of Augustine's sermons and biblical expositions, the books of the Old Testament, especially Genesis and the Psalms, bulk large. But the four Gospels, as the account of the deeds and sayings of Jesus, deserved a special position of reverence. At the beginning of his commentary on the harmony of the Gospels, *De consensu evangelistarum*, Augustine said: "In the entire number of those divine records which are contained in the sacred writings, the Gospel deservedly stands pre-eminent," using the word "Gospel" as it was used in the titles of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, to refer to the accounts of the evangelists, not, as St Paul used the word, to refer more specifically to the preaching of the Cross.[33] For although Jesus, like Socrates, had written nothing Himself, the four records of His life and teachings derived their special authority from Him.[34] In the liturgy since very early times, the reading of the Gospel had been accompanied by special ceremony, especially, it would seem, in the Christian East. For St Augustine's contemporary, St Jerome, writing from Jerusalem, reported that "throughout the whole Eastern Church... whenever the Gospel is read, the candles are lighted, even though dawn may be reddening the sky—not, of course, to scatter the darkness, but as a way of giving evidence of our joy."[35] From the commentaries on the Gospels prepared by Origen it is clear that although he attributed the entire Bible to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, neither the Old Testament nor the Epistles could be put on the same level as "the account of the acts concerning Jesus and His experiences and words."[36] And in this respect as in others, Origen was speaking as "a man of the Church."[37]

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32 See pp. 101-5 below.
33 Rom 1.16-17; see pp. 89-91 below.
34 Augustine *The Harmony of the Gospels* I.i.1; I.vii.12 (NPNF-I 6:77; 6:82).

35 Jerome *Dialogue Against Vigilantius* 7 (NPNF-II 6:420).
36 Hanson 1959, 210.
37 Lubac 1950, 47-91.

Augustine identified himself with this Tradition of the Church when he became a Christian. In the study of the Scriptures that had preceded his conversion, it was, he related, St Paul on whom he especially concentrated; and a passage from the thirteenth chapter of Romans was the text that finally filled his heart with full certainty and made him a Catholic.[38] At Cassiciacum he gave special attention to the Psalms, forming an orthodox exegesis of them over against the Manichaeans;[39] this took definitive form in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, which were to occupy him from 392 to 420. But in the Epistles of Paul and in the Psalms, the real author and teacher, according to Augustine, was Christ. Despite the efforts by some modern scholars to argue that it was in fact to Neoplatonism rather than to Catholic and Orthodox Christianity that he was converted,[40] it does seem clear that on the basis of this understanding of Christ the Teacher, the newly converted Augustine set about the assignment of understanding the teachings of Christ. And when he became a priest, one of the first tasks to which he turned was the exposition of those teachings, as they were quintessentially contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

The dates of the exposition cannot be determined with precision. It came after Augustine's ordination (early in 391) and before his consecration as bishop (between May 4, 395 and the end of 396). In the course of his exposition of the saying of Jesus about the two trees he refers to other writings in which he had replied to the Manichaean use of this passage.[41] He seems to have in mind his *Disputation Against Fortunatus*, written in August 392.[42] A second cross-reference to other writings comes at the very end, where he seems to be alluding to his *On the Psalms*, and to a portion written also in 392.[43] Most scholars would agree, then, that Augustine's duties as a preacher caused him to take up the greatest Sermon of them all and that he did so sometime between the end of August 392 and the latter part of 396. The most plausible explanation of how the exposition developed would appear to be that of Adolf Holl, that it "has the external form of a treatise, not that of sermons that were

38 Augustine *Confessions* VII.xxi.27; VIII.xii.29   40 Alfaric 1918.
    (Chadwick 1992, 130-32; 152-53).   41 *Aug* 7.16-20.
39 Augustine *Confessions* IX.iv.8 (Chadwick   42 NPNF-I 4:113-24.
    1992, 160).   43 *Aug* 7.26-29.

taken down as delivered, but on the other hand it can hardly deny its derivation from the spoken word."[44] The first half of Holl's explanation is corroborated by the division of the exposition into two books, each of which far exceeds the normal length of a sermon, even for Augustine. The books are, moreover, divided by some words addressed to "the reader, tired by so long a volume."[45] The second half of Holl's explanation is borne out by such devices as the rhetorical question "And what do you say, apostle?"[46] and by many other elements that are reminiscent of an oral presentation. It would seem, then, that Van der Meer's account is correct when it notes that Augustine "at length... began to preach, and...he carefully committed his first sermons to paper,"[47] one set of them being this sermonic commentary.

Even if the name of Augustine did not appear in the manuscripts and editions, his authorship of this sermonic exposition would probably be obvious. It is replete with ways of speaking and patterns of thinking that are associated with Augustinian theology and preaching. Many of these may well seem to us to be rhetorical devices that have been forced on the text, but it is a tribute to the power of his rhetoric that one often begins to wonder, at least eventually, whether perhaps they have really been there all along. For example, his paralleling of the seven Beatitudes with the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer is quite evidently a literary conceit,[48] created by a thinker for whom "numbers... exist apart, a kind of galaxy in the mind's firmament."[49] And when the number of the Beatitudes is multiplied by the number of the petitions, this comes to forty-nine, which, when one is added (for the oneness of the Divine Nature), produces fifty, the number of Pentecost.[50] One finds oneself asking: Could it have been otherwise?

Augustine as Christian Rhetorician

But it is not only for such demonstrations of skill in the practice of rhetoric as the *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount* that Augustine occupies this unique position in the history of rhetoric. Describing his

44 A. Holl 1960, 12.
45 *Aug* 5.45.
46 *Aug* 5.31-32.
47 Van der Meer 1961, 8.

48 *Aug* 6.13.
49 D'Arcy 1957, 169.
50 *Aug* 5.10.

mind after his conversion, he recalled: "The day came when I was actu-
ally liberated from the profession of rhetor, from which in thought I
was already freed. But now it became reality. You delivered my tongue
from a task from which you had already delivered my heart."[51] It may
come to some as a suprise to learn that for the theory of rhetoric, too,
on which the Latins had long seen themselves as the pupils of the
Greeks already in the classical period,[52] it was neither St Gregory of
Nazianzus nor St John Chrysostom nor any other Greek Christian
rhetorician, but St Augustine of Hippo who produced, in Book IV of
his treatise *On Christian Doctrine* [*De doctrina christiana*], a manual of
sacred rhetoric that went on being used for many centuries.[53] It was
heavily indebted to Cicero, whose works it freely acknowledged as the
standards in the field.[54]

The demand of the Bible and of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, as
voiced in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, for a morality that went
beyond the levels of ritual purity or external conduct to the level of
authentic holiness could not overlook the position of the Christian
rhetor, and therefore Augustine had to deal with the Socratic challenge
of "a rhetoric to please God best."[55] The "art of rhetoric," Augustine
admitted at the outset, was equally capable of communicating either
truth or falsehood, and of teaching its students how to do either;[56] for it
was "that art which I learnt and used to teach."[57] The Christian rhetor
was "not to love words, but the truth in words."[58] It was his aim,
therefore, "that truth be made clear, that truth be made pleasing, that
truth be made convincing [*ut veritas pateat, placeat, moveat*]."[59] What
Cicero had asserted, already in his youthful *De inventione*, about the
inseparability of eloquence and wisdom applied with unique force to
the communicators of the revealed wisdom of God. Even more than

51 Augustine *Confessions* IX.iv.7 (Chadwick
    1992, 159).
52 Cicero *Brutus* vii.26; lxxiii.254.
53 Copeland 1991, 154-58.
54 Testard 1958 presents a detailed index.
55 See pp. 3-6 above.
56 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* IV.ii.3
    (NPNF-I 2:575). Because of her careful
    philological analysis and attention to clas-
    sical sources, I have also consulted, and

occasionally quoted, the translation of
Sullivan 1930; but for the sake of accessi-
bility I have cited the page references for
the version in NPNF.
57 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine*
    IV.vii.20 (NPNF-I 2:581).
58 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* IV.xi.26
    (NPNF-I 2:583).
59 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine*
    IV.xxvii.60 (NPNF-I 2:595-96).

Cicero's orator, they had to avoid "eloquent nonsense";[60] for Scripture praised "the multitude of the wise," not "the multitude of the eloquent."[61] From this it necessarily followed that the life of the Christian orator—or rather, the Christian life of the orator—was far more persuasive than any eloquence.[62] All of that is pretty much what one would expect to find in the first manual of Christian rhetoric.

What one would not expect to find, at least without knowing something about Augustine's career both as a bishop and as a controversialist, is his treatment of the dilemma of rhetoric and virtue as the dilemma appeared in those preachers whose *wicked* life was far more persuasive than their eloquence. Augustine knew their kind all too well, and the puritanical Donatists of North Africa, his principal opponents during his middle period between the Manichaeans and the Pelagians, kept reminding him of the embarrassing facts. Concerning the validity of sacraments administered by such priests, Augustine insisted that what made water or bread and wine or oil a "sacrament" was the objective institution of Christ, not the subjective state of grace in either the minister or the recipient.[63] That was no less true in the pulpit than it was at the altar: "They do good to many by preaching even when they do not live up to it; but far more would they do good by practicing what they preached."[64]

It was in his controversy with the Manichaeans and the Donatists, as well as in his later controversy with the Pelagians, that Augustine the Christian rhetorician put his oratorical training to use not only in sermons, in oral debates such as the *Disputation Against Fortunatus the Manichaean*,[65] and in other spoken presentations, but even in his theological treatises such as *On the Trinity* and in his written polemics. In his polemic of ca. 400 A.D., *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, having argued on the basis of Scripture and Tradition (especially St Cyprian) that the Donatist position on the invalidity of Catholic Baptism was in error and therefore that their practice of rebaptizing converts to

60 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* IV.v.7-8 (NPNF-I 2:576-77).
61 Wis 6.24.
62 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* IV.xxvii.59 (NPNF-I 2:595).
63 Willis 1950, esp. 152-68.
64 Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* IV.xxvii.60 (NPNF-I 2:595-96).
65 NPNF-I 4:113-24.

Donatism from Catholicism was untenable, he proceeded to a series of rhetorical questions from the Donatists and responses from the Catholics: "Who can fail to understand what they may be saying in their hearts? 'What then are we to do,' say they, 'with those whom we have already rebaptized?'" Even in English translation and much more in its Ciceronian Latin original, Augustine's answer is, in its style and cadence, more like an oration than a literary text:[66]

> Return with them to the Church. Bring those whom you have wounded to be healed by the medicine of peace; bring those whom you have slain to be brought to life again by the life of charity. Brotherly union has great power in propitiating God. "If two of you," says our Lord, "shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them."[67] If for two men who agree, how much more for two communities? Let us therefore throw ourselves together on our knees before the Lord. Do you share with us our unity; let us share with you your contrition; and let charity cover the multitude of sins.[68]

It would not be difficult to duplicate such rhetorical periods from his other works, but his *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount* provided him with a unique opportunity to practice his Christian rhetoric while at the same time he was describing Christian rhetoric in action as it was practiced by One who not only spoke the word of God in language but was the Word of God in the flesh.

66 Augustine *On Baptism, Against the*   67 Mt 18.19.
   Donatists II.xiii. 18 (NPNF-1 4:433-34).   68 1 Pt 4.8.

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Chrysostom: "Golden-Tongued" Preacher

By common consent in both East and West, there was no preacher in the early Church more admirable than St John Chrysostom, whom Pope Pius X in 1908, speaking in this instance for most Christians, designated as the patron saint of Christian preachers.[1] As Georges Florovsky has summarized, "Chrysostom was a true Hellenist. He studied with the famous Libanius and received a broad and brilliant education. He was not a thinker or a philosopher, and in the classical sense he is best defined as an orator and a rhetorician. The classical rhetorician was a teacher, moralist, and preacher, and Chrysostom was just such a man."[2] The date of his birth is rather uncertain, but there is some reason (beyond the symbolic and hagiographic) to place it at 354, which was also the year of Augustine's birth.[3] Eventually he became a monk, and one of such rigorously ascetic devotion that he broke under the regimen and returned to Antioch. There he was ordained to the priesthood in 386, and for the next eleven years preached his way through most of the New Testament and parts of the Old. It is to this period of his career that we owe his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, as part of his ninety sermons on the entire Gospel of Matthew, "the oldest complete commentary on the first Gospel that has survived from the patristic period."[4]

Chrysostom's Homilies on the Sermon on the Mount as a Social Document

In 397 the preacher would become archbishop of Constantinople, but for our purposes here it is St John Chrysostom as preacher who is the

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1   *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 41 (1908):594-95.
2   Florovsky 1972-89, 7:240-41. The standard modern biography is that of Baur 1959-60, from which I have drawn much
of the biographical material summarized here; see also Kelly 1995.
3   Baur 1928.
4   Quasten 1951-86, 3:437-39.

most important. There are several hints in the homilies on the Sermon on the Mount about changes in the life of the Church, and about Chrysostom's attitude toward these changes. He contrasts the authentic security of the life of faith with the illusory security of wealth and power: "For there is not, nay there is not, another life we may find free from all evils, but this alone. And you are witnesses who know the plots in kings' courts and the troubles in the houses of the rich. But there was not among the apostles any such thing."[5] The emperor was Theodosius the Great, whose achievements in establishing Christianity consolidated the work of Constantine and prepared for that of Justinian. Although Chrysostom, like other clerics, was in many ways the beneficiary of those achievements, this did not blind him to the contrast between the imperial Church and the apostolic Church. Before his life and ministry were over, he would have ample occasion for further reflection on that contrast and on the effect of "plots in kings' [and queens'!] courts" upon the security of the Christian Church and the freedom of its proclamation.

Another by-product of ecclesiastical establishment to which Chrysostom often called attention as he was commenting on the Sermon on the Mount was the incursion of hordes of uncommitted new members into the Church and the breakdown in church discipline that this presaged. Warning that he would "have no rich man, no potentate, puffing at me here, and drawing up his eyebrows," Chrysostom denounced those who came to his church because its liturgy was a dramatic spectacle or because his preaching was an exciting form of rhetorical display.[6] He was a man of considerably less than infinite patience, and he did not suffer fools gladly; now he had "fairly given up in despair," he warned, for the members of the Church were "still clinging to the former rude beginnings." If they persisted, he threatened, he would "forbid you for the future to set foot on this sacred threshold, and partake of the immortal mysteries" of the Divine Liturgy. "For it is better to offer our accustomed prayers with two or three who keep the laws of God than to sweep together a multitude of transgressors and corrupters of others."[7] Despite such attacks and

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5 *Chrys* 7.24.   7 *Chrys* 5.37.
6 Hunter 1988, 33-36, 48-50.

threats, neither liturgical decorum nor moral uprightness seems to have improved.

Therefore even such formal and stylized homilies as those on the Sermon on the Mount contain repeated admonitions to observe both liturgical decorum and moral uprightness. There were evidently some Christians who "shamelessly associated with all, and make the awesome things [of the liturgy and the Sacraments] contemptible." Chrysostom warned them that the Church still celebrated the mysteries behind closed doors and still forbade attendance at them by the uninitiated.[8] This was "not for any weakness of which we have convicted our rites, but because the many are as yet imperfectly prepared for them."[9] He was striving to hold the line against the growing pressure of those who had become Christians the easy way. But his homilies on the Sermon on the Mount also show that the effort was not altogether successful. There was, the preacher warned, great "disrespectfulness" among Christian worshipers: "When prophets are chanting, and apostles singing hymns, and God is discoursing, we wander about, and bring in upon us a turmoil of worldly business." This he contrasted with the great reverence shown at the worldly theaters when the customary letters of the emperor were being read out. The audience was silent, and anyone who presumed to interrupt this silence was severely punished. Here in church it was the very letters of heaven that were being read, and yet the audience was indifferent. Nor was its behavior any better during the liturgy. "As though in the midst of a forum," he complained, "we make an uproar and disturbance, and spend the whole time of our solemn assembly in discoursing of things which are nothing to us."[10]

So far had such disrespect gone that the stringent regulations of the Church regarding fasting were also being flouted. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus condemned the hypocrites who fasted ostentatiously. But the new breed of Christians had gone these hypocrites one better, "not merely fasting and making a display of it, but neglecting to fast, and yet wearing the masks of those who fast, and cloaking themselves with an excuse worse than their sin." When they were called to account for

8 *Chrys* 5.23-24; 6.12.   10 *Chrys* 6.14-15.
9 *Chrys* 7.6.

their hypocrisy, they claimed that they were doing this to avoid giving offense: they were afraid of offense, but unafraid of blasphemy![11] Such references and allusions in Chrysostom's homilies can be used as a source for the social history of the metropolitan centers of Late Antiquity.[12] They are, of course, especially important for the study of the social history of the early Church, as research in this field has recently been recast.[13] But they also reveal a great deal about general social conditions; a distinguished historian of Antioch has noted that "Chrysostom's works complete our knowledge of Antioch at this time as much by the background they supply indirectly as by the specific facts they mention."[14]

Polemic Against Heresy

One aspect of church life at the end of the fourth century that is of particular importance for an understanding of the rhetoric in the homilies of Chrysostom on the Sermon on the Mount is polemic against heresy. Although the various Arian positions were still the most virulent heresies of the time, Chrysostom was especially concerned to refute Gnosticism and its near relative, Manichaeism. In the very first homily the preacher describes Jesus the Preacher as stopping "the shameless mouths of heretics, signifying by this His care of both parts of our being, that He Himself is the Maker of the whole creation."[15] Against the Gnostic and Manichaean disparagement of the body as the prison of the soul, he defended the biblical insistence that both the body and the soul were God's creations and, as such, essentially good. Later he rejected the dualistic notion that the body is the source of temptation and sin, which corrupts the mind by its appetites.[16] For in the Sermon on the Mount Christ is "not discoursing about our limbs—far from it—for nowhere does He say that our flesh is to be blamed for things, but everywhere it is the evil mind that is accused. For it is not the eye that sees, but the mind and the thought."[17] At a time when the teachers of the Church, including Chrysostom, were cultivating the ascetic

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11 *Chrys* 6.16.
12 Stiglmayr 1927.
13 Meeks 1983.
14 Downey 1962, 42.

15 *Chrys* 5.1-2.
16 Roth 1986, 20.
17 *Chrys* 5.29.

ideal and exalting virginity, they also continued to fight off the heretical doctrine that the body and its drives were creatures of the devil.[18]

It was not only the human body, however, that called forth the aversion of the Gnostics and Manichaeans; it was the entire natural realm. They asserted that "the God who made the world, who 'makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, who sends the rain on the just and on the unjust,"[19] is in some sense an evil being."[20] Their radical dichotomy between soul and body had its counterpart and its basis in a dualism within the Divine Reality itself. The Creator of the natural world, and with it of the human body, was a different being from the heavenly Father, "some other one, who is not, nor made any of the things that are, they assign for a Father to Christ." When the doctrine of the Trinity in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed identified God the Father with the Creator and asserted the unity of the Son and the Holy Spirit with Him in one Godhead, it was defending monotheism simultaneously against Gnostic dualism and against Arian subordinationism. So far had the disparagement of the natural gone that even Christ's use in the Sermon of illustrations drawn from the world of animals seemed improper to these fastidious souls, who opined that "it was not meet for one strengthening moral principle to use natural advantages as enticements to that end."[21] And as Chrysostom defended the essential goodness of the body, so he affirmed the essential goodness of the entire creation. Even the wickedness of the devil was not "from nature," but had come by the devil's own choice; the devil, too, was originally part of the divine creation.[22]

The heretical antipathy for creation and the body was part of a theological system that also rejected the Old Testament, and since the middle of the second century the Church had been engaged in a defense of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. Therefore the words of the Sermon on the Mount about the commandments given "by them of old time" did not mean an attack on the Old Testament and its law. On the contrary, by these words Christ "commends the Old Law, by making a comparison between it and the other.... He does not, you see, find fault with the Old Law, but will have it made stricter."[23] The commandments

18 Walsh 1994, 129-71.
19 Mt 5.45.
20 ap. *Chrys* 5.22.

21 ap. *Chrys* 6.27.
22 *Chrys* 6.13.
23 *Chrys* 5.20.

of the Mosaic law and the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount differed in degree, not in kind, and belonged together in the history of the revelation of God's will to the human race. It was blasphemy to "say that the old covenant is of the devil."[24] Christ Himself used the occasion of His announcement of the new and stricter law to make it clear that He had not come to destroy the law and the prophets of the Old Testament, but to fulfill them. And so "His sayings were no repeal of the former, but a drawing out, and filling up of them."[25] Chrysostom's commentaries on the Old Testament, notably his homilies on Genesis, illustrate how important this continuity between the old covenant and the new was for his understanding of the entire biblical message.[26] Both they and his homilies on the New Testament, including these on the Sermon on the Mount, also demonstrate the continuing threat of the Gnostic and Gnosticizing systems, which exalted the novelty of the gospel by undermining its continuity with the old covenant, which glorified grace by defacing nature, and which sought to protect God from defilement by repudiating the biblical doctrine of creation. Both as a Christian and as a theologian, Chrysostom found such systems intolerable. His defense against them therefore became a part of his homilies on the Sermon on the Mount.

Chrysostom as Antiochene Exegete

Second only to St John Chrysostom's fame as a preacher is his renown as a biblical exegete. He is, in the phrase of G.L. Prestige, "the master and pattern of all biblical commentators belonging rather to the historical than to the dogmatic school of exposition."[27] Because he saw the task of preaching principally as one of interpreting the biblical text and applying it to the hearers, even so brief an introduction to Chrysostom's rhetoric as this must devote some consideration to this method of biblical exegesis as it pertains to his homilies on the Sermon on the Mount.

St John Chrysostom is so completely the typical representative of the Antiochene school of exegesis that most of what we know about this school and its actual exegetical practice has come from him.

24 *Chrys* 5.17.
25 *Chrys* 5.17.
26 Baur 1927.
27 Prestige 1948, 20.

Chrysostom's friend, Theodore of Mopsuestia, was the teacher of Nestorius, and the condemnation of Nestorius by the Council of Ephesus in 431 led to the destruction of much of the scholarly literature of the Antiochene school; but St John's standing as a hero of the faith, revered by both the East (feast day November 13) and the West (feast day September 13, formerly January 27), helped to save his works from such a fate. He was an Orthodox theologian in a way that some later exponents of Antiochene theology were not; in Newman's words, "There have been many literal expositors, but only one Chrysostom. It is St Chrysostom who is the charm of the method, not the method that is the charm of St Chrysostom."[28] But he does enable historians to trace the evolution of literal exegesis from its beginnings to its Nestorian foliation and to see its place within the context of the history of early Christian exegesis. As von Campenhausen has observed, "The homilies of Chrysostom are probably the only ones from the whole of Greek antiquity which at least in part are still readable today as Christian sermons. They reflect something of the authentic life of the New Testament, just because they are so ethical, so simple, and so clear-headed"[29]—and, he could have added, because they are so sober and so restrained in their hermeneutical as well as their rhetorical procedure.

That sobriety and restraint may be said to be the dominant characteristic of the hermeneutics of the Antiochene school. It seems that in its origins this school of Christian exegesis owed much to the Jewish tradition of biblical interpretation, i.e., not to the tradition represented by Philo, which harmonized the Old Testament with its developed philosophy—notably the Book of Genesis with Plato's *Timaeus* on creation[30]—by means of an allegorical method of explaining Scripture, but to the tradition of the literal interpretation of Scripture represented by the rabbis. Applying this method of interpretation to the Christian understanding of Scripture, the Christian exegesis of the Antiochene school drastically limited the application of allegorical techniques.[31] It was against this form of exegetical alchemy, which sought to turn the lead of historical narrative into the gold of spiritual truth, that Antiochene hermeneutics protested.

28 Newman 1948, 3:220.
29 Campenhausen 1959, 144.
30 Pelikan 1997, 67-87.
31 R. Grant 1948, 75.

In so doing, the school of Antioch was taking on a formidable
opponent. The advocates of allegory could, of course, point to the use
of this method within the New Testament itself, notably to St Paul's
allegorical interpretation of the difference between Sarah and Hagar.[32]
In fact, however, this was one of the very few instances of an overtly
allegorical method in Scripture, and it was certainly more than coun-
terbalanced by the meticulous attention to the minutiae of historical
narrative evident not only in the Old Testament but also in the New.
But by the time of its encounter with Antioch, allegory had more than
Pauline precedent on its side. Against Marcion it had won the day as a
vindication of the Christianization of the Old Testament; in the con-
flict with Gnosticism it had proved that the truly "spiritual" interpreta-
tion of the mystery of Christ did not reside only with Valentinus,
Basilides, and their disciples, but was being set forth by the Orthodox
exegesis of the Church Catholic.[33] And in the course of the controversy
with Arianism allegory had marshaled the evidence of both Testaments
in support of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, citing
the Psalter, the eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs, and the pro-
logue to the Gospel of John as parts of the same Scripture, regardless of
their chronological difference.[34] Newman does not seem to have been
exaggerating when he proposed that "it may almost be laid down as an
historical fact that the mystical interpretation and orthodoxy will stand
or fall together."[35] Orthodoxy itself seemed to be in jeopardy when
Antiochene exegesis sought to put a limitation on allegory. Yet in some
of its outstanding representatives Antiochene exegesis was impeccably
Orthodox. St John Chrysostom proved that it was possible to be alto-
gether Orthodox whenever one dealt with dogma—which, to be sure,
was not very often in his case—and yet to follow the lead of Diodore in
stressing the literal rather than the allegorical sense of Scripture.

That inclination to be sober rather than imaginative in interpretation
makes itself evident also in his homilies on the Sermon on the Mount,
at those points where Chrysostom himself attacks an excessively allegori-
cal view or where there happen to have been other commentaries on the

32 Gal 4.21-31.
33 Harnack [1924] 1960, 2:259-60; Lubac
     1950, 166-78.
34 Pelikan 1962, 55-57.
35 Newman [1878] 1989, 344.

same passage. Of the first sort is his explanation of the third of the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." He raises the question, "What kind of earth?" Without specifying his sources, he goes on to note that some exegetes had said that this was "a figurative earth."[36] It is not clear whom he has in mind. This was the interpretation of "inherit the earth" that was proposed by Augustine's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount at about the same time. But apparently both Augustine's acceptance of a spiritual interpretation of "earth" and Chrysostom's polemic against such an interpretation presupposed an exegetical tradition which explained the words as "a certain solidity and stability of perpetual inheritance: through good disposition the soul rests as if in its own place... the very rest and life of the saints."[37] Not so, Chrysostom argued, "for nowhere in Scripture do we find any mention of the earth that is merely figurative." Hence the passage must mean that Christ as the master Rhetor sought to "put his hearers into a certain frame of mind,"[38] both by the prospect of eternal glory and by the promise of temporal gain, a literal "earth" that they would possess by inheritance if they practiced true meekness.

Another passage in the Sermon on the Mount where earlier allegorists had applied their technique was the admonition of Christ, "Make friends quickly with your accuser."[39] "Some say," Chrysostom informs us, "that [Christ] obscurely signifies the devil himself, under the name of 'the accuser,' and bids us have nothing of his."[40] But he insisted that there was no need for so far-fetched an explanation of the words, which could be taken simply and quite literally as referring to the judges, prisons, and way of this world. We are fortunate in this instance to have at least two earlier pieces of evidence about the provenance of the exegesis that identified the "accuser" here with the devil. Irenaeus informs us that the followers of the Gnostic teacher Carpocrates "declare the 'accuser' is one of those angels who are in the world, whom they call the devil, maintaining that he was formed for this purpose, that he might lead those souls which have perished from the world to the Supreme Ruler."[41]

36 *Chrys* 5.5.
37 *Aug* 5.5.
38 *Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a (Freese).

39 Mt 5.25.
40 *Chrys* 5.25.
41 Irenaeus *Against Heresies* I.xxv.4 (ANF 1:351).

According to Tertullian, too, Carpocrates taught the transmigration of souls and found in this passage a substantiation of this theory.[42] It was evidently some such allegory, perhaps even in an Orthodox form, that Chrysostom was attacking by urging in the same passage that Christ, "after He had abashed men by higher things, and things future... alarms them also by such as are in this life."[43]

But within the homilies on the Sermon on the Mount the most striking illustration of the antithesis between the two styles of exegesis comes in the interpretation of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread [*ton arton hêmôn ton epiousion*]."[44] Origen, who suggested that "the term *epiousios*... seems to have been invented by the Evangelists," was speaking for a large body of exegetical tradition when he proposed that the bread for which this petition prays could not be "material bread," as some interpreters of the passage supposed.[45] On the basis of the discourses of Jesus in the sixth chapter of St John's Gospel, he argued that Christ Himself was the true bread and therefore that this petition was actually a prayer for the only bread that was in the fullest sense "supersubstantial" or *epiousios*, "of the divine substance" or *ousia*.[46] Chrysostom's interpretation, on the other hand, was much more prosaic, but perhaps also more accurate. The command to pray this petition, like the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, was addressed "to men encompassed with flesh, and subject to the necessities of nature." Therefore the Lord's Prayer included not only requests for spiritual blessings, but also this prayer for what the body required, daily bread. Even here, however, the teaching of Christ was emphasizing the reality of the spiritual life, for all that we are permitted to request is the simple necessity of one day's bread at a time, not a superabundance of riches.[47]

Chrysostom as Christian Rhetor

It is impossible to read the homilies of Chrysostom on the Sermon without being constantly reminded that he was not only a Christian priest but a Greek orator.[48] Both the exegetical tradition of Antioch

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42 Tertullian *On the Soul* 35 (ANF 3:216).
43 *Chrys* 5.25.
44 Mt 6.11.
45 Origen *On Prayer* 27.7; 27.1 (ACW 19:96; 92).

46 Origen *On Prayer* 25.7 (ACW 19:96-97).
47 *Chrys* 6.11.
48 Hubbell 1924; Burns 1930.

and the rhetorical tradition of Antioch helped to shape his composition. As has been noted earlier, the outstanding representative of the latter during St John's youth was Libanius the Sophist, who had the quite unparalleled distinction of having had as his pupils both the "apostate" emperor Julian, who was his "spiritual disciple,"[49] and the "three hierarchs," St John Chrysostom, St Basil the Great, and St Gregory of Nazianzus.[50] There has been some debate among scholars about the accuracy of the report of the church historian Socrates that John Chrysostom "studied rhetoric under Libanius the sophist and philosophy under Andragathius the philosopher."[51] Most historians and biographers, nevertheless, are inclined to accept Socrates's account. As Baur has put it, "The first and greatest orator of Christian antiquity sat at the feet of the last great rhetorician of pagan antiquity."[52] Additional light both on Chrysostom's affinities for Libanius's style of rhetoric and on his independence of it has come from a close analysis of the rhetorical rhythms in several of Chrysostom's sermons.[53]

This is not to say that the sermons of John Chrysostom as we now have them represent a verbatim transcript of what Chrysostom actually said in the pulpit. For example, there are two different recensions of Chrysostom's *Homilies on Genesis*, which he delivered perhaps in 388.[54] One recension contains numerous allusions to current events and contemporary problems in the city of Antioch; the other is, in effect, a sermonic commentary on Genesis that could almost have been written and/or preached at any time in his career—or even in the career of some other Greek Christian preacher in another city and another century. Perhaps the literary version of the homilies was a revision for publication, based on stenographic notes taken down during the delivery of the sermons; but it is also possible, even likely, that the sermonic commentary was a literary composition in its own right. This may also be true of other series of homilies in the corpus of Chrysostom's works. Because of their subsequent use in the Orthodox tradition, it can be said that in their transmitted form the homilies of St John Chrysostom

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49 Bowersock 1978, 28.
50 Petit 1957, 40-42; Cazeaux 1980.
51 Socrates Scholasticus *Ecclesiastical History* VI.3 (NPNF-II 2:138).
52 Baur 1959-60, 1:21.
53 Skimina 1927, 54-69.
54 Quasten 1951-86, 3:434.

were delivered orally by hundreds or even thousands of Greek preachers, but not by Chrysostom himself!

The fifth book of Chrysostom's treatise *On the Priesthood* is a succinct description of the qualities that a Christian preacher and rhetorician must have. Among these, two were of special importance to Chrysostom, paradoxical though the combination may seem to be: an indifference to the plaudits of one's hearers, and an ability to speak skillfully. For

> ...if a preacher be indifferent to praise, and yet cannot produce the doctrine "which is grace seasoned with salt,"[55] he becomes despised by the multitude, while he gains nothing from his own nobleness of mind; and if on the other hand he is successful as a preacher, and is overcome by the thought of applause, harm is equally done in turn, both to himself and the multitude, because in his desire for praise he is careful to speak rather with a view to please than to profit.[56]

Both of these qualities, as well as their correlative temptations, were familiar to Chrysostom, as his career demonstrates and his sermons and homilies attest. Yet his training as a rhetor betrayed its presence even when he was warning against the dangers of relying too much on rhetoric. The entire treatise *On the Priesthood* is both a gem of Christian literature and a masterpiece of the rhetorician's art.[57] Each time a scholar has applied painstaking analysis to one of Chrysostom's writings, the virtuosity of his rhetorical performance has been proved once more.[58] Chrysostom's *Homilies Against the Jews*, probably delivered from August of 387 to September of 389, have been used as documentation of the way Christian rhetoric could serve as a vehicle for Christian anti-Semitism.[59] But Robert L. Wilken has shown that these homilies were evoked primarily by the perceived danger of Christian apostasy to Judaism and "Judaizing" Christianity.[60]

St John Chrysostom's exposition of the Sermon on the Mount provides many signs that techniques of classical oratory have been applied to the task of expounding the Scriptures. The complementary and yet often contradictory traits discussed abstractly in Book V of *On the*

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55 Col 4.6.
56 Chrysostom *On the Priesthood* V.1-2
     (NPNF-I 9:70-71).
57 Maat 1944.

58 Ameringer 1921; Burns 1930.
59 Williams 1935, 132-39.
60 Wilken 1983, 66-94.

Priesthood, the preacher's resistance to the blandishments of the multi-
tude and his cultivation of skill as a rhetor, are, according to
Chrysostom, exhibited concretely in this Sermon by Christ the Rhetor.
If there existed stenographic notes of Chrysostom's sermons as they
were delivered, we could perhaps identify many other points where the
rhetorician and the pastor have combined to produce the preacher. But
even in its present state the commentary shows many marks of obedi-
ence to Aristotle's rule that "authors should compose without being
noticed and should seem to speak not artificially but naturally":[61] the
art consists in concealing art—or at least in almost concealing it.

The last of the Beatitudes provided an occasion for a disquisition on
the necessity of cultivating an indifference to the flattery of the hearers,
as well as for a clarification of what this indifference did not imply.[62]
Chrysostom was not insensitive to the need for approval. He knew
already in 390 what he was to learn many times again, that "it is not
even possible that those who live in the practice of virtue should be well
spoken of by all men." He was obviously expressing his own feelings
when he went on to say: "Most assuredly, men's evil reports have a
sharper bite than their very deeds. For whereas, in our dangers, there
are many things that lighten the toil, as to be cheered by all, to have
many to applaud, to crown, to proclaim our praise; here in our
reproach even this consolation is destroyed."[63] The instructions in the
Sermon on the Mount did not pertain only to the disciples, but to "all
through them."[64] Yet they did apply with special force both to the dis-
ciples and to their successors in the Church, the bishops and clergy. In
one passage of the commentary on the Sermon on the Mount which
gives an indication that the text probably rests upon a transcription of
Chrysostom's actual preaching, the preacher had occasion to apply the
warnings about applause to himself. As he was moving into his
epilogos,[65] he seems to have been interrupted by applause. "Did you
give praise to what has been said?" he asked. "No, I do not want
applause, nor tumults, nor noise. One thing only do I wish, that

61 *Rhet* III.ii.4 1404b.
62 *Chrys* 5.11.
63 *Chrys* 5.11-12.

64 On Chrysostom's interpretation of the
    address of the Sermon, see pp. 123-28
    below.
65 *Rhet* III.19 1419b-1420b.

quietly and intelligently listening, you should do what is said. This is the applause, this the panegyric for me."[66] He attacked his hearers for treating the liturgy and the sermon as though they were a "dramatic spectacle" or a performance.

There are other passages in Chrysostom's writings that refer to the custom of applauding a sermon, including one from the peroration of a homily on First Corinthians.[67] But one of the fullest discussions appears in the *Homilies on Acts*. Here he addressed himself specifically to those who had the gift of eloquence and the "grace of teaching," warning them that it was easy to teach by words but that the example of the preacher's life was a better lesson. Some preachers went to great pains with their sermons: "And if they get applause from the multitude, it is to them as if they gained the very kingdom of heaven; but if silence follows the close of their speech, it is worse than hell itself, the dejection that falls upon their spirits from the silence!" Speaking now of his own feelings as a preacher, Chrysostom admitted that it was exhilarating to be applauded while he was in the pulpit; but the thrill was brief, for afterwards he reflected that many of those who had cheered would not take the message to heart. The only solution, he announced, was for all applause to be forbidden—and this announcement brought the house down with applause! Yet, as he reminded his audience on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, "Christ spoke publicly on the mount; yet no one said anything until He had finished His discourse."[68]

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66 *Chrys* 5.37.
67 Chrysostom *Homilies on First Corinthians* iv.11 (NPNF-I 12:22).

68 Chrysostom *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* xxx (NPNF-I 11:192-94).

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Luther: *Doctor in Biblia*

One of the most important achievements of the effort by present-day historians to relate the Reformation to the later Middle Ages has been their challenge to the relatively recent trend of sharply dividing the Renaissance and the Reformation from each other.[1] For it is historically misleading to interpret the relation between the Renaissance and the Reformation by concentrating, as many theologians and others have tended to do, on such conflicts as the debate of the mid-1520s between Erasmus of Rotterdam and Martin Luther over the freedom of the will, without paying attention to the substantial influence that the Renaissance had on the content of Reformation teaching, and especially on "the pursuit of eloquence" with which that teaching was communicated.[2] For just as the "sacred philology" of the Renaissance as represented by Erasmus and before him by Lorenzo Valla,[3] with its recovery of both classical and biblical Greek, helped to make possible the new translations and interpretations of the Bible by the Reformation; so, albeit to a lesser degree, the "sacred rhetoric" of the Renaissance,[4] drawing upon both classical and patristic traditions, contributed to educational reform in the Reformation and thereby to the communication of those new biblical interpretations in the pulpit.[5] What John O'Malley has called "rhetoric, doctrine, and reform" went together, not only in the Catholic Reformation as he has studied it, but in the several Protestant Reformations as well.[6]

In the pulpit and in the classroom, and even in many of his written works, Martin Luther functioned primarily as an interpreter of the

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1 Brady, Oberman, and Tracy 1994 is a summary and synthesis of this research.
2 Gray 1968; Fumaroli 1980.
3 Pelikan-Hotchkiss-Price 1996, 3-21: "Sacred Philology."
4 Shuger 1988.
5 Clark 1948; Kahn 1994.
6 O'Malley 1979.

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Bible, eventually applying the Renaissance philology of the study of
Greek and Hebrew to his work as translator and exegete. In 1512, in
obedience to the urging of his monastic mentor, Johann Staupitz,
Luther received the university degree of *Doctor in Biblia*.[7] More than
any other of his usual titles—ordained clergyman, professor of theol-
ogy, reformer of Western Christendom, or "prophet of the Ger-
mans"—this title summarizes his own sense of vocation and mission.
To the persistent question, "Why do you publicly attack the pope and
others, instead of keeping the peace?" Luther replied, near the begin-
ning of his *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*: "I have the com-
mission and charge, as a preacher and a doctor, to see to it that no one
is misled, so that I may give account of it at the Last Judgment."[8] "A
preacher and a doctor": but it was as a preacher who was at the same
time a doctor that he felt called to do this; for elsewhere he argued that
a preacher had no right to thrust himself upon a parish where he had
not been called to preach, even if that parish were being served by "a
papistic or heretical pastor."[9] By contrast with the parish preacher, who
was bound to one situation, the preacher who was a *Doctor in Biblia*
had a different and a more universal vocation. If someone were to ask
Luther, "Why do you, by your books, teach throughout the world,
when you are only preacher in Wittenberg?" he would answer:

> I have never wanted to do it and do not want to do it now. I was forced and
> driven into this position in the first place when I had to become Doctor of
> Holy Scripture against my will. Then, as a doctor in a general free univer-
> sity, I began, at the command of pope and emperor, to do what such a doc-
> tor is sworn to do, expounding the Scriptures for all the world and teaching
> everybody. Once in this position, I have had to stay with it, and I cannot
> give it up or leave it yet with a good conscience.[10]

He became *Doctor in Biblia* while he was an Augustinian monk and an
obedient son of the Church of Rome. But he remained *Doctor in Biblia*
after he had broken with both of those affiliations, and sometimes he
even insisted that he had broken with them precisely because of his
moral responsibility as *Doctor in Biblia*.

7   Steinlein 1912.   9   *LW* 13:65.
8   *Luth* 5.9.   10 *LW* 13:66.

Sola Scriptura and Tradition

Actually, however, "what such a doctor was sworn to do, at the command of pope and emperor," as Luther was very well aware, was to carry on his "expounding the Scriptures and teaching everybody" in accordance with the Tradition and the magisterium of the Church. At the Leipzig Debate in 1519 Luther was compelled by his opponent, Johann Eck, to admit that, in the name of the Scriptures as he interpreted them, he was setting the authority of the Scriptures against and above the authority of the Tradition of the Church: "Though Augustine and all the fathers were to take the 'rock'[11] to mean Peter, I should withstand them all alone by the authority of the apostle, that is, by divine right, as he writes:[12] 'No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'"[13] Yet within less than five years Luther was defending "the old interpretation [*die alte Deutung*]" of the Sacraments in the Tradition of the Church against those who, in the name of the Scriptures as they interpreted them, wanted to set aside the liturgical and ecclesiastical forms developed in that Tradition. And before Luther's death there had arisen men and movements in Western Christendom who, in the name of the Scriptures as they interpreted them, were even rejecting the trinitarian and christological dogmas upon which the doctrinal systems of Christendom East and West (including his own doctrinal system) had been founded. All of this in the name of the authority of the Scriptures! When Luther saw the results, he found himself closer, at least in some respects, to the Roman Catholicism that had excommunicated him than he was to a brand of Protestantism that claimed it was carrying out in consistent practice a conception of biblical authority which he had stated in theory. "I have often enough asserted," he declared in 1528 concerning the Real Presence in the Eucharist, "that I do not argue whether the wine remains wine or not. It is enough for me that Christ's blood is present; let it be with the wine as God wills. Sooner than have mere wine with the fanatics, I would agree with the pope that there is only blood."[14]

This situation raises the question of the relation between *Sola*

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11 Mt 16.18.

12 1 Cor 3.11.

13 *WA* 2:278.

14 *LW* 37:317.

Scriptura and Tradition as components in Luther's exegesis.[15] How could Luther consistently assign prime or even sole authority to the word of God in the Scriptures and yet retain all that he did retain of the Church's Tradition? What was the role of that Tradition in the exposition of the Scriptures according to Luther's principles of interpretation? And did he remain consistently loyal to those principles in the concrete performance of his task as a biblical interpreter in his sermons and commentaries, for example in his *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount* of 1532? Two of the decisive issues in the relation between *Sola Scriptura* and Tradition according to Luther become especially prominent in that commentary on the Sermon.

As is particularly clear in Luther's discussion of the so-called counsels of perfection in the Sermon on the Mount,[16] he set himself apart from what he regarded as a central tendency of the exegetical tradition by his opposition to moralism. He criticized what he took to be the traditional conception of the saint as a person without human emotions or weaknesses. The fathers, he charged, had often interpreted the narratives in the Scriptures, as well as the imperatives of the Sermon on the Mount, on the basis of this conception of the saint, and they had therefore misunderstood the meaning of sainthood as a gift of grace. "As many as they were," he said of the church fathers, "all of them failed either to observe or thoroughly and correctly to understand the kingdom of grace through Christ."[17] Luther was willing to accuse even his favorite among all the church fathers, St Augustine, the *Doctor gratiae*, of sometimes having failed to grasp the full implications of the biblical doctrine of justification by grace and hence of falling into a moralistic distortion of the gospel.[18] Luther's favorite passage on this subject, all his life, was the exclamation of St Paul, "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do,"[19] the source of his distinctive doctrine that the Christian was simultaneously both saint and sinner, *simul iustus et peccator*.[20] Because, in such passages as he read them, the Scriptures so unequivocally repudiated the notion of sainthood as a perfection on

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15 Koopmans 1955.
16 See pp. 131-32 below.
17 *WA* 13:242-43.

18 On the early stages of this development, see Hamel 1934-35, 1:161-69.
19 Rom 7.19.
20 Hermann 1930.

this earth, Luther pitted the authority of the Scriptures against the authority of the Tradition of the fathers, even the best fathers.

Similarly, Luther maintained that the Tradition was full of concessions to philosophy, as its interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount made abundantly evident. The same outlook that sought to subordinate exegesis to the authority of the fathers also sought to subject it to the authority of Aristotle, he had declared against Latomus already in 1521.[21] And in 1530 the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* was speaking for him when it declared:

> Therefore we may profitably distinguish between civil righteousness [*iustitia civilis*] and spiritual righteousness, attributing the former to the free will and the latter to the operation of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate. This safeguards outward discipline, because all men ought to know that God requires this civil righteousness and that, to some extent [*aliquo modo*], we can achieve it. At the same time it shows the difference between human righteousness and spiritual righteousness, between philosophical teaching and the teaching of the Holy Spirit; and it points out the need for the Holy Spirit.[22]

As this statement indicates, the author of those words, Philip Melanchthon, did grant to philosophy and "natural theology" a positive role in the realm of public morality, but insisted on distinguishing this from Christian morality.

At the same time, as the comparisons developed in this book demonstrate, Luther's break with the Tradition was often in fact far less drastic than either his own theoretical declarations or the polemics of his opponents seemed to indicate. That became explicit, for example, when, in his *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, he referred favorably to Augustine's commentary, which he had studied.[23] He did break with the exegetical tradition in his vigorous rejection of the way it had elevated the monastic life over the lay life as the true obedience to the imperatives of the Sermon on the Mount.[24] But when his interpretation of the Sermon—and especially of the Speaker of the Sermon[25]—is compared not with the interpretations that had preceded his, but with those that

21   *LW* 32:216-17.
22   Tappert et al. 1959, 226.

23   *Luth* 5.17.
24   See pp. 128-29 below.
25   See pp. 111-15 below.

were to follow it especially in the twentieth century,[26] his differences can be put into historical context.

Proclamation and Polemics

Martin Luther divided his time and attention as a theologian between the two tasks of expounding the Scriptures and waging controversy, between proclamation and polemics. It is, of course, the case that finally these were not two separate tasks at all. Luther's commentaries on the Bible constantly argued with his opponents living and dead, and his polemical works fairly bristled with biblical citations and biblical exposition. The theological controversies in which Luther engaged dealt with issues and opinions that came out of his exegesis. He often charged that his opponents had permitted controversy to blind them to the true meaning of the Scriptures, and his opponents often made the same charge against him. If these charges on either side—or on both sides—were true, it would not be the first time in the history of theology that this had happened, nor yet the last. Nevertheless, it is also possible that something quite different was happening in Luther's theological controversies, in addition to the overemphases that may have been present. As a debater, lecturer, and preacher accustomed to think on his feet, Luther seems frequently to have developed insights which had escaped him during the calm reflection of his study. The question of "proclamation and polemics" in Luther is, therefore, a complex one. He was not merely defending his view of the exegesis of the Scriptures in a controversy; he was shaping it. He was not merely using the Scriptures to support his previous exegesis; he was reexamining his exegesis in the light of further study of the Scriptures.

In his defense of the Real Presence in the Eucharist against Ulrich Zwingli, Luther believed that a fundamental hermeneutical principle was at stake: a text of the Scriptures had to be taken as it stood unless there were compelling reasons for taking it otherwise. It was forbidden both by grammarians and by theologians to introduce a contrary exegesis without compelling reasons.[27] Apparently Luther allowed for three such possible reasons: the statement of the text itself that it was not to be

26 See pp. 39-41 above.   27 *LW* 37:163-72.

taken literally; the powerful indication by another passage to this same effect; the clash between a literal interpretation and "a clear article of the faith." Even in the case of these reasons, however, the evidence would have to be compelling. For example, the argument against the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the elements of the Lord's Supper on the basis of the doctrine of the Ascension of the body of Christ into heaven (surely "a clear article of the faith") was invalid for Luther; and he argued at length that there was no conflict between the doctrine of the Ascension, correctly understood, and the doctrine of the Real Presence as he found it taught in the words of institution, "This is my body."

Clearly, this axiom involved a problem whose detailed implications Luther did not work out. Just how compelling would the evidence of another passage have to be before it would require that the passage at hand be taken in another sense than the literal one? On what grounds was the exegete to decide which passage interpreted which? Nor did the introduction of the concept "article of faith" help the problem a great deal.[28] It seemed to imply the existence somewhere (perhaps in the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed) of a set of such articles, present in the exegesis of the Scriptures and yet somehow present before it. Luther's attitude toward the authority of the ancient creeds belongs to the general problem of what he meant by "articles of faith."[29] In opposition to traditionalism he had been able to proceed as though every article of faith were ultimately subject to exegetical reexamination, though he himself did not necessarily subject it to such reexamination. Yet in opposition to a rejection of the Tradition, for example on the Real Presence, he proceeded as though there existed a given body of articles of faith.

Despite this constant emphasis on the Scriptures, Luther recognized that the Church had in fact been engaged in proclamation even before any of the books of the New Testament were written, and much before they were all collected into a canon. For the word of God in the Church usually took the form not of the written word, but of the oral word in preaching. Throughout his career Luther emphasized the centrality of this oral word in the life and work of the Church. "Christ did not command the apostles to write, but only to preach," he said.[30]

28 See the comments in Ebeling 1942, 342-43.   30 *WA* 10-I-1:626.
29 Kattenbusch 1883.

Again he said: "The Church is not a pen-house but a mouth-house."[31] In part Luther's emphasis on oral proclamation depended on a psychological judgment. One could read a thing many times over and yet fail to understand it and apply it to himself. But when another person spoke the same thing with a living voice, then the hearer could know that he was the one being addressed. As this was true of language in general, so it was particularly true of the proclamation of the gospel:

> There are many people nowadays who say: "Oh, I have read and learned it all, and I know it very well. I do not need [to listen]." They may even come out and say: "What do we need with any more clergy or preachers? I can read it just as well at home." Then they go their way and don't read it at home either! Or even if they do read it, it is not as fruitful or powerful as it is through a public preacher whom God has ordained to say and preach this.[32]

God had so constructed human nature that the gospel and the law could work the most effectively through the medium of the living voice. "Christ did not write anything, but He spoke it all. The apostles wrote only a little, but they spoke a lot," he explained.[33] For the basic form of the word of God was always the oral word of proclamation.

It is primarily in such statements as these, many of them articulated in the course of his own activity of proclaiming, that Luther came the closest he ever did to formulating anything resembling a "philosophy of language" or a theoretical "rhetoric."[34] His classically trained junior colleague, Philip Melanchthon, who once had the ambition of preparing a new edition of the collected works of Aristotle to replace the corrupt texts of the Middle Ages, had, as early as 1522, published a work entitled *Institutiones rhetoricae*. A recent study of this youthful work has examined its intriguing blend of classical Greek themes of the art of persuading with Protestant Christian themes of the art of proclaiming the gospel.[35] In the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg and other Lutheran institutions for the preparation of clergy, Melanchthon's textbook, together with the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle and the rhetorical handbooks of Cicero, [36] formed the basis for the education of future preachers in Christian rhetoric.[37]

31 *WA* 10-I-1:48.
32 *WA* 36:220.
33 *WA* 5:537.

34 Meinhold 1958.
35 Knapp 1993.
36 See pp. 9-16.
37 Petersen [1921] 1964, 187-95.

But one of the significant differences between Luther, on the one hand, and Augustine and Chrysostom, on the other hand, was in their direct relation to the formal tradition of theoretical classical rhetoric. They were, however, much closer together in their concrete rhetorical practice, as their sermonic commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount repeatedly, and sometimes surprisingly, show.

"The Preaching of the Gospel" and the Gospels

Just as an encounter with a text from the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans was decisive for the fundamental change of St Augustine's life,[38] so it was a text from the first chapter of Romans to which Luther, in a miniature autobiography written a year before his death, attributed the insight through which he "was altogether born again and had entered Paradise itself through open gates." The text reads: "I am not ashamed of the gospel.... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'"[39] As he himself reported, "I hated that word 'righteousness of God,' which, according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the sinner." If "gospel [*evangelium* in Latin]" meant "good news," the message that a righteous God punishes sinners certainly could not be the "gospel"! Only when he "began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God" did he realize that "this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'"[40] The discovery, only in the twentieth century, of Luther's early lectures on Romans has further documented this process of development.

Because of this exposition of Romans and of his several commentaries on Galatians, Luther has, with good reason, been identified as basically "Pauline" in his theology. That certainly applies to his very use of the term "gospel," which primarily meant to him, as it did to St Paul, the message

38 Augustine *Confessions* VIII.xii.29
    (Chadwick 1992, 152-53); see p. 54 above.

39 Rom 1.16-17.
40 *LW* 34:336-37.

of salvation through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, not the narrative of Christ's miracles and teachings in the "Gospels." Therefore it was used in the singular, and the distinction between the law and the gospel, which was for Luther the fundamental distinction of all theology, was a difference not between two books, but between two messages, both of which were contained in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament (including its first four books); only secondarily did the word "gospel" refer for Luther to the text of those four books. As he put it in 1521, in *A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels*, "It is a common practice to number the Gospels and to name them by books and say that there are four Gospels." But to the contrary, "one should realize that there is only one gospel, but that it is described by many apostles. Every single Epistle of Paul... is a gospel." In sum, "at its briefest, the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that He is the Son of God and became man for us, that He died and was raised, that He has been established as a Lord over all things." And so, "just as there is no more than one Christ, so there is and may be no more than one gospel."[41]

This definition of "the gospel" in the singular and this delineation of its relation to "the Gospels" in the plural was the basis on which Luther, in the preface to his German translation of the New Testament, proposed a stratification of the books of the New Testament, almost amounting to a canon within the canon: "John's Gospel and St Paul's Epistles, especially that to the Romans, and St Peter's first Epistle are the true kernel and marrow of all the books." A few sentences later he added Galatians and Ephesians to Romans, but he did not add the synoptic Gospels to St John. For, as he explained, "John's Gospel is the one, fine, true, and chief Gospel, and is far, far to be preferred over the other three and placed high above them. So, too, the Epistles of St Paul and St Peter far surpass the other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke."[42] Or, as he would put it in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, "St Matthew's way of speaking" was inferior in its "emphasis upon the profound doctrine of Christ [to] St John and St Paul," but "better than John" on the Christian life.[43] The inclusion of the Gospel of John in that stratification has led some Luther scholars to react

41 *LW* 35:117-18.   43 *Luth* 5.16; see p. 111-14 below.
42 *LW* 35:361-62.

against what they regard as an excessive emphasis on Luther the "Paulinist," and to speak of what the title of one monograph has called "the Johannine character [*Typus*] of Luther's doctrine of salvation in relation to the Pauline doctrine of justification."[44]

There has not been a comparable monograph on "the Synoptic character" of Luther's thought. But both his "Paulinism" and his treatment of the Synoptic Gospels have come to be seen in the light of his total place in the history of exegesis and hermeneutics. The foundation for that reinterpretation, as for much of the entire twentieth-century reinterpretation of Luther, was laid by Karl Holl (1866-1926), who, unlike most other Luther scholars, came to his study of the Reformation from extensive research in the church fathers, especially the Eastern church fathers: Holl prepared a careful edition of the *Sacra Parallela* of St John of Damascus, and then the first truly critical edition of the complicated text of St Epiphanius of Salamis. That patristic work served as the context for Holl's groundbreaking lecture of November 11, 1920 on "Luther's Significance for the Progress of the Art of Interpretation."[45] Since Holl's lecture, many individual aspects of Luther's work on the Bible have received the attention of scholars, including for example his portrait of the Old Testament hero Samson and his struggle to understand the Book of Ecclesiastes; but the most impressive individual volume to emerge from this research is unquestionably Gerhard Ebeling's monograph on the exegesis of the Gospels.[46] For Luther as an interpreter of the Old Testament or of the Epistles of St Paul, we have his written books and especially the transcripts of his classroom lectures over a period of more than three decades. But he did not lecture on the Gospels; he preached on them, for they were not, strictly speaking, *Schrift* but *Predigt*. Much of his preaching was on the Gospel pericopes as appointed for the Sundays of the church year, but he also followed the practice, exemplified by both St Augustine and St John Chrysostom, of a *lectio continua*, a series of homilies forming a sermonic commentary. It is to this latter that we owe Luther's exposition of the Sermon on the Mount from the early 1530s.

44 Stange 1949.
46 Ebeling 1942.
45 K. Holl 1948, 544-82.

Luther's Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount

Although the many volumes of Luther's letters and table talk, together with the numerous autobiographical references scattered throughout his sermons and written works, provide a vast amount of information about his life and work, there remain significant gaps. One such gap is the absence of detailed historical information about his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount.

We do know that the exposition was the direct result of the reformatory activity of Johann Bugenhagen (1485-1558), who, because of his family origins in Pomerania, was often called "Pommer" or "Pomeranus." In 1522 he became pastor of the city church in Wittenberg and was also Luther's colleague on the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg; Luther, in turn, was Bugenhagen's colleague in the pulpit of the church. One of Bugenhagen's outstanding services to the cause of the Reformation was his reorganization of church life in several territories that joined the Evangelical cause. In the spring of 1528, Bugenhagen supervised the organization of the Lutheran church in Braunschweig, arriving there on May 20. In a letter to Wenzeslaus Link (1483-1547) on May 12, 1528, Luther said he expected that Bugenhagen would stay there "several days." It proved to be several months; and when he did leave Braunschweig, it was to perform a similar service in Hamburg, where he went on October 9, 1528. He did not return to Wittenberg until June 24, 1529. Meanwhile Luther was filling Bugenhagen's pulpit, amid his myriad other duties.

This account of Bugenhagen's work in Braunschweig and Hamburg helps to explain Luther's reactions a year later, in the summer of 1530, when a delegation came from the North Sea port city of Lübeck, apparently to Augsburg, to request that someone from Wittenberg visit Lübeck to supervise the reorganization of their church along Evangelical lines. On September 11, 1530 Luther wrote to Philip Melanchthon from his exile in the Koburg castle:

> You will hear the rest [of the news] from the delegates from Lübeck, including your relative [Jakob Krappe]. I would prefer not to have Pomeranus absent, but I do not see how we can turn down their request, at least for a while. Both the church and our school need him greatly, especially since weariness

over my age and my health, or rather over my very life, makes me think that I shall not have to watch and bear this accursed world much longer.[47]

In November 1530 Bugenhagen wrote to his friends in Wittenberg: "On the Day of St Simon and St Jude [October 28 on the calendar of the Western Church], by the grace of God, we arrived safely in Lübeck."[48] On November 13, 1530, Luther wrote to Veit Dietrich (1506-1549): "I have taken over Pomeranus's labors. I am preaching and lecturing, and I am distracted by cases," apparently marital cases.[49] A few weeks later he complained to Link under the date of December 1, 1530: "I cannot find time to write to everyone. No longer am I only Luther, but Pomeranus, too, an official, a Moses, a Jethro,[50] and what not? All things to all men...."[51] Pomeranus is getting along very well in Lübeck."[52]

Pomeranus continued to get along very well in Lübeck, not for "a while," as Luther had hoped, but until the spring of 1532. He did not return to Wittenberg until April 30 of that year. Thus Luther was his substitute in the pulpit for almost exactly one and one-half years. On Wednesdays he preached a series of sermons on the Gospel according to St Matthew, and on Saturdays a series on St John; on Sundays he followed the prescribed pericopes for the week. The series on St Matthew was the origin of his *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, but there seems to be no way of determining who took down the sermons and who compiled them into this commentary. As the editor of the commentary in the standard Weimar Edition of *Luthers Werke*, Paul Pietsch, says in his introduction,

> When Luther began and concluded these sermons on Matthew, how many sermons he delivered, and finally whether he expounded only the three chapters from the fifth through the seventh or whether the editor trimmed the material down to the consecutive chapters, even though its beginning and end were determined by the accident of Bugenhagen's departure and return—about all this we know little or nothing.[53]

Because the evolution of the work from the pulpit to the appearance of the finished commentary is so completely obscure, a certain amount of caution is called for in referring to it as a source for our

47 *WA Briefwechsel* 5:617-18.
48 *WA Briefwechsel* 5:669.
49 *WA Briefwechsel* 5:682.
50 Cf. Ex 18.13-24.
51 1 Cor 9.22.
52 *WA Briefwechsel* 5:692.
53 *WA* 32:lxxvi.

understanding of Luther's thought. We cannot be sure whether the original editor or editors, whoever they may have been, took certain liberties with the text of Luther's sermons as delivered. We know that this did happen with other commentaries of his, for example his *Lectures on Genesis*, which occupied him for the last ten years of his life.[54] At the same time, there seems to be no warrant for the extreme skepticism of some scholars regarding the reliability of this commentary. There are many parallels throughout Luther's works for most of the ideas and many of the very terms that appear here.

The commentary was published in the fall of 1532 for the first time by Joseph Klug in Wittenberg. It was published again in 1533, this time in Marburg. And a third edition, with certain revisions apparently intended by the editor to tone down Luther's rhetoric in the text,[55] appeared in Wittenberg in 1534.

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54 Meinhold 1936.   55 See, for example, p. 146 below.

III

The Rhetoric of the Sermon on the Mount

Arthur O. Lovejoy, one of the founders of the history of ideas as a scholarly discipline, once made the observation that "the God of Aristotle had almost nothing in common with the God of the Sermon on the Mount—though, by one of the strangest and most momentous paradoxes in Western history, the philosophical theology of Christendom identified them, and defined the chief end of man as the imitation of both."[1] Although Lovejoy's term "identified" represents a considerable oversimplification of the history of what he calls "the philosophical theology of Christendom," there is a much more direct point of contact between Aristotle and the Sermon on the Mount, in the history of what could by analogy be called "the rhetorical theology of Christendom." On theological as well as on historical grounds, Christian rhetors expounding the Sermon on the Mount would have rejected any notion that Christ, the Only-begotten Son and immortal Word of God, was subject to the rhetorical principles of classical Greece and Rome (even though they themselves sometimes were).

But was it permissible nevertheless to use those principles even for the analysis of persuasive speech that did not stand in the classical rhetorical tradition?[2] One example of such speech was the long discourse of Moses, inspired as it was by the Holy Spirit, that made up the bulk of the Book of Deuteronomy. In that discourse, as Luther said at the beginning of his *Lectures on Deuteronomy* of 1525,

> Moses beautifully repeats and edits into brief compass the whole history, the good deeds and the wonders of God, at the same time mentioning also the deeds of godless men. He intends to declare the glory and magnificence of God and thus to coax the people to trust the divine goodness and to fear His wrath, so that, taught by experience, they might become ready to

1 Lovejoy [1936] 1960, 5.   2 Jackson and Kessler 1974; Kennedy 1984.

receive His law from the heart. For the best preparation of all for hearing the law and for moving the hearer is that which takes place through the evangelical praise of the mercy and the wrath of God.[3]

Such "declaring," "coaxing," and "moving the hearer," such "teaching" and "praise," and such appeals to "the good deeds and the wonders of God" and to "experience," as Luther's subsequent analysis repeatedly suggested, were all intended to be not only "beautiful" aesthetically but persuasive rhetorically. That would apply even more to the divine rhetoric of Jesus Christ the God-man in the Sermon on the Mount than it did to the divine rhetoric of Moses the prophet in the Book of Deuteronomy.

In the introduction to his *Rhetoric* Aristotle lists the three *pisteis*, proofs or means of persuasion, that are "furnished by the speech." "The first," he explains, "depends upon the moral character [*êthos*] of the speaker," the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind [which he later calls *pathos*], the third upon the message of the speech itself [which is now usually called *logos*].[4] As Kennedy reminds us, "the shorthand ethos-pathos-logos to describe the modes of persuasion is a convenience but does not represent Aristotle's own usage,"[5] though it does represent his distinction of the three *pisteis*. In Book II Aristotle lists them in a different order: *logos, êthos, pathos*;[6] and a little later the order is changed again to yet another sequence: *pathos, êthos, logos*, which is then also followed in the explanations of the three that form the bulk of Book II. For Aurelius Augustinus, John Chrysostom, and Martin Luther as interpreters of the Sermon on the Mount, the primary point of reference for understanding it was plainly "the character of the Speaker," Jesus Christ, who not only *spoke* the word of God, as the prophets had before him, but *was* the Word and Logos of God;[7] Chrysostom was speaking for all three of them, and for the whole Christian Tradition, when he said that here in the Sermon on the Mount no mere man but "God is discoursing."[8] Therefore the sequence in which Aristotle presents the three *pisteis* or means of persuasion the first time would also seem to be the most suitable one to follow here: "*Êthos*, The Character and Authority of the Speaker"; "*Pathos*, The Frame of Mind of the Audience"; "*Logos*, The Message of Change."

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3   *LW* 9:16.
4   *Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a.
5   Kennedy 1991, 37-38.

6   *Rhet* II.i.1-4 1377b-1378a.
7   Jn 1.1-14.
8   *Chrys* 6.14-15.

7

Êthos: The Character and Authority of the Speaker

The first of the *pisteis*, or means of persuasion in public address, that Aristotle lists is "the character [*êthos*] of the speaker," which, he declares, "is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuasion." Character as a factor in persuasion is at work, he explains, "whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others] on all subjects in general and more completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt." He adds, however, that such a sense of the character and credibility of the speaker "should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person."[1] His editor and translator, George A. Kennedy, has pointed out in commenting on this latter requirement that "Aristotle thus does not include in rhetorical ethos the authority that a speaker may possess due to his position in government or society, previous actions, reputation for wisdom, or anything else except what is actually contained in the speech and the character it reveals."[2] This is all the more surprising in view of the almost legendary preeminence accorded by the Greek rhetorical tradition to the funeral oration of Pericles, as reported by Thucydides; for both the public position of Pericles and his personal reputation for ethical character do seem to have helped to make the oration so effective.[3] Kennedy goes on later to clarify that "in religious discourse [by contrast with civic discourse] unsupported maxims made by an authoritative teacher can be effective, as in the case of many sayings of Jesus."[4]

1 *Rhet* I.ii.3-4 1356a.
2 Kennedy 1991, 39.

3 Thucydides *Peloponnesian War* II.34-46; Plato *Phaedrus* 270a.
4 Kennedy 1991, 184.

It was just this latter kind of authority, and therefore this kind of *êthos* and "character of the speaker," based on his education but even more on his position as a servant of the Church, that each of these three Christian rhetors—Augustine as priest and future bishop of Hippo Regius, Chrysostom as priest and future bishop of Constantinople, and Luther as *Doctor in Biblia* and now reformer of the Western Church—brought to his own rhetorical assignment when he undertook to interpret the Sermon on the Mount. That helps to account for the serene confidence with which each of them spoke. But at the same time each of them explicitly saw himself also as the unworthy but nevertheless authoritative spokesman for Another. To an infinitely greater degree, therefore, all three of them saw "the character of the Speaker" of the Sermon on the Mount Himself as based upon, and derived from, not "His position in government or society," but nothing less than His position in the Holy Trinity. All the devotion, speculation, and controversy about the person of Jesus Christ, which occupied so prominent a place in the Christian Tradition as inherited by each of these three interpreters, had served to define and to reinforce the transcendent authority and *êthos* of Christ in what He did but also in what He said. After specifying at the beginning of the Sermon that He had "come not to abolish [the law and the prophets] but to fulfill them,"[5] He proceeded to the sovereign pronouncement of a series of oppositions, which opened with "You have heard that it was said to men of old"—"But I say to you,"[6] and continued with five more.[7] In the Gospel of St Matthew itself as well as in the commentaries, the report at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount had made the singular authority and character of the Speaker explicit: "The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."[8] As Chrysostom exclaimed, "So great was the power of Him who spoke!"[9]

More specifically, Aristotle, once again with a triadic formula, identifies "three reasons why speakers themselves are persuasive; for there are three things we trust other than logical demonstration. These are

5   Mt 5.17.
6   Mt 5.21-22.
7   Mt 5.27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44.
8   Mt 7.28-29.
9   *Chrys* 5.11-12.

practical wisdom [*phronêsis*] and virtue [*aretê*] and good will [*eunoia*]; for speakers make mistakes in what they say or advise through [failure to exhibit] either all or one of these."[10] For all three of the Christian traditions being examined here, it was Jesus Christ the Son of God, and He alone, who had "exhibited all of these" three qualities in unique measure, so that the Sermon on the Mount was a prime exhibition of His practical wisdom, His virtue, and His good will. Although all three of these rhetors did, of course, deal with all three of these qualities and recognize all of them in the Speaker of the Sermon, each quality was sufficiently prominent in the exposition of *êthos* by one of them to be able to serve as the focal point for our examination of him.

Christ the Speaker as "Wisdom" and "Practical Wisdom" Incarnate: Augustine

St Augustine would eventually devote a large section of his theological masterpiece, *On the Trinity*, to a clarification of the statement of the apostle Paul that Christ was "the wisdom of God and the power of God":[11] for the contemplative life He was a wisdom [*sapientia*] to make foolish all the so-called wisdom of human systems of speculative thought; but for the active life He was a practical wisdom [*prudentia*] that found its most profound expression not in any system of speculative thought or rhetorical grandiloquence, but in humility and the Cross, in what Augustine called the *sermo humilis*.[12] Therefore *sapientia* and *prudentia* came together in the incarnate Word.

The Orthodox and Catholic definition of the place of Christ as the Second Hypostasis of the Trinity, as this definition had been formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and the First Council of Constantinople in 381, stood as the unquestioned—and unquestionable—presupposition of St Augustine's thought. In the introduction to *On the Trinity*, he summarized that definition in a paraphrase of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, and affirmed: "This is also my faith, since it is the Catholic faith."[13] But already when he had taken on the assignment of expounding the Sermon on the Mount, this Catholic

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10 *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.
11 Augustine *On the Trinity* VI-VII (NPNF-I 3:97-114), discussing 1 Cor 1.24.
12 Auerbach 1965, 27-66.
13 Augustine *On the Trinity* I.iv.7 (NPNF-I 3:20).

Orthodoxy replaced—and, in his judgment, corrected—the Manichaean view of Christ to which he had adhered when he was a member of that quasi-Christian sect.[14]

Throughout his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, therefore, Augustine was concerned to specify the *êthos* and authority of Christ, the Speaker of the Sermon. In keeping with his usual way of speaking about the person of Christ, he sometimes attributed the *êthos* to the divine nature of Christ as Logos, using the meaning of that title as "Word" to underscore the equation of the word of Christ with the word of God. At other times, Augustine the rhetor pays tribute to Jesus Christ as the greatest of all rhetors, who here, in the greatest of all sermons, demonstrated that He was qualitatively, not only quantitatively, superior to all human orators, Christian as well as pagan. The reason for that qualitative superiority was that although other orators might *speak* the truth, Christ *was* the Truth: "the truth, which is none other but Himself. And this truth, we cannot doubt, although found among liars, He preserved even in death; for Christ was once dead, but never false."[15] But as there was a gradation of loves, moving up from love of external goods to love of the neighbor to love of God, with each of these loves being appropriate to its object but "disordered" when it was directed to other objects,[16] so also there was a gradation of truths, climaxing in the truth of the Beatitudes, which was "the highest wisdom."[17] Near the very beginning of the commentary, Augustine identified Christ as Truth personified. Describing the "kingdom of God," in which reason, as the faculty that is distinctive and superior in human nature, controls the senses and rules over the appetites shared by human nature with the animals, he moved up the scale of authority, from the truth of the senses to the truth of reason to the truth of Christ: "And that very thing which is preeminent in man, namely, mind and reason, is subject to something higher, which is the Truth itself, the only-begotten Son of God. For no one is able to rule what is inferior to him unless he also subjects himself to what is superior to him."[18] Christ was not only Truth personified, as He called

14 Augustine *Reply to Faustus the Manichean*   69.3 (NPNF-I 7:325).
       XX.I-8 (NPNF-I 4:252-55).   16 Burnaby 1938, 115-79.
15 Augustine *Tractates on the Gospel of John*   17 *Aug* 5.3.
                                                      18 *Aug* 5.9.

Himself;[19] He was also Wisdom [*sapientia*] personified, as His apostle Paul called him.[20] And so near the end of the exposition, Augustine warned that "wisdom...can be found in Christ alone, 'in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.'"[21]

In one of his earliest Christian writings, *The Teacher* [*De magistro*], he had quoted some of these same passages to argue in support of a concept of truth as inner recollection that had obvious affinities with the Platonic doctrine of *anamnêsis*, but was by no means identical with it:

> Regarding, however, all those things which we understand, it is not a speaker who utters sounds exteriorly whom we consult, but it is truth that presides within, over the mind itself; though it may have been words that prompted us to make such consultation. And He who is consulted, He who is said to "dwell in the inner man," He it is who teaches—Christ—that is, "the unchangeable Power of God and everlasting Wisdom."

And he added: "This Wisdom every rational soul does, in fact, consult."[22] Here in the Sermon on the Mount, too, the summons of personified Truth and Wisdom to avoid ostentatious piety meant that "our every effort is to be directed toward inner joys, lest, seeking an external reward, we become conformed to this age and lose the promise of a blessedness which is more solid and lasting the more it is inward."[23] The universality of this inner truth and wisdom was evident through the universality of conscience. "There is no soul, however perverse, which can in some way still reason," he insisted on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, "in whose conscience God does not speak."[24] Therefore the Christ who, as Wisdom and Truth, was the source and author of the human conscience was also "the only searcher of conscience," whom those who had "a pure heart" were to strive to please.[25] For Christ was not only the source and the author of conscience, but its Lord.

And that meant that Christ the Lord was also the Judge of the quick and the dead, because the Father had given all judgment to the Son.[26] But this Lord and Judge was different from human judges, because He was at the same time the only true High Priest, mediating between

19 Jn 14.6.
20 1 Cor 1.24.
21 *Aug* 7.16-20, quoting Col 2.3.
22 Augustine *The Teacher* 38 (ACW 9:177).
23 *Aug* 6.16-18.
24 *Aug* 6.13.
25 *Aug* 6.1.
26 *Aug* 5.25-26, quoting Jn 5.22.

God and a sinful humanity.[27] By the power of His reconciliation, all
human relationships, in the family and in society, were transformed, so
that a disciple of Christ "loves his enemy . . . not inasmuch as he is an
enemy, but inasmuch as he is a human being; so that he wishes for his
enemy what he also wishes for himself, namely, that he reach the king-
dom of heaven renewed and corrected."[28] The Lord, Judge, and High
Priest, moreover, "has condescended to offer Himself as an example."[29]
Invoking the quite innocuous formula of *homo assumptus*, which
acquired heretical overtones because of its association with the
Nestorian version of the distinction between the divine and human
natures in Christ, Augustine asserted that "in the man whom He
deigned to assume the Lord offered us an example of how to live."[30] In
all of these ways, Christ the Lord and Savior provided His disciples
with "leadership and assistance" to overcome all three constituent steps
of committing a sin, which were "suggestion, pleasure, and consent."[31]

For St Augustine at the time of his commentary on the Sermon on
the Mount—and, for that matter, throughout his career as bishop and
theologian—the *êthos* of Christ as Speaker and the authority of Christ
as Lord were inseparable from the authority of Scripture, in which
Christ spoke both to the Church and to the individual believer, both in
the Old Testament and in the New. Therefore Augustine's reaction to
even the appearance of a contradiction in the Scriptures was an apodic-
tic "which cannot be."[32] Fundamental to the stages on life's way for the
believer that were described by the Beatitudes was the stage represented
by "Blessed are the meek," at which "the soul submits itself to divine
authority" and then "comes to the knowledge of the Scriptures, where
it is necessary to prove itself meek in piety, so it may not dare to dispar-
age what seems absurd to the unlearned, and by stubborn controversy
render itself unteachable."[33] The obedient disciple of Christ could be
defined quite simply as the one who obeyed the authority of Scripture:

> Who is it who agrees with divine Scripture except the one who reads or
> hears it piously, granting it the highest authority, so that he does not there-

27 *Aug* 5.39.   30 *Aug* 5.41.
28 *Aug* 5.32.   31 *Aug* 5.27-28.
29 *Aug* 7.21.   32 *Aug* 5.43-48.
                                   33 *Aug* 5.5.

fore hate what he understands when he feels it is opposed to his sins, but rather loves its correction and rejoices that his faults are not spared until they are healed? Indeed, when something sounds obscure or absurd, who but this person does not for that reason stir up a contest of contradictions, but prays that he may understand and remembers that goodwill and reverence are still to be shown to such a great authority?[34]

The meekness praised in the Beatitudes could be defined as "seeking piously to honor the Holy Scriptures and not to criticize what one does not understand."[35] Or, as Augustine put it at the conclusion of his commentary—commenting on the verse, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them, will be like the wise man who built his house on a rock"[36]—"If the rock is Christ, as many testimonies of Scripture proclaim, that person builds on Christ who does what he hears Him say," namely, in Holy Scripture.[37] As it was for Augustine, so for Luther and Chrysostom, too, the central consideration throughout the Sermon was "the true exposition of Scripture."[38]

Christ the Speaker as "Virtue" Personified: Chrysostom

To St John Chrysostom, the "virtue" both of the teachings and of the example of Christ, as documented here in the Sermon on the Mount, had "set the highest pinnacle on our good deeds."[39] When he expounded the Sermon on the Mount as part of his sermonic commentary on the entire Gospel of Matthew, sometime during the final two decades of the fourth century, the Orthodox Church had just passed through a period of intense controversy about the Trinity, hence about the identity, and therefore the authority, of Jesus Christ, the Speaker of the Sermon on the Mount, in relation to the God whom in the Sermon He called "Father" seventeen times—though usually "Your Father,"[40] once (in the Lord's Prayer) "Our Father,"[41] only once (near the conclusion) "My Father,"[42] and never simply "the Father." At the Council of Nicaea in 325, the Church had identified Him as "one in essence

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34 *Aug* 5.25-26.
35 *Aug* 5.5.
36 Mt 7.24.
37 *Aug* 7.24.
38 *Luth* 5.13.

39 *Chrys* 5.43-45.
40 Mt 5.16, 45, 48; 6.1, 4, 6 (twice), 8, 14, 15, 18 (twice), 26, 32; 7.11.
41 Mt 6.9.
42 Mt 7.21.

[*homoousios*] with the Father."[43] The period of this commentary was, however, also the time when Christian Orthodoxy was moving into the no less intense and vastly more protracted debate about the relation of the divine Logos as the Second Person of the Trinity to the human nature, the human life and death, and hence also the human words and teachings, of Jesus of Nazareth. The city of Alexandria and Chrysostom's city, Antioch, were, moreover, the two major rivals for theological supremacy in these contests about the person of Christ.

The controversies over the Trinity and the person of Christ pervaded not only the politics of the bishops and the learned debates of the theologians, but the life and teaching of the entire Church. That makes it all the more striking to discover how muted the echoes of these two controversies are in much of Chrysostom's treatment of the authority of the Speaker of the Sermon. Unlike earlier church fathers,[44] he identified the "false prophets" against whom Christ warned in the Sermon not as heretics, but as "those who are of a corrupt life, yet wear a mask of virtue," being guilty of falseness of morals rather than of doctrine.[45] This was also the falseness of which, according to Chrysostom, Christ accused His contemporaries, a stress "only on the doctrines" without a care for faithful practice.[46] It would be impossible to reconstruct from St John Chrysostom's account either the debates over the Arian and Semi-Arian heresies that had just dominated the thought of the preceding decades or those over the Nestorian and Apollinarist alternatives (and their several successors) that were about to dominate the thought of the following decades and centuries. At several points he himself was led to remark on the singular absence of explicit theological references by Christ Himself to the divine authority with which He was speaking. For as the supreme Rhetor, Christ would have had the right to address this supremely rhetorical appeal to His hearers, using His sovereignty to evoke their shame and and His sufferings to evoke their pity, both of these being emotions which Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* had specifically identified as among those to which "the available means of persuasion" were to speak:[47]

43 Tanner 1:5.
44 Irenaeus *Against Heresies* I.pr. (ANF 1:315); Tertullian *On Proscription Against Heretics* 4 (ANF 3:245).
45 *Chrys* 7.8.
46 *Chrys* 7.21.
47 *Rhet* II.vi 1383b-1385a; II.viii 1385b-1386b.

Me, who brought you from that which is not into being, who breathed into you a soul, and set you over all things on earth, who for your sake made earth and heaven and sea and air and all things that exist, who had been dishonored by you, yes, accounted of less honor than the devil, but who did not even so withdraw Himself, but had innumerable thoughts for you after it all; who chose to become a slave, who was beaten with rods and spit upon, who was slain, who died the most shameful death, who also on high makes intercession for you, who freely gives you His Spirit, who vouchsafes to you a kingdom, who makes you such promises, whose will it is to be to you head and bridegroom and garment and house and root and meat and drink and shepherd and king, and who has taken you to be brother and heir and joint-heir with Himself; who has brought you out of darkness into the dominion of light.

But because of his "gentleness [*epieikeia*]"[48] Christ refrained from vindicating His authority in this way.[49] What He did say as the supreme Rhetor was: "Did you give praise to what has been said? No, I do not want applause.... One thing only do I wish, that quietly and intelligently listening, you should do what is said. That is the applause, this the panegyric."[50]

About Himself, therefore, and about the Orthodox confession "that He Himself made heaven, and earth, and sea, and all things visible and invisible [as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed put it], in His own person He nowhere expressly spoke in the Sermon; but His disciple, speaking out plainly and suppressing nothing," would affirm it over and over, notably in the prologue of the Gospel of John.[51] On the basis of those words of St John, "the beloved disciple" and his own patron saint, St John Chrysostom could even explain that the Sermon on the Mount attributes exclusively to God the Father the works of creation and preservation, which belonged no less to the Son of God; for "surely all these things He Himself works."[52] It was another disciple of Christ, and one "untimely born,"[53] St Paul, who filled in the missing connection between the supreme gift of Christ's life and death and "all things" that human beings needed; but nowhere in the Sermon did Christ "set down the chief of all good things, nor bring forward His own coming."[54] But when St Paul spoke that way, "there too it is Christ,

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48 Cf. 2 Cor 10.1.
49 *Chrys* 7.20.
50 *Chrys* 5.37.
51 *Chrys* 5.17, referring to Jn 1.3, 10.

52 *Chrys* 6.28-29.
53 1 Cor 15.8.
54 *Chrys* 7.11, quoting Rm 8.32.

speaking by Paul."[55] That reserve of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount about His relation with the Father and the Holy Spirit is reflected also in Chrysostom's reticence about the doctrine of the Trinity, so lately the subject of bitter disputes. It is typically in the peroration of one of his sermons on the Sermon on the Mount, the *epilogos* as Aristotle called it,[56] that Chrysostom would invoke the Trinity:

> And together with all these things we shall receive also the ineffable blessings, to which may we all attain, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and power and worship, with the un-originated Father and the Holy and Good Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.[57]

Addressing the question of why Christ's review of the Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount[58] did not, as would have seemed logical, begin with the first commandment of the Decalogue, Chrysostom explained that this would have required Christ to enlarge on the doctrine of the Trinity and His relation to the Father in more detail than would have been appropriate here, because Christ had intended for His moral doctrine and His miracles "to convince the hearers that He was the Son of God"; only later did He "unveil [*exekalypse*] it in words also."[59] St Gregory the Theologian traced the successive stages of the history of such "unveiling" in fuller trinitarian detail:

> In the case by which I have illustrated it [the development of the requirements of the divine law from Moses to the New Testament] the change is made by successive subtractions [for example, of circumcision and of the dietary regulations]; whereas here perfection is reached by additions. For the matter stands thus. The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New [Testament] manifested the Son, and suggested the Deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit Himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of Himself. For it was not safe, when the Godhead of the Father was not yet acknowledged, plainly to proclaim the Son; nor when that of the Son was not yet received, to burden us further (if I may use so bold an expression) with the Holy Ghost..., but that by gradual additions, and, as David says, "goings up,"[60] and advances and progress from glory to glory, the light of the Trinity

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55 *Chrys* 7.1.   58 Mt. 5.21-48.
56 *Rhet* III.xix 1419b-1420b.   59 *Chrys* 5.27-28.
57 *Chrys* 5.48.   60 Ps 83.6 (LXX).

might shine upon the more illuminated. For this reason it was, I think, that He *gradually* came to dwell in the disciples, measuring Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him.[61]

As the oratorical periodic sentence placed into the mouth of Christ and quoted at length earlier showed,[62] Chrysostom was willing, though also with some reserve, to invoke the final suffering and the "shameful death" of Christ as establishing His authority and His right to speak as He does in the Sermon on the Mount. The admonition of Christ to be "peacemakers," he explained early in his commentary, was grounded in "the work of the Only-begotten, to unite the divided, and to reconcile the alienated,"[63] already by His life and teaching, but supremely by His death. "For we too were enemies of God, and the Only-begotten reconciled us, casting Himself between [God and sinners], and for us receiving stripes and for us enduring death."[64] Similarly, the admonition to forgive others their sins took not only its example but its motivating power from "having seen God become man, and descend so far and suffer so much for your sake" and forgive so much.[65] For it was "the good work of Christ" to bring liberation from "the rottenness of sins."[66] "He is," Chrysostom summarized, "everywhere bringing about the salvation of His hearers."[67] The rhetorical use of shame and pity[68] over the suffering of Christ found an especially poignant and powerful example in Christ's "turning and looking" at Peter after the threefold denial, which caused Peter to "weep bitterly":[69] "Better surely to endure a thousand thunderbolts than to see that face of mildness turning away from us, and that eye of peace not enduring to look upon us!"[70]

By virtue of such a position as both Son of God and Savior, Christ the Lawgiver, "enacting such laws, and such corrections of laws, would lead on the attentive and understanding hearer, little by little, to the word of His doctrine."[71] He combined "strictness of life" in his demands with "boldness of speech."[72] Both by His admonitions and by

61 Gregory of Nazianzus *Orations* 34.26 (NPNF-II 7:326).
62 *Chrys* 7.20.
63 *Chrys* 5.9.
64 *Chrys* 5.15-16.
65 *Chrys* 5.45.
66 *Chrys* 5.13.
67 *Chrys* 7.25.
68 *Rhet* II.vi 1383b-1385a; II.viii 1385b-1386b.
69 Lk 22.61-62.
70 *Chrys* 7.20.
71 *Chrys* 5.27-28.
72 *Chrys* 5.14-15.

His reproofs, therefore, he sought "to awaken men the more to the persuasive power of His words."[73] Therefore He had the right, in "discoursing with His disciples" in the Sermon on the Mount, to discourse at the same time "with all through them," which was why, "though it was spoken to them" orally, it went on to be "written for the sake also of all men afterwards," moving from the particularity of this historical situation to a universal authority.[74] His instruction was, in short, "a spiritual school."[75] That universal authority likewise enabled Him to take a sovereign stance toward the requirements of the Old Law by "a sort of addition, not however lessening, but enhancing virtue."[76] Contrary to the effort of some of the Gnostics and Manichaeans to separate the cruel Lawgiver of the Old Testament from the gentle Savior of the New, it was the Orthodox teaching of the Church to "say that there is but one and the same Lawgiver of either covenant, who dispensed everything appropriately and adapted to the difference of the times the difference between the two systems of law." Therefore it followed that "neither are the first commandments cruel, nor the second hard and grievous, but all of them come from one and the same providential care."[77] The two laws, old and new, and their commandments were issued from the same divine source and authority; for "in fact there is no other will of the Son besides that of the Father," and conversely no other will of the Father apart from that of the Son.[78]

And so, if "the Lawgiver has pronounced it, you must not ask any more questions."[79] Because it "especially pertains to the best legislation, not only to enjoin what is expedient, but also to make it possible,"[80] the authority of Christ the Lawgiver expressed in the Sermon on the Mount implied obedience to God, and then to "men for God's sake," rather than the other way around.[81] It implied as well that the same Lawgiver who issued commands also held out hope, for He backed up each of His commands with actions that spoke louder than words.[82]

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73 *Chrys* 6.28-29.
74 *Chrys* 5.2.
75 *Chrys* 5.37.
76 *Chrys* 5.17.
77 *Chrys* 5.22.

78 *Chrys* 7.21.
79 *Chrys* 5.27-28.
80 *Chrys* 6.24.
81 *Chrys* 6.19.
82 *Chrys* 6.34.

Christ the Speaker as God's "Good Will" Made Manifest: Luther

In the year before the departure of his colleague Johann Bugenhagen for Lübeck placed upon Luther the responsibilities in the pulpit at Wittenberg that led to his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, he had used the most influential prose work he ever wrote, the Small Catechism of 1529, to specify the basis of the "good will" and "the character and authority of the Speaker" of the Sermon on the Mount in considerable detail as part of his explanation of the Apostles' Creed:

> I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, delivered me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold but with His holy and precious blood and with His innocent sufferings and death, in order that I may be His, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.[83]

And in his most influential poetic work, the hymn "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott," he had also specified that authority in unambiguous language:

> Did we in our own strength confide,
> Our striving would be losing;
> Were not the right Man on our side,
> The Man of God's own choosing.
> Dost ask who that may be?
> Christ Jesus, it is He;
> Lord Sabaoth His name,
> From age to age the same,
> And He must win the battle.

His definition of the *êthos* and authority of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount was consistent with these two portraits, the first of which dealt chiefly with the redemptive work of Christ and the second with the divine-human person of Christ. For even Christ could not have preached publicly, as He did in the Sermon, without a "call," which applied

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83 Tappert et al. 1959, 345.

a fortiori to human preachers like Luther, who had the right to speak only because he had "the commission and charge."[84]

Therefore he observed that in "St Matthew's way of speaking" about Christ there was less "emphasis upon the profound doctrine of Christ [than] in St John and St Paul," but more upon the issue of good works and the Christian life, on which he was "better than John," whereas John was better on "the proclamation about faith and Christ."[85] Here in the Sermon on the Mount in the context of the Gospel of Matthew, consequently, Christ "is not dealing with the great chief doctrine of what He is and what He gives us."[86] In Luther's general usage, as in the usage of St Paul, the term "gospel" referred primarily to that "great chief doctrine" of the saving "good will" of God in the suffering and death of Christ, rather than to the life and teachings of Jesus in the four "Gospels."[87] (That distinction is reflected in the usage of modern written English, where the word is written lower-case as "gospel" when it means the Christian message but capitalized as "Gospel" when it means the first four books of the New Testament.) Repeatedly, therefore, Luther supplied the "gospel" in the first sense to these presentations of the "Gospel" in the second. "The only pupils" of the Sermon, he warned from the beginning, were not the unconverted, but "those who already cling to Christ and believe in Him."[88] The admonition of the Sermon on the Mount to "make friends quickly with your accuser" provided an occasion for Luther to remind his hearers not only that this was what they themselves ought to do, but first of all that this "is what God has done with us and continues to do when He forgives sin: He expunges it from the record and no longer remembers it."[89] At the same time, Paulinist though he was, Luther could say as he began his exposition of the Sermon: "Yes, I hear what St Paul and His other apostles have taught, but I would much rather hear what [Christ] Himself spoke and preached."[90] It is also somewhat surprising that, focused though he was on the Pauline doctrine of justification, he did not take the phrase "hungering and thirsting for righteousness" in the Beatitudes to be a reference to the righteousness

84 *Luth* 5.1-2; 5.9.
85 *Luth* 5.16.
86 *Luth* 5.19.

87 See pp. 89-90 above.
88 *Luth* 5.7.
89 *Luth* 5.25-26.
90 *Luth* 5.3.

"by which a person becomes pious and acceptable to God" as conferred in justification, but to "outward righteousness before the world."[91]

Always implicit in the commands and the promises of Christ the Teacher in the Sermon on the Mount was "Christ our Savior" and "His dear suffering and death."[92] This was "the chief article of faith. When that is gone, no other part can stay right," not even the very commands of Christ Himself in the Sermon on the Mount.[93] And when Christ was "not dealing with the great chief doctrine of what He is and what He gives us," the fact remained that even then He "was not talking primarily about life, but about doctrine."[94] At the same time Luther acknowledged that this emphasis on "doctrine" could, ironically, serve to divert attention from the full meaning of the authority of Christ. "The world could tolerate it," he admitted, "if we proclaimed Christ and all the articles of faith correctly," so long as the challenge represented by the word and authority of Christ was ignored.[95] The stipulation appended to the Beatitude "Blessed are those who are persecuted *for righteousness' sake*" meant that the promise did not apply to any and all persecutions, because "the devil and wicked people also have to suffer persecution"; but Christ made it "the primary thing that you grasp the word of God firmly and surely so that there can be no doubt or hesitation." Only then could the believer "have the confidence to say: 'This cause does not belong to me but to Christ, my Lord. For I have not concocted it out of my own head. . . . But it has been brought and announced to me from heaven, through the mouth of Christ, who never deludes or deceives me but is Himself sheer Truth and Righteousness. At this Man's word I will take the risk of suffering.'"[96]

Despite the obvious typology and parallelism between Mount Sinai and the Mount of the Sermon,[97] Christ was not speaking here as another Moses; "for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."[98] Hence the "good will" of the Father announced in the gospel of Christ "teaches about the right relation of the heart to God," not about "law and punishment..., the distinctions

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91 *Luth* 5.6.
92 *Luth* 5.19.
93 *Luth* 5.13.
94 *Luth* 5.19.

95 *Luth* 5.13.
96 *Luth* 5.10.
97 Daniélou, 1960, 159-60.
98 Jn 1.17.

that exist among ranks and persons, the management and distribution of property."[99] Unlike Moses the divine lawgiver, Christ "does not want to compel anyone or drive him with commandments."[100] The difference between the two was a rhetorical one as well. "Christ as a true preacher goes up on the mountain and vigorously opens His mouth... [with] a fine, sweet, and friendly beginning for His instruction and preaching. He does not come like Moses or a teacher of the law, with demands, threats and terrors, but in a very friendly way, with enticements, allurements, and pleasant promises."[101] Luther the rhetor throughout his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount took care to identify these "enticements, allurements, and pleasant promises," which made the Speaker of the Sermon on the Mount "a dear and wonderful preacher and faithful master," whose rhetorical skill as the Speaker of the Sermon meant that he "leaves out nothing that will help to strengthen and console" his hearers.[102] Even when Christ in the Sermon on the Mount was reinterpreting the Mosaic law, for example on marriage and divorce, this was not primarily divine legislation but divine rhetoric: He "is not functioning here as a lawyer or a governor, to set down or prescribe any regulations for outward conduct; but He is functioning as a preacher, to instruct consciences about using the divorce law properly, rather than wickedly and capriciously, contrary to God's commandment."

Those who were not His disciples were not the audience of the Sermon on the Mount, for such people "must be governed, not with the gospel, but with compulsion and punishment"; this was in keeping with the restraint that Christ put on His own preaching, as well as on the expositors of His preaching, in order to "keep our ministry clear and not claim any more right than we are authorized to have." In that sense marriage and divorce were "a rather secular and outward thing, having to do with wife and children, house and home, and with other matters that belong to the realm of government, all of which have been completely subjected to reason."[103] As St Augustine had insisted that the new relationship with God that Christ was describing in the

99 *Luth* 5.38-42.   101 *Luth* 5.3.
100 *Luth* 5.13.   102 *Luth* 5.12.
                                           103 *Luth* 5.31-32.

Sermon on the Mount "is not due to our merits but to the grace of God,"[104] so Luther felt obliged by the repeated references to "reward" in the Sermon on the Mount[105]—which he accused his scholastic opponents of having distorted in order to obscure divine grace—to vindicate the centrality of the good will of Christ toward humanity, by adding an entire "Postscript" to his exposition, as a way of emphasizing, as he said in his final paragraph, that the divine favor of "grace is granted equally to all" as a gift through Christ, so that "in Christ they are all alike."[106]

All "three things we trust other than logical demonstration" in the word of a human speaker, according to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*[107]—"practical wisdom," which had become incarnate, as Augustine expounded it; "virtue," which was personified, as Chrysostom urged it; and "good will," which was made manifest, as Luther found it presupposed—had therefore achieved their definitive expression, both in word and in deed, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"[108] and spoke the Sermon on the Mount.

104 *Aug* 6.9-13.
105 Mt 5.12, 46; 6.1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18.
106 *Luth* 7.28-29.
107 *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.
108 Jn 1.14.

8

Pathos: The Frame of Mind of the Audience

After having explained in the introduction to the *Rhetoric* that persuasion takes place through the "moral character [*êthos*]" of the speaker, Aristotle continues: "The second [depends] upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind [*ton akroatên diatheinai pôs*]."[1] And again: "[There is persuasion] through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion [*pathos*] by the speech; for we do not give the same judgment when grieved and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile."[2] For example, "it is possible [for a speaker] both to demonstrate that people are enemies and friends and to make them so when they are not and to refute those claiming to be and to bring those who through anger or enmity are on the other side of the case over to whatever feeling he chooses."[3] These statements make it clear that Aristotle sees "frame of mind," the response and the commitment of the audience, as an essential component of persuasion. He devotes the first eleven chapters of Book II of the *Rhetoric* to a catalogue of the "emotions." To introduce this catalogue, he defines and explains:

> The emotions [*pathê*] are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites. There is need to divide the discussion of each into three headings. I mean, for example, in speaking of anger, what is their *state of mind* when people are angry and against *whom* are they usually angry, and for what sort of *reasons*.[4]

In the separate chapters that follow on these various "emotions [*pathê*]," he sometimes neglects to draw specific connections to the task

1 *Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a (Freese).
2 *Rhet* I.ii.5 1356a.
3 *Rhet* II.iv.32 1382a.
4 *Rhet* II.i.8-9 1378a; italics are Kennedy's.

of rhetoric, perhaps because the treatise was left unfinished or because it incorporated an already existing (and unfinished) treatise on psychology.[5]

For this comparison of how Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther understood the role of audiences, by which they meant audiences both past and present,[6] in the Sermon on the Mount, it may be "useful"—*chrêsimon*, one of Aristotle's favorite words in all three books of the *Rhetoric*[7]—to divide and particularize the questions implied by this Aristotelian definition as follows: "people come to differ in their judgments" to identify *the different audiences being addressed*, as these are described in the preface to the Sermon by St Matthew's distinction between "the crowds" and "His disciples";[8] "what is their state of mind" to refer to *the cost of discipleship*, which was sublimely itemized in the Beatitudes and which the Sermon on the Mount was intended to evoke;[9] "undergoing change" to look specifically at how, in the Sermon on the Mount, this discipleship is set into *contrast with the Old Law*;[10] and "for what sort of reasons" to apply to the various concrete forms of response to the most comprehensive and absolute of all the demands of discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount, *the imperative of perfection*.[11] For the purposes of comparison, moreover, these four questions about "*pathos*, the frame of mind of the audience" in the present chapter will be applied in turn to each of the three rhetors, as will the four questions about "*logos*, the message of change" in the following chapter.

The Audience as "Soldiers for God": Augustine

To Augustine, as a former professor of rhetoric, the need to identify *the different audiences being addressed* in the Sermon on the Mount was one of his tasks in expounding the Sermon. It was evidently an echo of his studies in rhetoric even when, speaking about the address of the Lord's Prayer to God as Father, he explained a basic rhetorical rule about petition, whether to God or to a fellow human being: "Since in every

5   Kennedy 1991, 299-305.
6   *Chrys* 5.1-2.
7   *Rhet* I.i.12 1355a; I.i.14 1355b; II.i.4 1377b;
    III.vi.7 1408a.
8   Mt 5.1-2.

9   Mt 5.3-12. The phrase "cost of disciple-
    ship" is, of course, from Bonhoeffer 1957.
10 Mt 5.17-20.
11 Mt 5.48.

petition the good will of the one we are petitioning is to be won over and only then what we are asking for is to be mentioned, this good will is usually won over by praise of the one to whom the petition is directed, and this is generally put at the beginning of the petition."[12] Aristotle, and the Greek and Roman tradition that followed him, had listed this "good will," together with "practical wisdom" and "virtue," as one of the "three reasons why speakers themselves are persuasive, for there are three things we trust other than logical demonstration."[13] Augustine could also have used Chrysostom's phrase "all through them"[14] to specify the address of the Sermon on the Mount as the disciples, to whom Christ was speaking these words, but also by extension "those who [were to] believe in Christ through [the disciples'] word."[15] The third petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" could be paraphrased to say: "as in our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, so also in the Church."[16] Therefore he has Christ describe His hearers as "you, through whom the nations are to be salted and preserved," distinguishing between the direct and the indirect address of the Sermon.[17] An "utterly absurd" exegesis of the words of Christ in the Sermon, "Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing," according to which "the expression 'left hand' means 'wife,'" was cited by Augustine to clarify the real address of the Sermon: "As if, indeed, men alone were Christians and this precept was not also given to women!"[18]

If the audience being addressed consisted of Christ's intimate followers but also of "all through them," that made spelling out *the cost of discipleship* a central assignment. Negatively put, the basic definition was clear and simple for Augustine: "He does not follow Christ who is not called a Christian in accordance with the faith and the Catholic discipline." These two, "the faith and the Catholic discipline," were the components of discipleship: believing as the Church believes, and living in accordance with the "discipline" that defines (and, in both Latin and English, shares the etymology of) the word "disciple." This was why Christ in the Beatitudes did not put His stamp of approval on the enduring of all slander and persecution in general, but specified

12 *Aug* 6.9.
13 *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.
14 *Chrys* 5.1-2.
15 Jn 17.20.

16 *Aug* 6.10.
17 *Aug* 5.13.
18 *Aug* 6.3.

that it had to be happening "falsely for My sake." As Augustine knew already when he was expounding the Sermon on the Mount and as he would learn even more bitterly in the decades that followed, especially when confronted with the testimony of those who were martyrs to Donatism, "many heretics (who deceive souls by claiming the Christian name) suffer many of the same sorts of things, but they are excluded from the reward":[19] it was the truth of the cause, not merely the suffering, that made someone a genuine martyr, and the suffering as such was not an automatic proof for the correctness of the cause (even though Christian apologists, too, had sometimes tried to use it that way). Even in the present life, therefore, the cost of discipleship meant that "anyone who wishes to practice here and now the life of the kingdom should hate, not the persons themselves, but those temporal necessities by which this life of ours is sustained—a life which is transitory and which is traversed by being born and dying."[20]

A key element of rhetoric has always been the right choice of metaphors in relation to one's audience.[21] Augustine's most colorful metaphor for the disciple of Christ was "soldier of God."[22] It was, of course, a metaphor already employed by St Paul.[23] But it was also well-suited to the audience of St Augustine's Latin-speaking congregation, because all the virtues for which the soldiers of Rome had been justly celebrated had now found their more complete expression in the disciples of Christ. In his *City of God* Augustine discoursed at length about the foreign wars in which Rome had engaged: "How often were the victors on either side vanquished! What multitudes of men, both of those actually in arms and of others, were destroyed!"[24] Even more "calamitous" and "ruinous to the republic" were the Roman civil wars, which "began long before the coming of Christ and gave birth to one another."[25] To the stock militarist reply "that the Roman empire could never have been so widely extended, nor so glorious, save by constant and unremitting wars" he responded in turn: "Why must a kingdom be distracted in order to be great?"[26] And

19 *Aug* 5.11-12.
20 *Aug* 5.31-32.
21 *Rhet* III.ii.6-15 1404b-1405a.
22 Harnack [1905] 1981, 27-64.
23 2 Cor 10.4; Eph 6.11-12; 1 Tm 1.18, 6.12; 2 Tm 2.4.
24 Augustine *The City of God* III.18 (NPNF-I 2:55).
25 Augustine *The City of God* III.30 (NPNF-I 2:61).
26 Augustine *The City of God* III.10 (NPNF-I 2:47).

by contrast with the virtue of fortitude, which was one of the four classical virtues, along with prudence, temperance, and justice,[27] and was exemplified by the Roman soldier or statesman, he held out the virtue of Christian fortitude, which was grounded in an unshakeable hope.[28] Here in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount he used the image of the disciple as a soldier of God to issue a promise and an admonition:

> Just as all who serve as soldiers receive provisions and pay, so do all who preach the gospel receive food and clothing. But there are some who do not serve as soldiers for the welfare of the state, but because of what they receive; even so there are some who do not minister to God for the welfare of the Church, but because of these temporal things which follow (provisions and pay, as it were), or they do so both for the one reason and for the other. But it was already said above: "You cannot serve two masters."

A soldier, also a "soldier of God," could have only one master, only one set of loyalties, only one to whom his fortitude was dedicated, and only one for whom he was willing to go to war and to die.[29] That was the cost of discipleship.

Having been an adherent of the Manichaean heresy for eight years,[30] Augustine was the only one of these three interpreters of the Sermon on the Mount who knew at first hand how *the contrast with the Old Law* drawn by Christ here in the Sermon on the Mount could be exaggerated into a contradiction by "the heretics who are opposed to the Old Testament," even though "they read [Paul] along with us."[31] Therefore he described the disciples as having asked Christ: "Behold, we are willing to bear all things for Your name and not to hide Your doctrine... Are You about to say things contrary to those that are written in the law?" To this Christ replied: "No. Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. I have come not to destroy but to fulfill."[32] But it was essential to note there were at least two ways to fulfill: "either by adding what is lacking or by doing what it contains."[33] Christ "fulfilled" the Old Law in both ways. He added what was

27 See pp. 9-14 above.
28 Augustine *The City of God* XIX.4 (NPNF-I 2:402-3).
29 *Aug* 6.31-33.
30 Augustine *Confessions* III.vi.10 (Chadwick 1992, 42-43).
31 *Aug* 5.41.
32 Mt 5.17.
33 *Aug* 5.17.

lacking because there had been successive—and progressive—stages in the history of God's dealing with His people, what Augustine called "a thoroughly ordered division of times," according to which God had given "the medicine that is suitable for the times," first the "lesser precepts to a people who needed to be bound by fear," but eventually "through His Son greater precepts to a people who were now ready to be freed by love." The introductory statement that "He opened his mouth and taught them" was also significant for this contrast with the Old Law, because "now He is said to have opened His own mouth, whereas in the Old Law He was accustomed to open the mouths of the prophets."[34] A recognition of these historical contrasts and of the "thoroughly ordered division of times" was essential also for dealing with biblical accounts of vindictiveness such as Elijah's vengeance on his enemies.[35] An especially vexing "example of Old Testament history" was the polygamy of Abraham.[36] By being able "to distinguish the ages of the dispensation of divine providence which has aided the human race in a very regular way," the Christian disciple would recognize that such examples, biblical and patriarchal though they undoubtedly were, were not intended to provide "rules of living" or a pattern for imitating, but to point to the "greater commandments at which the human race has arrived, having passed through that earlier stage." These "greater commandments" involved repudiating not only polygamy, but the traditional double standard, which insisted on strict marital fidelity for women but was permissive toward infidelity by men.[37]

The greatest of such "greater commandments" in the New Law was *the imperative of perfection*. It was "the perfect measure of the Christian life."[38] The catalogue of virtues recited in the Beatitudes was a guide for those who sought "to attain to the highest wisdom," to perfect wisdom and not merely to an intermediate stage of wisdom.[39] Such perfection was to be found only, as the Book of Wisdom had said in its first verse, "in simplicity of heart."[40] In the strict and proper sense, of course, it was to be found only in God, so that the imperative of perfection in the Sermon on the Mount, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your

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34 *Aug* 5.1-2.
35 *Aug* 5.41 (cf. 1 Kgs 18.40).
36 Gn 16.1-3.
37 *Aug* 5.32.

38 *Aug* 5.1.
39 *Aug* 5.3.
40 *Aug* 5.8; Wis 1.1 (Vulg).

heavenly Father is perfect," had to be seen as applying to God essentially, but to the soul derivatively; that was true of the entire imperative of perfection, including the "perfection of mercy," which "cannot be carried farther than the love of an enemy."[41] Yet the demand for perfection, too, followed the "division of the times." The natural response to an injury was "that a greater evil should be returned for a lesser one"; the response "which the Lord gives for the perfection of His disciples," on the other hand, was "that no evil should be returned for evil" at all. But "between" these was "a middle course, that as much be returned as has been received"; that was the normal requirement of justice. And by the overall economy of the history of salvation, God in Christ was at work through this gradual "transition from the highest discord to the highest concord," leading His disciples by stages toward their ultimate perfection.[42]

The Audience as "All Through Them": Chrysostom

As the introduction to his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, St John Chrysostom took the introductory words of St Matthew, "He opened his mouth and taught them," to identify *the audience being addressed* in the Sermon: not "His disciples only, but rather all through them," and again, "through them with all the world." He went on, however, to describe these "all" in more detail: "For since the multitude was as such a multitude ever is, and consisted moreover of such as creep on the ground, He withdraws the choir of His disciples, and makes His discourse unto them." Christ's purpose in doing so, he explained, was chiefly rhetorical and pedagogical, namely, so that by this strategy the others, "who were yet very far from the level of His teachings, might find His lesson of self-denial no longer grievous," and so that they would surely "be more eagerly attentive to Him than they would have been had He addressed Himself unto all."[43] This lesson of self-denial did have as its special audience the disciples and their successors, as the Speaker made clear when, after dealing in the other Beatitudes with "the poor" or "the merciful" in general, He specified, "Blessed *are you* when men revile you and persecute you and utter all

41 *Aug* 5.48.   43 *Chrys* 5.2.
42 *Aug* 5.38-42.

kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." This meant "that this is an especial privilege of theirs, and that beyond all others, teachers [of the word of God] have this for their own"; it was a promise not of escape but of endurance.[44] The message, both Christ's and Chrysostom's, was intended for "the initiated" but also for "the uninitiated," therefore for the catechumens as well as for the faithful;[45] but during the hymns and lessons of the liturgy, Chrysostom's hearers, apparently including not only outsiders but some of the baptized and chrismated "faithful," were wandering around the church, gawking and gossiping.[46] Similarly, the message had both men and women in view even when Christ in the Sermon singled out only men for their lustful behavior.[47]

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, the divine Rhetor, being guided by an awareness of the limits of what His audience were equipped to handle at this time, exercised "so much reserve in His language, that He might not startle His hearers."[48] That awareness prompted Him to concentrate on "His moral doctrine only," while "keeping back His teaching on the subjects" of the Trinity and His own divinity, which "He now passed by quickly,"[49] because He was "reserving for the proper season what He had to say touching these points."[50] It was also in keeping with His accommodation to the limitations of the audience and to the "infirmities of our nature" that, when He was "discoursing to men encompassed with the flesh and subject to the necessities of nature and incapable of the same impassibility with the angels," He taught them to pray for daily bread; yet "even in things that are bodily that which is spiritual abounds," because He enjoined them to pray not for riches or luxury, "but for bread only," as the bare minimum required for subsistence.[51] Christ recognized, and sought to combat in His hearers, the tyranny of riches and of being "riveted to the present" through violence and self-indulgence.[52] It was likewise an adjustment to the "imperfections" of His audience when He admonished, "Tomorrow will be anxious for itself," employing the figure of

44 *Chrys* 5.11-12.
45 *Chrys* 5.23-24.
46 *Chrys* 6.14-15.
47 *Chrys* 5.27-28.
48 *Chrys* 5.17.

49 *Chrys* 5.27-28.
50 *Chrys* 5.43-45.
51 *Chrys* 6.11.
52 *Chrys* 6.24.

speech known in Greek as *prosôpopoiia* to "personify the time" as though a day could experience feelings such as anxiety.[53]

At its core, the Sermon on the Mount called upon its audience to accept *the cost of discipleship*; and it was an indication of how skillfully Christ the Speaker took the measure of His hearers that the portrait of the disciples of Christ, as the primary audience being addressed by the Sermon on the Mount, can be drawn on the basis of what Christ was saying to them, even without reference to whatever they said or did themselves. Both negatively and positively, His discourse was a characterization of the disciples: negatively, He drew a contrast between them and "the Gentiles" in order to shame them into action;[54] and positively, "He intersperses everywhere abundantly the name of the heavens, by the very place thoroughly elevating their minds, for as yet, I know not how, they were somewhat weak and dull."[55] Instead of delivering advice or issuing commands to them at the outset of the Sermon, He began by pronouncing the Beatitudes, "making His word less burdensome and opening to all the course of His discipline."[56] That discipline, St John pointed out in the opening paragraphs of his commentary, determined the different audiences of the Sermon by setting the disciples apart from "the multitude," who were "but gazers on the miracles";[57] this also implied that the fact "that we do not work miracles" did not make Chrysostom's hearers worse off than the original disciples.[58] And in the closing paragraphs he reiterated that "not wealth, not strength of body, not glory, not power..., but only the possession of virtue" was the mark of the true disciples of Christ:[59] "a noble spirit, a rock laughing waves to scorn, a house unshaken," so that just "as he who wraps up fire in a garment, does not extinguish the flame, but consumes the garment, so he that is doing harm to virtuous men, and oppressing them, and binding them, makes them more glorious, but destroys himself."[60] Therefore it was an embarrassment that even among the heathen there could be ascetic discipline and voluntary poverty, "when we who ought to be angels and sons of God do not even quite maintain our being as men."[61]

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53 *Chrys* 6.34.
54 Cf. *Rhet* II.vi 1383b-1385a.
55 *Chrys* 5.47-48.
56 *Chrys* 5.3.
57 *Chrys* 5.1-2.

58 *Chrys* 7.24.
59 *Chrys* 7.25.
60 *Chrys* 7.26.
61 *Chrys* 6.27.

Yet the sharpest differentiation of audience drawn by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount was not this comparison of the behavior of the disciples with the behavior and teachings of "the Gentiles," but *the contrast with the Old Law*, with what had been "said to men of old."[62] Once again, it was attention to "the frame of mind of the audience" that prevailed here. In order to forestall any misinterpretation of that contrast and in order not to "disturb the souls of the hearers," the Speaker prefaced this contrast with the disclaimer: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them."[63] Therefore He does not "find fault with the Old Law, but will have it made stricter"; for "had it been evil, He would not have required more of it..., but would have cast it out." He commended the Old Law by propounding the New.[64] Nevertheless He did demand more now, because "the precepts then uttered had reference to the weakness of them who were receiving the laws" and had been accommodated to the frame of mind of that audience.[65] But against the Marcionite and Gnostic disparagement of the Old Testament and old covenant, it was necessary to insist that "there is but one and the same Legislator of either covenant, who dispensed all meetly, and adapted to the difference of the times the difference between the two systems of law... [with] one and the same providential care."[66]

The same attention to "*pathos*, the frame of mind of the audience" that marked the rhetorical skill of the divine Rhetor in the Sermon on the Mount, leading Him to practice "reserve" about dogmatic matters,[67] had already marked the legislative skill of the divine Lawgiver from the beginning:

> If anyone accuses the ancient law..., he seems to me very unskillful in the wisdom that becomes a legislator, and ignorant of the virtue of opportunities, and the gain of condescension. For if he considers who were the hearers of these sayings, and how they were disposed, and when they received this code of laws, he will thoroughly admit the wisdom of the Lawgiver, and will see that it is one and the same, who made both those laws and these, and who wrote each of them exceedingly profitably, and in its due

62 Mt 5.21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39,
    43-44.
63 *Chrys* 5.17.
64 *Chrys* 5.20.
65 *Chrys* 5.37.
66 *Chrys* 5.21.
67 *Chrys* 5.17, 43-45.

season. Yes, for if at the beginning He had introduced these high and most weighty commandments, men would not have received either these or the others; but now ordaining them severally in their due time, He has by the two corrected the whole world.[68]

The two covenants and systems of law were neither antithetical nor identical, but complementary, having been issued by the same Law-giver, but to different audiences with different frames of mind and at different stages in the history of the divine *oikonomia.*

Therefore even *the imperative of perfection* was a matter of "*pathos,* the frame of mind of the audience," because it showed that "the interval between the commandments is not so great as the difference between the persons."[69] "Perfection of conduct" was, moreover, an attainable imperative, because it was not the same as complete "freedom from passions."[70] "There is," Chrysostom insisted, "nothing to hinder our reaching the perfection of the powers above because we inhabit the earth; but it is possible, even while abiding here, to do all, as though already placed on high."[71] At least twice St John Chrysostom admonished, "Let us not suppose that His injunctions are impossible"—the first time on the more general grounds that "besides their expediency, they are very easy, if we are sober-minded";[72] the second time with the specific empirical proof that "there are many who duly perform them, even as it is," for the "many solitaries in our time" were evidence that "it is manifest that even now there are many who show forth the apostolic life."[73] In Chrysostom's time there were already "societies of monks, who have taken up their dwelling on the mountains,"[74] also because the growing threat of secularization within the Church after its establishment by the emperors Constantine and Theodosius had made the quest for the perfection commanded by the words of the Sermon on the Mount, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect,"[75] appear to some to be increasingly incompatible with life in the world. This development was also responsible for a rising tide of hostile criticism directed at monks for their hypocrisy.[76]

68 *Chrys* 5.38-40.
69 *Chrys* 5.46.
70 *Chrys* 6.11.
71 *Chrys* 6.10.
72 *Chrys* 5.40.

73 *Chrys* 6.27.
74 *Chrys* 6.16.
75 Mt 5.48.
76 *Chrys* 7.3.

In issuing this imperative of perfection, Christ had a realistic understanding of His audience: "Anxious though He was to lead them on to another, and a higher self-command, yet since they were still unfit for this, He speaks of the lesser things, because, if He had mentioned what are higher than these, they would have failed to apply themselves to these, and would have fallen from the others." On that realistic basis Chrysostom could urge his own audience, too: "Let us then, considering the measures of that discipline which is set before us, press on at least to the middle station," and then finally "arrive at the very summit of all good things, unto which may we all attain."[77] At its core, therefore, the imperative of perfection was a sober reminder that "life is not a plaything," but serious business for mature adults who had a sound awareness of their priorities and a keen recognition of their goals.[78]

The Audience as "Christians Living in Society": Luther

By the time Martin Luther began to interpret the Sermon on the Mount—having consulted Augustine's commentary, of which he approved in general, despite their exegetical differences[79]—it had been the basis of many other commentaries as well. Therefore when he sought to specify *the different audiences being addressed* in the Sermon on the Mount, and in particular also to specify the audiences to which the Sermon was *not* addressed, the monastic "apostolic life" that Christian exegetes, beginning at about the time of Augustine and Chrysostom, had invoked as a means of stratifying the audiences of the Sermon[80] was an established part of the structure of the Church in both East and West. Luther himself had joined the Augustinians in 1505, and became vicar of the order in 1515. His ultimate break with the monastic life and his eventual marriage in 1525 also meant a break with this traditional exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount, which, he charged, had taught that "Christ does not intend everything He teaches in the fifth chapter [of St Matthew] to be regarded by His Christians as a command for them to observe, but He gave much of it merely as advice to those who want to become perfect" by leaving the world and entering a cloister.[81]

77 *Chrys* 6.27.
78 *Chrys* 7.20.
79 *Luth* 5.17.
80 *Chrys* 6.27; 6.16.
81 ap. *Luth* 5.1.

In opposition to this interpretation Luther insisted on both components of the identification "Christians living in society": first, that "this Sermon is intended only for those who are Christians";[82] but second, that Christ in the Sermon "does not want the kind of saints that run away from human society." For "if I am in a desert, isolated from human society, it is no credit to me that I do not commit adultery or that I do not murder or steal...For we are not made for fleeing human company, but for living in society and sharing good and evil." To those who would run away from society because of its scoundrels, he warned that even as they entered the monastery "you are still carrying the same old scoundrel!"[83]

At the same time that he was attacking any exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount that would have identified its intended audience as those Christians who were "fleeing human company" rather than as those Christians who were "living in society," Luther also attacked any definition of its audience that would have gone to the other extreme by claiming that Christ was addressing the message of the Sermon to the political order itself. The Beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers" certainly seemed to be meant for those who were engaged in putting an end to war and making peace among nations; but he explained that it "does not prohibit the waging of war, for Christ has no intention here of taking anything away from the government and its official authority, but is only teaching individuals who want to lead a Christian life."[84] Not only this Beatitude, but all the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount, he insisted, "have nothing to do with secular affairs or the imperial government. Nor should they be interpreted according to the Saxon code of law....Otherwise, how could this life and this secular realm continue?...Therefore we must not drag His words into the law books or into the secular government." For they were spoken "in relation to spiritual life and spiritual affairs, not outwardly, physically, or publicly before the world, but in your heart and in the presence of God."[85] By "distinguishing sharply between these two, the office and the person," Luther read the Sermon on the Mount as a divine instruction about how the "individual, natural person is to behave in relation to others," and not

82 *Luth* 5.5.
83 *Luth* 5.27-30.

84 *Luth* 5.8.
85 *Luth* 5.27-30.

about that person's "office and rule as He has ordained it."[86] In sum, "Christ is addressing His Sermon only to His Christians and seeking to teach them the kind of people they should be, in contrast to the carnal ideas and thoughts that still clung to the apostles. They imagined that He would institute a new realm and empire and set them up in it to rule as lords and to conquer their enemies and the wicked world."[87]

Throughout his exposition of the Sermon Luther used these "carnal ideas and thoughts that still clung to the apostles" and disciples as a kind of foil for his "refutations"—both "by stating an opposite" interpretation and "by bringing an objection"[88]—to what he believed were false interpretations of *the cost of discipleship*. He addressed these refutations, on the one hand, to the traditional "monastic" exegesis and, on the other hand, to the "theocratic" exegesis that sought to make the Sermon into a political tract. Not only was he, Martin Luther, refuting false interpretations of the definition of discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount, but in the Sermon on the Mount and by its definition of discipleship, Christ Himself "is rebuking those crazy saints who think that everyone is master of the whole world and is entitled to be delivered from all suffering, to roar and bluster and violently to defend his property"; that was not what Christian discipleship promised.[89] Authentic discipleship and ministry, whether in Christ's time or now in his own time, Luther complained, "must get it from both sides: either those who should perform it neglect it, or those who have not been commissioned for it want to perform it."[90] When Christ says "You, you shall not do it" about resisting evil, therefore, "He is not saying: 'No one should ever resist evil,'" because the "you" He had in mind were "the disciples of Christ," not everyone in general—and certainly not the civil government.[91] Being a genuine disciple of Christ, however, was "completely consistent with being a husband, loving wife and children, thinking about them and caring for them, and paying attention to other matters involved in such a relationship. For God has commanded all of this." As the heavenly voice said to Peter about eating foods that were prohibited by the dietary laws of Moses, "Whatever God has commanded cannot be profane."[92]

86 *Luth* 5.5.
87 *Luth* 5.38-42.
88 *Rhet* II.xxv.1 1402a.
89 *Luth* 5.5.

90 *Luth* 5.14-15.
91 *Luth* 5.38-42.
92 *Luth* 5.8, citing and paraphrasing Acts 10.15.

That incident in the Book of Acts was an apt illustration of *the contrast with the Old Law* that was being drawn by the Sermon on the Mount. If Luther were a professor in a modern faculty of theology, he would occupy the chair of Old Testament:[93] almost all his exegetical lectures, such as his *Lectures on Genesis* from 1535 to 1545, dealt with books of the Old Testament, while most of his exegesis of the New Testament, with the major exceptions of the *Lectures on Romans* of 1515-1516 and the several series of *Lectures on Galatians*, came in the form of sermons.[94] Therefore he was impatient and intolerant of any disparagement of the authority of the Old Testament for Christians and the Church. On the contrary, Christ was saying to the Pharisees here in the Sermon on the Mount:

> Certainly I have no intention of destroying the law or the prophets. I am more respectful toward them and more scrupulous and serious in My observance of them than you are, so much so that heaven and earth could pass away before I would let an iota or a dot perish or be useless. Indeed, I will go on to say that if anyone despises or departs from the very smallest commandment in this teaching, he will be thrown out of the kingdom of heaven for this minor offense, even though he might keep everything else. Thus we are in agreement that Moses and the prophets must be taught and enforced rigidly, but the issue is this: since both of us have the obligation and the desire to teach the law, it has to be determined which of the two sides is correctly citing and interpreting Scripture or God's law.[95]

The "two sides" in those words that Luther put into Christ's mouth were in the first instance Christ and the Pharisees, but as he often did, Luther was thereby also drawing the contrast between himself and his own sixteenth-century opponents.

Because of all these factors, Luther's attention to the question of "*pathos*, the frame of mind of the audience" to which Christ was addressing the Sermon on the Mount was concentrated on the question of its *imperative of perfection*. Here, too, he proceeded "by bringing an objection" to the interpretations of his adversaries as well as "by stating an opposite" interpretation.[96] He had in mind particularly those who "twist the meaning of these commandments" in the Sermon by dismissing them with the lame excuse, "These may be good bits of

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93 Pelikan 1959, 45-46.
94 See p. 91 above.
95 *Luth* 5.17.
96 *Rhet* II.xxv.1 1402a.

advice for perfect people, but no one is bound by them," because no one was perfect,[97] and by turning these commandments into "counsels of perfection" that were attainable only in the monastery. Quoting from the medieval proverb, "Despair makes a man three things—a monk, a physician, or a soldier," Luther blamed an unrealistic and unchristian definition of "perfection" for causing believers to give up on the imperative that Christ had so clearly laid down in the Sermon on the Mount.[98] Another medieval proverb counseled, "Enjoy being alone, and your heart will stay pure," because, according to yet another proverb, "the angels cannot come to anyone who moves around in human society." To this definition of perfection Luther countered with the counsel: "The angels like nothing more than to watch us deal with the word of God; with such people they enjoy dwelling. Therefore leave the angels up there in heaven undisturbed. Look for them here on earth below, in your neighbor, father and mother, children, and others. Do for these what God has commanded, and the angels will never be far away from you."[99]

After "bringing an objection" to the prevailing definition of perfection, which claimed to be based on the Sermon on the Mount, therefore, he "stated the opposite" in this summary definition, which in his judgment was based on the Sermon on the Mount:

> We cannot be or become perfect in the sense that we do not have any sin, the way they dream about perfection. Here and everywhere in Scripture, "to be perfect" means, in the first place, that doctrine be completely correct and perfect, and then, that life move and be regulated according to it. Here, for example, the doctrine is that we should love not only those who do us good, but our enemies, too. Now, whoever teaches this and lives according to this teaching, teaches and lives perfectly.[100]

Luther's teaching about "doctrine" and "life," about faith and works, about law and gospel, based though it may have been on his lifelong effort to understand St Paul, was shaped as well by his need to come to terms with the absolute demands of the Sermon on the Mount and with the question of "*pathos*, the frame of mind of the audience" to which Christ was addressing the Sermon.

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97 *Luth* 5.27-30.   99 *Luth* 5.8.
98 *Luth* 5.6.   100 *Luth* 5.43-48.

9

Logos: The Message of Change

In addition to "*êthos*, the character and authority of the speaker," and "*pathos*, the frame of mind of the audience," Aristotle lists, as the third *pistis*, or proof, in a speech, the message of "the argument [*logos*] itself, by showing or seeming to show something."[1] The presentations of the argument, he continues a little later in the same chapter, should deal with "things that seem to be capable of admitting two possibilities," and therefore with "things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are," rather than with "things incapable of being different either in past or future or present... for there is nothing more to say" about such things, and persuasion is impossible.[2] Hence the third *pistis* or proof may be formulated as "*logos*, the message of change." As Aristotle observes, both of the preceding themes, *êthos* and *pathos*, the latter far more than the former, bear a significant relation to this theme of *logos*.[3] In presenting the message, he urges, "one should make the moral purpose clear by the choice of words... [which] makes the speech 'ethical'...If the maxims are morally good, they make the speaker seem to have a good character," confirming by the message "*êthos*, the character and authority of the speaker."[4] Similarly, because, as Grimaldi says, explaining Aristotle, such maxims or paradigms "reflect the fund of common sense" shared by the hearers,[5] in using them "one should guess what sort of assumptions people have and then speak in general terms consistent with these views,"[6] acknowledging by means of the message "*pathos*, the frame of mind of the audience." In measuring the audience for the message, the speaker may predict the future on the basis of "those things for which there is desire and the impulse of anger and calculation together with the capacity to act."[7]

<table>
<tr><td>1</td><td>*Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a.</td><td>5</td><td>Grimaldi 1980-88, 2:251.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>*Rhet* I.ii.12-13 1357a.</td><td>6</td><td>*Rhet* II.xxi.15 1395b.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>*Rhet* II.xxii.16 1396b.</td><td>7</td><td>*Rhet* II.xix.23 1393a.</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>*Rhet* II.xxi.14, 16 1395a-b.</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
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If it is to be applied to the *logos*, or argument, of the Sermon on the Mount, which does "reflect the fund of common sense" and the tradition of its hearers, if sometimes negatively,[8] but which, however it may be interpreted, is certainly a message of radical change from beginning to end, consideration of this Aristotelian rhetorical category of "*logos, the message of change*" must begin by distinguishing—but not separating—the change that the Sermon proclaimed as having been wrought by God from the change that the Sermon demanded be wrought by its hearers. This was a distinction made in one way or another by each of the three interpreters.[9] The most all-inclusive metaphor for change in the Sermon on the Mount, one that had all the attributes of "clarity and sweetness and strangeness" that characterize an effective metaphor according to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*,[10] was announced already in its opening words, the first of the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven":[11] *the beatitude of the kingdom of God.*[12] The deepest appeal of the Sermon in urging change was to the fundamental *motive of love.*[13] It pushed this change to the utter extreme of commanding, "Love your enemies."[14] The venue for the changes that were both described and urged in the Sermon, as a reflection of eternal realities, was the area of *human relationships within time*, the sort of "emotions [*pathê*]" that Aristotle had defined and itemized in the *Rhetoric* as "those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites."[15] And among what Aristotle referred to as the "things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are"[16] that were discussed in the message of the Sermon, none has proven to be more vexing and problematical than the change that was expected to come about through *transcending the flesh in the area of sexuality.*[17]

8   Mt 5.21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39,   13   *ABD* 4:381-96.
     43-44.   14   Mt 5.44.
9   *Aug* 6.10; *Chrys* 6.14-15; *Luth* 6.14-15.   15   *Rhet* II.i.8-9 1378a.
10   *Rhet* III.ii.8 1405a.   16   *Rhet* I.ii.13 1357a.
11   Mt 5.3.   17   See Ford 1996, 12-37, comparing Western
12   *ABD* 4:49-69.   and Eastern church fathers on sexuality.

The Message of "the Perfect Measure of the Christian Life": Augustine

For St Augustine as an interpreter of the Sermon on the Mount, *the beatitude of the kingdom of God* not only belonged to "*logos*, the message of change" in the Sermon; it *was* the message of change. With the rhetorician's eye (or ear) for the symmetry of what is an "appropriate" style,[18] Augustine noted that the term "kingdom of heaven" appeared in the first of the Beatitudes and then again in the eighth, at the beginning and at the end, "showing forth and commending what is complete and perfect."[19] It was used in the first as "the perfect and highest wisdom of the rational soul," but the Beatitudes that followed the first were also variations on the theme of the beatitude of the kingdom of God, because "the one reward which is the kingdom of heaven is given various names in relation to each of these stages."[20] Reflecting what we have called the dialectic of "already" and "not yet,"[21] Augustine could interpret the ultimate change wrought by the kingdom of God as an eschatological one: "The coming of His kingdom, in which He will come in splendor, will be manifested not from the time the world has ended, but in the ending of the world";[22] but he could also speak of the kingdom of God in more general and "realized" terms, without explicit reference to eschatology, simply as "our good," and as "what we are to seek and where we are to establish the end for which we do whatever we do."[23]

Therefore it followed that "we are adopted into the kingdom of God not as strangers but as those made and created (that is, established) by Him."[24] Augustine used the reference to "sons of God" in the Beatitudes to explain the distinction that Christ was the Son of God "by nature," whereas believers "by receiving this power are made sons" by adoption.[25] The use of "the kingdom of God" for the Second Coming of Christ and the use of it as a way of speaking about the lordship of Christ came together, as when, in his conclusion to the Lord's Prayer, Augustine interpreted the petition "Thy kingdom come" to

18 *Rhet* III.xii 1413b-1414a.
19 *Aug* 5.10.
20 *Aug* 5.11.
21 See p. 46-47 above.

22 *Aug* 6.13.
23 *Aug* 6.31-33.
24 *Aug* 5.45.
25 *Aug* 5.45.

apply to both, "whether it be within ourselves, so that we become meek and do not resist it, or whether it comes down from heaven to earth in the splendor of the Lord's advent, in which we will rejoice and will be praised when He says, 'Come blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world.'"[26] In his commentary directly on that petition he warned against an exclusively eschatological interpretation, which would proceed "as if indeed He were not now also reigning on earth and had not always reigned on it from the founding of the world." The petition really meant, "May [the kingdom of God] be made manifest to men," because it was now "absent from the ignorant even though it never departs from the earth."[27] The beatitude in the kingdom of God, Augustine explained, was "so much the more solid and firm as it is inward, in which God has chosen that we should become 'conformed to the image of his Son.'"[28]

Whether inward or outward, "already" in this present world or "not yet" in the age to come, "*logos*, the message of change" that came through membership in the kingdom of heaven was to Augustine a summons to accept *the motive of love*. Therefore he admonished that "this sermon is filled with all the precepts by which the Christian life is formed."[29] So powerful was this divine motive that under Christ's "leadership and assistance" it was possible even to overcome the moral and psychological tyranny of "vicious habit"[30]—a tyranny that Augustine knew at first hand, both in himself and in others, including his own mother.[31] As "the perfect measure of the Christian life," the Sermon observed, in Augustine's phrase, "a thoroughly ordered division,"[32] also in its presentation of the motive of love. Worst of all was for people to "hate even those by whom they are loved." It was significantly better for someone to "love his neighbor" and thereby to "advance a certain degree, even though he still hates his enemy." But the perfection of the Sermon on the Mount moved on to prescribe that "under the rule of Him who came to fulfill the law and not to destroy it, a person will perfect benevolence and kindness when he has brought

26 *Aug* 6.13, quoting Mt 25.34.
27 *Aug* 6.10.
28 *Aug* 6.16-18, quoting Rom 8.29.
29 *Aug* 5.1.
30 *Aug* 5.27-28; 5.33-37.
31 Augustine *Confessions* IX.viii.18; X.xli.66 (Chadwick 1992, 167-68; 218).
32 *Aug* 5.1-2.

it as far as love of his enemy."[33] With someone who was an "enemy" only temporarily, a "brother [who] has something against you," this perfection meant that "we are to proceed to reconciliation... not by the body's feet but by the mind's movement" and "by the very swift affection of love."[34] The realism of the Sermon about the imperative of love also meant that its prohibition of swearing was intended to recognize "that swearing is not to be considered among good things but among necessary ones," to be engaged in when civil necessity demanded it but not in normal relationships with others.[35] There was a similar division of sins, as well as a division of punishments for them, but Augustine was ready to admit that no one could empirically "tell in what ways they are invisibly shown in the punishment of souls."[36]

That principle of "a thoroughly ordered division" enabled Augustine to derive from the seemingly absolute and unattainable imperatives of the Sermon on the Mount a schematization of *human relationships within time*. He could condemn as wrong and as "serving two masters" the effort of some to "seek both the kingdom of God as a great good and also these temporal things."[37] He could even speak as though "the eternal kingdom to which [Christ] thinks it worthy to call His disciples, whom He addresses as brothers, does not have temporal relationships of this sort" at all.[38] But the priorities he was seeking to define by such statements reflected a "thoroughly ordered division," which implied that "we ought not preach the gospel that we may eat, but rather we ought to eat that we may preach."[39] For this principle taught that such relationships were "beautiful in their order and by their degrees, but one must not descend from the higher... to the lower."[40] One example of this principle was that with the coming of the gospel and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the instances of capital punishment, while not forbidden (as the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira by the apostles showed), nevertheless "occurred much more rarely than they had in the Old Testament."[41] Similarly, Augustine did not find in the message of change a prohibition of slavery; but it did

33 *Aug* 5.43-48.
34 *Aug* 5.23-24.
35 *Aug* 5.33-37.
36 *Aug* 5.21-22.
37 *Aug* 6.31-33.

38 *Aug* 5.31.
39 *Aug* 6.31-33.
40 *Aug* 5.27-28.
41 *Aug* 5.44, citing Acts 5.1-11.

teach that "it is not proper for a Christian to possess a slave in the way he possesses a horse or silver, although it could happen that a horse is valued at a greater price than a slave."[42]

Among human relationships within time, there was none, according to the Sermon on the Mount as Augustine interpreted it, more directly affected by the message of change than the relationship between men and women,[43] and none for which Augustine's teaching has become more controversial than *transcending the flesh in the area of sexuality.* The message of change in the Sermon's own words seems quite unambiguous but altogether draconian on this subject:

> You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.[44]

Like every other interpreter of the Sermon on the Mount from Origen of Alexandria to Leo Tolstoy in his *Kreutzer Sonata,* Augustine struggled to make sense of these harsh words. He did so by several hermeneutical devices and on several exegetical levels. At its core, this saying of Christ, like all the other "contrasts with the Old Law" in the fifth chapter of Matthew,[45] which forbade not only murder but hatred, was, according to Augustine, a reformulation that redefined adultery as not only the overt physical act, but "all carnal and sensual concupiscence."[46] Together with the other instructions of the Sermon about marriage and sexuality, it was also intended to promote "conjugal fidelity and chastity."[47] By pointing out how the overt physical act of adultery begins in such carnal and sensual concupiscence, moreover, it was intended also to put an end to the external deed together with the internal thought.[48]

But beyond this direct meaning of Christ's words, Augustine found here in the Sermon's discussion of sexuality another example of the

42 *Aug* 5.40.
43 *Aug* 6.3.
44 Mt 5.27-30.
45 See pp. 121-22 above.
46 *Aug* 5.27-28.
47 *Aug* 5.31-32.
48 *Aug* 5.27-28.

"thoroughly ordered division" which, in his introduction, he had seen as a theme of the Sermon throughout.[49] A key to understanding it was his distinction between what was commanded and what was only "permitted."[50] That distinction was based on the most extensive instruction about this area of sex and marriage anywhere in the New Testament, the seventh chapter of First Corinthians, in which St Paul had drawn a set of careful distinctions between several levels: where he was speaking "by way of concession, not of command";[51] where "not I but the Lord" commanded;[52] where "I say, not the Lord";[53] and where "I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy."[54] Citing that chapter as his authority, Augustine listed the options that were open to a Christian who wanted to "live in concord with his wife": "fulfilling with her his carnal need (which the apostle allows but does not command)"; "providing for the procreation of children (which can at present be laudable to some extent)"; and "providing a fraternal relationship without any physical union. . . (which in a Christian marriage is a most excellent and sublime thing)." One option that was not open—or no longer open—was polygamy, despite the precedent of Old Testament patriarchs such as Abraham.[55] By such a classification Augustine managed to find in the Sermon on the Mount "all the precepts which have to do with shaping this life,"[56] also for the vexing problems of sexuality and marriage.

The Message of "Becoming Like God": Chrysostom

The term *kingdom*, usually as "the kingdom of heaven [*hê basileia tôn ouranôn*]," appears a total of eight times in the Sermon on the Mount, one of these in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer and two others in the Beatitudes.[57] Therefore an interpreter of the Sermon could not avoid having to deal with it. St John Chrysostom, too, maintained the dialectic of "already" and "not yet" by including both "future

49 *Aug* 5.1-2.
50 *Aug* 5.31-32.
51 1 Cor 7.6.
52 1 Cor 7.10.
53 1 Cor 7.12.
54 1 Cor 7.25.
55 *Aug* 5.31-32.
56 *Aug* 5.1.
57 Mt 5.3, 10, 19 (twice), 20; 6.10, 33; 7.21.

blessings" and "present ones" when he described it.[58] He defined "the kingdom" eschatologically as "the time of the resurrection, and that awesome coming" of Christ to judgment, together with "the enjoyment thereof."[59] The promise of the Sermon that to those who seek the kingdom of heaven "all these things" that they vainly sought in this world would "be added" pointed believers toward the beatitude awaiting them in the future, bidding them to "seek the things that are to come, and you will receive the things present also": to "seek the kingdom" meant to seek "the good things that are to come."[60]

But by linking the petition "Thy kingdom come" with the following petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount stood as a reminder that in the light of that future, "even before heaven He has bidden us to make the earth a heaven" and to live on earth as though it were heaven.[61] The message of the Sermon called the true disciples of Christ to a life conducted "with strictness" in accordance with the hope of the coming kingdom, "despising all things present and preparing ourselves for that which is to come," rather than "entangling ourselves in things present and plunging ourselves in them more and more."[62] For hell, with all its terrors, was a far lighter punishment than "to fail of that blessed glory" of the kingdom of God and "to be hated by Christ!"[63] Therefore, "if we would attain unto the kingdom," Chrysostom urged his hearers, "let us be diligent to show forth something more than the old commandments."[64] If all these solemn exhortations and glorious promises provoked impatience with "the delay of the recompense," so long expected and so often postponed, he replied: "The delay is not so long. Nay, for those things are at the doors, and we know not but that even in our own generation all things which concern us may have their accomplishment, and that fearful day may arrive, setting before us the awful and incorruptible tribunal. Yes, for the greater part of the signs are fulfilled."[65] Meanwhile, the promise of the kingdom of God and the prospect of the end of history served as a motivation.[66]

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58 *Chrys* 5.5; see pp. 46-47 above.
59 *Chrys* 5.9.
60 *Chrys* 6.33.
61 *Chrys* 6.10.
62 *Chrys* 5.15-16.

63 *Chrys* 7.20.
64 *Chrys* 5.37.
65 *Chrys* 6.22-23.
66 *Chrys* 7.13-14.

At one point in expounding the Sermon, however, Chrysostom pressed the concept of the kingdom and the definition of *the beatitude of the kingdom of God* well beyond either the primarily moral or the simply eschatological. For after having pronounced the various definitions of the concept of "beatitude" that were attached to the several Beatitudes, glorious in themselves, Christ suddenly escalated the promise (at any rate in the Gospel text as Chrysostom quoted it, reading "like your Father" instead of "sons of your Father"): "that you may become like your Father who is in heaven."[67] With this dazzling promise, greater even than the promise of the kingdom of God, Chrysostom explained,

> He has set the highest pinnacle on our good deeds... He appoints also such a reward as for none of the former. For He makes no mention here of earth as with respect of the meek,[68] nor of comfort and mercy as with respect of the mourners and the merciful,[69] nor of the kingdom of heaven;[70] but of that which was more thrilling than all of these, of our becoming like God, in such wise as men might become so.[71]

Earlier, too, he had explained Christ's repeated use of the title "your Father,"[72] rather than "God," on the grounds that thereby Christ was "planting the seeds of their noble birth."[73] This was the characteristic emphasis of the Greek church fathers on the hope for *theôsis*, "deification," which the Second Epistle of Peter had described as "His precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and *become partakers of the divine nature.*"[74] "By degrees," then, according to Chrysostom, Christ "leads us up into the very arches of heaven."[75]

But because "God [not merely has or manifests, but in His very nature] is love,"[76] this participation in the divine nature and "becoming like God" implied—and supplied—*the motive of love*. There was, Chrysostom admonished, "nothing that makes us so like God as being ready to forgive the wicked and wrongdoers."[77] For if the transcendent God, being in His own nature utterly holy and utterly just, could love

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67 Mt 5.45; Mt 5.48.
68 Mt 5.5.
69 Mt 5.4, 7.
70 Mt 5.3, 10.
71 *Chrys* 5.43-45.
72 Mt 5.16, 45, 48; 6.1, 4, 6 (twice), 8, 14, 15, 18 (twice), 26, 32; 7.11.
73 *Chrys* 5.15-16.
74 2 Pt 1.4; italics added.
75 *Chrys* 5.46; also 6.24.
76 1 Jn 4.8.
77 *Chrys* 6.14-15.

them enough to forgive them, how could His creatures, His sinful but forgiven creatures, withhold their forgiving love from their fellow creatures who had sinned against them? The "righteousness" spoken of in the Sermon meant nothing less than "the whole of virtue."[78] The close connection in Chrysostom's rhetorical language between this concept of "virtue" and the *êthos* of Christ the Speaker in the Sermon on the Mount as virtue personified,[79] required that even where the word "love" as such did not appear in a text of the Gospels, it was necessary to recognize that it was the subtext. The extended warnings of Christ in the Sermon against "insolence," insult, and verbal abuse had the motive of love as their corollary, for committing such words and deeds "utterly spoiled it." By negative statements of this kind, Christ was in fact "making much account of love" as a positive force. For He was saying that because love was "the root of all that is good, [He], by removing from all sides whatever mars it, brings us together and cements us to each other."[80] Again, love was "the mother of every good, and the badge of His disciples," in fact nothing less than "the bond which holds together our whole condition."[81] As "the root of all that is good" and "the mother of every good," the motive of love was the unspoken presupposition whenever the Sermon on the Mount spoke about the Christian life of virtue. In His love, God "has made virtue easy, assisting us everywhere and putting His hand to our work."[82] This also meant that a life of love and virtue did not need to have every step prescribed for it in minute detail, because "we all, of ourselves, know our duties, and that it is not possible for us ever to find refuge in ignorance."[83] Just as athletes in the Olympic games were intent primarily on pleasing the referees rather than the crowd, so those who were called "blessed" in the Beatitudes sought chiefly divine rather than merely human approval, not obeying God for men's sake but men for God's sake.[84] Although Chrysostom sometimes spoke rhetorically as though the human will of itself possessed the power to bring about such change unaided,[85] a theologically more precise formulation was to refer this power to its divine source, as when he admonished: "There is

78 *Chrys* 5.20.
79 See pp. 105-10 above.
80 *Chrys* 5.45.
81 *Chrys* 5.22.

82 *Chrys* 5.25-26.
83 *Chrys* 7.12.
84 *Chrys* 6.16; see Sawhill 1928.
85 For example, *Chrys* 5.40.

not any sin that does not yield and give way to the power of repentance, *or rather to the grace of Christ.*"[86]

Concretely, beatitude in the kingdom and the motive of love, which were eternal in their ultimate source as well as in their heavenly goal, were nevertheless to be found in *human relationships within time.* The followers of Christ were "unencumbered and winged for flight, yielding just so much to nature as the compulsion of necessity requires of us."[87] The Sermon's message of change, as articulated in the petition of the Lord's Prayer "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," while calling upon the followers and disciples of Christ to "long for heaven and the things in heaven," immediately added that "even before heaven, He has bidden us to make the earth a heaven and do and say all things, even while we are continuing [on earth], as having our citizenship there [in heaven]."[88] The healing that was the content of the salvation wrought by Christ pertained to both, to earth as well as to heaven, to the body as well as to the soul; as Chrysostom put it in the first of his homilies on the Sermon on the Mount, Christ showed "by His care of both parts of our being that He Himself is the Maker of the whole creation. Therefore also on each nature He bestowed abundant providence, now amending the one, now the other."[89] This did not abolish the social, political, and economic inequalities of this temporal existence, between king and commoner, between rich and poor, even betweeen master and slave; but it did relativize them and demonstrate their fundamental unimportance, "at least in those things which are greatest and most indispensable."[90] What was fundamentally important, also and especially here on earth and in time, was the imperative and the opportunity to show love to one another.[91] To bring that point home, Christ was quite willing in the Sermon to draw His illustrations of God's love and care not only from the law and the prophets and from human relationships, but from the world of nature, the lilies of the field and the birds of the air.[92]

The message of the Sermon on the Mount about a change that was to be otherworldly and at the same time thisworldly called upon its

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86 *Chrys* 6.34; italics added.
87 *Chrys* 6.11.
88 *Chrys* 6.10.
89 *Chrys* 5.1-2.

90 *Chrys* 6.9.
91 *Chrys* 5.22.
92 *Chrys* 6.27.

hearers to *transcend the flesh in the area of sexuality*, when it condemned not only the overt act of adultery, but the "lust" of regarding a woman as no more than a sex object: "But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."[93] As in the case of riches it was not possessing them but serving them that violated the will of God,[94] so it could be also with sexuality. Even in those passages of the commentary on the Sermon in which Chrysostom seemed to be expressing his most negative judgments about sexuality,[95] he was not equating "flesh" in any simplistic way with "body." Christ issued the command to pray for "daily bread" and bodily sustenance to those who were "encompassed with the flesh," so that they might transcend the flesh, but without leaving the body, which depended on the daily bread.[96] Similarly, in Christ's denunciations of lustful thoughts and looks, "everywhere it is the evil mind that is accused," not this or that bodily part.[97] At the same time it is clear that Chrysostom was one of the earliest ecclesiastical defenders of "societies of monks, who have taken up their dwelling on the mountains."[98] And even in his many diatribes against women for their preoccupation with clothing, jewelry, and cosmetics, where his rhetorical frenzy sometimes made it sound as though it were sexuality as such—or women as such—that he was making his target, the clear and present danger of Gnosticism and Manichaeism, with their overt hostility to sexuality and physicality, served to hold Chrysostom in check.[99] He could go so far as to assert on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount: "Nowhere does He say that our flesh is to be blamed for things."[100] Indeed, one examination of his works on the subject has gone so far as to conclude that "between St Paul and the twentieth century, the best in Christian teaching on marriage is represented by St John Chrysostom."[101]

The Message of "the Two Kingdoms of God": Luther

In his definition of "*êthos*, the character and authority of the Speaker" in the Sermon on the Mount, Luther was in basic agreement with Augustine

93 Mt 5.27-28.
94 *Chrys* 6.24.
95 For example, *Chrys* 5.31-32.
96 *Chrys* 6.11.
97 *Chrys* 5.29.
98 *Chrys* 6.16.
99 Karras 1991; Walsh 1994, 129-71.
100 *Chrys* 5.29.
101 Roth 1986, 11.

and Chrysostom, and with the Orthodox Tradition of East and West; but his divergence from both of them in his identification of "*pathos*, the frame of mind of the audience" expressed itself in an even greater divergence from their interpretations of "*logos*, the message of change."

That divergence became evident in his treatment of *the beatitude of the kingdom of God*—or rather, of the *two* kingdoms of God: the "kingdom of the left hand," which was ruled by God through the exercise of human reason and law and was governed by the "civil authority [*Obrigkeit*]," to which therefore the specific authority of revelation did not apply directly, and for which "you do not have to ask Christ about your duty, but ask the imperial or territorial law";[102] and the "kingdom of the right hand," which was ruled by God through the gospel of Christ and was governed by His teaching and preaching in the Sermon on the Mount. This radical differentiation between the two kingdoms of God was central to Luther's commentary. Luther accused the Roman Catholics of confusing these two kingdoms by assigning temporal authority to the pope; and he accused what we now call "the left wing of the Reformation"—to which, however, Luther referred as those "leaning too far to the right"[103]—of confusing them by seeking to rule the secular realm with the revealed law of God, either the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. He regarded the proper distinction between the two kingdoms or realms of God, together with the proper distinction between the law and the gospel, as basic to all theological consideration, including the consideration of the Sermon on the Mount. The prohibition of swearing here in the Sermon, "Do not swear at all," had to be taken to mean "that no one should curse or swear on his own, unless he has a word of God telling him to do so," for then there would be "the authorization of a word of God," which implied "a command that I do it for His sake in the execution of my office or an order through those who are in office."[104] The functioning of civil society in accordance with its own proper norms of reason and law was "secular business, all of which Christ has not forbidden but confirmed."[105] Even when Christ commanded His followers, "Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you," He left "the division of

102 *Luth* 5.38-42.
103 *Luth* 5.1-2.
104 *Luth* 5.33-37.
105 *Luth* 5.38-42.

property and business to the teaching of reason" and to "the secular and imperial law, which does not tell you to give your property away to someone else or to let him take it away from you."[106]

All of that pertained chiefly to the kingdom of the left hand, whereas when, by calling His disciples "the light of the world," Christ "subjects the whole world to the apostles," that pertained only to the kingdom of the right hand,[107] where it was the authority of the word of Christ that counted for everything. It was the propensity of human beings, and especially of theologians, "to reach into Christ's mouth, to lord it over His word, and to make it mean anything you please. But He will not let himself be fooled this way."[108] For "if every creature, the leaves and blades of grass in the forest and the sand on the shore, were all tongues to accuse and destroy, what would that be in comparison with a single word of this Man? His voice sounds enough to fill heaven and earth."[109] In short, as Luther explained, "I must place the word of God above everything else," and "where it is the word of God that is involved, there you must not expect any friendship or love that I may have for you to persuade me to do something against that, even if you were my nearest and dearest friend." Luther concluded this explanation with the characteristic imprecation: "But since you cannot endure the word, I will speak this prayer and benediction over you: 'May God dash you to the ground!'"—which a later edition softened to read "May God restrain you and bring you to naught!"[110]

The kingdom of the right hand was also the proper venue for *the motive of love.* In the Sermon Christ was not bringing His message to the government and the secular world, where law and justice—and force—prevailed. Rather, "He is speaking only about what Christians as Christians should do, and in particular what they should do on account of the gospel and their Christianity." On the basis of St Paul's celebration of love in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, Luther characterized the concerned love described here in the Sermon as "something divine and Christian, not a concern devoted to its own advantage or to Mammon, militating against faith and love."[111] The

106 *Luth* 5.42.
107 *Luth* 5.14-15.
108 *Luth* 5.21.

109 *Luth* 5.12.
110 *Luth* 5.43-48.
111 *Luth* 6.25, quoting 1 Cor 13.5.

message of the Sermon was not intended "to compel anyone or drive him with commandments," because "the state of being a Christian is one that requires only willing hearts."[112] Therefore "a Christian is the kind of man who knows no hatred or hostility against anyone at all, whose heart is neither angry nor vindictive, but only loving, mild, and helpful." This was in keeping with the "pattern" that had been set by "our Lord Christ and His heavenly Father Himself."[113] Those who hearkened to this message of the Sermon and to its "dearest promises," Luther explained, would "have peace and quiet in your heart here, and hereafter whatever your heart desires forever."[114] That was what the Beatitude meant when it said "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God": a truly pure heart was "one that is watching and pondering what God says and replacing its own ideas with the word of God."[115] It was, then, "in our heart," in a pure heart of that kind, that, while "serving [family] out of love as God has commanded," the followers of Christ should also "be able, if necessary, to give them up at any time for God's sake."[116] The motive of love likewise meant that despite Christ's prohibition of swearing here in the Sermon, an oath "may be necessary for the good of our neighbor."[117]

Luther went on from these comments on oaths to a consideration of other *human relationships within time*:

> In this way love may also get angry and critical when it sees a neighbor sinning or straying, as Christ teaches in Matthew 18.[118] It cannot treat evil as a laughing matter or a praiseworthy thing. Similarly, I may show love to another man's wife, helping her in her need or distress. Such love is not carnal and forbidden love, but Christian and brotherly love. Its source is not my own lust or impertinence, but my neighbor's need; and it is authorized by a word of God which says:[119] "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."[120]

It was, Luther urged against his ascetic opponents, "a shameful perversion to disparage the relationships covered by the Ten Commandments, as though God did not have as pure a mouth or eyes as we, or as pure a heart and hand when He creates both man and woman!"[121] Each of these

112 *Luth* 5.13.
113 *Luth* 5.43-48.
114 *Luth* 5.3.
115 *Luth* 5.8.
116 *Luth* 5.3.
117 *Luth* 5.33-37.
118 Mt 18.15-17.
119 Lv 19.18.
120 *Luth* 5.33-37.
121 *Luth* 5.8.

relationships had appeared as part of the contrast with the Old Law in the Sermon.[122] But in each of them, according to Luther, the shift of emphasis from outward deed to inner attitude was carried one step further, to the reshaping of the relationship by love. The application of this principle to the admonition in the Sermon, "Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you," meant that in each such relationship Christian love had to practice discernment, for "Christ is not telling me to give what I have to any scoundrel that comes along and to deprive my family of it."[123] In all such relationships and in every situation of life, the lesson of love was the one taught by St Paul:[124] "I have learned the art, wherever I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want."[125] Therefore a housewife, "watching and pondering what God says and replacing her own ideas with the word of God," could be more "pure in heart" than the strictest ascetic.[126]

That reinterpretation of the stern warnings of the Sermon about inner attitudes, not simply outward deeds, was especially problematical for Luther in interpreting its commands about *transcending the flesh in the area of sexuality*. Primarily, Luther was concerned to emphasize—or, as he would have put it, to reemphasize, in opposition to monasticism—the positive evaluation of marriage and sexuality in Scripture. He could say, on the one hand, that "matters of marriage and divorce" were to be "made subject to the secular government," and, on the other hand, a few paragraphs later could criticize those to whom marriage "seems to be nothing more than a human and purely secular state."[127] He insisted that Christ's language making "looking at a woman lustfully" tantamount to adultery, for example, was not to be taken to mean that it was "sinful for a man and a woman to desire each other" when this was "for the purpose of marriage."[128] The seventh chapter of First Corinthians, on which St Augustine had relied for much of his commentary on these commands of the Sermon,[129] appeared in Luther's commentary only in his discussion of the grounds of

122 See p. 131 above.
123 *Luth* 5.38-42.
124 Phil 4.11-12.
125 *Luth* 5.4.

126 *Luth* 5.8.
127 *Luth* 5.31-32.
128 *Luth* 5.27-30.
129 See p. 139 above.

divorce;[130] but already in 1523 the difficulties that this chapter raised for his rejection of the ascetic tradition had evoked from Luther an entire treatise devoted to a detailed exegetical explanation and defense.[131] And so, Luther declared, the real meaning of the Sermon's words about not "looking at a woman" was that "though I may look over all the women in the world, I cannot find any about whom I can boast with a joyful conscience as I can about mine: 'This is the one whom God has granted to me and put into my arms.'"[132]

130 *Luth* 5.31-32, citing 1 Cor 7.13-15.   132 *Luth* 5.27-30.
131 *LW* 28:9-56.

10

Epilogos: Questions on Summa and Sermon

The ministry and message of Jesus Christ, as reported in St Mark's Gospel, opened with two indicatives and then continued with two imperatives: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."[1] And St Paul, in interpreting the ministry of Jesus Christ, similarly declared an indicative, "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them," and continued with an imperative: "Be reconciled to God."[2] Corresponding to those two grammatical moods of the Greek verb, Christian teaching has always expressed itself in both of these ways, the indicative declaration and the imperative summons. There is a direct line from such indicatives to the language of Christian doctrine and theology, to creed and dogma ("summa"), and a no less direct line from such imperatives to the invitation voiced by Christian rhetoric and preaching ("sermon").

But in the study of Christian teaching, there is a surprising, even shocking, imbalance between the amount of attention that has been given to these two modalities of the summa and the sermon. In her dissertation of 1972 on the encyclical *Humanae vitae*, which was issued by Pope Paul VI on July 25, 1968, Kathleen Hall Jamieson has concentrated on the encyclical as an expression of "the rhetorical nature of the papacy's mission to teach and preach" and of "the unique nature of the pope as rhetor." But with her "focus throughout...on the rhetoric of the papacy not its theology," she observes that "theologians have written thousands of pages on the latter but have treated the former only in passing."[3] To which one can only respond that there is no reason why

1   Mk 1.15.   3   Jamieson 1972, 7.
2   2 Cor 5.19-20.

this document of Christian theological rhetoric should be any different from the thousands of others, each of which theologians and historians of theology (including this one) have examined carefully for its theology, "but have treated [its rhetoric] only in passing."

Adapting the definition in the opening words of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, therefore, it could be said that just as "rhetoric is an *antistrophos* to dialectic,"[4] preaching is an *antistrophos* to theology, and the "sermon" to the "summa." One difference between them, though not the primary one, is that the theological terminology of the summa is technical and in that sense "scientific," while the persuasive language of the sermon strives to be vernacular for the sake of the hearer. Manuals of homiletics and teachers of preaching have constantly warned neophyte preachers and beginning students in the seminary not to import into the pulpit the learned jargon of dogmatics, and amusing anecdotes abound of those who have done so (often getting the terms wrong in the process). The distinction must not be carried too far; for in preaching and pastoral care, no less than in medical advice or in legal opinion or in technological directions, growth and maturity should bring the layman a deepening grasp both of the concepts and of the vocabulary in which professionals formulate their presentations of church teaching. Each in his own way, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther had certain expectations about the kind of Latin, Greek, or German vocabulary that would be intelligible to their hearers, which in each case bore many affinities to the treatises that each of them—Augustine in Latin, Chrysostom in Greek, and Luther in both German and Latin—wrote for their fellow theologians.

For ultimately it remains the case that the summa and the sermon deal with the same subjects but in distinct ways. Although the description quoted earlier from Florovsky, that Chrysostom "was not a thinker or a philosopher, and in the classical sense he is best defined as an orator and a rhetorician,"[5] does help to explain why even such central doctrines of the faith as the Trinity and the Incarnation are so often muted in his preaching, Augustine and Luther, who were less reticent about these doctrines, also acknowledged the difference. Augustine

4 *Rhet* I.i.1 1354a.   5 Florovsky 1972-89, 7:240-41.

could deal with the Sermon's presentation of "all the precepts by which the Christian life is formed"[6] without always providing, as he would later insist against the Pelagians that one should, the basis and motivation for the precepts in the doctrines of sin and grace. Similarly, Luther's recognition, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, that "St Matthew's way of speaking" lacked the "emphasis upon the profound doctrine of Christ [of] St John and St Paul," but was in fact "better than John" on Christian morality,[7] served as such a justification for him, too. But we know from the vast corpus of other writings by each of the three that this insight into the Gospel of St Matthew, and specifically into the Sermon on the Mount, did not inhibit any of them from discussing not only Christian ethics but Christian doctrine for a lay audience.

One way to clarify the distinction of "summa" and "sermon," and to suggest a methodology for dealing with it, is by an analogy between Christian doctrine and political doctrine. Because political ideas can be analyzed rhetorically as well as philosophically or institutionally or operationally, it is highly instructive to lay side by side, as political "summa" and political "sermon"—both of these being ways of articulating political teaching—such diptychs as the *Federalist* and the Declaration of Independence, or *Das Kapital* and the Communist Manifesto, and to pay attention to their similarities and differences. On that analogy, the study of the "sermon" and of its relation to the "summa" as two ways of articulating Christian teaching can be carried out by addressing a series of methodological questions organized around the (by now) familiar Aristotelian categories of "speaker, hearer, argument,"[8] or *êthos, pathos, logos*:

I. *Êthos.* In the discourse of persuasion, whether written or oral, "there are three reasons why speakers themselves are persuasive:... practical wisdom and virtue and good will,"[9] which together constitute "character." How, on the basis of these three (or other) reasons, is the character of these preachers being vindicated? In their definition of themselves, what is the role of the official positions or professions they occupy in the Church, and therefore of the power they wield? How do

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6   *Aug* 5.1.
7   *Luth* 5.16; see pp. 90–91 above.
8   *Rhet* I.ii.3-6 1356a.
9   *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.

they identify themselves with Christian Tradition—the "great Tradition" or a particular one? How do they appeal to their own personal experiences? How do they set themselves in contrast to their opponents? How do they establish, or if necessary reestablish, their credibility?

II. *Pathos.* How is the sermon "adapted to the character" of the audience (age, class, gender, ethnicity, etc.)?[10] What positive or negative effect does the liturgical occasion of the discourse have on the audience? Is the audience initially supportive or hostile (or threatened)? Which assumptions, implicit or explicit, do the preachers and their intended audiences appear to have in common, and which not? Aristotle itemizes as emotions to which a discourse appeals: anger; peace of mind; friendship; fear; confidence; shame; favor; pity; indignation; envy; flattery. What is the Christian evaluation of these "emotions," and to which of them, or to which others, is this sermon being addressed, and to what effect?

III. *Logos.* What has happened to the doctrinal system of the "summa" in the course of its transposition to the modality of persuasion in the "sermon"? Which elements of it are emphasized, how have they been recast to make them persuasive, and which if any have been suppressed? Or has the movement in fact been in the opposite direction, from the "sermon" to the "summa"? What is the evidence of Scripture or of other authorities that is being cited as the basis of the appeal, and how is apparently contradictory testimony handled? What is the rhetorical "logic" of the appeal, and how is this different from the formal logic of the doctrinal syllogism? What appeal do these preachers make to arguments based on the Christian moral law, on the Cross of Christ, on "nontheological" considerations such as honor, patriotism, altruism, prejudice, revenge? How does a consideration of alternatives, theological or practical, shape the argument? How are history and precedent being mobilized in support of the case? What is the call to action?

When adapted and applied to the distinction of the summa and the sermon—especially if, as in the cases of the three Christian rhetoricians who have been studied here, we have examples of both genres in the

10 *Rhet* II.xii-xvii 1138b-1391b.

preserved body of their writings—these questions, although they originate in the political analysis of "civic discourse" by Aristotle, can illumine both sets of religious texts, the dogmatic and the rhetorical. They can also help to relate both of these to the third—and even more gravely neglected—genre of Christian language in which they both participate, the language of prayer and worship.

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JAROSLAV PELIKAN
Divine Rhetoric

The Sermon on the Mount as Message and as Model in Augustine, Chrysostom and Luther

Of the many themes that Classical Antiquity and Early Christianity had in common, for all their profound differences, none was more influential than their love of language. It was the Greek and Roman rhetorical theorists who called the attention of later generations to the importance of speech and language. Likewise, when the author of the Fourth Gospel needed a comprehensive metaphor to describe the eternal significance of Jesus Christ, he turned to speech, calling him the *Logos*—the Word and Reason of God, through whom the universe was made and by whom it was upheld.

What would happen when these two systems of interpreting persuasive language collided—and yet in some sense converged? To answer that question, this book examines three interpretations of the most universally acknowledged piece of rhetoric in the history of the West, the Sermon on the Mount: from the Latin and Catholic tradition (St Augustine), the Greek and Orthodox tradition (St John Chrysostom), and the Reformation and Protestant tradition (Martin Luther). Each is acknowledged in his tradition as a "prince of the pulpit." Together and yet separately, they illuminate both the Sermon and the Speaker for anyone who still takes the challenge of the faith—and of language—seriously.

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