A STUDY OF THE RHETORIC OF THE EARLY SERMONS OF ST. AUGUSTINE

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of History,
Indiana University

March 2012

Accepted by the Faculty of Indiana University, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction

Augustine of Hippo's *De doctrina christiana* has, quite rightly, received significant scholarly attention as a monument in the history of western culture. A 1991 conference at the University of Notre Dame gave *DDC* the subtitle, "A Classic of Western Culture."[1] The French historian Henri-Irénée Marrou concluded that *DDC* became a charter of Christian culture for the following millennium—a conclusion echoed by scholars for decades since.[2] More recently, scholars have seen *DDC* as a remarkable forerunner of twentieth century semiotic theory.[3] In *DDC*, Augustine lays out a guide for how Christian preachers should go about interpreting and then expressing the truth found in the Christian scriptures. He argues for some value for the classical liberal arts. And he insists that rhetoric, while not required, is particularly useful for persuading a congregation to walk in the ways of Jesus. He upholds the integration of wisdom and eloquence as the ideal for which every Christian preacher should aim. Marcia Colish has credited Augustine's *DDC* with fashioning a "redeemed rhetoric" that shaped church and culture throughout the Middle Ages.[4] The work played a vital role in the Carolingian reforms to

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[1] Duane W.H. Arnold and Pamela Bright, eds. *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

[2] Thomas L. Amos, "Augustine and the Education of the Early Medieval Preacher," in *Reading and Wisdom: The De doctrina christiana of Augustine in the Middle Ages,* ed. Edward D. English (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 23.; Keith V. Erickson, "The Significance of 'Doctrina' in Augustine's 'De Doctrina Christiana,'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 15, no. 3/4 (July 1985): 105-107.

[3] Edward D. English, "Preface," *Reading and Wisdom*, vii-viii.

[4] Marcia Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 19ff.

clerical education and preaching.[5] And after the invention of the printing press, Augustine's book 4 of the *DDC* was the first printed work on rhetoric—coming several years before the printing of any of Cicero's or Aristotle's rhetorical guides. James J. Murphy in a foreword to one of the most recent collections of historiography on *DDC*, wrote, "the *De Doctrina Christiana* had a continuous popularity throughout the Middle Ages. This is a largely undocumented history, but anyone who has read the medieval preaching manuals knows how much the ideas of Augustine permeate them."[6]

Yet it is worth asking the question: Does Augustine's theory of rhetoric, as articulated in Book 4 of *DDC,* neatly line up with his actual practice of rhetoric, as a preacher of sermons for nearly 40 years? In other words, did Augustine actually preach what he prescribed in *DDC*? There are good reasons, both historically and historiographically, for asking this question. First, it was Augustine's sermons and theological works that had the greater impact on Augustine's successors in the early Middle Ages. Caesarius of Arles, in southern France in the sixth century, had all of Augustine's sermons copied to use as examples in his own work as a bishop.[7] And many other preachers followed suit, consulting Augustine's sermons and commentaries as they constructed their own sermons, not working from the theory of *DDC*. "For a variety of reasons, the practical examples taken from these other works proved more influential than the *DDC* as sources for early medieval sermon texts," wrote historian Thomas L.

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[5] Amos, 23-24.

[6] James J. Murphy, "Foreword," in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo: De Doctrina Christiana & the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric*, ed. Richard Leo Enos and Roger Thompson et al. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), xi.

[7] Frits Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: Church and Society at the Dawn of the Middle Ages,* trans. Brian Battershaw and George Lamb (1961; repr., New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 417.

Amos.[8] Also, when it comes to Augustine's contributions in the history of rhetoric, George Kennedy has said this must include a comparison of Augustine's theory with his practice. "A full understanding of Augustine's evolving view of rhetoric would require … comparison of his theories with the actual practice in his numerous sermons, commentaries and controversial writings."[9] But Kennedy decided he could use *DDC* as a proxy for Augustine's practice because Augustine wrote it at the end of his life, working out his theory after a lifetime of practice. Many other scholars have drawn the same conclusion, using *DDC* as an accurate summary statement of what Augustine actually did in his sermons.[10] For example, Cardinal Michele Pellegrino, in his excellent analysis of Augustine's sermons, slides back and forth between evidence of the sermons and *DDC* as if the two were entirely consistent with one another.[11]

But are they? Few recent scholars have explored this question. Perhaps this is because in the middle of the twentieth century, several eminent scholars did ask and answer this question, quite convincingly, in the affirmative. In extensive work on Augustine's sermons, Frits Van der Meer and Christine Mohrmann concluded that Augustine's theory in *DDC* was merely the articulation of a lifetime of practice of the same principles. "Whoever begins to read the *sermones* of the Bishop of Hippo knows

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[8] Amos, 29.

[9] George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 267.

[10] Calvin L. Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine's Confessions* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Amy K. Hermanson et al. "Saint Augustine and the Creation of a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric," in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo,* 1-8.

[11] Michele Pellegrino, "Introduction," trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, in *Sermons 1-19*, vol. 1, pt. 3 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century,* trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990), 13-137.

3

after the first few pages that the theory in the last part of *Christian Knowledge* (that is, book 4 of *DDC*) had been lived and experienced long before it was written down. … Augustine follows his own precept," concluded Van der Meer in his biography of Augustine.[12] Around the same time, Mohrmann (who proofed Van der Meer's work), was drawing the same conclusion about Augustine's preaching. "We see further that Augustine's practice agrees with his theory," she said in a 1947 lecture. She added, "Augustine's practice is in accordance with the theory expressed in 'De doctrina Christiana.'"[13]

This thesis does not seek to contradict the overall conclusion of Van der Meer and Mohrmann, whose scholarship is crucial to my own understanding of Augustine's sermons. Yet they were operating with a significant handicap to any contemporary writer: they did not have access to the phenomenal scholarship on the dating of Augustine's sermons. Historians' understanding of the chronology of his sermons took a great leap forward with the work of Anne-Marie La Bonnardière in the late 1960s and has advanced even further since then, with contributions by Pierre-Patrick Verbraken and Edmund Hill. Upon the republication of his famous biography of Augustine, Peter Brown called La Bonnardière's work one of the most notable advances in scholarship since he first chronicled Augustine's life in 1967. Now, with greater ability to link up a meaningful sample of sermons to a specific phase in Augustine's life, historians can use them to chart shifts in Augustine's thought, preoccupations and practices.

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[12] Van der Meer, 413.

[13] Christine Mohrmann, "Saint Augustine and the 'Eloquentia,'" in *Études sur le Latin des Chrétiens*, vol. 1 of *Le Latin des Chrétiens,* 2nd ed. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1961), 369.

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I propose to attempt such a charting of Augustine's first five years as a preacher, from his initiation as a priest in 391 to his official ordination as a bishop in 396. To my knowledge, this period of sermons has not been studied as a distinct unit. As we have already mentioned, the elusiveness of the sermons' chronology has forced scholars to focus instead on overall style and "casts of thought" of all Augustine's sermons.[14] This tradition has even been continued by more recent scholars, such as the aforementioned Pellegrino, in his otherwise fine introduction to Hill's English translation of Augustine's works.[15] Other scholars have focused—and with good reason—more on Augustine's preaching when he was bishop. The Dolbeau sermons, whose discovery in 1990 has drawn much recent scholarly attention, tend to fall after the period I will focus on in this paper. A conference in 1996 in Mayence on the Dolbeau sermons produced an excellent volume of essays titled *Augustin prédicateur (395-411).*

However, Augustine's early sermons deserve study not merely because of scholarly neglect, nor merely because we can now determine with some confidence which ones were early. Rather, examining the first five years of Augustine's preaching can give us a peek at the former professor in the midst of transforming his own rhetoric into that of *DDC*. As I will argue, Augustine began his career as a parish priest giving sermons very much in line with the sophistic speeches he had mastered and taught. But by 396, he had refashioned that rhetoric to fit the new purposes and principles he identified in the Christian church. Of course, Augustine did not write book 4 of *DDC* until 426, four years before his death; so it would seem that my approach would end 30 years too soon to draw

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[14] Van der Meer, 412-52.

[15] Pellegrino, 56-83.

any meaningful conclusions about Augustine's practice of rhetoric. That may be. However, at bottom of my argument is that Augustine did not take until 426 to solidify his theory of rhetoric. Rather, I will argue that Augustine's thoughts on rhetoric congealed in roughly 396 and 397—when he penned his famous autobiography the *Confessions* and also wrote the first three books of *DDC*.

My project jumps off from the work of Colish and rhetoric scholar Calvin Troup, who both have argued that Augustine's *Confessions*—when read on its own terms—is not a story of Augustine's conversion from rhetoric to Christianity (as many scholars have held), but is instead an enactment of Augustine's redeemed rhetoric. Troup even sees the *Confessions* as teaching the same basic lessons as *DDC*: "In (the *Confessions*), Augustine teaches positive tenets that coincide neatly with *De doctrina Christiana*, although sometimes through negative illustrations."[16] What Augustine advocates in both works is the integration of philosophy and rhetoric, of wisdom and eloquence. In the *Confessions*, Augustine recounts the intellectual journey he took after reading Cicero's call to wisdom in *Hortensius.* We cannot know for sure what Cicero said in the *Hortensius* because the work has been lost and only fragments remain. But philosopher Vernon J. Bourke has summarized it based on the fragments and the comments of others who were able to read it. Cicero urges one to "think philosophically," but to do this one must be educated in the liberal arts. (That is, in rhetoric. Philosophy and the liberal arts were mutually exclusive in the ancient world; their integration is, to a large extent, an Augustinian innovation.) Cicero also advocated the four great ancient virtues: prudence, temperance, fortitude, and

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[16] Colish, 21-22; Troup, 28.

justice.[17] This construct—in which wisdom is a triangle of philosophy, rhetoric and virtue—became the test Augustine applied to every intellectual alternative he explored (Manicheeism, Academic skepticism, Platonism and, finally, Christianity). Referring to *Hortensisus*, Troup writes, "It would have provided the philosophical regimen Cicero advised (in his better-known rhetorical works) to complement the treatment of eloquence in those familiar rhetorical texts, where he insisted that the ideal orator be a man of wisdom and eloquence, style and substance, philosophy and rhetoric. Augustine would never abandon these unities."[18]

In making his arguments, Troup goes against the thesis of Harald Hagendahl's monumental *Augustine and the Latin Classics,* which argued that Augustine's highly classical rhetoric slipped away rapidly, starting in 391 and culminating with Augustine's sharp denunciation of rhetoric in the *Confessions.* "Hardly any work by a Christian writer since Tertullian breathes such a deep-seated hostility to the old cultural tradition as this manifesto of fanatical religiosity," Hagendahl writes of the *Confessions*. "The bishop turns violently against the reading of the classics in the schools. … He condemns outright rhetoric. … It would be a severe mistake to minimize the hostile attitude in the *Confessions* or to consider it as emanating from a fortuitous state of mind."[19] Many scholars, while not being quite so harsh as Hagendahl, acknowledge Augustine's denunciations of rhetoric and, as a result, argue that Augustine's continued use of

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[17] Vernon J. Bourke, *Augustine's Love of Wisdom: An Introspective Philosophy* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1992), 3.

[18] Troup, 64.

[19] Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 715.

7

classical rhetoric in his preaching was just a force of habit.[20] But in this paper, I will side with a third group of scholars, who suggest that, notwithstanding his apparent denunciations in the *Confessions*, Augustine quite consciously sought to reform rhetoric for Christian purposes.[21]

Troup's work is significant for my project in this key respect: If Augustine's theory in the *Confessions* is substantially the same as in *DDC* Book 4, then it means that Augustine had already formulated in his mind the conclusions of *DDC* Book 4 when he wrote the *Confessions* in 397. Perhaps he had even formulated those ideas in 396, when he was writing the first three books of *DDC* (which include a promise to include a fourth, on the expression of truth). If this mental timing is accurate, then one would expect to find remarkable consistency between Augustine's rhetorical theory in *DDC* Book 4, written in 426, and his rhetorical practice in his sermons of the preceding 30 years. This consistency is, in fact, what Mohrmann, Van der Meer and others have found when they have studied the rhetoric of Augustine's sermons as a whole. And yet, there is strong evidence that Augustine's preaching started out significantly different in form and style than where it ended up. The sermons scholars think are his earliest, Sermons 214 and

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[20] Mohrmann, 361: "the fact that Augustine was not able to free himself completely from the ancient tradition, that he still thinks and speaks in terms of rhetoric. This is easily understandable and perhaps even forgivable in a former teacher of rhetoric;" Steven M. Oberhelman, *Rhetoric and Homiletics in Fourth-Century Christian Literature: Prose Rhythm, Oratorical Style, and Preaching in the Works of Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 98-99: "Augustine remained too much the *Grammaticus* and the professor of rhetoric to abandon the pagan educational system in all its forms."

[21] See Troup and Colish as well as W.R. Johnson, "Isocrates Flowering: The Rhetoric of Augustine," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 9, no. 4 (1976): 217-31; and Alexandre Leupin, *Fiction and Incarnation: Rhetoric, Theology, Literature in the Middle Ages*, trans. David Laatsch (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

8

216[22], contrast sharply with the prescriptions Augustine later gave in *DDC*. These early sermons are meticulously prepared, adhering strictly to the proper structure of a speech taught in the late-antique schools of rhetoric. They are ornately adorned with the kind of rhetorical devices that Augustine would have rewarded during his days as a rhetoric professor. He includes poetic metaphors, clever turns of phrase, and strings of scripture references so oblique they probably sailed over the heads of his audience. In short, they are show-off pieces in the tradition of the sophistic rhetorical schools in which Augustine trained and taught. These early sermons certainly do not follow the aged Augustine's advice in *DDC,* where he insists that eloquence can be achieved quite apart from the formal schools and rules of sophistic rhetoric, and where he counsels preachers toward the supreme goal of speaking in a "fitting" way to the needs and expectations of an audience. *DDC* still recommends rhetoric as an effective tool for Christian preachers, but counsels them to aim for clarity and persuasion above all, not the showiness of the late-antique sophists. Somewhere between his first sermons in 391 and the *Confessions* in 397, Augustine shifted his attitudes toward rhetoric—a shift I believe can be glimpsed in his sermons of these early years.

In this thesis, I will evaluate the consistency between Augustine's theory in *DDC* and his practice in his early sermons by focusing on three key features of his sermons: structure, style and content. Or said another way, I will look at both form and content. My detailed description of that analysis is in Chapters 4 through 6. But before getting to a close reading of Augustine's sermons texts, I will spend the next two chapters on contexts. The material and mental background of Augustine's sermons is enormously

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[22] As numbered by the Maurists, a system which was reproduced by Migne in *Patrologia Latina*. See chapter 2 for further explanation of the manuscript tradition of Augustine's sermons.

important to understand the unspoken messages Augustine communicated even while he was speaking. I will sketch the details of the theater in which Augustine practiced rhetoric.

This theater is both literal and figurative. It includes the archaeology of North African basilicas, the art of late-antique Christian reliquaries, as well as the Christian liturgy of the fourth century and the place of sermons in it. On the figurative side, Augustine's theater includes the "culture of display"[23] formed by late-antique attitudes and approaches to rhetoric. In the late Roman Empire, rhetoric was a tool for the display of one's learning as well as the required preparation for leadership and privilege. It was a ticket into the circle of elites. It was also a form of entertainment richly enjoyed even by illiterate Romans, who loved to listen to the speeches of lawyers trying cases in the forum, to street-corner speakers and even to the rich allegories of the Roman plays. Therefore, anyone displaying the polished rhetoric that Augustine brought to the pulpit would have communicated, as Peter Brown has termed it, "power and persuasion," to the minds of his late-antique audience.[24] I will explore this theater of display to understand how Augustine's rhetoric both fulfilled and frustrated the expectations of his congregations in North Africa.

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[23] I borrow this notion from Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, eds., *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences* (Chicago: The University of Chciago Press, 2007), 16, a collection of essays on the ways the British public engaged with presentations of science and how those presentations engaged with the public. Fyfe and Lightman use the phrase "culture of display" to help describe the ways the locations, performances and shared expectations of those interactions shaped how the scientific knowledge itself was disseminated and understood. I will use the concept in a similar way, although applied to the sites and experiences of late-antique rhetoric.

[24] Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

In Chapter 3, I will summarize the principles of rhetoric Augustine identifies in *DDC* Book 4. I will then briefly compare and contrast his ideas with the major pieces of the rhetorical theories of Augustine's predecessors, such as Isocrates and Cicero, as well as the sophists of late antiquity. My goal in this chapter will be to show how Augustine's theory appears to overlap with the secular rhetoric of his day and how it departs from it. Scholarly opinion on this issue is far from unified, with some arguing that Augustine rejects sophistic in favor of Cicero's purer, classical variety.[25] Others simply see Augustine as putting a Christian veneer on Cicero's rhetoric.[26] But there appears to be broad agreement with the conclusion of Marrou: that Augustine so shifted the purposes of classical rhetoric in *DDC* Book 4, that the work marks "le fin de la culture antique."[27]

With this background in place, I will then proceed to examine the sermons Augustine preached during his first five years in the pulpit. As noted above, I believe this approach is possible now because of the work on chronology of the past 40 years. This work, tabulated in recent works by Hermann Josef Frede and in Hill's modern translation of the sermons, has allowed me to identify nine sermons that multiple scholars date confidently to the first five years of Augustine's preaching career. Beyond these nine, there are many uncertainties. On some sermons, scholars can only agree on a range of dates, such as 393 to 405. I did not include such sermons in my analysis. Also Hill, operating under the widely held theory that Augustine simplified his language as he grew into preaching, dates several additional sermons to the period 391-396. I also excluded

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[25] Charles Sears Baldwin, "St. Augustine on Preaching," in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo*, 187-203.

[26] Colish, 61.

[27] Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et le fin de la culture antique* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1938).

those sermons. I take this approach simply because there is less consensus among scholars about the dates of these other sermons. And Hill's approach, while plausible, could merely be a self-reinforcing theory, in which we date high-level rhetoric early and lower-level rhetoric late merely because our thesis insists on it, not because of any other evidence.[28]

Some scholars would balk at the chronological basis of my analysis. Hubertus Drobner, in a series of recent articles, has called into question much of the twentieth-century project of dating Augustine's sermons. For example, he rejects dating of sermons on the notion that similar content means similar date of composition. He also objects to the idea that similar style means similar date of composition. "Conclusions of this kind, however, may only be deduced from firmly dated texts, but they cannot be used to date texts," Drobner wrote.[29] And Drobner takes issue with other methods of dating sermons, such as relying on evidence of Augustine's theological development on a theme in relation to one of his datable theological treatises or relying on hypotheses of Augustine's life development. Drobner calls for a "complete and thorough revision" of the chronology of Augustine's sermons, separating them into two categories: securely dated and plausibly dated. Drobner takes particularly sharp aim at sermons 1, 12 and 50—all three of which are part of my analysis. Since all three are about the Manichees, with whom Augustine identified himself before his conversion to Catholic Christianity, scholars tend

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[28] See the Appendix for more detailed analysis of the dating of Augustine's early sermons.

[29] Hubertus R. Drobner, "The Chronology of St. Augustine's *Sermones ad populum,*" *Augustinian Studies* 31, no. 2 (2000): 216. Drobner's argument continues in two other articles: "The Chronology of St. Augustine's *Sermones ad populum* II: Sermons 5-8," *Augustinian Studies* 34, no. 1 (2003): 49-66; and The Chronology of St. Augustine's *Sermones ad populum* III: On Christmas Day," *Augustinian Studies* 35, no. 1 (2004): 43-53.

to assume they were preached early in his career. And since they are all on one topic, scholars tend to assume Augustine preached all of them in roughly the same time period. Drobner finds both lines of reasoning unsubstantiated, noting that Augustine preached about the Manichees even after 400 and that it is just as likely that he preached such sermons on sporadic occasions spread over many years.

One the other side of this debate, however, stand most other scholars, including Adalbert Kunzelman, Cyril Lambot, Peter Brown, Bonifatius Fischer, Pierre-Patrick Verbraken, Hermann Josef Frede and Edmund Hill. And there are good reasons for doing so, especially for sermons 1, 12 and 50. Augustine says in his *Retractationes*[30] that he preached sermons on some of the same topics he addressed in a book against Adimantus the Manichee, which can be dated to 394.[31] Since sermons 1, 12 and 50 all address the Manichees, scholars have assumed these are the sermons Augustine has in mind in the *Retractationes,* and therefore date all three to roughly 394.[32] In this study, I will side with this latter group of scholars, and I think my analysis of the structure and style of sermons 1,12 and 50 tends to reinforce its arguments.

Augustine was, at heart, an integrator. He made a habit of fitting seemingly disparate streams of thought—philosophy and rhetoric, classicism and Christianity—into

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[30] Augustine *Retractationes* 1.22.1, , in J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina,* vol. 32, col. 1175, in the Patrologia Latina Database, http://pld.chadwyck.com.proxy2.ulib.iupui.edu/all/fulltext?ALL=Y&ACTION=byid&warn=N&div=4&id=Z400057201&FILE=../session/1311816140_26289&CURDB=pld (accessed July 27, 2011). Hereafter I refer to this database as *PL.* Translation in *Revisions,* vol. 2, pt. 1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine,* trans. Boniface Ramsey, ed. Roland Teske, 88-89.

[31] Such a viewpoint rests on the hypothesis that Augustine's works were listed in chronological order in Possidius' *Indiculum.* That hypothesis, though widely accepted, is itself a bit fragile according to Goulven Madec, "Les sermons Dolbeau," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 38 (1992): 389-91, and Éric Rebillard, "Sermones," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia,* ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 791.

[32] Edmund Hill, *Sermons* I, pt. 3 of *The Works of Saint Augustine,* 305n1.

13

each other. In his mind, integration was a decidedly Christian pursuit, for Christ Himself was an integrator—of divinity and humanity. In fact, it was only Christ who fulfilled the triangle of wisdom laid out by Cicero's *Hortensius.* For Augustine, only the *Verbum Dei* who became a man and lived in perfect virtue, ever truly achieved Cicero's vision of wisdom. Augustine's answer was to join Christ and follow his example: putting eternal truths into persuasive words in real time. That kind of wisdom, which Augustine sets forth in *DDC* as the preacher's highest goal, was the combination of philosophy and rhetoric, the application of truth to the needs of the moment. Studying the rhetoric of Augustine's early sermons can give us glimpses of Augustine the philosopher at work as Augustine the practitioner, trying to apply the transcendent principles he was articulating in his other works. It is an exercise that can help us better understand his thought on such topics as the uncertainty of language and knowledge, the goals of education, and the capacity of the human will. For rhetoric is language, an attempt to embody knowledge in words, to put knowledge in a form that can be transferred to others in a way that spurs their wills to change their actions. For Augustine, this is wisdom; this is what Christ did. And if we watch Augustine's early work closely, I believe, we can see him make this kind of wisdom the goal of his preaching and, by extension, his life.

Chapter 2: Texts and Theater

This chapter will discuss two things: how it is we know what Augustine said in his sermons and the environment that surrounded the words when he spoke them. Both exercises are crucial because, in the first place, it may be futile to perform a close reading of texts when their accuracy cannot be trusted, and in the second case, even accurate texts cannot come close to recreating all the messages that were being sent to those actually present for Augustine's performance. The unspoken messages were just that because they were obvious to anyone in the audience. They required no comment and, for the most part, Augustine gives us none. "What is true of all good speakers is certainly true of Augustine, namely, that the bare text which has been reconstructed from the notes of stenographers does not even give an approximate idea of the reality," wrote Van der Meer. "That stream of words that ceaselessly rushes on, sparkling and shimmering as it goes, has here been reduced to a shadow of its true self."[33] So I will attempt to alleviate at least a bit of this poverty with my description of Augustine's words and theater and, then in Chapter 6, with my analysis of the dramatic effects of his words.

Sixteen hundred years stand between Augustine and us, yet there is strong evidence that the texts we have are, indeed, the words he spoke. The main reason for this is the stenographers, or shorthand writers, who seem to have been present for many of Augustine's sermons. Augustine himself refers to their presence while preaching on Psalm 51.[34] And Augustine's contemporary biographer Possidius said that anyone with

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[33] Van der Meer, 412.

[34] Pellegrino, 17.

means, including heretics and especially Donatists, could have a sermon of Augustine's taken down by a stenographer.[35] We do not know is how many of Augustine's sermons actually were recorded. There are more than 560 of Augustine's sermons preserved and widely accepted as genuine—though he probably preached ten times that number.[36] We can be fairly confident that the stenographers accurately recorded the words Augustine said in each sermon. That is because the stenographers were scrupulous enough to capture Augustine making mundane and unprepared comments in response to his audience. He refers to his congregation cheering when he begins to quote one of his favorite scriptures.[37] He encourages his congregation to pay closer attention during a lengthy sermon.[38] He also, according to Possidius, once digressed from his main explanation, attacked the Manichees and ended his sermon without ever returning to his intended theme.[39] These and other examples led Roy Deferarri to argue persuasively that Augustine delivered his sermons extemporaneously, but they also suggest the stenographers were attempting verbatim accounts of Augustine's performances, not merely synopses or highlights of them.

Assuming then that the stenographers produced an accurate copy of Augustine's words, we must also ask whether those copies remain untouched afterward? Augustine

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[35] Pellegrino, 17; Roy J. Deferarri, "St. Augustine's Method of Composing and Delivering Sermons," *American Journal of Philology* 43, no. 2 (1922): 119.

[36] Pellegrino, 16.

[37] Van der Meer, 428.

[38] Augustine *Sermo* 252.5.5 (*PL* 38, col. 1175); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 136.

[39] Deferarri, 117.

16

could have edited his sermons, as Ambrose did.[40] Augustine's *Retractationes*, written at the end of his life, indicate that he intended to revise his sermons. But scholars generally believe he made little if any progress on this project before his death. In the Epilogue to the *Retractationes,* published in 427, Augustine says that he will next revise his letters and sermons.[41] But he died in 430 and does not appear to have gotten around to editing his sermons and letters. Pellegrino notes that if Augustine did make revisions to his sermons, there is no trace of variants in the textual record of Augustine's sermons.[42] So most scholars have read Augustine's sermons as if they are a reliable and unedited record of what he actually said.[43]

The sermon texts produced by stenographers were massed into about 30 different collections during the Middle Ages, many of them compiled in the sixth century by Caesarius of Arles, who had every sermon he could copied.[44] Also, many others were collated during the Carolingian Renaissance.[45] These collections, which were also supplemented with many spurious sermons falsely attributed to Augustine, were collected by church scholars in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Then after the invention of the printing press, they began to be produced in printed collections. The most famous of

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[40] Oberhelman, 108-09.

[41] *Retractationes* 2.67 (*PL* 32, col. 656); translation in *Revisions*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, vol. 2, pt. 1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 168.

[42] Pellegrino, 18, with a citation of Cyril Lambot, "Le sermon 343 de saint Augustin," *Revue Benedictine* 66 (1956), 23.

[43] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography,* 2nd ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 445.

[44] Van der Meer, 417.

[45] Pellegrino, 19.

17

these was the 1683 volume produced by the Benedictine monks of the French

Congregation of Saint Maur, known as the Maurists.[46] Their collection of the sermons,

which separated out many spurious sermons, was adopted in its entirety in volumes 38

and 39 of Jacques-Paul Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, published in 1861.[47] An electronic

version of Migne's series was the source of eight of the nine Latin sermon texts I

scrutinized in this study. The ninth, sermon 265B, was discovered after the Maurist

collection. It was printed in 1960 as part of the *Patrologia Latina Supplementum*.[48]

Augustine's sermons, up to Sermon 156, have been published in Latin in the critical

edition known as *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, but because of the completeness

and the wider availability of the Migne texts, I have used them in this study.

Cultural Theater

Augustine spoke in a time and place that still operated primarily as an oral culture.

Few people ever learned to read or write, let alone developed the rhetorical polish of

Augustine.[49] And yet the average Roman had great familiarity with how rhetoric should

sound, based on the frequent chances they had to hear it in their daily lives. Roman

magistrates and tribunals conducted legal business in a basilica in the town forum, a

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[46] Pellegrino, 15.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Augustine *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76 in Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Latina Supplementum*, vol. 2. (Paris: Éditions Garniers Frères, 1960), 531. Hereafter, this volume of sermons will be referred to as *PLS* 2.

[49] Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 37; Troup, 52.

18

structure usually located next door to the commercial market.[50] So citizens would have heard lawyers arguing cases. If they lived in a major city, especially one with an imperial palace, they might have heard speeches by the local professor of rhetoric, praising the emperor and his policies. Augustine himself would have for a short time played this role in Milan, the seat of the western emperor, when he was professor of rhetoric there. Furthermore, the plays staged at the popular Roman theaters often included orations as part of the script. Well-turned rhetoric was a key form of entertainment in late antiquity and Roman ears were well-tuned to recognize it when they heard it, even if they had no literary training themselves.

Rhetoric was the goal of late-antique education, the attainment of which was a man's ticket into the circles of elites that governed Roman cities throughout the empire. Robert Kaster, in his fine history of the schools of grammar, cites Christian bishops like Paulinus of Nola and Jerome to make exactly this point. "First, 'letters' or the like recurred as one of the three or four most important marks of status—what Paulinus of Nola meant when he referred to *honos*, *litterae*, *domus* as the 'tokens of prestige in the world,' or what Jerome had in mind when he spoke of the 'noble man, fluent of speech, wealthy,' a vivid figure flanked by an 'accompaniment of the powerful,' set off against the backdrop of the 'mob.' … the literary culture in itself guaranteed virtue; its acquisition signaled that one possesses discipline, an appetite for toil, and the other ethical qualities that marked a man fit to share the burden of government."[51]

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[50] Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), 20.

[51] Kaster, 27.

19

Brown has gone even further, describing *paideia* or, in Latin, *eloquentia* as "the distinguishing mark of the diffused governing class of the empire, shared alike by the local notables of each region and by the personnel of the imperial government."[52] For Brown, *paideia* and *eloquentia* were symbols of power—not just of imperial power, but also of individual and aristocratic power. It prompted deference from those who did not have it. Brown argues that, not only did late-antique Christians continue to send their children to classical schools, but Christian elites also used the symbol of *paideia* or *eloquentia* in nearly identical ways and for similar purposes as their pagan peers. Brown examines elite Christians' use of symbols, in general, by scrutinizing the material artifacts of their late-antique culture. Brown cites Clifford Geertz's maxim that, "At the political center of any complexly organized society … there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in truth governing." Brown then adds, "Yet a glance at the art and secular culture of the later empire makes one fact abundantly clear; when the 'governing elite' of this officially 'Christian empire' presented themselves to themselves and to the world at large, as being 'in truth governing,' the 'set of symbolic forms' by which they expressed this fact owed little or nothing to Christianity."[53] To provide examples of this art and secular culture, Brown provides examples of mosaics that decorated upper-class villas, ceremonies at the imperial court, styles of poetry and letter-writing, and even an inscription on a dog collar of a slave, which referred to the slave's owner as a *vir clarissimus*, that is, a distinguished

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[52] Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 36.

[53] Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 11.

gentleman.[54] Perhaps most tellingly, the Codex-Calendar of 354, which listed the festivals of the Roman Church and the dates for the burial of the leading popes, also included painted illustrations displayed "lovingly circumstantial representations of those rites of the Roman public cult associated with each month."[55] In a similar way, when Christian bishops came to rival and even replace pagan elites as the most powerful leaders of a particular city, they maintained *paideia* or *eloquentia* as the symbol of their status and authority.

Augustine himself confirms the cultural power of rhetoric in sermon 399, likely preached in Carthage about the year 400, because he indicates many other bishops were present, who were probably in town for a church council.[56] This sermon vividly depicts the great lengths parents went to get their children trained in rhetoric, to launch them toward economic success and social standing. It also hints that Christian bishops like Augustine displayed rhetorical training so obviously, that Augustine is obliged to defend them while making his larger point that Christians should strive even more toward righteousness and things of eternal value. And finally, the sermon indicates that even Christian parents sent their children to be educated in classical rhetoric for reasons of status and success, not in order to learn to understand and communicate scripture.

> Why did you go to school, and get beaten, and run away when taken there
> by your parents, and get looked for and found, and dragged back again,
> and laid out on the floor when you were brought back? Why were you
> beaten? Why did you endure such ghastly evils in your boyhood? To make
> you learn. Learn what? Your letters. Why? So that you could earn money,

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[54] Brown, *Authority and the Sacred*, 14.

[55] Ibid., 12.

[56] It is not clear which council the bishops were attending, making the date somewhat uncertain.

21

or obtain honors, maintain a high social rank. … Yes, it was the one who loved you that dragged you off to receive punishment. He had you beaten out of love for you—so that you would learn, what? Letters. Aren't letters a good thing? Yes, they are.

Yes, I know what you're going to say to me, "Why, what about you bishops? Didn't you study your letters? Why, haven't you used your education in order to study and expound the divine scriptures?" That's so, but that isn't why we learned our letters. I mean, when our parents sent us to school they didn't say to us, "Learn your letters, so that you may be able to read and study the books of the Lord." Not even Christians say this to their children. But what do they say? "Learn your letters."

Why? "In order to be a man."

What do you mean? Am I an animal?

"When I say to be a man, I mean to be eminent among men …."[57]

Augustine is not condoning such motives, but his words indicate that in his age, *eloquentia* made one eminent among men, the display of rhetoric marked one as a ruler. Augustine would later make significant changes to his display of eloquence, but he would never exit this cultural stage.

Architectural Theater

Most likely reinforcing these messages of power and prestige was the actual theater in which Augustine performed his sermons. The architecture of Christian basilicas of the fourth and fifth centuries surrounded a preacher like Augustine with various symbols of imperial power, which would have only added to Christian notions of authority of the preacher. We know of only one basilica from Augustine's Hippo Regius, and it might have been constructed by the local Donatist sect. Augustine himself makes

[57] Hill, *Sermons* X, 465-66.

scant references to the structures in which he is preaching.[58] But through archaeological evidence from the times and places where Augustine lived, we can get some substantial clues as to the structure and symbolism of basilicas in his day.

As mentioned before, the basilica was a part of secular Roman architecture before it was appropriated by the Christians. It was simply a meeting hall, found in the forum of most Roman towns. Audience halls in the imperial palaces or in wealthy houses also took the form of basilicas. And some Roman funerary associations and even the religious devotees of Isis and Osiris met in basilicar halls. So the basilica had some religious connections for late-antique Romans, but it was not associated with the pagan temple cults, an association Christians would have been eager to avoid. The basilica did have a strong association with the emperor. Constantine not only built Christian basilicas but also secular ones, such as the Basilica Nova in Rome and the Palace of Constantine in Trier, in present-day Germany. The image of the emperor had always been present in the apse of local basilicas, just above the raised platform, or dais, on which the magistrate and other officials sat. The imperial effigy represented the authority necessary for local magistrates to render legal decisions and approve business contracts.[59] Christians did not put images of the emperor in their basilicas, of course, but they did adopt some of his other symbols: a cathedra or backless *sella curulis* on which the bishop sat, the dais on which his cathedra sat and often a colonnade that framed the seated bishop, reminiscent of the colonnade in the forum basilicas. A relief sculpture tacked on to the Arch of Constantine shows the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, seated on a *sella curulis* on a raised

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[58] Van der Meer, 317.

[59] Krautheimer, 20.

platform, dispensing food to the poor. Columns behind him show that he is dispensing this largess from the dais of a forum basilica. Augustine likely sat on a throne or sella like this to preach the official words of God and—when he was bishop—to act as an arbitrator and judge in ecclesiastical court hearings. Basilicas often had a depiction of the risen and reigning Christ in the apse. In front of the apse, many Christian basilicas had triumphal arches—one of the most potent symbols of imperial power. Christian basilicas also sported less obvious imperial symbols, such as clerestory windows that let in abundant natural light and reflective interior materials to diffuse that light into myriad sparkles inside. The poet Prudentius described how the finishing touches on St. Paul Outside the Walls, built in the late fourth-century in Rome, were all designed to reflect light: "He laid plates on the beams so as to make the light within golden like the sun's radiance at its rising, and supported the gold-paneled ceiling on pillars of Parian marble set out there in four rows. Then he covered the curves of the arches with splendid glass of different hues (probably a mosaic), like the meadows that are bright with flowers in spring."[60] This abundance of light was alien to the pagan temple buildings and even to much of Roman secular architecture, but it was used prominently in imperial audience halls. Late-antique Christians felt a natural pull to associate Christ—who in the book of Revelation is described as sitting on His Father's throne—with the emperor. "Christ too was identified with the Sun of Justice," wrote the archaeologist Krautheimer. "He had risen at sunrise; His second coming was expected from the East; he was the light of the world. Hence, the

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[60] As quoted in Maria Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation: Prolegomena to an Understanding of Spolia in Early Christian Rome* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2003), 140.

24

mysticism of light would lead fourth-century Christians to think of imperial audience halls as well as of churches as filled with light."[61]

As Augustine exhorted his congregation on the raised dais of an imperial magistrate, with his tribunal of elders and priests seated on a bench behind him[62], all underneath a colonnaded fastigium used by some emperors in their audience halls and, perhaps, with an image of the reigning Christ overhead, these symbols would have attached great power and authority to his words. This is significant because, as we will see later, Augustine greatly lessened the classical emphasis on establishing ethos at the outset of a speech. Augustine argued instead in *DDC* that a preacher's life should be exemplary, thus establishing ethos day-to-day instead of speech-to-speech. But I contend that the messages of authority inherent in Christian basilicas made it both unnecessary to establish one's credibility and also made it less appropriate to extol one's own virtues when the surroundings made such an overt display about the power and glory of Christ. Augustine, during his first five years of his preaching, seems to gradually adapt to these symbols as his sermons become more explicitly focused on Christ.

The layout of late-antique basilicas suggests a space used for a participatory performance, not merely as a gathering place for spectators. Whereas the ideal secular basilica in Roman culture, the Basilica Ulpia in Trajan's Forum in Rome, had an apse at each end and an entrance on the side, Christian basilicas replaced one of the apses with the entrance, so the faithful and later the clergy could enter and proceed toward the altar

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[61] Krautheimer, 25.

[62] Erwan Marec, *Monuments Chrétiens d'Hippone: Ville Episcopale de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1958), 24. Remains from the basilica in Hippo Regius show a curvilinear bench at the back end of the apse, which appears to have been a seating area for the church officials, probably Augustine's monks.

25

and the apse at the other end. In so doing, they were symbolically proceeding toward Christ. This processional effect was reinforced by the columns in the naves of many basilicas. They were frequently taken from pagan temples and monuments, and were displayed down one side of the nave in an eclectic mix of colors and capitals, in direct contrast to the classical style that arranged groups of columns with the same style. But interestingly, architects of Christian basilicas made sure that whatever color or style a column had on one side of the nave, it had a matching column directly opposite on the other side of the nave. In this way, a person proceeding from the entrance toward the apse would gradually pass through different phases or stages on his way toward Christ. "The diversity of the colonnades," wrote Maria Fabricius Hansen, "can be understood as an image of the movement and transformation of a person entering the church and proceeding towards the altar—and towards salvation."[63] Augustine would frequently speak of progression in the Christian life, arranging the beatitudes from Christ's Sermon on the Mount as a stairway, with the top step being wisdom, a concept Augustine closely associated with Christ. A mosaic from Tabarka, near Carthage, depicts a basilica from about the year 400 with the one-apse construction. And this basilica had one other key participatory feature, too. Unlike its contemporary basilicas in Rome, which pulled the altar into or nearly into the apse, the Tabarka mosaic shows the alter one-third of the way back down the nave.[64] This set-up suggests that the congregation would have pressed much closer to the Eucharistic host than in other basilicas. It is not clear that such basilicas were standard in North African, but it is significant that we find these highly

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[63] Hansen, 201.

[64] Krautheimer, 142.

26

participatory features in a building so near the cultural capital of Augustine's region, where he traveled nearly every summer of his ministry.

I do not intend to suggest, by emphasizing the participatory features of Christian basilicas, that Christian worship in the late fourth century was more participatory than it had been in the previous centuries. In fact, it was markedly less so.[65] My point is to draw a contrast with late-antique rhetoric, which was nearly always given as a performance to spectators—whether in a speech or a play or a legal trial; it was always part of a drama Romans were invited to see and to watch, but not to join. I will argue later that Augustine's sermon rhetoric continued to be constructed as a dramatic performance. But inside the Christian basilicas, the performance was one in which the "spectators" joined in. I will explore this participatory performance further in later chapters because it is a notion to which Augustine gradually adapted his rhetoric to fit.

The Tabarka mosaic was one piece of evidence that informed Van der Meer's sketch of the liturgy in Augustine's Hippo, which appears to be highly participatory for the faithful. Augustine would open the ceremony of the mass with a greeting: "The Lord be with you, and with thy spirit." Then a boy would read a passage from one of the Apostle Paul's epistles. Then one of the men of the church would lead the congregation in the antiphonal chanting of a psalm. And then one of Augustine's deacons would read the passage from which Augustine would preach that day. Augustine would then seat himself on his cathedra, looking down into the faces of his congregants, pressed up against the front edge of the dais, and deliver his oration. It could last as long as an hour, and the congregation would stand throughout. At the conclusion of the sermon,

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[65] Van der Meer, 327.

Augustine would pray. The catechumens, who had yet to be baptized, would be dismissed to the atrium outside the entrance. Then those nearest the dais would turn around to face the altar. Augustine and his priests would descend the dais and gather round the altar, likely inside a railing that surrounded it. The congregation of the faithful would press around this balustrade, and listen silently as Augustine offered a series of prayers petitioning God's help for all classes of people, including the church officials and the emperor. Following these prayers, the clergy would move into action, pouring wine into bowls and breaking bread into chunks on saucers. When finished, Augustine would begin praying again, this time thanking and praising God for his grace and mercy and then to consecrate the bread and wine. The prayer of consecration would include the Lord's Prayer, and at the line "Forgive us our trespasses," Augustine's congregation was known to sigh and beat their chests. Having finished praying, Augustine would hand the bread on saucers to his clergy. Then he would hand bread to the congregants one by one, who had formed themselves in line to receive it. With each piece of bread he would say, "Body of Christ," and the recipient would say, "Amen," that is, let it be so. Then a deacon would hand them the mixing vessel filled with wine, saying "Blood of Christ." Augustine would say a final prayer and then dismiss the congregation with the words, "Go in peace." [66] Such is Van der Meer's vision of the liturgy in Hippo. No one knows for certain every practice Augustine adhered to. But Van der Meer's richly sourced picture of the liturgy has heuristic value for the rest of this study. The movement, the chanting, the eating, the drinking, the pressing around to pray—all show the active role the congregation took in worship.

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[66] Van der Meer, 389-402.

Aesthetic Theater

The final thing we must appreciate about the theater in which Augustine's rhetoric functioned is that to the late-antique eye and ear, beauty was best achieved not with classical symmetry and consistency, but by a thoughtful arrangement of classical fragments and vivid descriptions. Michael Roberts, a historian of late-antique poetry, has given this sensibility the apt label of "jeweled style." The ideal of beauty in late antiquity was to construct a piece of art or literature so that it was studded with jewels. These jewels could be Vergilian quotations or allusions, or vivid, part-by-part descriptions of scenes or persons or objects, or plays on words, or string or synonyms. In the visual arts, they could be relief sculptures or marble from older monuments, or columns from older buildings or stones from mosaics. "The elements of a text were understood chromatically, described as multicolored flowers or jewels. The art of the poet was akin to that of the jeweler—to manipulate brilliant pieces (*lumen* is a quality of both flowers and jewels) and to throw them into relief by effects of contrast and juxtaposition. The poet strives for an impression equivalent to that of a flower-covered meadow in spring."[67] The source of this aesthetic for literary works came from the schools of grammar, in which each word was toiled over, commented upon and admired for its own inherent beauty, with less time and attention paid to the overall structure of a work. A similar fragmented approach also had a place in schools of rhetoric, where famous lines and passages were memorized and declaimed upon, even if no student ever read the entire oration from which the passage

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[67] Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 55.

29

was taken.[68] Augustine, of course, was trained in these schools. And some of his favorite rhetorical ornaments—antithesis, variation, enumeration—were also the favorites of jeweled poets of his day.[69]

Stringing together jewels was not merely for aesthetic appeal, was not merely art for art's sake; the new arrangement of classical gems was designed to make a new creation, with a new message and with a new purpose. Sabine MacCormack captures both qualities well when writing about Augustine's lifelong interaction with Vergil.

> passages quoted from Vergil now became building blocks for new structures, just as the columns and capitals of earlier temples and public edifices were, at Augustine's time of writing, being reused in the construction of Christian churches. More apt, perhaps, is the analogy of the arch of Constantine in Rome, dedicated to the emperors Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Diocletian. The reliefs from these earlier imperial structures do, in effect, continue to speak in their own idiom if one examines them in isolation, and similarly, it is possible to take Vergil's verses out of the Christian contexts in which they were being quoted in order to gain something of their original meaning. But that is not likely what the contemporaries who read Augustine's writings are particularly likely to have done, or at any rate, it is not what Augustine wanted them to do. Rather, part of Augustine's purpose when addressing pagan contemporaries with quotations of Vergilian verses was precisely to help such individuals to forget their original understanding of these verses and to use the verses as a gateway to the 'different life and the different customs' that lay ahead in a Christian society.'[70]

MacCormack's comments refer to Augustine's writings during his leisure at Cassiciacum, when he was still directly quoting Vergil and other classical authorities.

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[68] Roberts, 58.

[69] Ibid., 55-60.

[70] Sabine MacCormack, *Shadows of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)*, 37-38.

Later, however, Augustine generally ceased with classical quotations and allusions and in
their place used biblical references. Some of the Augustine's sermons are nothing but
biblical quotations—and not just from the passage of the day, but from numerous books
of the scriptures. Augustine links them together by combinations of other biblical phrases
or images. These are used to add authority to the message and to persuade his audience,
as Augustine will later argue in *DDC*.[71] But they also suggest that Augustine was quite
conscious of late-antique sensibilities on beauty and tried to fashion his sermons to
appeal to them—even as he also substituted new texts for the classical ones he formerly
used.

Augustine's appreciation of a "jeweled style" is confirmed, I think, by evidence
from a few other places in Augustine's writing, where he refers to the beauty of lights.
Roberts identifies a "jeweled" sentiment in Book 4 of *DDC,* where Augustine praises the
prophet Amos because his "utterance is decorated with place names as with lights".[72]
And although Van der Meer notes how little Augustine ever says about the appearance of
the basilicas in which he preaches, there is at least one instance in which, during an
Easter vigil sermon, a reference to a lamp in Psalm 17 causes Augustine's eye to fall on
the brilliance of the lamps lit inside the basilica and to see them representing the light of
faithfulness in the hearts of the congregants: "God, to whom we cry, 'Thou wilt lighten
my darkness,' that God is now lighting up our hearts. With delighted eyes we behold the
gleam of these lamps, and thus, with an illuminated spirit, we can understand the

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[71] Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 4.26.56 (*PL* 34, col. 117); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity,* vol.
2, pt. 1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine,* 167. Hereafter I refer to *De Doctrina Christiana* as *DDC.*

[72] *DDC* 4.7.17 (*PL* 34, col. 97); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity,* 210. "… locorum nominibus
tanquam luminibus ornatur eloquium …"

meaning of this shining night."[73] What Augustine perceived as delightful and beautiful is

crucial for understanding how he approached rhetoric and how he adapted it to his

Christian context.

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[73] Augustine *Sermo Morin Guelferbytanus* 5.2 (*PLS* 2, 550); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 203. Also cited by Van der Meer, 323.

Chapter 3: *De Doctrina Christiana*

In this chapter I will summarize and comment on Book 4 of *DDC,* which contains Augustine's case for the utility of rhetoric in Christian preaching. It also contains the closest thing we have to a statement of his theory of rhetoric. The work has been read many different ways, as a mere repetition and hearty recommendation of Cicero[74] and, alternatively, as a complete undermining of all rhetoric.[75] In the eyes of classicist W.R. Johnson, Augustine's insistence in *DDC* that piety and prayer are even more important to a speaker than linguistic and literary skills is "a portrait of rhetoric that would give Gorgias apoplexy and send the abstemious Cicero to the bottle, but however strange the change in the look of rhetoric, the fact remains that rhetoric remains essentially unchanged."[76] What Johnson means is that Augustine is more in line with the ancient rhetoricians than the ancient philosophers in asserting that, however important the contemplation of truth is, it is communication of truth to others that is fundamental to any human society—even a Christian society. This is a point we will encounter again as we consider the theme of the Incarnation in Augustine's sermons.

DDC Book 4 is an elaborate version of *praeteritio*, the rhetorical device that uses omission for rhetorical effect. Augustine says at the outset that he will not lay out the rules of rhetoric, but for anyone familiar with the rules of rhetoric, nearly all them are

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[74] Marie Comeau, *La rhetorique de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1930), 48.

[75] Stanley E. Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 37-38.

[76] Johnson, 222.

included and displayed.[77] He implicitly includes all five of the parts of a rhetorical

oration. He recommends an exordium when he says of a preacher, "When, though, he

finds them friendly, attentive, willing to learn, or renders them so himself, further tactics

have to be employed, as the case requires." He recommends narration of the facts when

he writes, "If the listeners need to be instructed, this calls for [narration], provided, at

least, that they need to be informed about the subject being dealth with …." But proof

and, by extension, rebuttal are also necessary: "while for the clearing up of doubts and

the establishment of certainty, reasoned arguments and documentary proofs are needed."

Finally, when a preacher has informed the minds, it is time for a peroration to stir the

hearts: "But if the listeners are to be moved rather than instructed, so as not to become

sluggish in acting upon what they know, and so as to give real assent to things they admit

are true, more forceful kinds of speaking are called for. Here what is necessary is words

that implore, that rebuke, that stir, that check, and whatever other styles may avail to

move the audience's minds and spirits."[78] Augustine emphasizes the notion of fittingness,

or decorum, which was vital in ancient rhetoric.[79] He spends a large section talking about

the three styles of rhetoric—low, middle and grand—borrowing them straight from

Cicero. He cites Cicero several times, almost always with a circumlocution that does not

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[77] Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition: From Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 155.

[78] *DDC* 4.4.6 (*PL* 34, col. 91); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 203. "Ubi autem benevolos, intentos, dociles aut invenerit, aut ipse fecerit, caetera peragenda sunt, sicut postulat causa. Si docendi sunt qui audiunt, narratione faciendum est, si tamen indigeat, ut res de qua agitur innotescat. Ut autem quae dubia sunt certa fiant, documentis adhibitis ratiocinandum est. Vero qui audiunt movendi sunt potius quam docendi, ut in eo quod jam sciunt, agendo non torpeant, et rebus assensum, quas veras esse fatentur, accommodent, majoribus dicendi viribus opus est. Ibi obsecrationes et increpationes, concitationes et coercitiones, et quaecumque alia valent ad commovendos animos, sunt necessaria."

[79] Cicero, Quintilian and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* all recommended adapting speech to the audience. See Thérèse Sullivan, "Latin Text, Translation, and Commentary of Book IV of *De Doctrina Christiana,"* in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo,* 33-183, ed. Enos and Thompson et al., 82-83n4.

name him—a common feature of classical rhetoric. And the meat of the book is
Augustine working through examples of rhetoric, the same kind of process of *imitatio*
that any graduate of the ancient schools of grammar and rhetoric would have recognized.
They also would have recognized nearly every variety of rhetorical ornament in this
work, including antithesis, alliteration, anaphora, asyndeton, assonance, climax,
metaphor, paradox and paronomasia. Augustine even trots out his grandest eloquence,
with a knowing wink to his elite readers, in praise of the simple language of the Bible:
"Oh what eloquence, all the more terrifying for being so simple, and all the more
forcefully effective for being so down to earth! Oh indeed *an axe splitting the rocks* (Jer
23:29)!"[80] They also would have recognized the near constant use of rhythmic endings in
Book 4 of *DDC*.[81] Augustine's performance is very much like a lawyer in the Roman
forum, giving a defense to his fellow learned aristocrats of a case that, for them, would
have seemed hopeless: that the Bible is eloquent.

This was a serious matter in Augustine's day. He himself had walked away from the
faith, in part, because of the lack of eloquence of the scriptures. Some of this had to do
with the "particularly barbarous kind of Latin" into which the Bible had been translated
in Augustine's day, before Jerome produced his Vulgate.[82] In ancient thought, eloquence
was the mark of leadership, authority and knowledge. The idea that God—the epitome of
those three qualities—would speak to mankind in such uncouth language was nearly

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[80] *DDC* 4.14.30 (*PL* 34, col. 102); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 217. "O eloquentia tanto terribilior, quanto purior; et quanto solidior, tanto vehementior! O vere securis concidens petras!"

[81] Oberhelman, "Appendix," Table 4, in *Rhetoric and Homiletics,* ranks Book 4 of *DDC* as the most rhythmic of all of Augustine's works, even slightly more so than *De civitate dei.*

[82] Van der Meer, 407.

35

impossible to accept. Augustine ultimately embraced Christianity because its integration of knowledge, eloquence and taming of the will satisfied his Ciceronian quest for wisdom.[83] And by taking a broader definition of eloquence, Augustine also came to see that the Christian scriptures were eloquent, even if they did not satisfy the strict rules of Roman rhetoric in which he had been trained. "So while we are not saying that the apostle deliberately observed the rules of eloquence, we are still not denying that eloquence waited upon his wisdom," Augustine wrote when discussing one of Paul's biblical passages.[84] Augustine is, in a sense, echoing his statement from earlier in *DDC,* in which he said all truth is God's truth, though some of it may be buried by human error.[85] In *DDC* Book 4, he asserts that all eloquence is God's eloquence, though it may be marred by human abuse.[86]

While Augustine was showing off his own classically refined eloquence in his defense of biblical eloquence, he also had a second audience to convince: Christians who wanted to reject rhetoric altogether as hopelessly pagan. This was a serious movement among late-antique Christians, many of whom objected to the bombastic and showy rhetoric, known as the second sophistic, which held sway in Augustine's day. Also, there had been venerable church fathers before Augustine who had denounced pagan culture,

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[83] Troup, 73.

[84] *DDC* 4.7.11 (*PL* 34, col. 94); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 206. "Sicut ergo Apostolum praecepta eloquentiae secutum fuisse non dicimus, ita quod ejus sapientiam secuta sit eloquentia, non negamus."

[85] *DDC* 2.18.28 (*PL* 34, col. 49); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 144. "imo vero quisquis bonus verusque christianus est, Domini sui esse intelligat, ubicumque invenerit veritatem …"

[86] *DDC* 4.6.10 (*PL* 34, col. 93); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 206. "Illud magis admiror et stupeo, quod ista nostra eloquentia ita usi sunt per alteram quamdam eloquentiam suam, ut nec deesset eis, nec emineret in eis."

36

including its characteristic use of language—albeit while using some of the most richly ornate and eloquent language. One of the most famous denunciations is Tertullian's rhetorical question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?"[87] Augustine's contemporary Jerome also struggled over the place of pagan culture and rhetoric in the life of a Christian scholar and preacher. In a letter from 384, Jerome wrote, "Do not be too eager to seem to yourself eloquent, or improvise humorous themes in lyric verse. … What has Horace to do with the psalter, Vergil with the gospels, Cicero with Paul? … we ought not at the same time drink Christ's chalice and the chalice of demons."[88] Perhaps as an application of this view, Jerome adopted a sermon style that was simple and dry.[89] And this could have become the norm in Latin Christianity. One of Augustine's North African predecessors, Cyprian, declared, "Let oratory boast itself, seek its commendations and rewards in courts of judicature, and in popular assemblies. But where the supreme God is our theme, and our argument treats of things pertaining to him; the weight of things, (we should remember,) and not the wisdom of words is the proper support of faith."[90] But instead,

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[87] Tertullian *De praescriptionibus adversus haereticos* 7 (*PL* 2, col. 20B); translation Roxanne Mountford, "Aurelius Augustinus," in *Classical Rhetorics and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Sources,* ed. Michelle Ballif and Michael G. Moran (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2005), 78. "Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? quid Academiae et Ecclesiae?"

[88] Jerome *Epistolae* 22.29 (*PL* 22, col. 415-16); translation in *The Letters of St. Jerome Volume 1*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow, vol. 33 of *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation* (New York: Newman Press, 1963), 164-65. *"Nec tibi diserta multum velis videri, aut Lyricis festiva carminibus, metro ludere. … Quid facit cum Psalterio Horatius? cum Evangeliis Maro? cum Apostolo Cicero? … tamen simul bibere non debemus calicem Christi, et calicem daemoniorum."*

[89] Oberhelman, 110.

[90] Cyprian *Epistola Prima: Ad Donatum* 2 (*PL* 3, col. 197A-198A); translation in *The Genuine Works of St. Cyprian, Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy2.ulib.iupui.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=mult

Augustine in *DDC* sought a course between sophistic showiness and Christian

reactionism, which could retain rhetoric in the church without bringing in pagan culture

with it. This attempt was imperative, Augustine asserted, in a culture where, although

Christianity was the official religion, pagan falsehoods still abounded.

> Rhetoric, after all, being the art of persuading people to accept something, whether it is true or false, would anyone dare to maintain that truth should stand there without any weapons in the hands of its defenders against falsehood; that those speakers, that is to say, who are trying to convince their hearers of what is unrue, should know how to get them on their side, to gain their attention and have them eating out of their hands by their opening remarks, while these who are defending the truth should not? That those who utter their lies briefly, clearly, plausibly, and these should state their truths in a manner too boring to listen to, too obscure to understand, and finally too repellent to believe?[91]

Augustine then clinches his argument with a characteristic ornament, an antithetical and

paradoxical word play: "Who is to be so foolish as to be thus wise?"[92]

Augustine's recipe for redeeming rhetoric was to give it a different purpose. *DDC*

rejects the purpose of the second sophistic, which was to bring glory to the speaker by

displaying learning and persuading the audience to believe and act as the speaker wished.

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ipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW3320522602&source=gale&userGroupName=iuclassb&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE, (accessed July 9, 2011). "In judiciis, in concione pro rostris, opulenta facundia volubili ambitione jactetur. Cum vero de Domino Deo vox est, vocis pura sinceritas non eloquentiae viribus nititur ad fidei argumenta, sed rebus."

[91] *DDC* 4.2.3 (*PL* 34, col. 89); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 201-02. "Nam cum per artem rhetoricam et vera suadeantur et falsa, quis audeat dicere, adversus mendacium in defensoribus suis inermem debere consistere veritatem, ut videlicet illi qui res falsas persuadere conantur, noverint auditorem vel benevolum, vel intentum, vel docilem prooemio facere; isti autem non noverint? illi falsa breviter, aperte, verisimiliter; et isti vera sic narrent, ut audire taedeat, intelligere non pateat, credere postremo non libeat?"

[92] Ibid. "Quis ita desipiat, ut hoc sapiat?" I use the translation of Sullivan, 39, because Hill's translation ("Could anyone be so silly as to suppose such a thing?") bears little relation to the words of the original Latin, and still less to their power.

Instead, Augustine aimed to use rhetoric to proclaim truth; and this truth needed to be proclaimed in such a way that it would communicate to all, not merely giving the ring of eloquence in otherwise uncomprehending ears, but also being truly understandable to people of all levels of society. This new purpose is captured in a brief statement Augustine gave to describe the eloquence he finds in one of Paul's passages: "moves and delights even the unlearned."[93] Indeed, moving and delighting both the learned and unlearned is perhaps the major theme and goal of *DDC* Book 4.[94] This is the purpose Augustine evolved toward in his first five years of preaching. It is a function of teaching the ignorant while also delighting the audience with beauty: "Therefore the person who is saying something with the intention of teaching should not consider he has yet said anything of what he wants to the person he wishes to teach, so long as he is not understood. … If on the other hand he also wishes to delight the person he is saying it to, or to sway him, he will not succeed in doing so whatever his way of saying it may have been; but in order to do so, it makes all the difference how he says it."[95] These three tasks—instructing, pleasing and moving—are the same functions of rhetoric identified by Cicero and followed by Quintiian. Augustine then matches up these three functions with a separate quotation from Cicero, in which he commends three styles of speech: subdued, moderate and grand. Cicero says a man is eloquent if he uses the subdued style when

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[93] *DDC* 4.7.13 (*PL* 34, col. 95); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 207. "etiam indocti delectantur moventurque, fecerunt."

[94] John D. Schaeffer, "The Dialectic of Orality and Literacy: The Case of Book 4 of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo,* 289-307. Schaeffer argues that Book 4 of *DDC* is Augustine's attempt to adapt a textual religion to a mostly illiterate society through the means of extemporary oral performance.

[95] *DDC* 4.12.27 (*PL* 34, col. 101); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 215. "Qui ergo dicit cum docere vult, quamdiu non intelligitur, nondum se existimet dixisse quod vult ei quem vult docere. … Sicut est autem, ut teneatur ad audiendum, delectandus auditor; ita flectendus, ut moveatur ad agendum."

speaking of unimportant matters (such as money), the moderate style when speaking of more important matters, and the grand style when speaking of truly great matters.[96] But Augustine contends that the Christian message—no matter its daily topic—is directed toward the eternal welfare of men and women and, therefore, it is always speaking of great matters, even when speaking of the use of money. So he rejects Cicero's hierarchical ordering of the three styles and instead orders them according to purpose. Augustine assigns the subdued style to the purpose of instructing, the moderate style to the purpose of engaging and pleasing, and the grand style to the purpose of persuading. Which style to use depends on the goal of the speaker, but also on the needs of the audience at the moment. And the goal of the Christian orator was to communicate truth in whatever style would most help the audience understand the truth and put it into practice.

Christine Mason Sutherland has described this shifting of the Ciceronian categories as a product of Augustine's applying the principle of love to rhetoric. She notes that the grand style had been the favorite of classical orators because, not only was it for the most important matters, but it also gave them the best opportunity to display their full powers of rhetoric. But for a preacher, teaching Christians how to love God was the most

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[96] *DDC* 4.17.34 (*PL* 34, col. 104-05); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 220. "Qui ergo nititur dicendo persuadere quod bonum est, nihil horum trium spernens, ut scilicet doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat; oret atque agat, ut quemadmodum supra diximus, intelligenter, libenter, obedienterque audiatur. Quod cum apte et convenienter facit, non immerito eloquens dici potest, etsi non eum sequatur auditoris assensus. Ad haec enim tria, id est ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat, etiam tria illa videtur pertinere voluisse idem ipse Romani auctor eloquii, cum itidem dixit, *Is igitur erit eloquens, qui poterit parva submisse, modica temperate, magna granditer dicere (Cicero, de Oratore):* tanquam si adderet illa etiam tria, et sic explicaret unam eamdemque sententiam dicens. Is erit igitur eloquens, qui ut doceat, poterit parva submisse; ut delectet, modica temperate; ut flectat, magna granditer dicere."

40

important function, meaning the subdued style was the most vital.[97] Such concern for the needs and welfare of one's audience was a principle of classical rhetoric long before Augustine. Goodwill toward audience, along with intelligence and integrity, were key elements of classical *ethos,* according to Quintilian. But in *DDC* Augustine goes beyond the classical "well-wishing in terms of worldly advantage," and in so doing, Sutherland argues, fundamentally alters rhetoric. "This deep concern for the welfare—the eternal welfare—of the audience informs everything that Augustine has to say about the relationship between the speaker and those who hear him," Sutherland wrote. "It is responsible for many of the changes that he makes in classical theory, and also for a new kind of emphasis, a redistribution of priorities."[98] Sutherland contends that Augustine has this principle of love in mind right from the first book of *DDC* up to the last. Augustine says in *DDC* Book 1, referring to Rom 13:8 and 1 Tim 1:5

> *the fulfillment and the end of the law* and of all the divine scriptures *is love*; love of the thing which is to be enjoyed, and of the thing which is able to enjoy that thing together with us, because there is no need for a commandment that we should love ourselves. So in order that we might know how to do this and be able to, the whole ordering of time was arranged by divine providence for our salvation.[99]

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[97] Christine Mason Sutherland, "Love as Rhetorical Principle: The Relationship Between Content and Style in the Rhetoric of St. Augustine," in *Grace, Politics and Desire: Essays on Augustine,* ed. Hugo A. Meynell (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990), 150.

[98] Ibid., 146-47.

[99] *DDC* 1.35.39 (*PL* 34, col. 34); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity,* 123. "ut intelligatur Legis et omnium divinarum Scripturarum plenitudo et finis esse dilectio rei qua fruendum est, et rei quae nobiscum ea re frui potest; quia ut se quisque diligat, praecepto non opus est. Hoc ergo ut nossemus atque possemus, facta est tota pro salute nostra per divinam providentiam dispensatio temporalis."

And in *DDC* Book 4, Augustine says the goal of the Christian preacher should be to speak what is best for the audience to hear on that given day. This can only be accomplished with divine help, which is why he counsels the Christian preacher to pray before speaking: "About any of the matters, after all, that have to be dealt with in terms of faith and love, there are many things that can be said, and many ways they can be said in by those who are well versed in such work; but who knows what is the right thing for us to say, or for someone to hear from us, at precisely this time, but the one who can see into the hearts of us all?"[100] As we will see later, Augustine's preaching style shifts as he matures, becomingly increasing direct with the audience and tailored more and more to the masses. This shift, I will argue, is a sign of Augustine gradually working out this principle of love in his sermons, gradually shifting the practices of classical rhetoric to the purposes of the Christian religion.

This change to a purpose-driven rhetoric exemplifies Augustine's larger shift in his view of rhetoric. Eloquence could no longer be inherently good, as it was for Cicero. It could no longer be the goal of education, as it was for the Roman elites. Instead, eloquence was either good or bad based on the purpose to which it was applied. It could not be a goal by itself, but rather a tool to reach a goal—either a good one (wisdom) or a bad one (worldly gain), either a selfless one (love of God) or a selfish one (love of self). In the eyes of Marrou, this was a revolutionary shift. In his book *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique,* Marrou concluded, "And from that point, in style and substance, Christian eloquence appears deeply original and differs from all the manifestations of

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[100] *DDC* 4.15.32 (*PL* 34, col. 103); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity,* 218. "Cum enim de unaquaque re, quae secundum fidem dilectionemque tractanda sunt, multa sint quae dicantur, et multi modi quibus dicantur ab eis qui haec sciunt; quis novit quid ad praesens tempus, vel nobis dicere, vel per nos expediat audiri, nisi qui corda omnium videt?"

literary art that we know from the secular tradition."[101] In this way, Augustine's *DDC* marked the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages.

It is in light of this redeemed, purposive eloquence that we can best understand Augustine's rather shocking—to elite ears of late antiquity—statement that it is preferable to use an incorrect word if it does a better job communicating than a correct word. I will quote Augustine's words at length here.

> Good teachers, though, will or should be so concerned with teaching, that if a word can only be correct Latin if it obscure or ambiguous, while in common speech it has an incorrect form that avoids ambiguity or obscurity, they will speak it in the way the uneducated, not the way educated people are used to. … What is the point, after all, of correctness of speech which the hearers are unable to follow and understand, seeing that there is absolutely no point in speaking at all, if the people do not understand, whom we are speaking to precisely in order that they may understand? So the person who is teaching will avoid all words that do not in fact teach; and if instead of them he can correctly use others that are understood, he will prefer to choose them. But if he cannot, either because there are none such, or because they do not occur to him at that moment, he will also use words that are not so correct, provided the matter itself is being taught and learned correctly.[102]

For late-antique rhetoricians this was akin to sacrilege. While Cicero and Quintilian both advocated adapting speech to the audience, none would have gone this far. It is unclear

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[101] Marrou, 531. "Et par là, forme et fond, l'éloquence chrétienne apparaît profondément originale et se distingue de toutes les manifestations d'art littéraire que pouvait connaître la tradition profane." Translation is my own.

[102] *DDC* 4.10.24 (*PL* 34, col. 99-100; translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 213-14. "Quamuis in bonis doctoribus tanta docendi cura sit, vel esse debeat, ut verbum quod nisi obscurum sit vel ambiguum, latinum esse non potest, vulgi autem more sic dicitur ut ambiguitas obscuritasque vitetur, non si dicatur ut a doctis, sed potius ut ab indoctis dici solet. … Quod enim prodest locutionis integritas, quam non sequitur intellectus audientis, cum loquendi omnino nulla sit causa, si quod loquimur non intellegunt, propter quos ut intellegant loquimur? Qui ergo docet, vitabit verba omnia quae non docent; et si pro eis alia, quae intellegantur integra, potest dicere, id magis eliget; si autem non potest, sive quia non sunt, sive quia in praesentia non occurrunt, utetur etiam verbis minus integris dum tamen res ipsa doceatur atque discatur integre."

43

how much Augustine actually used incorrect grammar in his sermons; some scholars contend it was hardly at all, much less than the statement in *DDC* would suggest.[103] But Augustine's point seems to be this: God has given the church the job of proclaiming and teaching the gospel. Rhetoric is a valuable tool that can be employed powerfully in that endeavor. But the rules of rhetoric can never function as a system of values that stands over the church and its mission. So stating that it is permissible to break those rules from time to time in order to fulfill the purpose of the church is, more than anything, Augustine making sure late-antique preachers keep their priorities straight.

Augustine treats wisdom and eloquence, throughout *DDC* Book 4, as distinct but severable concepts that ought to go together but often do not. Indeed, Augustine bases the entire book on a quote from Cicero that implies wisdom can be detached from eloquence in a person's speech: "'wisdom without eloquence is of little use to a society, while eloquence without wisdom is frequently extremely prejudicial to it, never of any use'."[104] In this respect, Augustine's descriptions of wisdom and eloquence would appear to diverge from Troup's reading of the *Confessions,* in which he identified Augustine's recipe for wisdom as necessarily including rhetoric along with knowledge and morality. But I think the divergence is merely an appearance. Wisdom is the goal in *DDC* Book 4, just as it is in the *Confessions.* But Augustine does not devote a book in *DDC* to reaching wisdom through contemplation or spreading it through Socratic dialogue. Rather, he devotes all of Book 4 to expressing wisdom through the rhetorical art of speaking.

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[103] Sullivan, 88-89n16.

[104] *DDC* 4.5.7 (*PL* 34, col. 92); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 204. "sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus; eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse nunquam."

44

Expression can either be done well or poorly, the former being called eloquence and the latter being called lack of eloquence. Augustine does identify a second mode of eloquence that involves deeds instead of words: personal piety. He claims a preacher's righteous life could express the wisdom of the scriptures with beauty, even though the preacher be unable to communicate either wisdom or beauty in his speech: "But if anyone is unable to do both, let him say wisely what he does not say eloquently, rather than say eloquently what he says unwisely. If however he cannot even do this, let him so conduct himself that he not only earns a reward for himself, but also gives an example to others, and so his manner of life itself can be a kind of eloquent sermon."[105] Augustine is contending that expression that expression, in ideal circumstances, will come with the beautiful adornment of eloquence, in either words or deeds or both. But whether audible or silent, expression of true knowledge in beautiful terms is the recipe for true wisdom.

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[105] *DDC* 4.28-29.61 (*PL* 34, col. 119); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 239. "Sed qui utrumque non potest, dicat sapienter quod non dicit eloquenter, potius quam dicat eloquenter quod dicit insipienter. Si autem ne hoc quidem potest, ita conversetur, ut non solum sibi praemium comparet, sed etiam praebeat aliis exemplum, et sit ejus quasi copia dicendi forma vivendi."

Chapter 4: Structure

The structure of a classical speech comprised four parts: an exordium to hook the audience's attention, a narration of the facts, a proof of one's case and a rebuttal of opposing arguments, and finally an epilogue, or peroration, in which the speaker stirred the emotions of his audience.[106] These parts would all be present in a judicial speech in the Roman world, the kind Augustine would have trained his students to give. In other types of oration—ceremonial, for instance—only some parts would have been present. A key phrase in these recommendations is "as each case demands." Even though Augustine obliquely recommends all the structural parts of classical rhetoric, nowhere in *DDC* does he argue that they must all be present in a sermon. Yet it would appear that Augustine did not always hold this view. In his earliest sermons, we see him much more faithful to the standard parts of speech structure than he is by the time of the *Confessions.* To examine this apparent difference, I will start by analyzing Augustine's earliest sermons—214, 216 and 353—and then compare them to later works.

Sermon 214: The Professor Lectures

In this sermon, Augustine explains the Apostles Creed to catechumens who were about to receive the wine and bread of the Eucharist for the first time. He begins with a short exordium, asserting his ethos as an honest, humble laborer. According to Cicero,

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[106] Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 4.1-5. Latin original and English translation in *Quintilian: The Orator's Education,* vol. 2, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library 125 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 180-311.

the exordium was the place for a speaker to establish ethos.[107] Quintilian generally

agreed, placing special importance on a speaker who pleads a certain weakness or

unpreparedness.[108] In this sermon, Augustine follows Cicero and Quintilian to the letter.

> Now that I am assisting as a minister at the altar, which you are soon
> going to approach, I must not cheat you out of the ministry or service of a
> sermon. I will do my best, for the love I have for you, to the extent that my
> age and my inexperience allow, and the fact that I am only a new recruit in
> the office I have been entrusted with.[109]

Augustine follows with a description of the creed—also called the symbol—and

how it can help new Christians fulfill Paul's instructions to "confess with your mouth that

Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that the Lord raised him from the dead" (Rom.

10:9). The Maurist text then includes instructions to read the creed aloud, although it also

indicates that it is not customary to write it down.[110]

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[107] Cicero *De Inventione* 1.15-18. Latin original and English translation in *Cicero: De Inventione, De Optime Genere Oratrum, Topica*, trans. H.M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 40-53.

[108] Quintilian 4.1.8; translation Russell, 182-83.

[109] *Sermo* 214.1 (*PL* 38, col. 1065); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, pt. 3 of *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 150. *"Pro modulo aetatis rudimentorumque nostrorum, pro tirocinio suscepti muneris atque in vos dilectionis affect, qui jam ministrans altari, quo accessuri estis, assistimus, nec ministerio sermonis vos fraudare debemus."* In this paper, all English quotations from Augustine's sermons come from Hill's translations, which are the latest available. For sermons 1- 50, Hill's translation is based on the critical edition of Latin texts in *Sermones de vetere testamento*, ed. C. Lambot, vol. 41 of *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1961). For sermons 51 on, Hill used the Latin text in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, vols. 38-39, as well as the *Patrologia Latina Supplementum*, vol. 2. Because of the wider availability of Migne's texts, I have used them throughout my analysis. However, I have quoted Hill's translations throughout this thesis for ease of reference and because his translations do a commendable job at reproducing in English many of the rhetorical devices that are so evident in Augustine's Latin.

[110] The old Roman creed, which dates from Augustine's lifetime, can be found in Rufinus, *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum* (*PL* 21, col. 335B-386C). "Credo in Deo Patre omnipotente. Et in Christo Jesu unico filio ejus domino nostro. Qui natus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine. Crucifixus sub Pontio Pilato, et sepulto descendit ad inferna. Tertia die resurrexit a mortuis. Ascendit ad caelos, sedet ad dextereram Patris: inde venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos. Et in Spiritu Sancto. Sanctam Ecclesiam. Remissionem peccatorum. Hujus carnis resurrectionem."

47

After this "narration of the facts," Augustine begins to unpack the creed line by line, as he would have done numerous times teaching grammar and rhetoric to his students. We see this practice most clearly when Augustine comes to the phrase "natus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine". Augustine mirrors this phrase against what the angel told Mary in Luke 1:35: "Therefore the holy one to be born of you shall be called the Son of God." Then Augustine breaks down both lines to explain why the Creed says what it does:

> It is because of this holy conception in the virgin's womb, brought about not by the burning lust of the flesh but by the glowing charity of faith, that it says *born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*; the first mentioned as sanctifying, not as begetting; the second as conceiving and giving birth. *Therefore,* he said, *the holy one to be born of you shall be called the Son of God.* Because *holy,* that's why *of the Holy Spirit;* because *to be born of you*, that's why *of the virgin Mary.*"[111]

This is how Augustine presents his "proof" in this sermon, which in this case takes up nearly the entire speech.

But before concluding all his evidence, Augustine runs into some issues that demand rebuttal; and he gives it right away. The creed, he says, "has to be defended against people who think differently, having been taken prisoner by the devil."[112] The main series of rebuttals come early in the sermon, as Augustine explains the line of the

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[111] *Sermo* 214.6 (*PL* 38, col. 1069); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 154. "Propter cujus sanctam in virginis utero conceptionem, non concupiscentia carnis urente factam, sed fidei charitate fervente, ideo dicitur natus de Spiritu sancto et virgine Maria: ut unum eorum pertineat, non ad gignentem, sed ad sanctificantem, alterum vero ad concipientem atque parientem. *Propterea,* inquit, *quod nascetur ex te Sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei.* Quia *Sanctum,* ideo de Spiritu sancto; quia *nascetur ex te,* ideo de virgine Maria."

[112] *Sermo* 214.2 (*PL* 38, col. 1066); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 150-51. "Sed quoniam munienda sunt adversus diversa sentientes et a diabolo captivatos."

Creed that says "Maker of heaven and earth." His first argument attempts to shoot down the notion that God created the world, but did so using some pre-existing material or "the formless matter of things" (*informis rerum materies.)* This Platonic phrase is a reference to *De rerum natura*, a work by the Roman poet Lucretius in the first century B.C., who had a strong influence on Vergil.[113] His second argument is against the idea that the disobedience of the wicked proves that God is not almighty. And his third argument cuts off anyone who would try to argue that God is not almighty because he cannot do certain things: die, change, be deceived or defeated. Augustine's says "truth not only shows he is almighty because he cannot do these things, but also requires anyone who can do them not to be almighty."[114] After these counter-arguments, Augustine resumes explaining the Creed line by line.

At the end of the sermon, Augustine recaps his lesson with a peroration that is brief but still highly adorned, with rhetorical questions and then with strings of rhyming phrases in the last two sentences.

> This is the Christian, this the Catholic, this the apostolic faith. Believe Christ when he says, *Not a hair of your head shall perish* (Lk. 21:18), and thrusting out all unbelief, reflect upon it to the best of your ability. I mean, can anything of ours be ignored by the redeemer as valueless, when he cannot ignore even one of our hairs? Or how can we doubt that he is going to give life to our soul and our flesh, when for our sakes he both assumed soul and flesh in which to die, and laid them down when he died, and received them back so that death need no more be feared? As required by my ministry, I have explained to your graces everything that is given in

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[113] Mary Sarah Muldowney, trans., *Saint Augustine: Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*, vol. 38 of *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1959), 132.

[114] *Sermo* 214.4 (*PL* 38, col. 1068); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 153. "Ac per hoc non solum ostendit veritas omnipotentem esse, quod ista non possit; sed etiam cogit veritas omnipotentem non esse, qui haec possit."

the Symbol. The reason it is called a symbol is that in it is contained the prescribed faith and pledge of our association, and it is by confessing it, as by giving a password, that the faithful Christian can be recognized.[115]

This sermon has all the structural elements of a classical oration, with an instructional approach any hearer trained in grammar or rhetoric would have recognized. It also includes many stylistic flourishes, which we will explore in the next chapter.

Sermon 216: Initiating New Believers

Augustine here addresses the *competentes*, that is, the advanced catechumens of the church who had at Lent submitted their names for baptism at Easter. The *competentes* were considered Christians, because they had already professed faith, but before listening to this sermon, they also would have previously sat through numerous other sermons and even endured rigorous rituals of fasting, praying and, finally, exorcism.[116] Augustine begins this sermon with a definite exordium, in which he tries to establish ethos by asserting a certain oneness between himself, the new preacher, and his audience, the new Christians.

The commencement of my ministry and of your conception, your beginning to be begotten by heavenly grace in the womb of faith, needs to

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[115] *Sermo* 214.12 (*PL* 38, col. 1072); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 157. "Haec est Christiana, haec catholica, haec apostolic fides. Credit Christo dicenti, *Capillus capitis vestry non peribit*: et infidelitate depulsa, quanti capillus contemni cogitate. Quid enim nostrum a Redemptore nostro contemni potest, quorum capillus contemni non potest? Aut quomodo dubiabimus quod animae et carni nostrae vitam daturus sit aeternam, qui pro nobis animam et carnem, et suscepit in qua moreretur, et posuit cum moreretur, et receipt ne mors timeretur? Omnia quae traduntur in Symbolo prop modulo nostro, fratres mei, vestrae exposui Charitati. Quod ideo Symbolum dicitur, quia ibi nostrae societatis fiddes plactia contentur, et ejus confessione tanquam signo dato christianus fidelis agnoscitur."

[116] William Harmless, "Catechumens, Catechumenate," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Eerdmans, 1999), 146-49.

50

be aided by prayer, so that my sermon may contribute to your welfare and salvation, and your conception to my encouragement and consolation. … Let us all run the course in the tracks of the Lord according to the vocation with which we have been called by him; none of us must look back.[117]

Augustine follows in this sermon the pattern of an encomium, a kind of ceremonial speech: he speaks about the shared identity and values into which his audience is about to come. The second part of Augustine's exordium reads like this:

And what is this one thing that you are asking and longing for, but what a certain person, casting aside all fleshly desires and trampling on the terrors of the world, fearlessly exclaims about: *If fortresses are arrayed against me, my heart will not fear; if war breaks out upon me, in this I will hope.* And to express what this thing might be, he went on to add: *One thing have I asked from the Lord, this will I seek; to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life;* and to explain what the blessedness of this region and dwelling consists in, he continues by declaring, *to contemplate the delight of the Lord, and to be protected by his temple* (Ps. 27:3-4).[118]

The sermon that follows this introduction is a highly ornate oration—a showy display of Augustine's sophisticated style and ability to quote and allude to an enormous amount of scripture. The entire speech is a combination of describing the blessedness of a life in Christ, extolling the virtues befitting that life, and then exhorting the *competentes* to live it. A classical encomium ended with praise of virtue, and Augustine certainly

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[117] *Sermo* 216.1 (*PL* 38, col. 1076-77); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 167. "Rudimenta ministerii nostri, et vestri conceptus quo fidei concipitis utero generari coelesti gratia, adjuvanda sunt ore: ut et noster vos sermo salubriter alloquatur, et nos vester conceptus utiliter consoletur. … Omnes secundum vocationem qua vocati sumus a Domino, in ejus via semitaque curramus; nullus retro respiciat.*"*

[118] *Sermo* 216.1 (*PL* 38, col. 1077); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 167. "Et quod illud est unum, quod petites vel concupiscitis, nisi quod quidam abjectis desideriis carnalibus et superatis terroribus saeculi clamat intrepidus? *Si consistant adversum me castra, non timebit cor meum; si exsurgat in me bellum, in hoc ergo sperabo.* Et quae illa sit exprimens, adjunxit et dixit: *Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram; ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnes dies vitae meae.* Atque hujus regionis et habitationis beatitudinem explanans, connectit et exprimit: *Ut contempler delectationem Domini, et protegar a templo ejus.*"

51

delivers, with praise of Christ and an attempt to stir the *competentes* in the grand style.

He strings together a daisy chain of rhyming phrases (note the "os" at the end of every

other word in the Latin version), before catching his panting breath at the word "and"

("atque" in Latin), and then squeezing in a couple more "os" words in an ending clause.

He walks off with a one-line exhortation (look for the Latin "admonemus") to holiness.

> Hasten to him and be converted; he, you see, is the one who converts those
> who have turned away, goes in pursuit of those who have run away, finds
> those who have got lost, humbles the proud, feeds the starving, releases
> those in fetters, gives light to the blind, purges the unclean, gives
> refreshment to the weary, raises the dead, and snatches the possessed from
> the grip of *the spirits of wickedness* (Eph. 6:12). From these [evil spirits]
> we have just now found you to be free; we congratulate you, and exhort
> you to preserve in your hearts the health that is apparent in your bodies.
>
> Currite ad eum, et convertiminimi: ille est enim qui convertit aversos,
> prosequitur fugivitos, invenit perditos, humiliat superbos, pascit famelicos,
> solvit compeditos, illuminat caecos, purgat immundos, recreat fatigatos,
> suscitat mortuos, atque nequitiae spiritibus possessos et captos eripit. A
> quibus quia vos nunc immunes esse probavimus; gratulantes vobis
> admonemus vos, ut sanitas quae apparuit in vestro corpora, haec in vestris
> cordibus conservetur.[119]

This sermon again shows Augustine bringing over the structural forms he had learned

and taught in schools of rhetoric to his Christian preaching.

Sermon 353: Bejeweling

Sermon 353 again follows the pattern of encomium, with Augustine exhorting to

holy living those believers who had, for the first time, participated in the Eucharist. It

begins with a classical exordium, with Augustine establishing ethos by declaring himself

the "wet-nurse" of the new church members. He ends with a long peroration starting with

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[119] *Sermo* 216.11 (*PL* 38, col. 1082); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 174.

a vivid metaphor about how the new members have left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea and are now journeying through the desert toward the Promised Land. He issues a string of commands, citing a plethora of scriptures, to shun wickedness and embrace righteousness. However, what is most noteworthy about this sermon is that it shows Augustine adopting the "jeweled style" we discussed in Chapter 2 as a technique to delight his listeners while he reminds them of familiar lessons. Consider Augustine's final sentences, and how many scriptural "gems" he quotes:

> I say it again, and it has to be said so often: *The time that is past is enough for having carried out the will of the nations* (1 Pt. 4:3). Loathe and detest the dogs which return to their vomit (2 Pt. 2:22; Pr. 26:11); loathe and detest the cleaned and empty house, into which seven other spirits, more wicked still, are brought, so that *the last state of the man is worse than the first* (Lk. 11:25-26). What you must do is keep hold of the one who has cleaned you up as a permanent resident in your house. For *we command and beg you not to receive the grace of God in vain* (2 Cor. 6:1). For the time that is past is enough for having carried out the will of the nations (1 Pt. 4:3). Listen also to the apostle Paul: *For just as you have preserved your members to be slaves of uncleanness and iniquity making for unrighteousness, so now present your members to be slaves of righteousness, making for sanctification* (Rom. 6:19).[120]

I have taken to calling Augustine's stringing together of so many scriptures as "bejeweling." It reflects the aesthetic sensibilities described by Roberts' phrase "jeweled style," as well as the reliquaries, mosaics and other reflective materials that adorned the basilicas in which Augustine preached. Van der Meer has made a similar observation in

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[120] *Sermo* 353.4 (*PL* 39, col. 1562-63); translation Hill, *Sermons* X, 154. "Iterum dico, et saepe dicendum est: *Sufficit praeteritum tempus voluntates gentium consummasse.* Detestamini et aversamini canes conversos ad vomitum suum: detestamini et aversamini mundatam et vacantem domum, quo nequiores alii spiritus septem adducuntur, ut sint novissima hominis pejora, quam erant prima. Vos vestrum mundatorem tenete habitatorem. *Praecipientes* enim *rogamus ne in vacuum gratiam Dei recipiatis. Sufficit enim praeteritum tempus voluntates gentium consummasse.* Audite et apostolum Paulum: *Humanum dico propter infirmitatem carnis vestrae. Sicut enim exhibuistis membra vestra servire immunditiae et iniquitati ad injustitiam: sic nunc exhibete membra vestra servire justitiae in sanctificationem.*"

53

his analysis of Augustine's sermons: "The texts from Proverbs and the Psalms run parallel like little rows of stones, the Prophets intertwine with the Epistles of St. Paul, there are the hieratic ovals of the four Gospels, and all this combines with the criss-crossing of the rhetorical antitheses—in a word, all seems to combine to produce an effect very similar to the delicately-inlaid expressionist mosaics of early Christianity …."[121] This is one early example of it, in the midst of a well-prepared, well-polished sermon. But Augustine will keep this habit in his later sermons too, even as his structure and style become more relaxed.

Sermons 1, 12 and 50: The Manichees on Trial

In these three sermons, Augustine offers three different rebuttals of the claims of his former compatriots the Manichees. Most scholars date all three sermons to between the years 393 and 395. And while it is not my intent in this paper to argue for more precise dates than that, I think there is a good case to be made for them being preached in same order in which the Maurists printed them. This trio displays subtle but significant shifts in Augustine's structuring of his sermons, so that by sermon 50, we can begin to make out the pattern that the mature Augustine will make his own.

Sermon 1 is a textbook display of the five parts of a speech, which were most common in the judicial orations made in the Roman forums from Cicero's day to Augustine's. This sermon is modeled after a judicial oration. It reads as if Augustine is placing his old pals the Manichees on the raised platform with him, in order to prosecute them for heresy. He argues his case not before an imperial official and the public, but

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[121] Van der Meer, 438.

instead before Christ and the penitent. Sermon 1 has a definite exordium, where Augustine establishes ethos by saying he is fulfilling his promise to preach about the theological arguments of the Manichees. He portrays himself as faithfully paying off a debt out of love for his congregation and fear of feeling ashamed if he did not.

> Those of us who remember the debt we owe, and the apostle's ruling, *Owe no one anything, except to love one another* (Rom 13:8), owe it to ourselves to force ourselves to repay them. And certainly, however hard rent-collectors may be in leaning on debtors and terrifying them with their shouting, charity is much more vehement in its demands since it removes the weight of fear from debt collecting, but adds the greater one of shame. Now I am remembering the promise I made to you, that with the Lord's help I would not fail to answer the silly pernicious quibbles of the Manichees with which they snipe at the Old Testament.[122]

One very subtle shift at the outset here is the quotation of scripture in the first line. Augustine did not do this in sermons 214 and 216, yet in later years he would commonly start sermons straight from scripture. However, there are also many later sermons which do not begin with a direct scripture quotation. So I am reluctant to draw a definite conclusion here. I think we simply have too few pieces of evidence to say one way or another.

Augustine's sermon continues with his narration of the facts or, perhaps more accurately, framing of the question, which was a vital part of rhetorical strategy.[123] He

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[122] *Sermo* 1.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 23); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 169. "Qui meminit debiti sui, sententiaeque apostolicae, qua dictum est, *Nemini quidquam debeatis, nisi ut invicem diligatis* (Rom. XIII, 8), se ipsum debet ad reddendum ipse compellere. Et revera quantolibet fremitu debitoribus exactorum terror incumbat; multo vehementius exigit charitas, quae aufert ab exactione pondus timoris, et verecundiae majus imponit. Memini me fuisse pollicitum Charitati vestrae, adversus Manchiaeroum stultas perniciosasque calumnia, quibus Veteri Testamento insidiantur, responsionem per nos non defuturam, quantum Dominus donare dignatur."

[123] Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric,* 120; 208-11.

does this with two bits of vivid description, or *ecphrasis*, another common tool of the polished rhetor.

> So notice and observe the snake-like coils of the noose; remove your necks from them and place them instead under the yoke of Christ. These people, you see, have the nerve to set this kind of trap in front of the unwary: they say the scripture of the Old and New Testament contradict each other, to the point that they cannot both be accepted by one faith. In particular, in their efforts to convince us that the openings of the book of Genesis and of the gospel according to John disagree with each other, they oppose them to each other head on, almost like two bulls. Moses, they tell us, says *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Gen. 1:1) and doesn't even mention the Son through whom all things were made; whereas John says *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing* (Jn 1:1-3). Is this contradictory, or are they not rather contradicting themselves, who prefer blindly to find fault with what they do not understand instead of devoutly seeking to understand?[124]

Augustine's proof and rebuttal in this sermon form another example of the professor of rhetoric parsing words, in this case, the words of the Bible. However, Augustine also adds one of the most well-developed tricks of the late-antique rhetor: an argument from probability. Augustine claims that the word "beginning" in Genesis refers to the Son of God, the same person that "Word" refers to in John. Augustine, while acknowledging he may not be able to prove this claim, appeals to two other passages in John to establish the likelihood of his conclusion. In one, Jesus says that Moses wrote of

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[124] *Sermo* 1.2.2 (*PL* 38, col. 24); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 169. "Advertite igitur, et videte laqueos serpentinos, atque inde subtracta jugo Christi colla supponite. Audent quippe illi hujuscemodi dolos praetendere incautis, ut dicant adversari sibi Scripturas Novi et Veteris Testamenti, ita ut una fide retineri utrumque non possit: et ipsa principia libri Geneseos et Evangelii κατὰ Joannem sibimet inimica persuadere molientes, quasi ex adversa fronte committunt. Moyses enim dicit, inquiunt, *In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram,* nec nominat Filium, per quem facta sunt omnia: cum Joannes dicat, *In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil.* Hoccine contrarium est, an potius sibimetipsi contrarii sunt, qui ea quae non intelligunt, caecitate reprehendere, quam pietate quaerere maluerunt?"

him (Jn 5:26), making it likely that Moses was writing of Christ, the Son of God, when he wrote, "In the beginning God created …." Next, Augustine recounts a scene where the Jews ask Jesus who he is, and he replies, "The beginning, because I am also speaking to you" (Jn 8:25). The Latin word in this verse, *principium,* is the same as in Genesis, *principio.* Augustine then seals his argument with a clever antithesis decorated with internal assonance between the words *haereditatem ... exhaeredatis haereticis:*

> And thus, the gospel being in agreement with Genesis, we may retain our inheritance in accordance with the consensus of both Testaments, and leave fault-finding quibbles to the disinherited heretics.
>
> Ut etiam Evangelico concordante cum Genesi, secundum Testamenti utriusque consensum teneamus haereditatem, litigiosasque calumnias exhaeredatis haereticis relinquamus.[125]

But it is not so simple as that, for Augustine has many other arguments of his Manichee past ringing in his ears; a rebuttal is in order. Since Augustine has argued that Moses and John were both talking about Christ as creating all things, he knows an astute Manichee would point out that John says "All things were made *through* him," while Moses says "*In* the beginning God made heaven and earth." So Augustine argues that "through him" and "in him" (*per ipsum* and *in ipso*) really mean the same thing. Augustine, after appealing to a passage from Paul (Eph 1:9-10) that says "in him," concludes that Paul, John and Moses all agree.

> In this place you may so hear the words *in him* that you also understand "through him"; in the same way then, in John's words *through him all things* you are also obliged to understand "in him." Here then I am not denied the right of understanding that all things were made in him, when I

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[125] *Sermo* 1.2.2 (*PL* 38, col. 25); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 170.

57

read *through him*; so likewise when I read in Genesis that heaven and earth were made in him, who is to forbid me also to understand it as *through him*?[126]

At this point, Augustine considers the possibility that his first argument is not correct, that the word "beginning" in Genesis refers not to the Son of God but merely to the beginning of time.[127] Granting this for sake of argument, Augustine retorts that the Son of God is still implied as active in creation later in Genesis, where God says, "Let us make man to our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:27). The plural "us" refers to the trinity, Augustine argues, or, at least, the phrasing in Genesis does not rule out the participation of the Son of God in creation.

Augustine has a definite conclusion to this sermon, although it is in a far more subdued style than Sermons 214 and 216. He merely recaps what he has argued and urges his listeners to inquire further on their own.

> But the genuine and only truth faith … bears in mind the peace between
> Moses and John; and if in the text of Moses, *In the beginning God made*
> *heaven and earth,* it takes "beginning" as meaning the beginning of time,
> then in the word *God,* it recognizes quite simply the unity of the trinity; or
> else without a qualm it accepts the beginning in which God made heaven
> and earth as being the Son himself. There are many other things we could
> draw to your attention in accordance with these modes of speech
> employed in the divine scriptures. But in order not to overload your
> holiness' memory, let it suffice to have drawn your attention to these
> points. The rest we urge you to inquire into yourselves, or at any rate to

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[126] *Sermo* 1.3.3 (*PL* 38, col. 25); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 170. "Quemadmodum itaque hic sic audis quod ait, *in ipso,* ut intelligas et, *per ipsum;* sic in eo quod dicit Joannes, *Omnia per ipsum,* etiam *in ipso* intelligere cogeris. Et quemadmodum hic non mihi aufertur intellectus, quo intelligo in ipso facta esse omnia, cum *per ipsum* legam; sic in Genesi cum legam in ipso factum esse coelum et terram, quis me intelligere prohibet et per ipsum?"

[127] Augustine's allowance for multiple interpretations of the same scriptural passage is a common feature of his sermons and scripture commentaries. This approach is similar to that taken by the Roman commentators on the poetry of Vergil, which served an analogous function to pagan Romans as the Bible did to Christians. See MacCormack, 83-84.

58

notice them when the scriptures are read, and to consider and discuss them amicably among yourselves.[128]

As we will see, Augustine adopts this subdued recap as an option for his ending, although he at times still uses the stirring ending, as we saw in Sermon 216, or the stylized crescendo and then quick diminuendo, as he did in Sermon 214. However, his later sermons will make the subdued recap his normal practice.

Sermon 12 combines structural elements both of a judicial speech as well as a vituperation. The latter kind of speech was the opposing pair of the encomium (which we saw in Sermon 216), an effort to identify and condemn the mutually rejected vices of a person of persons, in this case the Manichees.[129] A vituperation catalogued a person's actions, faulting them as the product of evils of either mind, body or background, and then exhorted the audience to shun such behavior. In this sermon, Augustine is heavy on the criticism but light on the exhortation. In his opening, he tells his audience to avoid the "dishonest traps" of the Manichees and to teach others to do likewise. Then near the end of the sermon, he gives them some specific scriptures to "read out" to Manichees to rebut their arguments. In between, Augustine throws out a string of insults at the Manichees

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[128] *Sermo* 1.5.5 (*PL* 38, col. 26); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 172. "Sicut autem sincerissima et verissima fides … sic Moysi et Joannis pacem intuens, in eo quod Moyses dixit, *In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram,* si principium accipit temporis, nihil aliud in eo quod dictum est, *Deus,* nisi Trinitatis unitatem agnoscit; aut principium in quo fecit Deus coelum et terram, ipsum Filium incunctanter amplectitur. Multa sunt alia quae secundum has regulas locutionis divinarum Scripturarum commemorare possimus: sed ne oneremus memoriam Sanctitatis vestrae, ista commemorasse suffecerit. Caetera vos ipsos quaerere, vel cum Scripturae leguntur, advertere, atque inter vos considerare concorditer et pertractare adhortamur. Conversi, etc."

[129] Roughly speaking, the Manichees were to late-antique Christians what "Bolsheviks" were to Depression-era Britons and Americans. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 35.

(e.g., "incompetent," "raving lunatics," "astonishing madness") and repeatedly accuses them of "malicious intent."

Augustine begins with a definite exordium, but he makes no attempt to establish his own ethos. Rather, he appeals to the knowledge of his listeners, as well as to their capacity for critical thought and instruction of others. This was another strategy for exordia, according to Quintilian. Appealing to the goodwill or good sense of one's audience was an effective way to make it pay attention to the speech that followed.[130]

> I am sure, dearly beloved brothers, that sensible people like you do not need telling how the Manichees lay their dishonest traps for us in the matter of the divine and holy books of the Old Testament. Nonetheless I offer you here some more of their tricks for your critical inspection, so that you may not only avoid them as far as you yourselves are concerned, but may also, as far as each of you is able, teach others not so strong and experienced in the readings from the divine scriptures to avoid and despise them too.[131]

Augustine then narrates the Manichees' argument for another contradiction between the Old and New testaments. Job 1:6 says, "Behold the angels came into the presence of God, and the devil in their midst;" yet in Matthew 5:8 Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The Manichees, according to Augustine, argued that the Old Testament text must be wrong, since the devil is the exact opposite of "pure in heart." He follows this *stasis* with a range of arguments based on scriptural exegesis, as

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[130] Quintilian 4.1.16; translation Russell, 187.

[131] *Sermo* 12.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 100); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 297. "In divinis et sanctis veteribus Libris fraudulentissima fallacia Manichaeos insidiari, jam vestrae prudentiae, dilectissimi fratres, satis probatum esse confidimus. Offerimus tamen adhuc eorum dolos inspiciendos obtutibus cordis vestri: ut non solum eos, quantum ad vos pertinet, evitetis, sed etiam ut alios infirmos et divinarum lectionum rudes, ut quisque vestrum potest, evitare atque contemnere doceatis."

well as descriptions of the various kinds of speech and the mutability of created bodies. He comes to an end with a highly adorned flourish, full of antithesis, antistrophe and anaphora, which I will consider in detail in the next chapter, on style. But it is a grand style oration, withering in its criticism of the Manichees, stirring in its praise of Christ, ending in a breathless climax. The sermon ends with a final few sentences, returning to the original question and reiterating Augustine's contentions against the Manichees.

In sermon 50, Augustine again adjudicates one of the Manichees' juxtapositions of scriptures, but the distinct beginnings and endings of Augustine's preaching are gone. In this case, Augustine dives straight into the texts he is comparing, with no attempt whatever at an exordium. Here is how the sermon begins:

> The Manichees cast a slur on the prophet Haggai, and blame him unfairly for what he said, with God speaking in person, *Mine is the gold and mine is the silver* (Hg. 2:8). They are always eager to make contentious comparisons between the gospel and the old law, to show up each part of scripture as contradicting and disagreeing with the other, and so they put the question like this: "In the prophet Haggai," they say, "It is written *Mine is the gold and mine is the silver*; but in the gospel our savior called this kind of iniquity *mammon* (Lk. 16:9), and the blessed apostle wrote about its use to Timothy with the words, *But the root of all evils is avarice, which some people, setting their hearts on, have turned away from the faith and involved themselves in many sorrows* (1 Tm 6:10).[132]

The rest of sermon proceeds in the judicial-vituperative style, with Augustine calling the Manichees "poor wretches" and offering various arguments to rebut their

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[132] *Sermo* 50.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 326); translation Hill, *Sermons* II, 345. "De Aggaeo propheta Manichaei calumniantur, invidiose accusantes quod dixerit ex persona Dei loquentis, *Meum est aurum, et meum est argentum:* et quia Evangelium veteri Legi student pugnaciter comparare, ut sibi utraeque Scripturae velut adversariae contrariaeque videantur, ita proponunt quaestionem: In Aggaeo, inquiunt, propheta scriptum est, *Meum est aurum, et meum est argentum;* in Evangelio autem, Salvator noster mammona hujusmodi iniquitatis speciem appellavit. De cujus usu beatus Apostolus ad Timotheum scribens: *Radix autem omnium malorum,* inquit, *est avaritia: quam quidam appetentes, aversi sunt a fide, et inseruerunt se doloribus multis*."

claims. His final sentences include a recap of sorts, but he ends making another point, not stirring his audience's emotions.

> But why should we spend any longer dealing with this question? I am sure it is perfectly clear to your graces that the sect of the Manichees uses fraudulent, not honest, means with the unlearned to get them to set parts of the scriptures above the whole, the new above the old; they pick out sentences which they try to show contradict each other, in order to take in the unlearned. But just in the New Testament itself there is no letter of the apostle or even book of the gospel in which that sort of thing cannot be done, so that any one book of the gospel in which that sort of thing contradicted itself in various places, unless the reader pays very careful attention to its whole composition and design.[133]

Truncating—and in some cases even dropping—the exordium and peroration from the beginning and ends of his sermons becomes Augustine's preferred style during the rest of his ministry. It is, I will argue, a change made both for practical as well as theoretical reasons. But it is a change we should especially note, for it is one of the most significant ways in which Augustine altered his rhetorical practice in his first five years of preaching. While looseness and spontaneity were regarded as good rhetorical traits in late antiquity, beginnings and ends were considered vital for any good speaker: "Above all, it was thought essential that what he presented should have a good beginning and a fine resonant end," Van der Meer noted.[134] So we can see that by 395, Augustine was embarking on a major break with the secular rhetoric of his past.

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[133] *Sermo* 50.9.13 (*PL* 38, col. 332); translation Hill, *Sermons* II, 351."Sed quid jam diutius de hac quaestione tractemus? Credo esse manifestum Charitati vestrae, Manichaeorum sectam non veritate, sed fraude agere, cum imperitis, ut Scripturas non totas totis, novas veteribus praeferant; sed sententias excerpendo, quas velut adversas sibi esse conantur ostendere, ut decipiant imperitos. Nulla est autem de ipso Novo Testamento vel Apostoli Epistola, vel etiam liber Evangelii, de quo non possint ista fieri; ut quibusdam sententiis ipse unus liber sibi videatur esse contrarius, nisi ejus tota contextio diligentissima lectoris intentione tractetur."

[134] Van der Meer, 418.

Sermons 273, 252 and 265B: Melting into the Liturgy

Sermon 273, dated confidently to Jan. 21, 396, shows even more clearly how Augustine has shorn his exordium completely and truncated his peroration to such an extent that his sermon ceases to be a free-standing event and now tends to melt into the liturgy that comes around it. The occasion of this sermon is the day of death for three martyrs: Fructuosus, Augurius and Eulogius. The story of their lives was read immediately before Augustine took to his cathedra to preach. Augustine begins his sermon jumping directly off from this reading of the martyrs' passion:

> The Lord Jesus not only gave his martyrs their instructions, he also strengthened them by his example. I mean, that they might have something to follow when they were about to suffer, he first suffered for them; he pointed out the journey to be made, he made the road along which to make it.[135]

Augustine makes no attempt to establish his ethos here, unless it is an attempt to establish the ethos of Christ. Rather, the passion story itself serves as introduction, from which Augustine jumps straight to his theme. We might expect Augustine to structure a sermon celebrating the martyrs as an encomium, praising their virtue and exhorting his audience to follow their example. And while Augustine does, in fact, toss in a few lines praising "the saints in whose memory we are celebrating," he structures this sermon as a teacher's lesson. He is not parsing scripture, but he is instructing his audience that the martyrs are to be emulated but not worshiped; for the martyrs were human like us, and

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[135] *Sermo* 273.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 1247); translation Hill, *Sermons* VIII, 17. "Dominus Jesus martyres suos non solum instruxit praecepto, sed et firmavit exemplo. Ut enim quod sequerentur haberent passuri, prior ille passus est pro eis: iter ostendit, et viam fecit."

even ordinary Christians are more praiseworthy than the pagan gods. Augustine drives

home these points with a string of rhetorical questions that, as we shall discuss in the

section on style, augur the dialogical structure his sermons take on later in his ministry.

> What's Juno worth, as against one little old faithful Christian woman? As against one weak old Christian man, trembling in all his limbs, what's Hercules worth? Yes, he overcame Cacus, Hercules overcame the lion, Hercules overcame the hound Cerberus; Fructuosus overcame the whole world. … And yet, dearly beloved, while those gods are in no way at all to be compared to our martyrs, we don't regard them as gods, or worship them as gods. We don't provide them with temples, with altars, with sacrifices. Priests don't make offerings to them; perish the thought![136]

Augustine continues on this theme, and in this dialogical style, squeezing in one last

lesson about the dual nature—exalted divinity and humble humanity—of Christ, before

wrapping up with a two sentence exhortation. He then transitions immediately into a

prayer, as the last sentence indicates.

> … he preferred to be called a priest rather than to require a priest's services; he preferred to be a sacrifice rather than to demand sacrifice, insofar as he is a man. Because insofar as he is God, everything that is owed to the Father is also owed to the only-begotten Son. For that reason, dearly beloved, venerate the martyrs, praise, love, proclaim, honor them. But worship the God of the martyrs. Turning to the Lord, etc.[137]

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[136] *Sermo* 273.6.6-7.7 (*PL* 38, col. 1250-51); translation Hill, *Sermons* VIII, 20. "Contra unam aniculam fidelem christianam quid valet Juno? Contra unum infirmum et trementem omnibus membris senem christianum quid valet Hercules? Vicit Cacum, vicit Hercules leonem, vicit Hercules canem Cerberum: vicit Fructuosus totum mundum. Compara virum viro. … Et tamen, charissimi, nos martyres nostros, quibus illi nulla ex parte sunt conferendi, pro diis non habemus, non tanquam deos colimus. Non eis templa, non eis altaria, non sacrificia exhibemus. Non eis sacerdotes offerunt: absit."

[137] *Sermo* 273.9 (*PL* 38, col. 1252); translation Hill, *Sermons* VIII, 21. "… maluit sacerdos dici, quam sibi exigere sacerdotem; maluit sacrificium esse, quam poscere; in quantum homo est. Nam in quantum Deus est, totum quod Patri debetur, et unigenito Filio debetur. Ideo, charissimi, veneramini martyres, laudate, amate, praedicate, honorate: Deum martyrum colite. Conversi ad Dominum, etc."The phrase "Conversi, etc." also occurred at the end of Sermon 1, although oddly it was not included in Hill's translation there. See note 125.

Sermon 252 features a more traditional exordium than Sermon 273[138], but it also includes a device that Augustine will make increasingly common: beginning and ending his sermons with the scripture used that day in the liturgy. Augustine starts with a scripture quotation (Heb 1:1) to make a broad statement about divine revelation in scripture, and then narrows the attention of his audience to the scripture passage of the day, a story from John 21 about Jesus, after his resurrection, filling his disciples' nets with fish. Augustine makes no attempt in this introduction to establish ethos or, really, to appeal to the audience's goodwill, but he does make a direct appeal to his audience to pay close attention: "Would your holiness please consider seriously what the meaning is of holy scripture testifying that the Lord showed himself to the disciples in the manner which the evangelist recounts."[139] The oration that follows is studded with rhetorical devices—metaphors, numerology, rhetorical questions—but the style remains predominantly low to moderate. Augustine even refers to the preceding liturgy in the midst of his sermon:

> I mean, we too have been saying *alleluia.* It was sung here early this morning, and when we were already present, a short while ago, we said *alleluia.* … Let us say it as much as we can, so that we may deserve to say it always. There, our food will be *alleluia,* our drink *alleluia,* the activity of our rest *alleluia,* our whole joy will be *alleluia,* that is, the praise of God.[140]

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[138] According to some scholars, Sermon 252 was preached at Easter 395, about nine months before Sermon 273. Others date Sermon 252 to Easter 396. See the Appendix for lengthier discussion of how the sermons are dated.

[139] *Sermo* 252.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 1171-72); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 132. "Intendat Sanctitas vestra quid sibi velit, quod eo modo se Dominum discipulis demonstrasse sancta Scriptura testatur, quomodo Evangelista narrat."

[140] *Sermo* 252.9.9 (*PL* 38, col. 1176-77); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 138. "Nam et nos diximus Alleluia, et cantatum est mane hic, et cum jam adessemus, paulo ante diximus Alleluia. … Dicamus quantum

Augustine has a definite conclusion to this sermon, where he gives his congregation an exhortation on how to apply the "great mystery" he has spent the sermon explaining: first, that they celebrate Easter festivities with feasting but not with drunkenness. Then he extends this application to a broader rule: "that a person who understands less and lives a better life is better than one who understands a lot and doesn't live a good life." Augustine then ends where he began, with a scripture quotation.

> If you live a good life, you see, you earn the right to a fuller understanding; while if you live a bad one, you will lose even what you do understand. That's what was said: *To the one who has, it will be given; but the one who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away from him* (Mt 25:29; Mk 4:25).[141]

The last sermon I will examine is Sermon 265B, which falls just outside the window of my analysis in this paper. Most scholars date it to either 396 or 397, but clearly after Augustine was already bishop of Hippo. This sermon is helpful, however, as an example of the dominant features of Augustine's later sermons. This sermon is markedly shorter than any of the previous eight I have analyzed. Its language is simpler than the first five sermons in my study, although Augustine the rhetorician still bursts forth with a well-turned, metaphorical passage in its middle. The exordium and peroration are severely truncated, with Augustine diving straight into his material and ending abruptly. The middle is structured like a classical question setting and proof. As I

possumus, ut semper dicere mereamur. Ibi cibus noster Alleluia, potus Alleluia, actio quietis Alleluia, totum gaudium erit Alleluia, id est, laus Dei."

[141] *Sermo* 252.12.12 (*PL* 38, col. 1179); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 140. "Qui enim bene vivit, meretur amplius intelligere: qui male vivit, et quod intelligit perdet. Sic dictum est: *Qui habet, dabitur ei; qui autem nan habet, et id quod videtur habere, auferetur ab eo*."

will discuss further in a later chapter, these become the defining features of Augustine's preaching throughout his career as a bishop.

Even though it lacks a classical exordium and peroration, Sermon 265B has a definite structure: It begins and ends with the scripture passage of the day, which is the story in the book of Acts retelling Christ's ascension into heaven. Here is how the sermon begins:

> After our Lord Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, he wished to give the most certain and trustworthy possible proof that he had risen again in the same body, in which he had hung on the cross; and so he spent forty days with his disciples, going in and coming out, eating and drinking. … After rising again, you see, he ascended into heaven in the same body in which, after dying, he had visited the underworld. He now, that is, deposited in heaven that dwelling of his immortal flesh, which he had fashioned for himself in the womb of his virgin mother.[142]

Augustine then, in the following section, sets the question to be debated and answered:

> Some people, certainly, find very surprising what the Lord said in the gospel, *Nobody has ascended into heaven, except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven* (Jn 3:13). How, they ask, can the Son of man be said to have come down from heaven, when it was here that he was taken on in the virgin's womb?[143]

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[142] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.1 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 249. "Dominus noster Jesus Christus, postquam a mortuis resurrexit, volens certissima et fidelissima attestione in eodem corpora se resurrexisse monstrare, in quo pependit in cruce, quadraginta diebus cum discipulis suis fuit, intrans et exiens, manducans et bibens. … In eo namque corpora in caelum resurgens ascendit, in quo corpora mortuus inferos vistavit. Ipsum quipped habitaculum iam immortalis carnis suae in caelo collocavit, quod sibi ipse in matris virginis utero fabricavit." In Hill, Sermo Casinensis 2.27 is titled "Sermon 265B" in Hill, *Sermons* VII, 249-51.

[143] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.2 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 249. "Mirum sane quibusdam videtur, quod dominus in evangelio ait, *nemo ascendit in caelum, nisi qui descendit de caelo, Filius hominis qui est caelo.* Quemadmodum dicitur filius hominis, inquiunt, descendisse de caelo, cum hic assumptus sit invirginis utero?"

67

Augustine offers several lines of argument to prove his case, the peak of which is a

passage that mixes metaphor, bejeweling, antithesis and paradox into a remarkable

rhetorical flourish:

> But God *so loved* the human race, *that he gave his only-begotten Son for
> the life of the world* (Jn 3:16; 6:51). Unless the Father, you see, had
> handed over life, we would not have had life; and unless life itself had
> died, death would not have been slain. It is the Lord Christ himself, of
> course, that is life, about whom John the evangelist says, *This is the true
> God and eternal life* (1 Jn 5:20). It was he himself that through the prophet
> had also threatened death with death, saying, *I will be your death, O
> death; I, hell, will be your sting* (Hos 13:14). As though to say, "I will slay
> you by dying, I will swallow you up, I will take all your power away from
> you, I will rescue the captives you have held. You wanted to hold me,
> though innocent; it is just that you should lose those you had the power to
> hold."[144]

Augustine then ends, quite abruptly, with the barest of recaps.

> And so on the fortieth day, that is today, the Lord Jesus ascended into
> heaven, while his disciples beheld him and marveled. In fact, while they
> were standing around, and talking together, a cloud suddenly caught him
> up, and he was taken away from them into heaven.[145]

When I first read this sermon, I thought the ending was so abrupt that perhaps the

true ending had been lost over the centuries. Perhaps it had never been copied down by

Augustine's stenographers or had been edited out by a medieval copyist's mistake. But as

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[144] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.4 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 250. "Sic autem deus *dilexit* humanum genus, *ut Filium suum unigenitum daret pro saeculi vita*. Nisi enim traderet Pater vitam, nos non haberemus vitam; et nisi ipsa vita moreretur, mors non occideretur. Ipse quippe dominus Christus est vita, de quo Johannes evangelista ait: *hic est verus deus, et vita aeterna*. Ipse namquam etiam per prophetam morti mortem comminatus ait: *ero mors tua, o mors; ero morsus tuus, inferne*. Quasi diceret: Ego te moriendo occidam, ego te consumam, ego tibi omnem potestatem auferam, ego captivos quos tenuisti eruam. Innoxium me tenere voluisti: justum est ut perdas quos tenere voluisti."

[145] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.5 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 251. "Quadragesima itaque die, hoc est hodie, dominus Jesus in caelum ascendit, discipulis contemplantibus et admirantibus: ipsis quippe constantibus et confabulantibus subis nubs suscepit eum, et ablatus est ab eis in caelum."

68

I pondered it further, it struck me that Augustine ends where he began: with the biblical

passage that would have been read immediately before he sat on his cathedra to preach.

That passage, I contend, was Acts 1:3-9:

> [3]After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many
> convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of
> forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. [4]On one occasion, while
> he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave
> Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard
> me speak about. [5]For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will
> be baptized with the Holy Spirit." [6]Then they gathered around him and
> asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to
> Israel?" [7]He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the
> Father has set by his own authority. [8]But you will receive power when the
> Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and
> in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." [9]After he said this,
> he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their
> sight.[146]

Note first how the final line of Augustine's sermon is a summary of the last three verses

of the passage, and especially of the last verse, which describes Jesus' ascension.

Likewise, the opening line of his sermon is a summary of the first three verses: "After our

Lord Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, he wished to give the most certain and

trustworthy possible proof that he had risen again in the same body, in which he had hung

on the cross; and so he spent forty days with his disciples, going in and coming out,

eating and drinking."

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[146] *Actus Apostolorum* 1.3-9 in *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, 5th ed., ed. Robert Weber and Roger Gryson
(Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 1698; translation New International Version. "quibus et
praebuit se ipsum vivum post passionem suam in multis argumentis per dies quadraginta apparens eis et
loquens de regno Dei [4]et convescens praecepit eis ab Heirosolymis ne discederent sed expectarent
promissionem Patris quam audistis per os meum [5]quia Johannes quidem baptizavit aqua vos autem
baptizabimini Spiritu Sancto non post multos hos dies [6]igitur qui convenerant interrogabant eum dicentes
Domine si in tempore hoc restitues regnum Israhel [7]dixit autem eis non est vestrum nosse tempora vel
momenta quae Pater posuit in sua potestate [8]sed accipietis virtutem supervenientis Spiritus Sancti in vos et
eritis mihi testes in Hierusalem et in amni Judaea et Samaria et usque ad ultimum terrae [9]et cum haec
dixisset videntibus illis elevatus est et nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum."

I take pains to point out this structure of Augustine's sermon because, as Van der Meer stated, the way an orator began and ended his speech was of the highest importance in late antiquity. Augustine here has rejected the accepted classical models of his day in favor of using scripture as his beginning and end, as his Alpha and Omega. This is significant. And the reasons for it go to the heart of Augustine's development of a "redeemed rhetoric."

First, it must be acknowledged that Augustine was speaking in decidely more intimate circumstances than the model orators of antiquity. He addressed essentially the same crowd at least once a week, and in closer settings than are common in either antique forums or even in modern churches.[147] At some point, this intimacy would have made it unnecessary for Augustine to establish ethos at the start of each sermon. In a similar way, prerorations may not have been necessary in every sermon, as the example of Augustine's own life—quite visible in the tight confines of Hippo's Christian quarter— would have added weight to Augustine's messages. So it is natural, to some degree, that Augustine would truncate the beginnings and endings of his sermons.

Second, melding the sermon into the rest of the liturgy was, for Augustine, a way to invite his listeners to participate in the sermon, rather than to watch it like a show in the theater. This new structure reinforced changes Augustine also made in his style—as we will see in the next chapter. The combination of structural and stylistic changes rendered Augustine's sermons more direct and accessible to a mass audience than second sophistic rhetoric, including Augustine's earleist sermons, was ever designed to be.

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[147] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 248. He notes that since the congregation stood during the sermon, while Augustine sat on a cathedra, Augustine's fce would have been at eye level for his listeners, and would have been no mroe than five yeards' away.

Nevertheless, neither of these factors explains why Augustine replaced the exordium and peroration with the daily scripture; to do that, we must turn to Augustine's theology and to his semiotics. Augustine's habit of beginning and ending sermons with the words of God reflects his belief that Christ is the *Verbum Dei*, holiness embodied in words, wisdom incarnated in flesh. The Incarnation, in Augustine's view, was the only thing that allowed the inherent limits of human language to communicate with reliability and stability the eternal truths of God.

Augustine came to embrace this role of the Incarnation as an answer to to the problems created by his semiotics, which anticipated many aspects of twentieth century poststructuralism. Under this school of thought, a word has meaning only in reference to other words. Language is a self-referential network, in which meaning is sought in the ever-moving play between a word and the words it signifies. Meaning, and therefore truth, is always elusive because a self-referential network never reaches outside itself to eternal concepts that lie beyond language. Either such concepts are indescribable in human words, or else they are, in fact, created by language. This is even true of the concept of self, making self-knowledge problematic if not impossible. Poststructuralism stands in stark contrast to the classical view of language, in which it was believed that words were self-evident from the objects to which they referred and that they corresponded to those objects unproblematically.[148] Augustine viewed the meanings imparted to words as socially constructed and, therefore, always changing. He saw that human experience is preceded by speech and is therefore defined by it. He agreed that

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[148] Troup, 96-108; Frances Young, "Augustine's Hermeneutics and Postmodern Criticism," *Interpretation* 58 (January 2004), 44-45.

71

uncertain language undermines the human ability to determine truth or even to define oneself.

While Augustine outlines much of his semiotics in *DDC* and *De magistro*, we get perhaps the best view of Augustine's thoughts in a passage from the *Confessions* "describing" the way he first learned language:

> When people called an object by some name, and while saying the word pointed to that thing, I watched and remembered that they used that sound when they wanted to indicate that thing. Their intention was clear, for they used bodily gestures, those natural words which are common to all races, such as facial expressions or glances of the eyes or movements of other parts of the body, or a tone of voice that suggested some particular attitude to things they sought and wished to hold on to, or rejected and shunned altogether. In this way I gradually built up a collection of words, observing them as they were used in their proper places in different sentences and hearing them frequently.[149]

Troup unpacks this account to show that Augustine holds to the key tenets of poststructural theories of language.

> The signs he observed were not self-evident from the things to which they referred. Neither were the words and gestures self-evident indicators of what the adults had in mind. Therefore, Augustine had to gather instances of signs in connection both to their referents and to the thought of the speaker within a particular social context … In other words, signs depend on other signs to establish their meaning. ... From this position, Augustine denies the possibility of demonstrable proofs about anything, or of reliable self-knowledge. The fact that language also changes over time renders all human knowledge unstable, obscure and ambiguous.[150]

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[149] Augustine *Confessiones* 1.8.13 (*PL* 32, col. 666-67); translation Maria Boulding, trans., *The Confessions*, vol. 1, pt. 1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 45-6. "... cum ipsi appellabant rem aliquam, et cum secundum eam vocem corpus ad aliquid movebant, videbam et tenebam hoc ab eis vocari rem illam, quod sonabant, cum eam vellent ostendere. Hoc autem eos velle ex motu corporis aperiebatur, tanquam verbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt vultu et nutu oculorum, caeterorumque membrorum actu, et sonitu vocis indicante affectionem animi, in petendis, habendis, rejiciendis, fugiendisve rebus. Ita verba in variis sententiis, locis suis posita, et crebro audita, quarum rerum signa essent, paulatim ..."

[150] Troup, 105-08.

In spite of these conclusions, Augustine still found it possible to carry on with the task of a Christian preacher—to speak the eternal truth of God in words—because of the Incarnation. The *Verbum Dei* provided a working answer to the problem of language. In Augustine's view, because God *is* eternal truth and yet also *spoke* this eternal truth in human words, the Word of God bridges the gap between truth and language. Therefore, when Augustine began and ended each sermon with a scripture passage, he was, quite literally, embedding his own words in the words of God, stabilizing human *verba* in the *Verbum Dei*. Like a pagan jewel in a Christian reliquary, like a classical column in the nave of a Christian basilica, Augustine removed his classical oratory from the classical structure and transplanted it into a Christian one. He did not keep the entire classical edifice, but put identifiable parts of it to a new use in his new structure. Thus Augustine fused Christian theology and classical culture, along with a late-antique aesthetic flare, to establish a new kind of rhetoric, which would influence teaching, learning and expression for the next millennium.

The style of Augustine's sermons has been studied and commented upon endlessly, both as a chapter in the evolution of the Latin language as well as for clues about Christian twists Augustine gave to classical rhetoric. I will apply my chronological analysis along both lines of study, examining Augustine's prose rhythm and then looking at the stylistic effect produced by his figures and forms of speech.

Prose Rhythm

In classical Latin, speakers and writers tried to embellish their works of prose not merely with rhetorical devices of sound, but of rhythm too. This is a somewhat foreign concept for English speakers, because only in poetry, particularly poetry of a pre-modern sort, are words made to fit a strict meter. In addition, English speakers achieve rhythm—whether in poetry or prose—by relying on the accented, or strong, syllables of each word. But a Latin speaker like Cicero worked into his speeches a rhythmical meter that was non-accentual. He did this because speakers of Latin in Cicero's day pronounced some syllables by holding the sound for about twice as long as they did short syllables. They then tried to form their words into recognizable patterns of short and long syllables—not long and short vowels, as English-speakers use the terms, but literally longer-pronounced and shorter-pronounced sounds. Classical Latin speakers particularly strove to end each sentence with recognizable patterns of short and long syllables, called *clausulae*.[151]

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[151] Mary Josephine Brennan, *A Study of the Clausulae in the Sermons of St. Augustine* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 27; Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, 157.

Four centuries later, in Augustine's day, Latin was in transition. Highly polished speakers still tried to end their sentences with key metrical patterns, but many—especially in Augustine's North Africa—also sought to end sentences in a certain accentual pattern.[152] The twentieth century saw large amounts of scholarship devoted to the sentence endings of Latin speakers and writers. They sought as their primary goal an understanding of how Latin developed from a language of purely metrical *clausulae* in Cicero's day to one of purely accentual *clausulae* in the Middle Ages.

That broad trend is beyond the scope of this study. However, I must consider the *clausulae* of Augustine's sermons because Augustine himself, in *DDC,* claimed to end his sentences with rhythmical phrases. Even though, in the midst of a defense of the lack of prose rhythm in the Latin translations of the biblical authors, Augustine calls rhythmical *clausulae* "claptraps"[153] he goes on to say this: "while I do not neglect these concluding rhythms in my own speaking, as far as I consider can be decently done, still what gives me more pleasure in our authors is that I find them there so very infrequently."[154] This does not appear to be a recommendation to Christian pastors to fill their sermons with rhythmical *clausulae*. But it is a statement that suggests Augustine did, quite consciously, display his rhetorical polish—even with methods that he

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[152] Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 186.

[153] *DDC* 4.20.41 (*PL* 34, col. 108-09); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 225. "plausibilia."

[154] Ibid. "… sicut in meo eloquio, quantum modeste fieri arbitror, non praetermitto istos numeros clausularum; ita in auctoribus nostris hoc mihi plus placet, quod ibi eos rarissime invenio."

75

considered to be rather arbitrary conventions of his day.[155] Therefore, we will see how much attention Augustine did, in fact, pay to this stylistic device in his sermons.

The jumping off points for my analysis are the two major studies of prose rhythm in Augustine's sermons. The first, written in 1947 by Mary Josephine Brennan, examined the *clausulae* in 97 of Augustine's sermons, checking for the frequency of metrical and accentual patterns before the ending of independent clauses and sentences. Brennan then compared the results with similar studies of other antique authors.[156] The second, written in 1991 by Steven Oberhelman, counted the rhythmical endings at the end of independent clauses and sentences from nine of Augustine's sermons—all based on Psalm texts. Oberhelman then compared the results to statistical averages derived from non-metrical and non-accentual Latin prose, to see if Augustine's rhythm is more prevalent than that achieved by Latin writers who were paying no attention to accent or meter. Oberhelman's approach tries to control for the frequent cadences Latin produced, even when an author or speaker was not trying to do so.

I will summarize the findings of Brennan and Oberhelman, and then supplement their analysis by looking at Augustine's early sermons. Neither Brennan nor Oberhelman analyzed any of the sermons that I have identified as confidently falling within the time period 391-396. Brennan thought she had included some sermons from this early period, but the ones she did use—such as Sermons 221, 229I and 346B—have since been dated

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[155] For further evidence that Augustine regarded prose rhythm as an arbitrary convention, see his dialogue on meter and rhythm, finished in 391: *De musica* 2.1.1 (*PL* 32, col. 1099). "Itaque verbi gratia cum dixeris, *cano,* vel in versu forte posueris, ita ut vel tu pronuntians producas hujus verbi syllabam primam, vel in versu eo loco ponas, ubi esse productam oportebat; reprehendet grammaticus, custos ille videlicet historiae, nihil aliud asserens cur hunc corripi oporteat, nisi quod hi qui ante nos fuerunt, et quorum libri exstant tractanturque a grammaticis, ea correpta, non producta usi fuerint. Quare hic quidquid valet, auctoritas valet."

[156] Brennan, 29.

76

to later years. Some sermons she analyzed might fall within this period, but there is no consensus among scholars. For example, she included sermons 63A and 260A in her study, which scholars date somewhere between 393 and 405. Because of that wide range, I have excluded such sermons from my study. My main goal is to see if Augustine's use of prose rhythm changed over the first five years of his preaching. Therefore, I analyzed the *clausulae* in Sermon 216, preached in 391, and compared the results against the *clausulae* of Sermon 265B, preached in either 396 or 397. This approach has potential weaknesses, since it includes too few sermons to trace any evolution in Augustine's prose rhythm. Nevertheless, the prose rhythm of these two sermons is so similar, and is fairly consistent with the findings of Brennan and Oberhelman, that they provide suggestive evidence of Augustine's early rhetorical practice.

Because Latin words are made of long and short syllables, a certain amount of rhythmical endings will be produced even when an author or speaker is not using rhythm deliberately. Therefore, Oberhelman established a test to determine if a text is intentionally metrical or not: it must have a frequency of four standard metrical *clausulae* patterns greater than 56 percent. Entirely non-metrical texts will have a frequency of metrical *clausulae* in the 30-40 percent range. These four standard patterns are the ditrochee (long-short, long-short), the cretic trochee (**long**-short-**long**, **long**-short), the dicretic (**long**-short-**long**, **long**-short-**long**) and the cretic tribrach (**long**-short-**long**, short-short-short). Cicero's works showed a 62 percent frequency of these patterns. Using this test, in Sermon 216, I found these four standard *clausulae* at a frequency of 39 percent. In Sermon 265B, the frequency was virtually identical at 40 percent. Brennan found a frequency of 35 percent in the sermons she studied. And Oberhelman found a frequency

77

of 32 percent in Augustine's sermons on the Psalms. Therefore, my study, as well as Brennan's and Oberhelman's, all agree that Augustine did not use metrical rhythms in his sermons.

For accentual rhythms, Oberhelman determined that at least 60 percent of the endings of independent clauses and sentences will have one of the three main accentual *clausulae*. But for scholars wanting to be absolutely sure an author intended to make his text accentual, Oberhelman established a threshold of at least 75 percent of *clausulae* with one of the three main accentual rhythms. The three standard accentual clausulae are stress patterns called *cursus planus* (**strong**-weak-weak-**strong**-weak), the *cursus tardus* (**strong**-weak-weak-**strong**-weak-weak), and the *cursus velox* (**strong**-weak-weak-weak-weak-**strong**-weak).[157] The two sermons I analyzed each had a frequency of these patterns of 68 percent, which suggests they are accentual. Brennan, however, found a frequency of 59.5 percent in the sermons she studied. And Oberhelman found a frequency of 57 percent. Their sets of results both fall below the 60 percent threshold established by Oberhelman.

Because the frequency of accentual *clausulae* in Sermons 216 and 265B exceeded 60 percent but fell below Oberhelman's higher threshold of 75 percent, I conducted a second test Oberhelman created to identify accentual prose. This test involved comparing the prevalence of *cursus planus* and *cursus tardus* against the occurrence of four less common pattersn of accents. One of these less common forms is the *cursus trispondaicus* (**strong**-weak-weak-weak-**strong**-weak). The other three Oberhelman groups as miscellaneous: *cursus ditrochaicus* (**strong**-weak-**strong**-weak), *cursus medius* (**strong**-

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[157] Brennan, 62.

weak-**strong**-weak-weak) and the *cursus dispondeus dactylicus* (**strong**-weak-weak-weak-**strong**-weak).[158] Oberhelman found that non-accentual Latin prose, including Cicero's, tended to have a high percentage of *cursus planus* (higher than 30 percent), a low percentage of *cursus tardus* (12-14 percent), a high percentage of *cursus trispondaicus* (20-24 percent) and a high percentage of the three miscellaneous forms, grouped together (22-29 percent).[159] In this test, accentual prose should display a pattern that is markedly *unlike* the one just described.
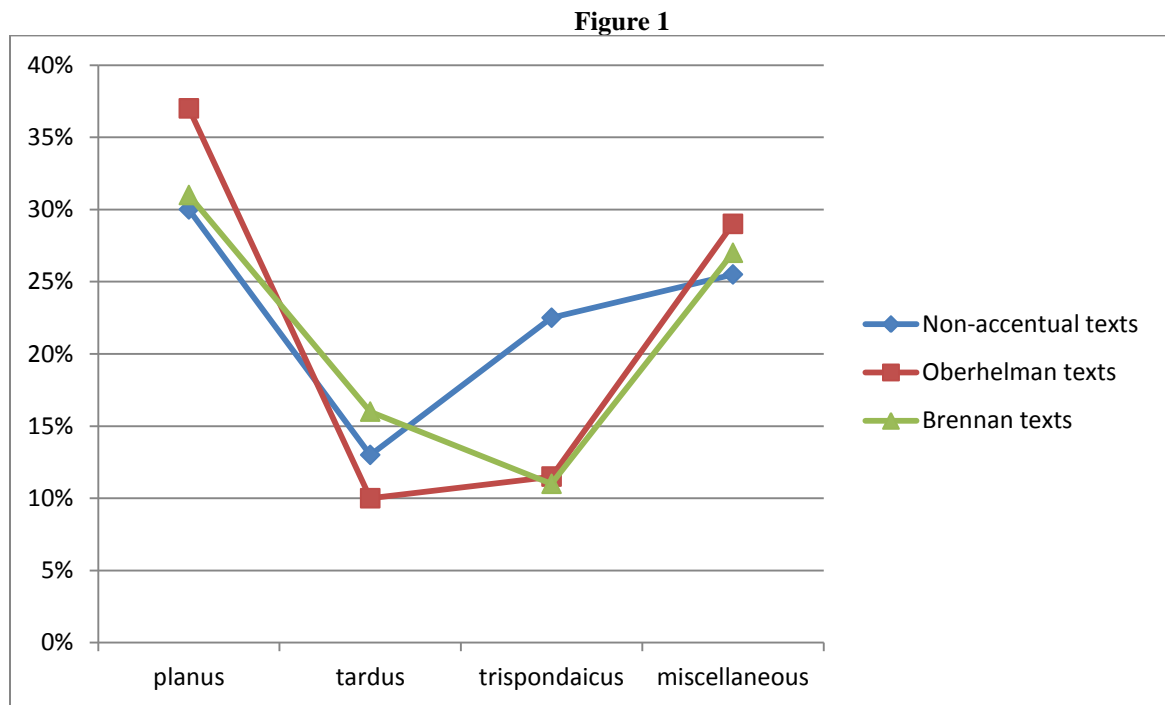
Figure 1

As Figure 1 shows, the sermons analyzed by Brennan and Oberhelman conform to the non-accentual pattern on three out of four points, but neither set of sermons has the

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[158] Brennan, 62.

[159] Oberhelman, 15.

frequency of *cursus trispondaicus* that Oberhelman found characteristic of truly non-accentual prose. Oberhelman's Psalm sermons have percentages of *planus*, *tardus*, *trispondaicus* and the miscellaneous groups as follows: 37 percent, 10 percent, 11.5 percent and 29 percent. Brennan's sermons display percentages of the four *clausulae* of 31 percent, 16 percent, 11 percent and 27 percent. The later sermons of Augustine in these analyses would appear, therefore, to be non-accentual—albeit with more characteristics of accentual prose than Cicero would have used.

The two sermons I analyzed bear little similarity to the non-accentual pattern described by Oberhelman, as shown by Figure 2. Sermon 216, which I think is Augustine's earliest, has percentages of *planus*, *tardus*, *trispondaicus* and the miscellaneous groups as follows: 27 percent, 19 percent, 10 percent and 17 percent. The percentages of *planus*, *tardus*, *trispondaicus* and the miscellaneous groups in 265B are as follows: 28 percent, 16 percent, 12 percent and 16 percent. These results suggest that these sermons are accentual. Therefore, I conclude that Augustine consciously made his early sermons—represented in my study by Sermons 216 and 265B—accentual, but in his later sermons—represented by Brennan's study and, especially, Oberhelman's analysis—he neglected accentual rhythm.[160]

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[160] Oberhelman tries to cinch his point by noting that Augustine's sermons not only lack the rhythmical *clausulae* of *DDC*, but are even less rhythmical than Augustine's dictated commentaries on the Psalms. These *Enarrations*, as Erasmus of Rotterdam would later label them, are decidedly drier and devoid of other rhetorical devices. But even they have higher rates of rhythmical *clausulae* than do Augustine's later sermons: 70 percent of sentences end with one of three main accentual patterns, and 51 percent end with one of the four main metrical patterns.

Figure 2
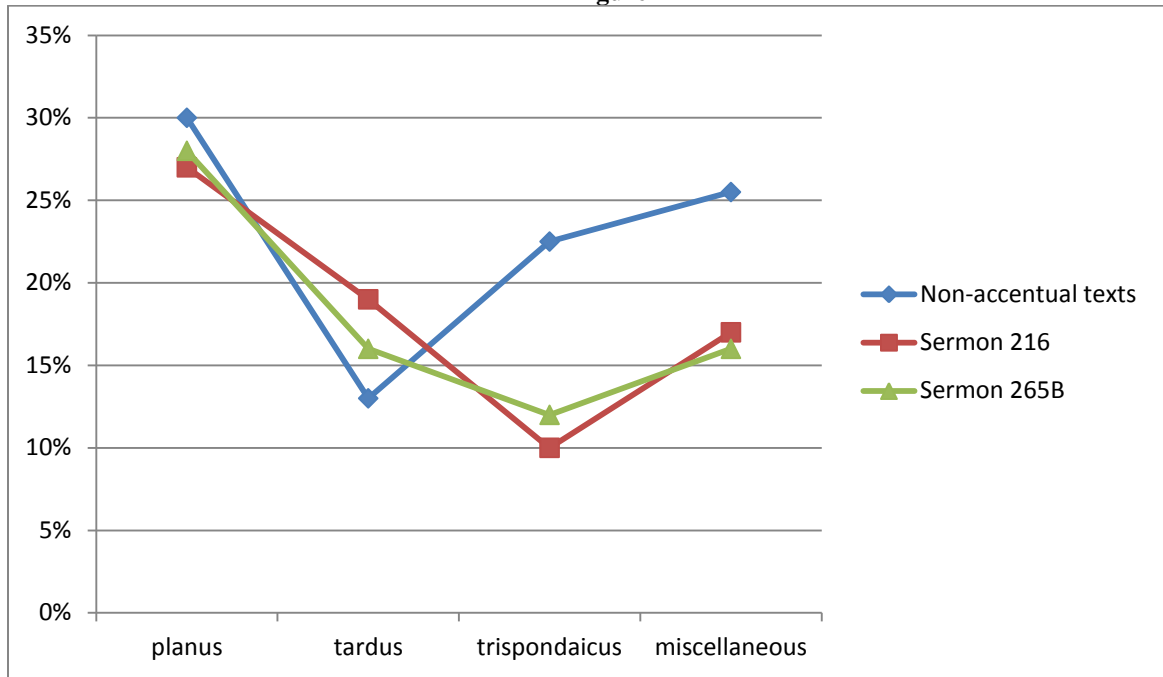
Why Augustine made this change from accentual to non-accentual prose is outside the chronological scope of my study, but I will offer at least a partial explanation. When in roughly 394 Augustine wrote his song against the Donatists, *Psalmus Contra Partem Donati*, he deliberately wrote it in non-metrical verse. This acrostic song was designed to instruct "the very simplest people" (*ipsius humillimi vulgi*) Augustine said later in his *Retractationes*. He wanted to use the simplest, most understandable words, without worrying whether or not they fit a rhythmical pattern: "I did not want to do this in some other song-form lest the requirements of meter would force some words on me that were less well known to the general public."[161] As Augustine consciously adapted his sermonic rhetoric to instruct and please a mass audience, it is quite likely he made the same

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[161] *Retractationes* 1.20 (*PL* 32, col. 617); translation Ramsey, *Revisions*, 86. "Ideo autem non aliquo carminis genere id fieri volui, ne me necessitas metrica ad aliqua verba quae vulgo minus sunt usitata compelleret."

81

decision to jettison prose rhythm. My analysis, however, suggests that he did so only after he had been bishop for a few years.

Augustine's eventual neglect of both metrical and accentual rhythm stands in marked contrast to *DDC* Book 4, which Oberhelman concludes is the most rhythmical of all Augustine's works, even slightly more so than Augustine's flaunting display of pagan learning and rhetoric in *De civitate dei*. Nearly 82 percent of all sentences in Book 4 of *DDC* end with one of the three main accentual rhythms. And only 0.8 percent of sentence endings have no accentual rhythm. In addition, 74 percent of Augustine's sentences end with one of the four standard metrical rhythms. The reasons for this difference, even at the end of Augustine's life, hinge on practice and purpose. Practically, Augustine delivered sermon texts extemporaneously, as Deferrari's research has shown, and never went back to edit them. If he had, Oberhelman argues, he likely would have followed the example of Ambrose, where an unedited sermon shows neglect of accentual and metrical rhythms, whereas redacted versions of Ambrose's sermons have been altered to include rhythmical *clausulae*.[162] That's because a written text, whether a sermon of Ambrose or treatise of Augustine, was intended for a different kind of audience—higher class, more likely to be classically educated—than a preached sermon, which as we discussed before, functioned within the lingering oral culture of late antiquity. As Oberhelman wrote:

> The style of [Ambrose's unedited sermons] replicates the style of Jerome's
> and Augustine's sermons in all broad particulars. Intended to engage the
> audience in a dialogue with the speaker, these sermons breathe with
> spontaneity and improvisation and contain a very free, loose structure. The
> tone is paternal and familiar. The vocabulary, though simple, does not
> approximate vulgar Latin; as Mohrmann has noted, the impression
> afforded by the diction is of a cultivated man speaking frankly and clearly.

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[162] Oberhelman, 101-09.

Formal rules of rhetoric are avoided, and certain elements of an oral homiletic style present to the audience the essential truths under discussion.[163]

Augustine's non-metrical and increasingly non-accentual sermons in large part belie his statement in *DDC* that he does not neglect rhythmical *clausulae*. Whether Augustine intended that comment to apply more to written works than to extemporaneous speeches is not entirely clear; if he did, then the accentual nature of *DDC* and *De civitate dei* vindicate his claim. But his sermons ceased being rhythmical, most likely as part of his conscious adaption of his rhetorical style to reach mass audiences.

Figures of Speech

Augustine used the full range of figures of speech and used them throughout his career. That much is clear from the catalogue of rhetorical devices produced by M. I. Barry, using 363 of Augustine's sermons. She counted 34,175 instances of a figure of speech, or an average of 94 per sermon.[164] Barry, who judged Augustine's Latin against the classical standards of Cicero and the like, viewed his career stats a bit dimly. "His style is vigorous and attractive," she granted, "but often lacks simplicity, purity and elegance."[165] Other scholars, such as Erich Auerbach, have reached a similar conclusion, noting that Augustine's sermons did not achieve the refined sublimity of the best classical

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[163] Oberhelman, 101.

[164] Mary Inviolata Barry, *St. Augustine, the Orator: A Study of the Rhetorical Qualities of St. Augustine's Sermones ad Populum*, vol. 6 of *Patristic Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1924).

[165] Barry, 258.

Latin, but instead tended toward a dramatic "humilitas."[166] My analysis will show how Augustine transitioned from one to the other in his early years.

Figures of sound account for 22 percent of all figures of speech in Augustine's sermons, according to Barry's analysis. Augustine's favorites were assonance, paronomasia and polyptoton. Barry described Augustine's use of sound as lavish and even, by strict classical standards, abusive: "Ingenious play upon words both from the same and different roots succeed each other through long passages. … Augustine's abuse of these figures is one of his defects and shows a tendency to indulge in verbal trickery when treating profound subjects."[167] But Augustine did not live in the classical age and, by the showy standards of the second sophistic, Augustine's tastes for "verbal trickery" were hardly unusual.

Figures of dramatic vivacity make up 21 percent of all figures in Augustine's sermons. Augustine used lots of asyndeton. But even more, he relied on rhetorical questions as the main device in this category, ranking as the second most common of all.

Parallelism, the single most common figure of all, accounts for 15 percent of Augustine's devices.

Figures of repetition count for 19 percent of all Augustine's devices. The main ones here are antistrophe and epanaphora.

Figures of amplification, such as arsis and thesis, constituted 7 percent of Augustine's devices. And a couple others worth noting are dialogue and metaphor, which

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[166] Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language & Its Public in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon, 1965), 38-41.

[167] Barry, 254-55.

84

we will discuss in the rest of the chapter. Each made up about 4 percent of Augustine's figures of speech.

Some scholars have concluded that, while Augustine shifts his style from sermon to sermon, according to changing circumstances, he displays no discernible evolution over time.[168] The main argument against a chronological development of style is that one can find late sermons by Augustine that are highly rhetorical—especially ones delivered to congregations in Carthage, generally better educated than those in Hippo. Pellegrino argued:

> What we are dealing with here is, in the final analysis, the capacity for adaptation to audience and circumstances that is the gift of every real orator. I offer as confirmation of this claim the fact that in Carthage, where Augustine knows his audience to include people of more refined taste, he bestows greater pains on his style. In any case, the difference in language and style that are found in the sermons cannot be explained as a development in the course of time.[169]

But I find that last statement from Pellegrino not to explain entirely the evidence gleaned from Augustine's earliest sermons, which suggests a shift over time in his style, away from a subtle and sublime style to a participatory and popular presentation.

Other scholars have identified a shifting style over time in Augustine's sermons. Oberhelman, contrasting Augustine's sermons from 391 with his later pieces, reaches this conclusion:

> Augustine's first sermons were testimony to the lingering legacy of his classical training, as he declaimed in the long periodic prose style typical

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[168] Barry, 254.

[169] Pellegrino, 113. He refers on this point to Kunzelman, Mohrmann and Lambot.

85

of his Cassiciacum dialogues. … These sermons (214 and 216) are saturated with numerous obscure biblical references which would have escaped the audience's comprehension, but which had as their purpose the ostentatious display of Augustine's biblical learning …. Augustine abandoned this style after he had reevaluated the role of rhetoric in Christian teaching and had fixed upon the most effective methods of preaching.[170]

Hill, in an introductory note to his translation of Augustine's sermons, contends that Augustine consciously moved away from the grand oratorical style that can be found in the sermons of Ambrose and Leo the Great. "Augustine, a professional rhetorician, though perfectly capable of such a style, and employing it to some extent in his earliest sermons as a priest before he became a bishop, afterward deliberately chose not to use it," Hill wrote. "As a public speaker he was acutely conscious of his audience and of their reactions, and he very early on decided that he must speak to them in their own style of language."[171]

Perhaps the theses of Oberhelman and Hill could be proven definitively, by updating Barry's analysis, cataloguing each figure of speech in Augustine's sermons and then comparing the results to see if he shifts from favoring some to favoring others as he ages. However, that is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, I will consider more the general effects that Augustine produced with his rhetorical ornaments to see how those effects changed over time. In doing so, I hope to be able to show when and why Augustine's rhetoric shifted.

There are two closely related changes that I will point out in the sermons of Augustine's early years. First, the character of Augustine's rhetorical ornaments shift

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[170] Oberhelman, 110-11.

[171] Hill, "Translator's Note," *Sermons* I, 164.

from being subtle, even poetic, to being more direct and homespun. Second, Augustine's earliest sermons are designed as performances before a passive crowd, but they later become participatory dramas, in which Augustine's oratorical performance is a dialogue with the congregation. Throughout these changes, however, Augustine the preacher always remains Augustine the performer, always displaying his rhetorical skills in decidedly theatrical ways. Augustine always put on a good show; that never changed. But the kinds of shows he staged did.

Sermons 214, 216 and 353: Sermon as Showpiece

Even cursory readers of Augustine's first two sermons will notice that these are well-prepared, highly polished speeches—with the polish aimed for the benefit of a high-level audience. The first sentence alone of Sermon 214—long, complex, indirect and written in a kind of royal "we"—shows that Augustine meant to impress the best in his audience. Hill, in his translation, has to divide the sentence into two and turn "we" into "I" to make it comprehensible to modern English speakers. I have translated the Latin more literally to read, "In accordance with our young age and early training, in accordance with a new recruit undertaking this duty in affectionate love for you, we who are now assisting at the ministry of the altar, which you are about the approach, shall not cheat you out of the ministry of a sermon which we owe you."[172] Augustine attempts here to appear humble and intimate with the congregation—and his sentiments could very well have be genuine. But his language comes off stilted, especially when compared to

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[172] *Sermo* 214.1 (*PL* 38, col. 1065); translation is my own. "Pro modulo aetatis rudimentorumque nostrorum, pro tirocinio suscepti muneris atque in vos dilectionis affect, qui jam ministrants altari, quo accessuri estis, assistimus, nec ministerio sermonis vos fraudare debemus."

Augustine's later sermons, and it may have made his at ethos seem affected to his audience.

Augustine delivered this sermon in the same year that Christianity was made the mandatory religion of the Roman Empire, leading people from all levels of society to flood into the church. Many of these new attendees would have been highly educated elites, such as the rhetorician Victorinus mentioned by Augustine in the *Confessions*.[173] But many—particularly in the provincial city of Hippo—would not have been. In Sermon 214, Augustine frequently shoots over the heads of his unlearned listeners. He makes an oblique reference to Lucretius in a rather philosophical argument against "the formless matter of things" being co-eternal with God.[174] Also, the former writer of philosophical dialogues argued against unnamed—and to much of his audience, unknown—heresies, such as those who claimed that God cannot be almighty because he is unable to change or die:

> … almighty God cannot die, cannot change, cannot be deceived or mistaken, cannot be miserable, cannot be defeated. Perish the thought that the Almighty should be able to do these and suchlike things. And so it is that truth not only shows he is almighty because he cannot do these things, but also requires anyone who can do them not to be almighty. God, you see, is willingly whatever he is; so he is willingly eternal and unchangeable and truthful and blessed and undefeatable. So if he can be what he does not wish, he is not almighty; but he is almighty, which is why he is capable of whatever he wishes. And therefore what he does not will he cannot be, the reason he is called almighty being that he is capable of whatever he wishes.[175]

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[173] *Confessiones* 8.2.3-5 (*PL* 32, col. 749-51); translation Boulding, 186-89.

[174] Lucretius *De rerum natura* 1:483-550ff, cited in Muldowney, 132.

[175] *Sermo* 214.4 (*PL* 38, col. 1068); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 152-53. "… Deus omnipotens non potest mori, non potest mutari, non potest falli, non potest miser fieri, non potest vinci. Haec atque hujusmodi absit ut possit omnipotens. Ac per hoc non solum ostendit veritas omnipotentem esse, quod ista non possit; sed etiam cogit veritas omnipotentem non esse, qui heac posit. Volens enim est Deus quidquid est; aeternus ergo, et incommutabilis, et verax, et beatus, et insuperabilis volens est. Si ergo potest esse non vult,

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This complex interlockinig of willing, being and can-being is something that Augustine largely abandoned in his later sermons. But here in 214, Augustine appears not to have yet embraced the maxim he would later give in *DDC*: that the best kind of eloquence "moves and delights even the unlearned."

Sermon 216 is another showpiece. Interlocking word play, bejeweling, and metaphors are constant throughout. Augustine amps up his bejeweling to such a degree, one wonders if he is trying to prove just how well he knows the scriptures. Augustine had spent three months studying the scriptures before beginning his preaching, and it shows in Psalm-laden passages like this one:

> Grow, become young people, get old in the faith and the maturity of your powers, not in the break-up of your bodies, *in a fruitful old age* (Ps 92:14), and thus peacefully proclaim the works of the Lord, as he, *being mighty, has done great things for you* (Lk 1:49), because *great is his name, and his wisdom has no limits* (Ps 147:5). Seek life; run to him who is *the fountain of life* (Ps 36:9); and then, dispelling the darkness of your reeking, smoking lusts, *you will see light in the light* (Ps 36:9) of his only-begotten Son and your most kindly redeemer, who also enlightens you with his brilliance. If you are seeking salvation, hope in him who *saves those who hope in him* (Ps 17:7). If you are dead set on drunkenness and delights, he will not even refuse you these; only come and worship and *fall down and weep before the one who made you* (Ps 95:6), and he will make you *drunk on the riches of his house, and you to drink from the torrent of his delights* (Ps 36:8).

> ut crescentes, juvenescentes, ac senescentes in fide ac maturitate virium, non corruptione membrorum, *in senecta uberi* (Ps 92:14), tranquilli annuntietis opera Domini, *qui fecit vobis magna, qui potens est* (Lk 1:49): quia *magnum nomen ejus, et sapientiae ejus non est numerus* (Ps 147:5). Vitam quaeritis currite ad eum qui est *fons vitae* (Ps 36:9): et fugatis tenebris fumosarum cupiditatum vestrarum, *videbitis lumen in lumine* (Ps 36:9) Unigeniti illius vestri atque clementissimi

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omnipotens non est: est autem omnipotens, ergo quidquid vult potest. Et ideo quod non vult, esse non potest; qui propterea dicitur omnipotens, quoniam quidquid vult potest."

89

Redemptoris, et fulgentissimi illuminatoris. Si salutem quaeritis, sperate in eum qui *salvos facit sperantes in se* (Ps 17:7). Si ebrietatem deliciasque sectamini, nec ipsas negabit. Tantum venite et adorate, *procidite et plorate ante eum qui fecit vos* (Ps 95:6): et inebriabit vos *ab ubertate domus suae, et torrente deliciarum suarum potabit vos* (Ps 36:8).[176]

As I noted before, late antiquity maintained many qualities of an oral culture, and memorization of scripture was surely far greater among Augustine's congregants than is common in a modern textual culture. Nevertheless, Augustine quotes the Psalms here like he might have quoted Vergil in his pre-Christian days, with such a patchwork of scriptural snippets that probably only a few hearers could have recognized all of them. For the rest of the audience, who again were *catechumens*, the biblical ring of the passage would have to suffice.

Augustine in Sermon 216 also swings from one metaphor to another. He speaks of the "auction and market of faith," then transitions to a farmer working either "damnable soil" or "fertile soil," and then to a poetic metaphor about smoke. The image of smoke is beautifully rendered using some of Augustine's favorite rhetorical devices: antithesis, as well as anaphora with the word "quibus" and antistrophe with the endings "ere." These devices would have produced a sound effect heard by all. But the metaphor itself seems likely to have been too subtle for many of Augustine's listeners:

> Here, after all, your days were *fading away like smoke* (Ps 102:3); for them, augmentation has meant diminution, growing in length has meant becoming fewer, rising up has meant vanishing away.

> Ibi enim deficiebant*, sicut fumus,* dies vestri (Ps 102:3): quibus augeri, minui; et quibus crescere, deficere; et quibus ascendere, vanescere fuit.[177]

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[176] *Sermo* 216.9.9 (*PL* 38, col. 1081-82); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 172-73.

[177] *Sermo* 216.4.4 (*PL* 38, col. 1078); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 169.

Of this metaphor, Hill notes, "He presses the smoke image very effectively; it billows up thickly at its source, but as it rises it thins out and fades away."[178] But Augustine leaves the metaphor unexplained and, I think for many, unappreciated.

Sermon 353 bears many similar marks as sermons 214 and 216, but also shows some of the features that Augustine made more prevalent in later sermons. The opening is a formal exordium and there is bejeweling throughout. But now Augustine tends to quote scripture in full sentences, and then repeats those references throughout the sermon, rather than race through a string of scriptural snippets. Metaphor is also present in Sermon 353, but instead of a poetic image left for only the most alert listeners to catch, Augustine develops an extended biblical metaphor (of the exodus and desert wandering of the Israelites), with audience-friendly explanations interspersed within it.

> The time past, you see, is quite enough for having, so to say, been slaves
> under the domination of the Egyptians, in the muddy works of sin.
> Already the Red Sea, namely, the baptism of Christ consecrated by his
> blood, has overthrown the real Pharaoh, destroyed the Egyptians; you need
> be in no dread of your past sins, as enemies pursuing from the rear. For the
> rest, give your thoughts to making your way through the desert of this life,
> and to reaching the promised land, the heavenly Jerusalem, the land of the
> living. Don't let your hearts, like inner taste buds, lose their sense of taste
> out of contempt for the word of God, like loathing for the manna; don't
> ever grumble about the nourishment coming from heaven out of a longing
> for Egyptian foods. Never commit fornication, as some of them did, and
> never tempt Christ as some of them tempted him. If in your thirst for the
> faith of the nations you should encounter some bitterness from those who
> oppose you, like that of the waters which Israel was unable to drink,
> imitate the patience of the Lord, so that those waters may turn sweet by
> your throwing in, as it were, the wood of the cross. If you should apply the
> same cure of the cross, by gazing on that serpent lifted up, like death

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[178] Hill, *Sermons* VI, 175n17.

91

conquered and led in triumph in the flesh of the Lord. If the Amalekite
adversary should attempt to block and hinder your journey, let him be
defeated by your doggedly persevering in stretching out your arms in yet
another indication of the cross.[179]

It is not clear when Augustine preached Sermon 353. Scholars have generally
suggested 391 to 396.[180] Whenever it was, from this point on, Augustine would no longer
stud his sermons with subtleties designed for the late-antique literati. Instead, he would
begin staging blockbuster spectacles—like this Exodus metaphor—that could be
appreciated by one and all.

Sermons 1, 12 and 50: Sermon as Stage Play

As we noted in the previous chapter, Augustine uses these three sermons to put the
heretical Manichees on trial. But Augustine does not merely follow the structure of
judicial argument, he actually recreates a trial scene on his raised platform. It is not too
much to describe these sermons as theatrical—a quality that Augustine would tone down
later but still trot out when necessary.[181] Auerbach noted that theatricality had become

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[179] *Sermo* 353.4.2 (*PL* 39, col. 1562); translation Hill, *Sermons* X, 154. "Sufficit enim praeteritum tempus luteis operibus peccatorum, tanquam Aegyptiorum dominationi servisse. Jam mare Rubrum, Baptisma scilicet Christi sanguine consecratum, verum dejecit Pharaonem, Aegyptios interemit: nihil de peccatis praeteritis tanquam de insequentibus a tergo hostibus formidetis. De caetero cogitate vitae hujus eremum permeare, et ad terram promissionis, supernam Jerusalem, terram viventium pervenire: ne verbi Dei contemptu tanquam mannae fastidio, corda vestra velut ora interiora desipiant; ne cibos concupiscentes Aegyptios de alimentis coelestibus murmuretis: ne fornicemini, sicut quidam illorum fornicati sunt; et ne tentetis Christum, sicut quidam illorum tentaverunt. Si vobis fidem Gentilium sitientibus amaritudo aliqua resistentium, velut aquarum illarum quas Israel non potuit bibere, occurrerit; imitata Domini patientia, velut injecto crucis ligno dulcescant. Si tentatio serpentina momorderit; conspecta illius exaltatione serpentis, tanquam mortis in carne Domini victae atque triumphatae, eodem crucis medicamento sanetur. Si adversarius Amalechita iter intercludere atque impedire conabitur, perseverantissima extensione brachiorum ejusdem crucis indicio superetur."

[180] Hill, *Sermons* X, 155n1.

[181] Auerbach, 30.

92

commonplace in Christian sermons even before Augustine, and he suggests that Augustine fell into this tradition. "At an early date the Christian sermon began to develop on the model of the diatribe, or moralistic declamation, in which the opinions of others are adduced in imaginary speeches to which the speaker replies, the whole thus forming a dialogue. There are numerous examples, some dating back to the earliest Christian period; characteristic is the *inquit* …."[182] As Auerbach also notes, moralistic declamation was taken straight from the rhetorical schools of antiquity. Students would frequently be asked to give an imaginary judicial dialogue, with all the figures of speech, vivid descriptions and other verbal trickery they could throw in.[183] These forms of speeches were no less showpieces than the refined sermons I considered at the beginning of the last section. Nevertheless, as much as Augustine is still showing off in these sermons, he is no longer shooting over the heads of his hearers, but is instead using language, ornaments and themes designed to connect with them. And that is a significant shift in the development of his homiletic style.

In Sermon 1, Augustine opens the trial with a vivid simile of the Manichees setting the book of Genesis and the gospel of John against each other like two bulls. He then launches into a kind of dialogue, using the telltale word "inquiunt:"

> Moses, they tell us, says *In the beginning God made heaven and earth,*
> and doesn't even mention the Son through whom all things were made;
> whereas John says *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with*
> *God and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All*

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[182] Ibid., 31.

[183] Quintilian 2.10.1-12; translation Russell I, 325-329.

93

things were made through him, and without him was made nothing (Jn 1:1-3).

Moyses enim dicit, inquiunt, *In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram,* nec nominat Filium, per quem facta sunt omnia: cum Joannes dicat, *In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil.*[184]

    Augustine, playing a dual part of narrator of the Manichee dialogue and debater against them, provides one possible answer, saying the word "beginning" in Genesis actually refers to the Son of God. He then brings out "witnesses ready to support me." Augustine puts Jesus himself on the stand, as it were, quoting him from John 5:46: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me too; for he wrote about me," and again from John 8:25, where in response to the Jews' question about who he was, Jesus said, "The beginning, because I am also speaking to you."[185] Later in the sermon Augustine returns his audience to the imaginary action by saying, "Supposing they say that *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* was not about the Word of God." Augustine tells his audience to grant this premise, before picking up the part of the Manichees again: "it is not the beginning that is the only Son of God, but the beginning of time that is to be understood in what is written, *In the beginning God made heaven and earth.*"[186] Then Augustine goes on to refute this argument as well.

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[184] *Sermo* 1.2.2 (*PL* 38, col. 24); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 169.

[185] *Sermo* 1.2.2 (*PL* 38, col. 24); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 170.

[186] *Sermo* 1.5.5 (*PL* 38, col. 250: translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 170. "Fortassis dicant, non de Verbo Dei dictum esse, *In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram.* Fac esse, non in principio, quod est unicus Filius Dei; sed in principio temporis dictum intelligatur quod scriptum est, *In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram.*"

94

In between these two debate scenes, Augustine inserts a grammarian's lesson. As we saw in the previous chapter, he parses scriptures to rebut the Manichees' argument that John's phrase "through him" and Moses' phrase "in the beginning," if they are both about Christ, are in conflict because they use different prepositions. Augustine, still in academic mode, ties off his rebuttal with a literary simile—artificial enough to betray his sophistic past[187]:

> … therefore all the divine writings are at peace and consistent with each other. It often happens, though, when we gaze at clouds passing across the night sky, that our sight is confused by their darkness and it seems to us that the stars, not the clouds, are hurrying across the firmament. Well, it is the same with these heretics: because they find no peace in the cloudy skies of their own errors, it seems to them rather that the divine scriptures are wrangling among themselves.[188]

There is, however, a difference between this picture of clouds and the puff of smoke in Sermon 216. In this case, Augustine abandons any attempt at sublime rhetoric and instead attaches a quick explanation to the metaphor, to make sure his audience gets it. Indeed, the first purpose of the cloud metaphor is to illustrate the lesson Augustine has given; it is only secondarily a rhetorical ornament. The smoke metaphor was the opposite: ornamental first, pedagogical second. It is a subtle difference, but one that is central to the "redeeming" reorientation that Augustine gave to rhetoric. As Augustine

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[187] Hill, *Sermons* I, 172n1.

[188] *Sermo* 1.4.4 (*PL* 38, col. 25); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 170-71. "Omnia divina scripta inter se pacata consistunt. Sed quaemodum solet accidere, ut quando transeuntes nubes per obscura noctis intuemur, earum caligine sic acies nostra turbetur, ut in contrarium nobis sidera currere videantur; sic isti haeretici, quia in sui erroris nubile pacem non inveniunt, videtur eis potius divina Scriptura rixari."

would later write of *eloquentia* in *DDC*: "But if what he says is not understood, it cannot also be heard with any pleasure."[189]

Sermon 12 is even more theatrical than Sermon 1, with Augustine giving the Manichees' dialogue not so woodenly, but with gusto. Listen to his opening "inquiunt:"

> It is written in Job," they say, "*Behold the angels came into the presence of God, and the devil in their midst. And God said to the devil, Where do you come from? And he answered and said, After going round the whole world I have come here* (Jb 1:6)." "This shows," they say, "that the devil not only saw God but also talked to him. But in the gospel it says *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (Mt 5:8). And again it says *I am the door, no one can come to the Father except through me* (Jn 10:7)." Then they go on to argue in this way: "So if only the pure in heart see God, how on earth was the devil with his filthiest and most impure of hearts able to see God? Or by what means does he manage to get through the door, that is to say, through Christ?" "The apostle too," they say, "confirms this with his support when he says that neither princes nor dominions nor powers know God."[190]

Throughout this sermon, which in the previous chapter we identified as a vituperation against the Manichees, Augustine intersperses his rebuttals and lessons for Christian living with repeated snippets of dialogue between "they" and "we." Here is one example:

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[189] *DDC* 4.26.57 (*PL* 34, col. 118); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 237. "Si autem non auditur intelligenter, nec libenter potest."

[190] *Sermo* 12.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 100); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 297. "Apud Job scriptum est, inquiunt, *Ecce venerunt Angeli in conspectum Dei, et diabolus in medio eorum. Et Deus ait diabolo: Unde venis? Qui respondens dixit: Circuiens totum orbem adveni huc.* Hic, inquiunt, demonstratur diabolum non solum vidisse Deum, sed etiam locutum esse cum eo. In Evangelio autem dicit, *Beati qui puro sunt corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt;* et iterum dicit, *Ego sum janua; nemo potest venire ad Patrem, nisi per me*. Deinde adjungunt ratiocinationem, dicentes: Si igitur hi soli qui sunt puro corde vident Deum, quonam modo sordidissimo et immundissimo corde diabolus potuit videre Deum? aut qualiter per januam, hoc est, per Christum ingreditur? Iterum Apostolus, inquiunt, testatur et confirmat, dicens quod neque Principes, neque Potestates, neque Virtutes Deum cognoverunt."

However long-windedly they go on asking how it was that the devil saw God, we answer: "The devil did not see God." They go on to say, "Then how did he talk to him?" Here, though, it isn't by me but by blind men that the blindness of their hearts must be shown up. After all, those who are blind in their bodily eyes can talk every day to people they cannot see. "Then how," they say, "did he come into his sight?" In the same way that a blind person comes into the sight of one who can see, without himself being able to see him.[191]

And here is another dialogue, in which Augustine counters the Manichees' view that Christ could not have had a human body, because they believed human flesh to be inherently evil:

But you who shudder at the chaste womb of the Virgin, choose, if you would be so kind, where the Lord is to take his body from. You say all bodies are of the substance of the race of darkness. So choose, as I said, where the Son of God ought to take his body from. Or have you lost the light wherewith to answer, since wherever you turn your eyes, they are met by darkness? "But mortal flesh," they say, "seems so impure."

Vos autem qui exhorrescitis casta virginis viscera, eligite, obsecro, unde Dominus corpus assumeret. Dicitis omne corpus gentis tenebrarum esse substantiam. Eligite ergo, ut dixi, unde corpus Filius Dei deberet assumere. An perdidistis respondendi lucem, quia tenebrae vobis quocumque oculos converteritis, occurrunt? Sed caro mortalis, inquiunt, videtur immundior.[192]

Augustine next pivots from "immundior" to "imfirmior," and from there unleashes the rhetorical climax I hinted at in the last chapter. I will quote it at length, in both

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[191] *Sermo* 12.3.3 (*PL* 38, col. 101); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 298-99. "Quantalibet enim loquacitate perquirant, quomodo viderit diabolus Deum; respondemus, Non vidit diabolus Deum. Dicent: Quomodo ergo cum eo locutus est? Hic vero non a nobis, sed a caecis hominibus convincenda est caecitas cordis ipsorum. Hi enim qui carnalibus oculis caeci sunt, quotidie loqui possunt cum his quos videre non possunt. Quomodo ergo venit, inquiunt, in conspectum ejus? Quomodo caecus in conspectum videntis, quem ipse non conspicit."

[192] *Sermo* 12.12.12 (*PL* 38, col. 106); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 304.

English and Latin, as it is the clearest example in these early sermons of Augustine using the grand style.

> If, however, they don't say "so impure" but "so weak," we agree entirely. And that's why Christ is our strength, because he wasn't changed by our weakness. Here I recognize the aptness of the prophet's words, *You will change them and they shall be changed; but you yourself are the same, and your years shall not fail* (Ps 102:26-27). Not only did the weakness of the flesh not change him for the worse, but by him it was changed for the better. That bodily sun up there, which they don't think is a body—so little do they understand what is meant by "body," they who pride themselves fallaciously on their spiritual arguments—that bodily sun, simply because it is a *heavenly* body, illuminates the earth without being darkened by it; dries up water without being moistened by it; melts ice without being cooled by it; bakes mud hard without being softened by it. And our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father through which all things were made, the power and wisdom of God, everywhere present, everywhere hidden, everywhere whole, nowhere shut in, reaching mightily from end to end and disposing all things sweetly—these unhappy men are afraid that he couldn't so take on being a man that he could quicken mortality without being made mortal by it, could sanctify the flesh without being polluted by it, could undo death without being bound by it, could change man into himself without being changed into man.

> Si autem non dicunt, Immundior; sed, Infirmior: consentimus plane; et ideo Christus est nostra firmitas, quia eum nostra non mutavit infirmitas. Hic agnosco prophetae illam vocem, *Mutabis ea, et mutabuntur; tu autem idem ipse es, et anni tui non deficient.* Non solum enim non eum mutavit in deterius infirmitas carnis, sed ab eo in melius ipsa mutata est. Sol iste corporeus, quem corpus non esse arbitrantur (usque adeo nec quid sit corpus, intelligunt, qui de spiritualibus disputationibus se fallaciter jactant): sol iste corporeus, quem corpus non esse arbitrantur (usque adeo nec quid sit corpus, intelligunt, qui de spiritualibus disputationibus se fallaciter jactant): sol ergo iste corporeus, tantum quia coeleste corpus est, illuminat terram, nec ab ea ipse obscuratur; siccat aquam, nec inde humectatur; solvit glaciem, nec inde frigescit; durat limum, nec inde mollescit. Et Dominus noster Jesus Christus Verbum Patris, per quod facta sunt omnia virtus et sapientia Dei, ubique praesens, ubique secretus, ubique totus, nusquam inclusus, pertendens a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponens omnia suaviter, timent infelices, ne non potuerit sic hominem assumere, ut vivificaret mortalia, nec ab eis mortificaretur; sanctificaret

98

carnem, nec inde pollueretur; dissolveret mortem, nec inde ligaretur; mutaret in se hominem, nec in hominem mutaretur?[193]

The remarkable thing about this passage is not the rhetorical devices, although they are there. There is anaphora with the repetition of the word "nec" four times, and then with "ubique" three times and a fourth line beginning with the opposite notion "nusquam." There is rhyme, first of "obscuratur" with "humectatur" and "frigescit" with "mollescit," and then at the climax, with the sound "etur" over and over. There is parallelism and, most in evidence, antithesis from start (immundior-imfirmior) to finish (mutaret-mutaretur), which by the way is also a ringing use of assonance. But the real power of this passage comes from its vividness, in the description of the sun's effects, and the pacing that builds and builds to the ending praise of Christ, which like a trumpeter holding a high note for an impossibly long time, suddenly cuts off—and lets the sound echo off the walls of the chamber for a few dramatic seconds.

This passage is a perfect demonstration of what Augustine recommended in *DDC*, when he introduced a similar passage by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6, saying, "It is in fact carried along by its own vehemence, and if it stumbles on some beauty of expression, it carries it along in virtue of its subject, rather than choosing it with a careful eye on appearances. It is sufficient, you see, for the subject which engages it that suitable words, rather than being picked by the dliberation of the tongue, should follow upon the ardor of the breast. After all, if a mighty man of valor should be armed with steel that has been gilded and set with gems, intent upon the battle he does indeed do what he does with those arms, not because they are valuable, but because they are arms. He is still himself,

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[193] *Sermo* 12.12.12 (*PL* 38, col. 106); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 304.

and supremely valiant, even when anger makes a weapon of whatever he breaks off."[194] It is clear from this passage in Sermon 12 that long before Augustine wrote *DDC*, he had mastered the grand style so favored by his showy contemporaries.

Sermon 50 is transitional in style, as it was in structure. Augustine begins with "inquiunt" and dialogue from the Manichees, but he never returns to that device during the rest of the sermon. Rather, he uses the Manichees' misinterpretation of a line from the Old Testament, "Mine is the gold and mine is the silver" (Hg 2:8), to instruct his listeners on the correct interpretation and the correct applications for handling money in their own lives. Augustine has rhetorical devices interspersed in the sermon—anaphora, antithesis, bejeweling, parallelism—but for the most part he relies on steady stream of assonance to keep his listeners engaged. Indeed, word and sound play would become Augustine's ornaments of choice once he became bishop.

> That's how they set the question; or rather It is how they bring a charge against the old scriptures, through which the gospel was foretold, from the gospel which was foretold through them. If they had really set a question, they might have done some questioning perhaps, and if they had done some questioning, they might perhaps have found a solution.
>
> Haec ipsorum est propositio quaestionis; vel potius veterum Scripturarum, per quas Evangelium praenuntiatum est, ex ipso Evangelio quod per eas praenuntiatum est, accusatio. Nam si quaestionem proponerent, forsitan quaererent: si autem quaererent, forsitan invenirent.[195]

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[194] *DDC* 4.20.42 (*PL* 34, col. 109); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 225-26. "Fertur quippe impetu suo, et elocutionis pulchritudinem, si occurrerit, vi rerum rapit, non cura decoris assumit. Satis enim est ei propter quod agitur, ut verba congruentia, non oris eligantur industria, sed pectoris sequantur ardorem. Nam si aurato gemmatoque ferro vir fortis armetur, intentissimus pugnae, agit quidem illis armis quod agit, non quia pretiosa, sed quia arma sunt: idem ipse est tamen, et valet plurimum, etiam cum rimanti telum ira facit." The last two clauses of this quotation are a reference to Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.508.

[195] *Sermo* 50.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 326); translation Hill, *Sermons* II, 345.

Notice the play of sound between "questionis … questionionem … quaererent … quaererent," and the antistrophe between the endings of the latter two words with "proponerent" and "invenirent." There is an echo between the "v", "t", "us" and "um" sounds in the phrase "vel potius veterum Scriptuarum." And there is a ring between "per quas Evangelium praenuntiatum" and "Evangelio quod per eas praenuntiatum." All that being said, the sound play is a little less precise than in Augustine's earliest sermons. My hunch is that this one was not as meticulously prepared as the previous ones. Preaching *ex tempore* became the habit of bishop Augustine, and his use of rhetorical devices suggest a well-trained rhetorician speaking with pleasing turns of phrase, but not fretting if the perfect word did not come to him in the moment.

Sermons 273, 252 and 265B

Augustine begins Sermon 273 with clever word and sound play, as in Sermon 50, but then he gives the rest of his discourse a different quality: he chats with his audience. Referring to the reading of the stories of three martyrs, he says:

> You heard the interrogations of the persecutors, you heard the replies of the confessors, when the passion of these saints was being read. Among other things, what was that remark of the blessed Fructuosus the bishop? When someone spoke to him, and asked him to keep him in mind and pray for him, he answered, 'I have to pray for the Catholic Church, spread as it is from the east to the west." Who, after all, can pray for every single individual? But the one who prays for all doesn't overlook any single individual. No individual member is passed over by one whose prayers are poured out for whole body. So what advice do you think he was giving this man who asked him to pray for him? What's your opinion? Undoubtedly you know what I'm getting at. I'm just reminding you. He asked him to pray for him." And I," he said, "am praying for the Catholic

Church, spread as it is from east to west. Don't you, if you want me to pray for you, withdraw from the Church for which I am praying.[196]

In this passage, Augustine is still creating an imaginary dialogue, but instead of parlaying with imaginary characters on the raised platform, he's conversing with the congregation itself. They don't actually answer back—at least not as in a true conversation.[197] But he is addressing them directly, asking them to recall pieces of the liturgical story, to formulate an opinion on the bishop's quotation. In short, he is not addressing them with questions merely for rhetorical effect, but is instead asking them to participate in a rhetorical exercise. Notice as well how short Augustine's sentences are in this passage. This simpler style is a long way from that opening line of Sermon 214.

Throughout this sermon, Augustine is more direct in his address to the congregation than in earlier sermons. And in a couple other places, he attempts to pull his listeners in to a participatory dialogue with himself. Here is one example to prove the point:

When did you ever hear it said by me at the shrine of Saint Theogenes, or by any of my brethren and colleagues, or by any priest, "I am offering to you, Saint Theogenes"? Or, "I am offering to you, Peter," or "I am offering to you, Paul"? You never did; it doesn't happen, it is not permitted. And if you should be asked, "Do you, then, worship Peter?"

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[196] *Sermo* 273.2.2 (*PL* 38, col. 1249); translation Hill, *Sermons* VIII, 18. "Audistis persequentium interrogationes, audistis confitentium responsiones, cum sanctorum passio legeretur. Inter caetera, quale erat illud beati Fructuosi episcopi? Cum ei diceret quidam, et peteret ut eum in mente haberet, et oraret pro illo, respondit: *Me orare necesse est pro Ecclesia catholica, ab oriente usque ad occidentem diffusa.* Quis enim orat pro singulis? Sed neminem singulorum praeterit, qui orat pro universis. Ab eo nullum membrum praetermittitur, cujus oratio pro toto corpore funditur. Quid ergo vobis videtur admonuisse istum, a quo rogabatur ut oraret pro eo? quid putatis? Sine dubio intelligitis. Commemoramini a nobis. Rogabat ille ut oraret pro illo. *Et ego,* inquit, *oro pro Ecclesia catholica, ab oriente usque ad occidentem diffusa.* Tu si vis ut pro te orem, noli recedere ab illa, pro qua oro."

[197] However, Van der Meer's research shows that Augustine's congregation could be quite boisterous, literally applauding his turns of phrase and his quotation of his favorite scriptures. Van der Meer, 428.

answer what Eulogius answered about Fructuosus: "I do not worship Peter, but I worship God, whom Peter also worships.[198]

Augustine ends this sermon with sound play. He pairs "sacerdos" with "sacerdotem," and then swings from one sentence to the next by repeating the word "quantum." He parallels his clauses about God the Father and God the Son by ending both with "debetur." Then he uses a rush of assonance about how to treat the martyrs— "charrisimi-veneramini" and "laudate-amate-praedicate-honorate"—to lead up to his punchy exhortation at the end: "but worship the God of the martyrs."

> … he preferred to be called a priest rather than to require a priest's services; he preferred to be a sacrifice rather than to demand sacrifice, insofar as he is a man. Because insofar as he is God, everything that is owed to the Father is also owed to the only-begotten Son. For that reason, dearly beloved, venerate the martyrs, praise, love, proclaim, honor them. But worship the God of the martyrs. Turning to the Lord, etc.

> … maluit sacerdos dici, quam sibi exigere sacerdotem; maluit sacrificium esse, quam poscere; in quantum homo est. Nam in quantum Deus est, totum quod Patri debetur, et unigenito Filio debetur. Ideo, charissimi, veneramini martyres, laudate, amate, praedicate, honorate: Deum martyrum colite. Conversi ad Dominum, etc.[199]

In Sermon 252, Augustine presses the device of participatory dialogue even further, and his sermon sounds far more like a man talking his way through an explanation than putting on a performance. The passage is from Jn 21:6 where, after his resurrection, Jesus meets his disciples after a fruitless night of fishing, and tells them to cast their nets on the

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[198] *Sermo* 273.7.7 (*PL* 38, col. 1251); translation Hill, *Sermons* VIII, 20. "Quando audistis dici apud memoriam sancti Theogenis, a me, vel ab aliquo fratre et collega meo, vel aliquo presbytero: Offero tibi, sancte Theogenis? aut offero tibi, Petre? aut, offero tibi, Paule? Nunquam audistis. Non fit: non licet. Et si dicatur tibi, numquid tu Petrum colis? responde quod de Fructuoso respondit Eulogius: Ego Petrum non colo, sed Deum colo, quem colit et Petrus."

[199] *Sermo* 273.9.9 (*PL* 38, col. 1252); translation Hill, *Sermons* VIII, 21.

right side of their boats. They catch 153 big fish, but miraculously this time, their nets do not break. Augustine pulls his audience into his exegesis of this text by essentially thinking out loud, and asking them to think along with him:

> So we should ask this miracle some questions, ask what it may be saying to us more inwardly. … Why (in a similar miracle before Jesus' death) is no number mentioned there? Why were the nets breaking there, here they didn't break? Why weren't they told there to cast the net on the right-hand side, while he did he say *Cast the nets on the right-hand side?* … So this is the task I have been set: to discuss with your graces what the meaning may be of this diversity. … Can we fail to see, brothers and sisters, that the nets are the word of God, and the sea is this age, and all those who believe are enclosed within those nets?[200]

Unlike sermons 50 and 273, where Augustine peppered participatory dialogue throughout his sermons, now Augustine keeps up this approach almost continuously. I will quote the first line or lines of each of the remaining sections in this lengthy sermon:

> Section 3: "So let's confine ourselves, brothers and sisters—because the Lord's resurrection represents the new life which will be ours after this age has passed—to seeing how the Word of God was first sent into this sea, that is into this world.[201]
>
> Section 4: Let's also take a look at the ship of the nations.[202]

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[200] *Sermo* 252.1.1-2.2 (*PL* 38, col. 1172-73); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 132-33. "Ergo interrogare debemus ipsum miraculum, quid nobis interius loquatur. … Quare ibi numerus nullus dicitur? Quare ibi retia rumpebantur, hic non rupta sunt? Quare ibi non dictum est, ut ad dexteram partem mitterentur retia, hic autem dixit, *Mittite retia in dexteram partem?*... Hoc ergo nobis propositum est, quod cum vestra Charitate tractemus, quid sibi velit ista diversitas. … Numquid non videmus, fratres, verbum Dei retia esse, et hoc saeculum mare, et omnes qui credunt intra illa retia includi?"

[201] *Sermo* 252.3.3 (*PL* 38, col. 1173); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 134. "Illud tantum videamus, fratres (quia resurrectio Domini novam vitam significat, quam habebimus, cum hoc saeculum transierit), quomodo primum verbum Dei missum est in hoc mare, id est, in hunc mundum."

[202] *Sermo* 252.4.4 (*PL* 38, col. 1174); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 134. "Attendamus etiam navem Gentium."

Section 5: The same comparison can be derived from the threshing floor.[203]

Section 6: So such people, brothers and sisters, who seek material advantages in the Church, and don't give any thought to what God promises …. We don't find much joy in them, and neither do we butter them up with idle flattery.[204]

Section 7: Now direct your attention, brothers and sisters, also to that blessed, mystic, great Church which is represented by the one hundred and fifty-three fish.[205]

Section 8: So why a hundred and fifty-three? That isn't all the saints there are going to be, surely?[206]

Section 9: It couldn't be, perhaps, could it, these fifty days which we are now celebrating?[207]

Section 10: So why are fifty days celebrated in this paschal mystery?[208]

Section 11: That's why those three fasted for forty days, to signify that in this time it is necessary to abstain from love of the things of time.[209]

Section 12: I think that is a sufficient explanation of a grand mystery.[210]

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[203] *Sermo* 252.5.5 (*PL* 38, col. 1174); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 135. "Hanc enim similitudinem habet etiam area, cum trituratur."

[204] *Sermo* 252.6.6 (*PL* 38, col. 1175); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 136. "Isti ergo, fratres, qui carnalia quaerunt in Ecclesia, et non sibi proponunt quid promittat Deus …. Nec ad illos valde gaudemus, nec palpamus eos vanis adulationibus."

[205] *Sermo* 252.7.7 (*PL* 38, col. 1175); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 136. "Attendite jam, fratres, etiam illam Ecclesiam beatam, mysticam, magnam, quam significant centum quinquaginta tres pisces."

[206] *Sermo* 252.8.8 (*PL* 38, col. 1176); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 137. "Quare ergo centum quinquaginta tres? Numquid tot erunt sancti?"

[207] *Sermo* 252.9.9 (*PL* 38, col. 1176); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 137. "Numquid forte ipsi sunt quinquaginta isti dies, quos nunc celebramus?"

[208] *Sermo* 252.10.10 (*PL* 38, col. 1177); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 138. "Quare ergo quinquaginta dies in hoc mysterio celebrantur?"

[209] *Sermo* 252.11.11 (*PL* 38, col. 1178); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 139. "Ideo quadraginta diebus illi jejunaverunt, significantes in isto tempore necessariam esse abstinentiam ab amore rerum temporalium."

[210] *Sermo* 252.12.12 (*PL* 38, col. 1178); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 140. "Satis esse arbitror expositum grande mysterium."

Of the 10 opening lines, eight of them are either questions or statements directly addressing the audience. This demonstrates that Augustine is no longer staging a performance for his audience to watch and be wowed. Instead, he is having a conversation with them. In this respect, Augustine was very much in the tradition of early Christian sermons. As Mohrmann argues, "The early Christian sermon (was) not an artfully composed lecture, such as we find in Leo the Great, Maximus of Turin, and others, but rather a *homilia* in the proper sense of the word: a conversation between preacher and congregation."[211] Augustine even turns his peroration, such as it is, into a conversation.

> But see to it, brothers and sisters, that you don't plan to celebrate these days in a worldly way with a lot of drunkenness, as though complete self-indulgence were now permitted; if you do that, you won't deserve to celebrate with the angels for ever what these days stand for. Perhaps, you see, when I take some drunkard or other to task, he is going to say, "It was you that explained to us that these days stand for everlasting joy; you that suggested to us that this time is a foretaste of the heavenly joy of the angels; so oughtn't I to do myself a good turn?" Of course a good turn, and not a bad one. It stands for joy for you, after all, provided you are the temple of God. But if you fill God's temple with the filth of drunkenness, the apostle thunders at you, *Whoever ruins the temple of God, God will ruin him* (1 Cor 3:17). Let this be written on your holiness' hearts, that a person who understands less and lives a better life is better than one who understands a lot and doesn't live a good life. Complete and perfect happiness, indeed, consists in being quick to understand and in living a good life; but if you can't manage both, it is better to live a good life than to be quick to understand. If you live a good life, you see, you earn the right to a fuller understanding; while if you live a bad one, you will lose even what you do understand. That's what was said: *To the one who has, it will be given; but the one who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away from him* (Mt. 25:29; Mk 4:25).[212]

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[211] Mohrmann, *Die altchristliche Sondersprache in den Sermones des hl. Augustin* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1965), 18-26; translation Pellegrino, 11.

[212] *Sermo* 252.12.12 (*PL* 38, col. 1179); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 140. "Sed videte, fratres, ne per multam ebriositatem quasi permissi magna effusione, carnaliter volentes celebrare istos dies, non

Augustine, who in this sermon rejects the notion that the church should be a theater-like place to see spectacles, has indeed, sucked out many—though not all—of the elements of theatricality that he displayed in the first five sermons we examined. "Don't the very people who also fill the theaters fill the churches?" he says with great disappointment. "And often enough they seek the same sort of things in the churches by rowdy behavior as they do in the theaters."[213] It is rare to find in this sermon well-turned word play, and sections of soaring rhetoric are completely absent. We can see assonance in the words "intelligentem … viventem … intelligentem … viventem." But there are only a few scattered passages like it.

Sermon 252 remains theatrical in its use of metaphors and allegory— boats-nets-fish and grain-chaff-threshing floors—which make up the bulk of the sermon. They are no longer like the poetic images of smoke and clouds, which were ornaments hung on a larger structure. In this case, Augustine is using allegory and metaphor as the basic structure of the sermon, going beyond an explanation of the metaphors (as in Sermon 1) to instead use metaphors to explain his text. And, through his conversational tone, Augustine draws his audience inside the metaphors, describing how they are the fish in the nets, they are the grain on the threshing floor. These are participatory, rather than

mereamini quod significant in sempiternum cum Angelis celebrare. Forte enim quemcumque ebrium reprehendero, dicturus est: Tu nobis tractasti quia isti dies laetitiam sempiternam significant; tu nobis insinuasti quia hoc tempus gaudium angelicum et coeleste praenuntiat: non ergo debui mecum bene facere? Utinam bene, et non male. Significat enim tibi gaudium, si fueris templum Dei. Si autem immunditia vinolentiae impleas templum Dei, sonat tibi Apostolus, *Quisquis templum Dei corruperit, corrumpet illum Deus*. Sit hoc conscriptum in cordibus Sanctitatis vestrae, meliorem esse hominem minus intelligentem et melius viventem, quam multum intelligentem et non bene viventem. Plenitudo quidem est et beatitudo perfecta, ut cito quisque intelligat et bene vivat: sed si forte utrumque non potest, melius est bene vivere, quam cito intelligere. Qui enim bene vivit, meretur amplius intelligere: qui male vivit, et quod intelligit perdet. Sic dictum est: *Qui habet, dabitur ei; qui autem nan habet, et id quod videtur habere, auferetur ab eo*."

[213] *Sermo* 252.4.4 (*PL* 38, col. 1174); transaltion Hill, *Sermons* VII, 135. "Nonne ipsi implent ecclesias, qui implent et theatra? Et talia plerumque seditionibus quaerunt in ecclesiis, qualia solent in theatris."

poetic, metaphors—a characteristic reinforced by the nature of the metaphors themselves. For people living in a coastal port that specialized in for agricultural goods, such as Hippo was, these images would have had about the same amount of poetic force as strip malls and SUVs would have had for twentieth-century American suburbanites. No, these metaphors are now designed to engage more than entertain.

Indeed, Augustine has shifted the aim of his rhetoric, from entertainment to engagement, from spectacle to participation. To be sure, Augustine is still using rhetoric—quite consciously—in this sermon; but he is using it to achieve a different effect than before. Augustine even introduces a new word in this sermon to describe what he is doing: "tractemus." The way Augustine uses it in the first passage I quote from this sermon (above), it literally means "we discuss." Augustine uses the same word later in the sermon, "tractavimus," to indicate what has been happening: "we have been discussing." Indeed, Augustine is having a discussion, a conversation, with his congregation. By the date of this sermon—395 or 396—we can say that Augustine's attitude toward his sermons has changed from primarily one of display, to primarily one of discussion.

Sermon 265B serves to confirm the shift we saw in Sermon 252 and yet to show that all of the elements we identified in his earlier sermons continued to live on. Unlike Sermon 252, which was meant to be instructional, Sermon 265B is more a reaffirmation of previous lessons, which gives Augustine an opportunity to be eloquent. Yet the way he does so is markedly changed from, say, Sermon 216, which was also delivered as an encomium. It is a sermon on one of Christianity's most difficult subjects—the dual nature but unipersonality of Christ—yet it is delivered in common language. It is richly adorned

108

with rhetorical devices; it is at times theatrical and even poetic. But for all that, it is neither showy nor sailing over the heads of Augustine's listeners. It is, in short, a remarkable display of classical rhetoric in a discussion of Christian doctrine. It is a strong example of *sermo humilis*, the label Auerbach gave to early Christian sermons: "The keynote now was *humilitas.* Augustine recommended the academic forms of pagan eloquence and even made use of them, but what really strikes us and leaves a lasting impression in his sermons is the directness with which, setting aside all barriers between style levels, they speak to each individual soul."[214]

Augustine's opening relies on assonance to engage the listeners and keep them engaged in this difficult topic. I have highlighted the words in the Latin and English below that would have rung in late-antique ears:

> After our Lord Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, he wished to give the most **certain** and **trustworthy** possible proof that he had risen again in the same body, in which he had hung on the cross; and so he spent forty days with his disciples, **going in** and *coming out*, **eating** and *drinking*. In this way, you see, it was fitting both that the doubtful should be **reassured**, and the truth of the gospel be **preached** to later generations, that the faithful should be shown the **imperishable immortality** of his flesh in eternal bliss, and evil-minded **men** be refuted who hold and **teach opinions** about the Lord that are far from the truth. After rising again, you see, he ascended into heaven in the same body in which, after dying, he had **visited** the underworld. He now, that is, **deposited** in heaven that dwelling of his immortal flesh, which he had **fashioned** for himself in the womb of his virgin mother.

> Dominus noster Jesus Christus, postquam a mortuis resurrexit, volens **certissima** et **fidelissima** attestione in eodem corpora se resurrexisse monstrare, in quo pependit in cruce, quadraginta diebus cum discipulis suis fuit, **intrans** et *exiens*, **manducans** et *bibens*. Sic enim oportuerat et dubitantes **firmari**, et vertatem evangelii posteris **pradicari**, et credentibus carnis suae futuram **incorruptionem** et **immortalitatem** in

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[214] Auerbach, 53.

illa aeterna beatitudine ostendi, et malignis **hominibus** aliter, quam veritas habet, de domino **sentientibus** et **docentibus** contradici. In eo namque corpora in caelum resurgens ascendit, in quo corpora mortuus inferos **vistavit**. Ipsum quipped habitaculum iam immortalis carnis suae in caelo **collocavit**, quod sibi ipse in matris virginis utero **fabricavit**.[215]

Augustine moves from this opening to a bit of theatrical dialogue. Notice the

inquiunt in the third line of the Latin text:

> Some people, certainly, find very surprising what the Lord said in the gospel, *Nobody has ascended into heaven, except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven* (Jn 3:13). How, they ask, can the Son of man be said to have come down from heaven, when it was here that he was taken on in the virgin's womb?

> Mirum sane quibusdam videtur, quod dominus in evangelio ait, *nemo ascendit in caelum, nisi qui descendit de caelo, Filius hominis qui est caelo*. Quemadmodum dicitur filius hominis, inquiunt, descendisse de caelo, cum hic assumptus sit invirginis utero?[216]

From here, Augustine seeks to answer their question with word play, but with a new

twist: paradox. Augustine included a brief bit of paradox in Sermon 214.[217] But now

Augustine lets paradox dominate Sermon 265B. Indeed, while paradox had always been a

device in classical rhetoric, Christian preachers made it utterly fundamental to their

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[215] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.1 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 249.

[216] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.2 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 249.

[217] *Sermo* 214.7 (*PL* 38, col. 1069); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 154. "Oportebat autem ut in homine assumpto, non solum invisibilis videretur, et Patri coaeternus temporaliter nasceretur; verum etiam incontrectabilis teneretur, insuperabilis ligno suspenderetur, inviolabilis clavis configeretur, et vita et immortalis in cruce moreretur, in monumento sepeliretur." "It was necessary, though, that in the man assumed not only should the invisible one be seen, and the one co-eternal with the Father be born in time, but also that the untouchable one should be seized, the unconquerable one be hung on the tree, the inviolable one fixed there with nails, and that life and immortality should die on the cross."

110

speaking and preaching, as Averil Cameron has shown.[218] Augustine, if he had not already, moves himself into that Christian tradition at this point. Paradox also aligns nicely with Augustine's preferred devices of parallelism and antithesis. We see all three thoroughly mixed in this sermon:

> They don't realize, I mean, that the divinity took on the humanity in such a way as to become one person, God and man; and that the humanity was attached to the divinity in such a way that Word, soul, and flesh were the one Christ. And that's why it could be said, *Nobody has ascended into heaven, except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven* (Jn 3:13). … on the one hand, the Son of God can be called a man, and on the other the Son of man can be called God, while each, all the same, is identical with Christ himself.[219]

Augustine follows this paradox with some bejeweling and a metaphor that, I dare say, is participatory and poetic and biblical all at once. After quoting Peter's confession of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," Augustine says, "here we are, in the presence of the harpist whom David had prefigured; he has now revealed himself, by touching the hearts of his followers, and striking from them any note he wished, to be heard by all."

After this beautiful metaphor, Augustine delivers a short passage that, in so few words, includes a bevy of rhetorical devices—paradox, parallelism, antithesis, antistrophe, assonance, bejeweling, dialogue, theater.

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[218] Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse*, Sather Classical Lectures 55 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 158. "… we see how Christian writers could exploit to rhetorical effect the contradictory aspects in Christian discourse even while themselves continuing to struggle with their philosophical and religious implications."

[219] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.2 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 249. "Ignorant enim quia ipsa divinitas ita illam humanitatem suscepit, ut una persona fieret deus et homo; et illa humanitas illi divinatati ita cohaesit, ut unus Christus esset Verbum anima et caro. Et propterea dictum est: *nemo ascendit nisi qui caelo descendit, Filius hominis qui est caelo*. … et Filius dei dicatur homo, et filius hominis dicatur deus, utrumque tamen idem ipse Christus."

111

> But God *so loved* the human race, *that he gave his only-begotten Son for the life of the world* (Jn 3:16; 6:51). Unless the Father, you see, had handed over life, we would not have had life; and unless life itself had died, death would not have been slain. It is the Lord Christ himself, of course, that is life, about whom John the evangelist says, *This is the true God and eternal life* (1 Jn 5:20). It was he himself that through the prophet had also threatened death with death, saying, *I will be your death, O death; I, hell, will be your sting* (Hos 13:14). As though to say, "I will slay you by dying, I will swallow you up, I will take all your power away from you, I will rescue the captives you have held. You wanted to hold me, though innocent; it is just that you should lose those you had the power to hold." So then life not only died, life also remained life, and life rose again., and in killing death by his death conferred life on us.[220]

As a younger man, Augustine at this moment might have let loose a torrent of eloquence. But the mature Augustine instead quotes a couple more scriptures and, as we noted in the previous chapter, melts his rhetoric back into the liturgy.

Augustine is still putting on a show, but he is no longer preening in front of his audience. He is now putting on a show that points to the larger show, the worship of Christ. Augustine is still putting on a show, but he is no longer doing so for the sole benefit of elites. He is putting on a show designed for all to understand and, indeed, to participate in. Augustine is, in a sense, like a modern-day symphony orchestra—filled with world-class talent and training—performing pops concerts for the masses. To better understand why Augustine made this kind of shift, I will spend the next chapter

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[220] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.4 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 250. "Sic autem deus *dilexit* humanum genus, *ut Filium suum unigenitum daret pro saeculi vita.* Nisi enim traderet Pater vitam, nos non haberemus vitam; et nisi ipsa vita moreretur, mors non occideretur. Ipse quippe dominus Christus est vita, de quo Johannes evangelista ait: *hic est verus deus, et vita aeterna*. Ipse namquam etiam per prophetam morti mortem comminatus ait: *ero mors tua, o mors; ero morsus tuus, inferne*. Quasi diceret: Ego te moriendo occidam, ego te consumam, ego tibi omnem potestatem auferam, ego captivos quos tenuisti eruam. Innoxium me tenere voluisti: justum est ut perdas quos tenere voluisti. Ergo et mortua est vita, et mansit vita, et resurrexit vita, et morte sua mortem interficiendo nobis contulit vitam."

examining key elements of the content of his early sermons. They provide strong clues

for explaining why popular, participatory rhetoric prevailed over the learned and sublime.

Chapter 6: Content

Since one of the key messages from *DDC* is the union of form and content, it is vital for me to examine the content of Augustine's sermons—to see if it accords with the structure I have analyzed in the previous two chapters. Rather than examine the sermons in strict chronological order, however, I will focus on four themes, or associations, that appear in the nine sermons: 1) love, 2) beauty-will-knowledge, 3) humility-greatness, and 4) incarnation-wisdom. I will argue that these four themes, while not always fully formed in these early years, help us understand why Augustine made the changes to his sermonic structure that we identified in earlier chapters. I will spend little time commenting on how Augustine changed—did not change—his theology during these early years. Rather, I will contend that in the early years after Augustine the rhetor became Augustine the preacher, the gradual changes he made to his rhetoric brought it more in line with his theology.

Love

The theme of love—so prominent in Augustine's *De civitate dei* and in his overall body of work, is rather latent in his early sermons. Speaking of Augustine's sermons as a whole, Pellegrino writes, "It seems to me that if we really want to enter into the spirit of Augustine it is his love, more than anything else, that we must emphasize. It makes its presence known in one or other way in all of his preaching and, more than his natural gifts as a speaker, explains his constant and profound contact with his hearers."[221] Yet

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[221] Pellegrino, 103.

none of the sermons he quotes to support this argument can be firmly dated to Augustine's years as priest.[222] Except for Sermon 216, the Latin words for "love" (*amore, caritas, dilectio*) are almost completely absent in the rest of the sermons considered in this study.[223] But in Sermon 216, we find Augustine speaking of love (*amore, amate*), as well as delight and desire (*delectionem, concupiscenda*), as vital for his listeners in their efforts to turn away from sin and to instead enjoy and serve God. "Do you see, my fellow boys and girls, to what delight (*delectationem*) of the Lord you will come, when you reject the delights (*delectationem*) of the world?"[224] Augustine asks early in the sermon as he is framing his presentation.[225] Augustine goes on to say that it is through love that Christians proceed to "the land of the living," a line from Psalms that he equates with heaven. "This land we have to long for (*concupiscenda*), with a kind of heavenly and living heart, not a dead and earthbound one."[226] Augustine later says that adherence to God and his commands is produced by love (*dilectio).* He then urges his young converts: "Love what you will be."[227] Augustine isn't yet talking about "two cities" defined by "two loves," but Sermon 216 shows that the thoughts are beginning to form.

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[222] Pellegrino, 77-79.

[223] The few references from sermons 1, 12, 50, 252, 265B, 273 and 353 occur either in quoted scriptures or as exhortatory commands, but not as a theme for discussion.

[224] *Sermo* 216.2.2 (*PL* 38, col. 1077); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 167. "Videtis, contirones mei, ad quam delectionem Domini venietis, cum delectationem saeculi abjicitis?"

[225] This "psychology of delight," as Peter Brown calls it, will get more attention in my next section, on beauty, will and knowledge.

[226] *Sermo* 216.5.5 (*PL* 38, col. 1079); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 170. "Haec terra non terreno vel mortuo, sed coelisti quodam modo ac vivo corde concupiscenda est."

[227] *Sermo* 216.8.8 (*PL* 38, col. 1081); translation Hill *Sermons* VI, 171. "Amate quod eritis."

115

More broadly, however, love lies behind Augustine's early sermons as he gradually shifts his structure and style to engage with his audience. As I noted in previous chapters, Sermon 216 is structured and styled to shoot over the heads of most of Augustine's listeners, to wow them with eloquence. But Augustine's sermons from 394-396 (Sermons 1, 12, 50, 273, 252 and perhaps 265B and 353) function more as attempts to serve the needs of his congregation, rather than to woo his listeners by impressing them. Sutherland saw Augustine in *DDC* Book 4 setting up "love as rhetorical principle."[228] In Augustine's rhetoric, she argued, serving the needs of the congregation becomes the thing—rather than subject matter or the advantage of the speaker—that determines the appropriate style and structure. Augustine appears to have worked out this love principle over his first five years of preaching: as his sermons become more conversations than presentations, as his metaphors become more participatory than poetic, as his scriptural references become more direct and less allusive, as his sentences become shorter and simpler. In all these ways Augustine's sermons can be understood as attempts to serve the needs of his audience in Hippo better than his showy sophistic rhetoric did. Based on his sermons of 396—sermons 273, 252 and perhaps 265B—Augustine appears have at that time been settling in to the ideas he articulated in Book 4 of *DDC*.

This may sound like speculation on my part, but there is evidence that Augustine was during these same years consciously thinking about how he could better communicate with his congregation. In Augustine's *Psalm Against the Donatists,* dated to about 394, Augustine later said he aimed "to bring the issue of the Donatists to the

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[228] Sutherland, 139-54.

attention of the very simplest people, and in general, the ignorant and unlearned."[229] This phrase could also describe the way Augustine came to design his sermons. The first five sermons in this study, and especially the first two, seem designed to attract the simple, ignorant and unlearned to a speaking spectacle—whether or not they caught Augustine's subtler verbal tricks or understood the content of his message. But small changes we can detect in sermons 1 and 12, as well as more marked ones that occur in Sermon 50, suggest that Augustine began to deliver his sermons in a structure and style meant to attract the simple, ignorant and unlearned, as well as to really teach them the "issue" at hand—no matter how complex.

Beauty-Knowledge-Will

Augustine made a clear connection between beauty, knowledge and will in *DDC*. Augustine contended that instruction is the only absolutely necessary element of oratory, but because of human nature, beauty and charm of language is necessary to draw them to the knowledge being offered. "But yes, there is a certain similarity between feeding and learning; so because so many people are fussy and fastidious, even those foodstuffs without which life cannot be supported need their pickles and spices."[230] In addition, even once an audience knows something, their "prejudice" and "hardened natures" require persuasion in order to get them to live out the knowledge they have. And persuasion, Augustine insists, requires a beauty that appeals to the emotions:

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[229] *Retractationes* 1.20 (*PL* 32, col. 617); translation Ramsey, *Revisions*, 86. "causam Donatistarum ad ipsius humillimi vulgi et omnino imperitorum atque idiotarum notitiam pervenire."

[230] *DDC* 4.11.26 (*PL* 34, col. 100-01); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 215. "Sed quoniam inter se habent nonnullam similitudinem vescentes atque discentes, propter fastidia plurimorum, etiam ipsa sine quibus vivi non potest, alimenta condienda sunt."

117

And just as he is delighted if you speak agreeably, so in the same way he is swayed if he loves what you promise him, fears what you threaten him with, hates what you find fault with, embraces what you commend to him, deplores what you strongly insist is deporable; if he rejoices over what you declare to be a matter for gladness, feels intense pity for those whom your words present to his very eyes as objects of pity, shuns those whom in terrifying tones you proclaim are to be avoided, and anything else that can be done by eloquence in the grand manner to move the spirits of the listeners, not to know what is to be done, but to do what they already know is to be done.[231]

This same combination of beauty-will-knowledge shows up early in Augustine sermons, though with a telling absence, compared with *DDC*. Listen to this passage from Sermon 12:

There are many ways in which God speaks to us. Sometimes he speaks to us through some instrument, like a volume of the divine scriptures. Or he speaks through some element of the world, as he spoke to the wise men through a star. What after all is speech but an indication of the will? … No one can come to such knowledge (of God's majesty or will) without a kind of silent clamor of truth ringing inside him. … But truth is what God is; and since she speaks in so many ways to people both good and bad— though not all to whom she speaks in so many ways can perceive her substance and nature—which of us could possibly work out by thought or guesswork in how many different ways the same truth speaks to angels, whether the good ones who through their wonderful charity enjoy the contemplation of her indescribable luster and beauty, or the bad ones who, though perverted by pride and sentenced by truth herself to lower stations, while being unworthy to see her face?[232]

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[231] *DDC* 4.12.27 (*PL* 34, col. 101); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 216. "Et sicut delectatur, si suaviter loquaris; ita flectitur, si amet quod polliceris, timeat quod minaris, oderit quod arguis, quod commendas amplectatur, quod dolendum exaggeras doleat; cum quid laetandum praedicas gaudeat, misereatur eorum quos miserandos ante oculos dicendo constituis, fugiat eos quos cavendos terrendo proponis; et quidquid aliud grandi eloquentia fieri potest ad commovendos animos auditorum, non quid agendum sit ut sciant, sed ut agant quod agendum esse jam sciunt."

[232] *Sermo* 12.4.4 (*PL* 38, col. 102); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 299-300. "Multi autem modi sunt, quibus nobiscum loquitur Deus. Loquitur aliquando per aliquod instrumentum, sicut per codicem divinarum Scripturarum: loquitur per aliquod elementum mundi, sicut per stellam Magis locutus est. Quid est enim locutio, nisi significatio voluntatis? … Non enim hoc quisquam potest, nisi apud se intus sonante quodam tacito clamore veritatis agnoscere. … Veritas autem Deus est: quae cum tam multis modis loquatur hominibus et bonis et malis (quanquam non omnes, quibus tot modis loquitur, possint quoque ejus substantiam naturamque conspicere), quis hominum potest conjiciendo aut cogitando colligere, quot et

His main point here, made as part of an argument against the Manichees, is to assert that God speaks in many ways to all kinds of people, both good and bad, but that only the good can ever hope to "see" the beauty of God and his truth. Along the way, however, Augustine discloses several key thoughts on knowledge, will, beauty and speech. He does so in a way that raises several complicated issues, not least of which are the scholarly debates over the evolution of Augustine's anthropology as well as Augustine's thoughts on the actual inability of human language to communicate knowledge. I will deal with those issues shortly. But what is important to see here is that, in Augustine's view, God sets a pattern whereby speech, truth, beauty and knowledge are linked. It is as if Augustine is saying, "God speaks. What God speaks is truth. The truth God speaks is beautiful. It is only when this truth "rings" (a definitive late-antique mark of beautiful speech) in a person's conscience, that he can know good and bad, that he can know God's will." Augustine here shows that he recognizes a divine pattern that binds speech, truth, beauty and knowledge together. It was a pattern that Augustine would never swerve from following.

This passage does not address the condition of the human will; but the fact that Augustine had already made a connection between beauty and the motivation of human wills is clear, however, from his discussion of the psychology of "delight" in *De musica*, the philosophical dialogue he finished in 391—right before he began his career as a priest. In that work, Augustine argued that delight is the only possible source of human action, that only when a person's feelings were affected could he have any chance of

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quibus modis eadem veritas loquatur Angelis, sive bonis, qui ejus ineffabili specie et pulchritudine per mirabilem charitatem contemplando perfruuntur; sive malis, qui depravati per superbiam suam, et ab ipsa veritate in inferioribus ordinati, possunt quibusdam latentibus modis vocem ejus audire, quamvis faciem videre non digni sint?"

119

mobilizing his will.[233] That view, it is clear, still holds sway in the *Confessions,* in which Augustine depicts reason as an alliance between the affections and the intellect.[234] And it still holds sway in Augustine's mind in Book 4 of *DDC,* where as quoted above, he instructs preachers to appeal to their audiences' emotions in order to persuade them to action. Indeed, so much of Augustine's sermons and the setting in which he delivered them—all the glittering of stones and gems, the "lights" of bejeweling and rhetorical devices, the theater and the drama—all of it served to render Augustine's sermons delightful, and therefore actionable, to his congregation.

By not mentioning the human will in Sermon 12, Augustine leaves us with only faint clues as to the state of his views at that time. Does he, here in about 394, already think the human will is too "hardened" or "prejudiced" to act on knowledge once the mind has it? Does he already think that "delight" is in fact beyond the control of the human will, so that we rely on God first to give us a desire for truth and salvation? Does he think it is even possible for humans, on their own, to know or do anything that is good? Augustine may not mention the human will simply because it is not the main topic of the sermon. But he may avoid the issue because his views were still in flux at the time. Some scholars contend that Augustine, from his conversion in 386 on, viewed the human will as incapable, on its own, of refraining from sin. But other historians argue that Augustine came to this view of the will only gradually from an earlier conviction that Christians had the ability to improve themselves, even without God's grace. Sermon 12 offers support for the latter view. In the passage immediately after the one I quoted,

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[233] I borrow Brown's excellent summary from Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 148.

[234] Troup, 62.

Augustine describes coming to the sight of God's truth as an achievement Christians are progressing toward: "Persevere now in walking by faith in the truth, that you may succeed in coming at a definite and due time to the sight of the same truth. … We are led to the direct sight and vision of the Father by Christian faith."[235] Around the same time this sermon was preached, Augustine dictated his commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. In it he interpreted the beatitudes as a kind of spiritual ascent that climaxed in wisdom, which Augustine described as "contemplation of the truth" and "a likeness to God."[236] Augustine even claimed that the heights of this ascent could be reached on earth: "And these things can be realized even in this life, as we believe the Apostles realized them."[237] A few yers later, however, Augustine would no longer credit the human will with such potential.

Peter Brown famously argued that Augustine, after re-studying the Apostle Paul's writings to the Galatians and the Romans (in about 394-95) took a dimmer view of human willpower. His thesis has come to dominate historical interpretations of Augustine, though not without some challenges.[238] Augustine's hope for human nature shows marked decline from where we find him in Sermon 12 and in his commentary on

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[235] *Sermo* 12.5.5 (*PL* 38, col. 102-03); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 300. "… perseveranter nunc ambulate per fidem veritatis; ut certo et opportuno tempore ad speciem veritatis ejusdem venire possitis. … Ad speciem autem visionis Patris, fides christiana perducit."

[236] Augustine *De Sermone domini in monte* 1.3.10 (*PL* 34, col. 1234); translation in *St. Augustine: The Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, trans. John J. Jepson, vol. 5 of *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation* (New York: Newman Press, 1948), 16-18. "Postremo est septima ipsa sapientia, id est contemplatio veritatis, pacificans totum hominem, et suscipiens similitudinem Dei …."

[237] *De sermone domini in monte* 1.4.12 (*PL* 34, col. 1235); translation Jepson, 20-21. "Et ista quidem in hac vita possunt compleri, sicut completa esse in Apostolis credimus."

[238] Madec, *Le Christ de Saint Augustin: La Patrie et la Voie,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Desclée, 2001), 17-18; Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7.

121

the Sermon on the Mount, to the time when he finally wrote Book 4 of *DDC*. Augustine even took time to revise his statement in the Sermon on the Mount commentary late in his life. He said the ascent to perfect wisdom could only be achieved in this life "to the degree of perfection that this life is capable of—and not as they are going to be realized, thanks to that utter peace for which we hope … ."[239] While Carol Harrison has argued that Augustine's theology as early as 386 accounted for humans' flawed natures, it seems to me that when Augustine preached Sermon 12 he had not fully grappled with the reality that he could preach beautiful sermons again and again, and yet still find his flock wandering away from truth and goodness. Augustine's thinking here—and in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount—seems to focus on whether a person has heard that inner "clamor of truth" and, if he has, assumes that he will then progress toward wisdom. He does not appear to consider the possibility of a person—even himself—hearing the inner truth and yet ignoring it, getting a glimpse of the beauty of it and yet walking away from it for a life of sin. Brown describes Augustine in this period as "perched between two worlds": "While he was a priest, he insisted that men's unaided efforts counted for something. Men could not overcome their limitations; but they could take the initiative in believing in God and calling on him to save them."[240] Brown's view is, I think, reinforced by a passage in Sermon 252—probably preached after Augustine had been restudying Paul. In this sermon, Augustine discusses free choice in a way that still insists on it, yet discards the notion of progressing toward the pure sight of God for a

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[239] *Retractationes* 1.19.2 (*PL* 32, col. 614); translation Ramsey, 80-81. "… ut ita compleantur sicut in illis completa sunt, id est quadam perfectione, cujus capax est ista vita, non sicut complenda sunt illa quam speramus pace plenissima, …"

[240] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 145.

122

more cyclical view, which has Christians falling in and out of true faith in their lives. Describing worldly men as "chaff" and faithful Christians as "wheat," Augustine says, "This, after all, is the difference between that real chaff and these worldly people, that chaff and straw don't have freedom of choice, but to man God has given freedom of choice. And if you want, yesterday you were chaff, today you become wheat; if you turn away from the word of God, today you become chaff. The one thing we all have to ask ourselves is in what class the final winnowing will find us."[241] But by 400, Augustine no longer held any hope of humans, apart from Christ, overcoming sin so as to contemplate the truth. He wrote then, "Whoever thinks that in this mortal life a man may so disperse the mists of bodily and carnal imaginings as to possess the unclouded light of changeless truth, and to cleave to it with the unswerving constancy of a spirit wholly estranged from the common ways of life—he neither understands What he seeks or who he is that seeks it."[242]

No matter Augustine's view on the human will when he preached Sermon 12, we do know he did not believe language had power—on its own—to impart either knowledge or faith to his hearers. In *De magistro*, a philosophical dialogue Augustine wrote before becoming a priest, he makes a complex argument that human language only teaches when it points the hearer to something his mind already knows, or else pushes

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[241] *Sermo* 252.6.6 (*PL* 38, col. 1175); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 136. "Hoc enim interest inter illas veras paleas, et istos carnales homines, quia paleae illae non habent liberum arbitrium, homini autem Deus dedit liberum arbitrium. Et si vult homo, heri fuit palea, hodie fit frumentum: si a verbo Dei se avertat, hodie fit palea. Et non est quaerendum, nisi quales inveniat ultima ventilatio."

[242] *De consensu evangelistarum* 4.10.20 (*PL* , col. 1227-28); translation Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 140. "Quisquis autem arbitratur homini vitam istam mortalem adhuc agenti posse contingere, ut demoto atque discusso omni nubilo phantasiarum corporalium atque carnalium, serenissima incommutabilis veritatis luce potiatur, et mente penitus a consuetudine vitae hujus alienata illi constanter et indeclinabiliter haereat; nec quid quaerat, nec quis quaerat intelligit."

123

him to seek knowledge, which God will provide.[243] The conclusion of this argument is that there is only one true Teacher, which is Christ. Only Christ can reveal knowledge to the mind of man. What human language does is simply point to or remind a person of that revealed knowledge. This view is echoed in Sermon 12, when Augustine said, "No one can come to such knowledge without a kind of silent clamor of truth ringing inside him." Of course, Augustine still recognizes a role of teacher for humans. He even describes teaching as the only truly necessary function of a preacher in *DDC*. But without Christ echoing the words of the preacher in the hearts and minds of the congregants, no knowledge would be communicated. Augustine continues to hold to this view in Book 4 of *DDC*. There he says,

> Medicines for the body, after all, which are provided for people by human beings, only do good to those whose health isrestored by God; and he can cure without them, while they cannot do so without him, and yet they are still provided and applied—and if this is done out of kindness it is counted among the works of mercy, or as a good deed. So in the same way the assistance of sound doctrine provided by a human teacher is only then any good to the soul when God is at work to make it any good, seeing that he was able to give the gospel to man, even without its coming from men or through men.[244]

In a similar way as knowledge, faith for Augustine is not something the human heart can grab by itself; it must receive it as a gift from God. "Augustine, like earlier

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[243] Colish, 55-57. This self-referential nature of language and its essential failure to communicate—notions reinforced elsewhere by Augustine, particularly in *Confessions*—has led many scholars to see Augustine as the first poststructuralist. See my discussion of this point in Chapter 4.

[244] *DDC* 4.16.33 (*PL* 34, col. 104); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 220. "Sicut enim corporis medicamenta, quae hominibus ab hominibus adhibentur, nonnisi eis prosunt quibus Deus operatur salutem, qui et sine illis mederi potest, cum sine ipso illa non possint, et tamen adhibentur; et si hoc officiose fiat, inter opera misericordiae vel beneficentiae deputatur: ita et adjumenta doctrinae tunc prosunt animae adhibita per hominem, cum Deus operatur ut prosint, qui potuit Evangelium dare homini, etiam non ab hominibus, neque per hominem."

124

Christians, regarded conversion as an act of the Spirit in which eloquence has no true role," George Kennedy wrote in a discussion of *DDC*. "The function of eloquence in Augustine's system is to convert faith into works, to impel the faithful to the Christian life."[245] In other words, eloquence in the pulpit is aimed at sanctification, not justification.

Sermon 12 also corresponds with *DDC* in showing that Augustine viewed eloquence, at least in a preacher, as something beyond language. Near the end of *DDC,* Augustine argues that a speaker's good life has even greater force than his grandest speech. As we stated in Chapter 3, this had also been the view of pagan rhetorical theorists, such as Aristotle, Cicero and Quintillian. But Augustine goes a step further, likening righteous actions to speech itself. "If however he cannot even do this (speak with any bit of wisdom or eloquence), let him so conduct himself that he not only earns a reward for himself, but also gives an example to others, and so his manner of life can itself be a kind of eloquent sermon."[246] Augustine made essentially the same point in the passage from Sermon 12, quoted above. God speaks in all manner of ways; therefore, we humans too speak not only in words, but also in deeds. Augustine makes the same point a year or two later, in Sermon 252, by focusing on Christ as both a human and divine model of speech: "Christ is the Word of God, who speaks to mankind not only by sounds

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[245] Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian & Secular Tradition,* 157.

[246] *DDC* 4.29.61 (*PL* 34, col. 119); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity,* 239. "Si autem ne hoc quidem potest, ita conversetur, ut non solum sibi praemium comparet, sed etiam praebeat aliis exemplum, et sit ejus quasi copia dicendi forma vivendi."

by also by deeds."[247] As I will discuss more at the end of this chapter, Christ became for Augustine the model rhetorician, because of his unification of divine words and human actions.

Augustine's linking of beauty with knowledge and will helps to explain why he held on to the elements of rhetoric throughout his preaching career. It seems insufficient to argue—as many scholars have—that Augustine hung on to figures of speech more as habit than anything else. Seeing Augustine's attention to beauty—and how in his view it was inter-connected with knowledge and action—helps us understand why he would insist throughout his life on the usefulness, the vitality, of beauty in sermons. It is helpful to keep in mind the importance of beauty for Augustine as we consider the theme of humility in the next section. In many ways, Augustine's rhetoric seems to have been a conscious fusion—or even an equation—of beauty and humility.

Humility-Greatness

The connection of these two themes is perhaps the defining feature of Augustine's sermons. [248] Not only does Augustine make this connection via explicit statements in several places throughout his early sermons, but he also puts it into practice more and more over his first five years of preaching. We can see how explicit this theme became for Augustine from a passage from a sermon relatively late in his career, about 418.

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[247] *Sermo* 252.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 1172); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 133. "Verbum Dei est Christus, qui non solum sonis, sed etiam factis loquitur hominibus."

[248] René-Antonin Gauthier, *Magnanimité: L'idéal de la grandeur dans la philosophie païenne et dans la théologie chrétienne* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1951), 437-8.

> Let us not seek greatness directly. Let us devote ourselves to little things, and we will be great. Do you want to reach God in his sublime heights? Begin by practicing the humility of God. Deign to be humble for your own sake, since God himself deigned to be humble for your sake. Practice the humility of Christ, learn to be humble and not proud. Confess your weakness and wait patiently at the door for the physician. When you have learned humility from him, rise up with him.[249]

This sentiment evokes the *sermo humilis* quality of Augustine's mature preaching, which we marked in the chapters on structure and style. Also, the focus of its central exhortation on "the humility of Christ" points to another vital stream of content in Augustine's sermons, which I will consider in the next section.

The connection of humility and greatness was apparent right at the beginning of Augustine's career as a priest, and recurred regularly until he became a bishop. In Sermon 216, as Augustine urges his listeners to seek the face of God, he says, "Be lowly in your search, because when you find what you seek, you will come to the security of the heights."[250] And a little later, in Sermon 353, Augustine declared, "*For of such is the kingdom of heaven,* namely, of the humble, that is to say those who are little ones in spirit. Don't despise it, don't shrink from it. This littleness is proper to great souls. Pride, on the other hand, is the misleading greatness of the weak …."[251] After these earliest sermons, there are no more explicit passages linking humility and greatness in the

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[249] *Sermo* 117.10.17 (*PL* 38, col. 671); translation Hill, *Sermons* IV, 87. "Ad magna nos tendimus, parva capiamus, et magni erimus. Vis capere celsitudinem Dei? Cape prius humilitatem Dei. Dignare esse humilis propter te, quia Deus dignatus est humilis esse propter eumdem te: non enim propter se. Cape ergo humilitatem Christi, disce humilis esse, noli superbire. Confitere infirmitatem tuam, jace patienter ante medicum. Cum ceperis humilitatem ejus, surgis cum illo."

[250] *Sermo* 216.8.8 (*PL* 38, col. 1081); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 172. "Humiles quaerite: quod cum inveneritis, ad securam altitudinem venietis."

[251] *Sermo* 353.2.1 (*PL* 39, col. 1561); translation Hill, *Sermons* X, 152. "*Talium est enim regnum coelorum*, humilium scilicet, hoc est, spiritualiter parvulorum. Non contemnatis, non abhorreatis. Magnorum est ista pusillitas. Superbia vero fallax infirmorum est magnitude …."

sermons in my study. However, in four more, Augustine makes allusions to this theme as he talks about the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. At the conclusion of Sermon 273, amid a discussion of Christ's dual nature, Augustine says:

> ... even Christ himself, though he is God, though he is one God with the Father, though he is the Word of the Father, only-begotten, equal and coeternal with the Father; yet insofar as he was prepared to be a man, he preferred to be called a priest rather than to require a priest's services; he preferred to be a sacrifice rather than to demand sacrifice, insofar as he is a man. Because insofar as he is God, everything that is owed to the Father is also owed to the only-begotten Son.[252]

Sermons 252 and 265B include similar oblique references to the humility-greatness theme, each of them deriving from a broader discussion about Christ. "In many and various ways our Lord Jesus Christ manifested both his divine highness and his human pathos in the holy scriptures," Augustine says in his opening line of Sermon 252.[253] And in Sermon 265B, Augustine begins with this statement: "After rising again, you see, he ascended into heaven (greatness) in the same body in which, after dying, he had visited the underworld (lowliness). He now, that is, deposited in heaven that dwelling of his immortal flesh (greatness), which had fashioned for himself in the womb of his virgin

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[252] *Sermo* 273.9.9 (*PL* 38, col. 1252); translation Hill, *Sermons* VIII, 21. "... et ipse Christus cum sit Deus, cum sit cum Patre unus Deus, cum sit Verbum Patris, unigenitus, aequalis Patri et coaeternus; tamen in quantum homo esse dignatus est, maluit sacerdos dici, quam sibi exigere sacerdotem; maluit sacrificium esse, quam poscere; in quantum homo est. Nam in quantum Deus est, totum quod Patri debetur, et unigenito Filio debetur."

[253] *Sermo* 252.1.1 (*PL* 38, col. 1171); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 132. "Multis et variis modis, et altitudinem divinitatis suae, et misericordiam humanitatis, in Scripturis sanctis Dominus noster Jesus Christus ostendit." Hill's translation says "divine highness and human kindness," and I suspect he chose the word "kindness" because of its ring with "highness." But I think a better translation of Augustine's *misericordiam* would be pity or compassion or pathos. I have substituted the third of those options in my quotation above.

128

mother (lowliness, especially in an antique society that often regarded the body as evil or a burden)."[254]

While the humility-greatness theme is present throughout Augustine's early sermons, we can see the shifts in rhetoric we identified in the previous two chapters as being, in part, a working out of this theme in his sermonic method. There is little that is humble about Augustine's rhetoric in the showy sermons 214 and 216, or even in the highly theatrical Sermons 1 and 12. In these instances, Augustine appears to go after greatness directly. But in sermons 273, 252 and 265B—the last three sermons from which I quoted above—Augustine's language is noticeably simpler and less showy. The structures and manner of address are more direct, less ornate. Sermon 252 is a deliberate discussion of a tricky passage in John, and is almost entirely in the low style. Sermon 265B, which I find to be a good proxy for the remainder of Augustine's preaching career, is more polished and mainly in the middle style, but it is also short, to the point, and derives much of its charm from the proof texts and paradoxical images of scripture. It is a good example of how, by 396 or 397, Augustine had come to the conclusions about decorum he would later articulate as a major theme of Book 4 of *DDC*. Speaking of the eloquence of the biblical authors, Augustine said, "whereas the more lowly it appears, the higher does it soar above other writers, not by any kind of windiness, but by its very solidity. … through another kind of eloquence of their own they employed this eloquence of ours in such a way that it was neither lacking nor obtrusive in their writings, because it

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[254] *Sermo Casinensis* 2.76.1 (*PLS* 2, 531); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 249. "In eo namque corpore in caelum resurgens ascendit, in quo corpore mortuus inferos visitavit. Ipsum quipped habitaculum iam immortalis carnis suae in caelo collocavit, quod sibi ipse matris virginis utero fabricavit."

was important that it should be neither rejected nor paraded by them."[255] As I said before, Augustine is still putting on a show with his sermons, but it is as if he has left Broadway and is instead a star performer in an intimate community theater.

Smack in the middle of the examples I have discussed above is a pregnant passage in Sermon 50 that is, I think, a major turning point in Augustine's preaching,[256] as well as a statement about the connection of humility and greatness. The passage comes in a sermon against the Manichees, but it is in a section where Augustine shifts from dueling with his opponents to doing something else: interpreting the day's passage. The passage is from Haggai 2:6-9: "There is still one little while, and I will shake heaven and earth, and sea and dry land, and I will set all the nations quaking. And there shall come the one desired by all the nations, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. Mine is the gold and mine is the silver, says the Lord of hosts. Great shall be the glory of this latest house, more than of the first, says the Lord of hosts." This is what Augustine says about it:

> Clearly it is about the latest, that is to say the second, coming of the Lord,
> when he is going to come in glory, that this verse is uttered when the
> prophet says, *And there shall come the one desired by all the nations.*
> After all, when he first came in mortal flesh by the virgin Mary, he was
> not yet desired by all the nations, because they had not yet believed. But
> now that the gospel seed has been scattered abroad through all the nations,
> the desire of him is kindled among all nations. … First, therefore, it was
> necessary for the heavens to be shaken, when the angel announced to the
> virgin that she would conceive him, when a star led the magi to worship
> him, when angels yet again told the shepherds where he was born; for the
> earth to be shaken, when it was disturbed by his miracles; for the sea to be

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[255] *DDC* 4.6.9 (*PL* 34, col. 93); translation Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 205-06. "alios autem, quanto videtur humilior, tanto altius non ventositate, sed soliditate transcendit."

[256] As I said in the previous chapters, Sermon 50 appears to show Augustine shifting his use of the formal aspects of rhetoric. The same appears to be true with his homiletic content as well.

shaken, when this world roared and raged with persecutions; for the dry land to be shaken when those who believed in him hungered and thirsted for justice; finally, for all the nations to be shaken when his gospel ran everywhere to and fro. Then at last would come the one desired by all the nations, as indeed according to the prophecy he is going to come. And this house shall be filled with glory, that is the Church.

And so it was only after that he added, *Mine is the silver and gold.* All wisdom, you see, which is metaphorically signified by the name of gold, and the *sayings of the Lord, sayings that are chaste, silver assayed in the fire of the earth, seven times refined* (Ps 12:6), so all such silver and gold is not men's but the Lord's, in order that *whoever glories* (since the house shall be filled with glory) *may glory in the Lord* (2 Cor 10:17). That high priest, you see, who dwells in this house, our Lord Jesus Christ, was pleased to offer himself as an example of humility, to ensure the return of man who had gone out from paradise through pride, as he declares in the gospel when he cries out, *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart* (Mt 11:29). Therefore, to prevent anyone in his house, that is in the Church, from getting a swollen head if he managed to think or say anything rather wise and wanted it to look as if it were his very own, just notice what an excellent cure he is told of by the Lord God: *Mine is the gold and mine is the silver.* In this way, you see, what follows will come to pass, that *great shall be the glory of this latest house more than of the first.*[257]

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[257] *Sermo* 50.7.10-8.11 (*PL* , col. 330-31); translation Hill, *Sermons* II, 349-50. "De novissimo enim Domini, id est, secundo adventu, quo in claritate venturus est, versus iste prolatus est, cum ait Propheta, *Et veniet Desideratus cunctis gentibus.* Quando enim primo in carne mortali per Mariam virginem venit, nondum desiderabatur a cunctis gentibus; quia nondum crediderant. Disseminato autem Evangelio per omnes gentes, in omnibus gentibus desiderium ejus accenditur. … Prius ergo oportebat moveri coelum, cum eum Angelus conceptura Virgini nuntiavit, cum Magos ad eum adorandum stella perduxit, cum rursus Angeli natum pastoribus indicarunt: moveri terram, cum ejus miraculis turbaretur: moveri mare, cum iste mundus persecutionibus fremeret: moveri aridam, cum in eum credentes esurirent sitirentque justitiam: moveri denique omnes gentes, cum Evangelium ejus usquequaque discurreret. Tunc deinde veniret Desideratus omnibus gentibus, sicut Propheta pronuntiante, venturus est. Et implebitur domus ista gloria, id est, Ecclesia. Consequenter itaque subjecit, *Meum est aurum, et meum est argentum.* Omnis enim sapientia quae nomine auri figurate significatur, et *eloquia Domini eloquia casta, argentum igne probatum terrae, purgatum septuplum*: omne ergo tale argentum et aurum non est hominum, sed Domini; ut quoniam implebitur domus gloria, qui gloriatur, in Domino glorietur. Quia enim sacerdos ille magnus, domus hujus inhabitator, Dominus noster Jesus Christus, propter reditum hominis, qui per superbiam de paradiso exierat, se ipsum exemplum humilitatis praebere dignatus est; quod testatur in Evangelio clamans, *Discite a me quoniam mitis sum, et humilis corde*: ne quis forte in domo ejus, id est, in Ecclesia, si quid sapienter potuerit vel sentire vel dicere, quasi sua propria videri volens extollatur; videte quanta medicina ei dicitur a Domino Deo, *Meum est aurum, et meum est argentum.* Sic enim fiet quod sequitur, ut *magna* sit *gloria domus istius novissimae plus quam primae*."

131

Here are the key things to note about this passage:

First, it is through the preaching of the gospel that Christ comes to be desired by all peoples.

Second, this preaching of the gospel "to and fro" is the last phase in history before the second coming of Christ. It is this phase in which the church now lives.

Third, the second coming of Christ will bring the manifestation of "all wisdom," which is of the Lord, not men.

Fourth, even though the second coming of Christ is yet to come, nevertheless Christ "dwells" in the church right now.

Fifth, Christ instructs all Christians to learn a life of humility from his example.

Sixth, any wisdom Christians do learn or say comes from Christ, not themselves. Augustine's statement suggests that he is the one who got a swollen head because he thought his wise thoughts and sayings were his own.

Seventh, it is through humility that Christ will fill his church with glory (a synonym of greatness).

This passage connects not only humility and greatness, but also wisdom and Christ, and it does so in a discussion about preaching. Remember that Augustine had been searching for the path to wisdom ever since reading Cicero's *Hortensius*. In Sermon 50, he is still holding up wisdom as the ultimate goal, the reaching of which will mark the end of history and the beginning of eternal glory. But now he is saying "all wisdom" will come when Christ comes. He is also saying that preaching the gospel is what the church is supposed to do until Christ's coming. And preaching is not supposed to be a presentation of one's own wisdom, for all wisdom belongs to Christ. Rather, preaching is

supposed to point to Christ, specifically to his wisdom and to his humility. When preachers do that, then glory shall fill the church. Rephrasing Augustine's sermon in the terms we have been using in this study, we can describe his view thus: The business of the church is rhetoric that communicates wisdom. This wisdom, if it is true wisdom, will come only from Christ and his gospel. Like Christ, this wisdom must be clothed with humility. Therefore, the business of the church is rhetoric that clothes wisdom with humility. It is this kind of rhetoric through which all peoples will come to desire Christ and through which the church shall be filled with glory. From this point on, Augustine sought to put this view of rhetoric into practice, ridding his rhetoric of exordia, humbling his structure and style, and as we saw, focusing even more intently on Christ and his wisdom.

It is worth asking why, however, if Augustine saw humility as vital to preaching, that he still continued to insist on the presence of rhetorical adornment. The answer, I think, lies in Augustine's connection of beauty, will and knowledge. In his view, one can only do what one wills, one can only will what one desires, and one can only desire what one delights in. Actions really flow from the heart, the seat of desires and affections, and not from the head. Clearly explaining a text or clearly presenting evidence appeals to the intellect. And if human wills were not corrupted by sin—desiring things which they ought not—then appeals to the intellect would suffice. But human wills are corrupted, pulled by strong desires toward sin and away from God. These sinful desires do not go away entirely, even after one is connected to Christ and receives new desires to follow him. Therefore, the way of truth must not only be made plain, but beautiful. For it is to beauty that people are drawn. And sin must not only be made plain, but also ugly and

133

fearful, for only in fear will men and women run from danger. Augustine never says that
rhetorical adornment "makes" sinners desire Christ, in such a way that rhetorical
adornment is required for one to desire Christ. But he does say the two are coincidental,
not only in his sermons but also in the *Confessions.* "It is no accident," Troup wrote of
Augustine in the *Confessions*, "that he initiates the text by presenting the Incarnation and
preaching as the grand conspiracy to produce belief—a decidedly rhetorical goal."[258]
Likewise in Sermon 50, Augustine asserts that God uses the rhetorical act of preaching to
"kindle" the desire for Christ among all nations. He concludes, as we saw in *DDC,* that
beautiful rhetoric, when aimed at the needs of weak wills (and not designed merely to
impress them), can stoke those kindled flames.

Incarnation-Wisdom

The fourth major theme of Augustine's sermons is the close connection between
Christ's incarnation and wisdom. This pair is nearly a mirror of the humility-greatness
combination, with incarnation reflecting Christ's humility and wisdom evoking his
divine, eternal home. But there are important distinctions that make incarnation-wisdom a
topic worth considering on its own. Once again, wisdom is a theme throughout
Augustine's early sermons. He describes it as the opposite of foolishness[259] and, more
poetically, the embrace of earthly utility by eternal felicity, a description he offers to

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[258] Troup, 4. He refers to *Confessiones* 1.1.1 (*PL* 32, col. 661); translation Boulding, 39. "Invocat te, Domine, fides mea quam dedisti mihi, quam inspirasti mihi per humanitatem Filii tui, per ministerium praedicatoris tui."

[259] *Sermo* 214.4 (*PL* 38, col 1068); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 152.

134

describe Christ's relation to God the Father.[260] Wisdom flows from eternity and is a life-giving blessing.[261] According to Paul, Augustine notes, wisdom is connected with Christ and with knowledge.[262] It is also, according to Paul, what preachers speak.[263] Wisdom renews all things, as Christ also does.[264] In fact, Augustine finally concedes in Sermon 12, Christ is "the wisdom of God."[265] And as we saw in Sermon 50, Augustine declares Christ the possessor of "all wisdom."[266]

These statements lead up gradually to a well-developed formula for the connection between Christ and wisdom: God came in the flesh (the incarnation-humiliation of Christ) to dispense wisdom to mankind in time, through the medium of rhetoric. Augustine gives this formula in Sermon 252, probably preached during the Easter season in 396, while laboriously interpreting a passage from John 21. "That he came in the flesh, you see, means that he himself dispensed wisdom to us in a temporal manner, in a temporal manner through the law, in a temporal manner through the prophets, in a temporal manner through the scriptures of the gospel," Augustine says, referring to three kinds of biblical literature—law, prophets, gospel—whcih can also be thought of as three

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[260] *Sermo* 214.8 (*PL* 38, col. 1070); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 155.

[261] *Sermo* 216.4.4 (*PL* 38, col. 1079); translation Hill, *Sermons* VI, 169.

[262] Quoting Rom. 11:33 in *Sermo* 1.5.5 (*PL* 38, col. 26); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 171.

[263] Quoting 2 Cor. 2:6 in *Sermo* 12.2.2 (*PL* 38, col. 100-01); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 298.

[264] Quoting Wisdom 7:27 in *Sermo* 12.10.10 (*PL* 38, col. 105); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 303.

[265] Alluding to 1 Cor 1:24; *Sermo* 12.12.12 (*PL* 38, col. 106); translation Hill, *Sermons* I, 304. "*sapientia Dei.*"

[266] *Sermo* 50.8.11 (*PL* 38, col. 331); translation Hill, *Sermons* II, 350. "omnis sapientia."

135

different forms of rhetoric.[267] And through a complicated interpretation of the number 153 (the number of fish caught by the disciples in the story in John 21), Augustine asserts that the church is participating in the third of the temporal stages of Christ's dispensation of wisdom.

Through reasoning that is opaque to modern minds, Augustine decides that 153 is actually a reference to the number 50: "the reason the number three was added appears to be to advise us by what particular multiplication a hundred and fifty was arrived at; as if to say, 'Divide a hundred and fifty by three.' So the real number to decode is 50. Augustine, preaching during Easter, decides it refers to the 40 days of Lent leading up to Easter plus the 10 days of Easter celebrations. But there is further symbolism, with Augustine arguing that the 40 days refer to human history while the 10 days refer to eternity.

> So the number forty stands for this present time, during which we toil away in the world; because here wisdom is dispensed to us in a temporal manner. … That he (Christ) came in the flesh, you see, means that he himself dispensed wisdom to us in a temporal manner, in a temporal manner through the law, in a temporal manner through the prophets, in a temporal manner through the scriptures of the gospel. You see, when all times have passed on, we shall see wisdom herself as she is, and she will pay us the number ten. … this number ten is the fullness of wisdom. But when it is dispensed in time and a temporal manner, because the mark of temporal realities is to be found in the number four, ten multiplied by four makes the number forty. Even the year changes with a fourfold rhythm, spring, summer, autumn, and winter. And a kind of fourfold rhythm of change marks all time. Again, the scripture mentions four winds. The gospel, you see, has gone out through the four cardinal points of the compass, being dispensed in time; and that's where the Catholic Church

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[267] *Sermo* 252.10.10 (*PL* 38, col. 1177); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 139. "Quod enim venit in carne, temporaliter nobis sapientiam ipse ministravit: temporaliter per Legem, temporaliter per Prophetas, temporaliter per Scripturas Evangelii."

herself if, occupying the four corners of the world. So that is the way in which the tenner makes the number forty.[268]

So Augustine says that the business of the church in the present is disbursing perfect wisdom (the tenner) in time (the number forty) via rhetoric. This description matches Troup's reading of the *Confessions* as Augustine's prescription to use rhetoric to apply eternal knowledge in the contingent circumstances of the temporal present. Augustine is now well removed from his goal at Cassiciacum, where he pursued a contemplative life. No longer is contemplation the route to wisdom; rhetoric is now in its place. And no longer is contemplation of perfect wisdom achievable in this life, as Augustine had claimed in his commentary of the Sermon on the Mount. Only when Christians leave the times of the forty and receive the tenner do they contemplate perfect wisdom: "wisdom," Augustine says later in Sermon 252, "no longer by a dispensation of different times, but eternally contemplating the creator distinguished from the creature, so as to enjoy the creator and in the creature to praise the creator."[269] Therefore, imitating Christ in this integration of eternal wisdom with temporal rhetoric is what Christians are to strive for, even though they will never attain it until the end of time.

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[268] *Sermo* 252.10.10 (*PL* 38, col. 1177-78); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 138-39. "Quadragenarius ergo numerus tempus hoc significat, in quo laboramus in saeculo: quia sapientia nobis hic dispensatur temporaliter. … Quod enim venit in carne, temporaliter nobis sapientiam ipse ministravit: temporaliter per Legem, temporaliter per Prophetas, temporaliter per Scripturas Evangelii. Cum transierint enim tempora, videbimus ipsam sapientiam sicut est, quae retribuit denarium numerum. … Iste est ergo denarius, plenitudo sapientiae. Sed quando temporaliter distribuitur; quia in quaternario numero est insigne temporalium, quater ductus denarius, quadragenarium numerum facit. Et annus quadrifarie variatur, verno, aestate, autumno et hieme: et maxime apparet in tempore quaternaria quaedam vicissitudo. Quatuor etiam ventos Scriptura commemorat. Per quatuor enim cardines perrexit Evangelium, quod in tempore dispensatur: et ipsa est catholica Ecclesia, quae quatuor partes orbis obtinuit. Ergo denarius hoc modo quadragenarium numerum facit."

[269] *Sermo* 252.11.11 (*PL* 38, col. 1178); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 139. "jam non per temporum distributionem, sed in aeterna contemplatione sapientiam discernentem Creatorem a creatura; ut Creatore perfruatur, de creatura laudet Creatorem."

137

Augustine concludes this sermon with an exhortation to spiritual discipline and righteous living, which he contends can even help one grow in knowledge and wisdom. "Complete and perfect happiness, indeed, consists in being quick to understand in living a good life; but if you can't manage both, it is better to live a good life than to be quick to understand. If you live a good life, you see, you earn the right to a fuller understanding; while if you live a bad one, you will lose even what you do understand."[270] So we have here the same three elements that Troup identified in his analysis of the *Confessions*: wisdom, dispensed in time through language and righteous actions. This is Augustine's triangle of wisdom, and it would guide him the rest of his life. "The Ciceronean integration, the wisdom for which the *Hortensius* had made him burn, could be fulfilled exclusively in Christ incarnate: the human embodiment of Wisdom," Troup wrote. "Through his incarnation, Christ perfectly integrates philosophy and rhetoric, form and content, and exercises his passions perfectly in the body."[271] Sermon 252, preached perhaps a year before the writing of the *Confessions*, indicates strongly that Augustine's views on rhetoric had already congealed on the key point of integration of wisdom and eloquence—exemplified perfectly by Christ and only possible through him—the same key point he would echo 30 years later, when he got around to finishing *DDC*.

Sermon 252 also parallels the other major themes of *DDC* Book 4. It strongly advocates the union of wisdom and eloquence, yet like *DDC* also contends that eloquence is a matter of both words and deeds. The sermon is definitely simplified in its structure,

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[270] *Sermo* 252.12.12 (*PL* 38, col. 1179); translation Hill, *Sermons* VII, 140. "Plenitudo quidem est et beatitudo perfecta, ut cito quisque intelligat et bene vivat: sed si forte utrumque non potest, melius est bene vivere, quam cito intelligere. Qui enim bene vivit, meretur amplius intelligere: qui male vivit, et quod intelligit perdet."

[271] Troup, 73.

with no exordium and only a modest peroration. It is instead a straightforward discussion of the passage of scripture read that day as part of the liturgy. As we saw in the previous chapter, the style is not showy and yet is still engaging, with a smattering of rhetorical devices and metaphors throughout. In all these respects Sermon 252 shows that, as Augustine began his career as a bishop, he had finally settled into the sermonic style that would mark the rest of his career and which he would then articulate at the end of his life.

Conclusion

I began this study questioning whether Augustine's practice of rhetoric in his sermons really matched his prescriptions for rhetoric in Book 4 of *DDC*. My study suggests that, by about 396, it did. But before that time, Augustine appears to have been working up to the ideas he later articulated in *DDC*. During those early years, Augustine applied the Christian notions of love, humility, incarnation and wisdom to transform the character of his sermons from a showiness intended to impress to a simplicity intended to teach, from a presentation meant to entertain to a conversation meant to engage. He did this first by adopting a new structure. Augustine altered the structure of his sermons, melding them into the larger liturgy to make them participatory performacnes for his audience. This structure also embedded Augustine's words in the words of God in scripture, the words of incarnational wisdom that make human communication and learning possible. Also, during his years as a priest, Augustine engineered a shift in the purpose of rhetoric that sought in one stroke to unchain it from elite pagan culture and to bind it to the Christian mission of teaching the masses. Yet Augustine's dimming view of the will—deadened by sin and, even when revived by Christ, never fully healed in this life—demanded that knowledge be expressed with beauty, so that fickle human hearts would find it desirable. His notions of beauty—bejeweled with scripture, theatrical and ringing with memorable sounds—were distinctively late antique, even if they were toned down by the biblical message and its model of simplicity. Thus August sought to redeem classical eloquence as a tool, not to serve the power and prestige of the speaker in the moment, but instead to lift human hearts and minds to transcendent truth.

140

That Augustine lessened the rhetorical adornment of his sermons after his early years is hardly a new conclusion, but my study adds to existing historiography by presenting an argument for when, why and how Augustine made this change. Such questions have been glossed over by too many scholars of Augustine's rhetoric, as they instead focus on describing how *DDC* is similar to or different from other statements of rhetoric, both classical and Christian. Too many scholars have misread Augustine's statements against rhetoric in the *Confessions*, concluding that he tried to abandon rhetoric but, either unconsciously or out of force of habit, kept using many of its devices.[272] This explanation I find to be unsatisfactory. It fails, in my view, to adequately account for the lavishly adorned language in two of Augustine's latest works, *De civitate dei* and Book 4 of *DDC*. Nor does it account for Augustine's highly adorned language in many of his letters. If Augustine had abandoned rhetoric after his early years, why did it keep showing up throughout his later career, even spiking in some of his latest and most important works? More to the point in this study of sermons, why did Augustine recommend rhetoric to fellow preachers at the end of his life? As W.R. Johnson noted of *DDC*, "this was the book that he finished at the end of his life, the book that had to be finished. He ended his life, as he had begun it, by defending rhetoric with all the honesty and all the passion that he could muster." Not only did Augustine consciously defend rhetoric, but he also thought deeply about how to practice it in church preaching. His actual sermons show marked change from 391 to 396. And his statements in the *Confessions, DDC* and *Retractationes* suggest that he was making these changes quite

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[272] See Chapter 1, n20-21.

141

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consciously as he sought to make his rhetoric fit more snugly the needs of his congregation.

Augustine created a new rhetoric for all Christian speakers after him—a participatory performance with simple words, humble presentation, vivid descriptions, pleasing sounds. Augustine drew many of these features from the Christian scriptures, as his use of biblical examples in *DDC* Book 4 makes clear.[273] But my study suggests that Augustine was doing far more than shifting rhetorical models from Cicero to Paul. It is true that Augustine's sermons on the whole do not have the same rhetorical polish of late-antique literary works, including his own, let alone the sublime language of a Vergil or Cicero. Neither does Augustine quote classical masters in any of his sermons, early or late, but instead copiously cites the scriptures as his new literary canon. Yet Augustine never stopped engaging with the words of the classical masters, as the prominent references to Cicero and Vergil in *DDC* Book 4 make clear.[274] Even more importantly, it was not merely the form of the scriptures that Augustine sought to copy, but also their content—content with ramifications for how an orator in church ought to form his words. By studying the structure, style and content of Augustine's early sermons, I have sought to demonstrate that Augustine gradually worked out in practice how Christian theology should shape classical rhetoric—the themes he later recorded in *DDC* Book 4.

Augustine's theory and practice of rhetoric preserved a high place for rhetoric in Christian culture. In his sermons and in *DDC*, Augustine sought to apply eternal truth,

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[273] Oberhelman, 110-11. He suggests that the Christian Bible was the source of the simpler sermon style of Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome: "A final issue is the provenance of this simple homiletic style, for it was not taught, of course, in the rhetorical schools, nor does it appear in the literary productions of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine. Rather, the inspiration was the style that Christian writers discovered in the Bible."

[274] For Augustine's lifelong engagement with Vergil, see MacCormack, 228-29.

either in words or deeds, to real-life circumstances—and he determined that such application must be performed with a balance of beauty, humility and love for others. In Augustine's eyes, rhetoric was vital to wisdom—the integration of knowledge, language and morality. For Augustine, this kind of integrative wisdom was to be the aim of every Christian. Integrative wisdom as Augustine displayed it became the ideal at which Christian preachers in the Latin world aimed for centuries on.

Appendix

As I noted in my introduction, there has in the past five decades been an enormous amount of work on the chronology of Augustine's sermons, yet dating the sermons is far from simple or free from controversy. I will explain how and why I selected the nine sermons in this study and excluded other sermons that are, by some scholars, dated to the period 391 to 396. Here are the nine sermons and their approximate dates, and the reasons why I ordered them the way I did:

Sermon 214: 391. Augustine says in the sermon he has just begun his priesthood.

Sermon 216: 391. Augustine again says he has just begun to preach.

Sermon 353: 391-96. So say Bonifatius Fischer and Adalbert Kunzelman. Hill splits the difference by saying 394. I grouped it with the first two sermons in my study mainly because it contains a classical exordium and peroration, whereas later sermons in my study do not.[275] This is hardly water-tight chronological reasoning, but even if sermon 353 were discarded from my analysis, my conclusions would still be amply supported.

Sermon 1: 394-5. Hill says simply before 396, as do nearly all other scholars. Frede says 394-5. [276] As I said in Chapter 1, most scholars date this sermon to sometime near 394 because it concerns the Manichees and could be one of the sermons Augustine references in *Retractationes*. He says he preached sermons on some of the same topics he addressed in a book against Adimantus the Manichee, which can be dated to 394.

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[275] *Sermo* 353.1 (*PL* 39, col. 1560); transaltion Hill, *Sermons* X, 152; *Sermo* 353.4 (*PL* 39, col. 1562-63); translation Hill, *Sermons* X, 155.

[276] Hermann Josef Frede, *Kirchenschriftsteller: Verzeichnis und Sigel,* Vetus Latina 1, no. 1 (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1981), 135.

Sermon 12: 394-95. For same reasons as Sermon 1.

Sermon 50: 394-95. For same reasons as Sermons 1 and 12.

Sermon 273: Jan. 21, 396. All the dating authorities agree on this year for this sermon. The specific date comes from the fact that Augustine says the fast of the martyrs which the sermon commemorates coincided with the feast of St. Agnes, which is celebrated on January 21.[277]

Sermon 252: April 396. Augustine in the sermon says that the church is or has been celebrating Easter, which in 396 was in April. Some scholars even date the sermon specifically to April 18, 396.[278] Frede says simply 396.[279] My analysis assumes it as being preached in 396, but my conclusions would not be meaningfully changed if it was instead preached a year earlier.

Sermon 265B: 396-397. I chose sermon in order to have one clearly after Augustine was officially installed as bishop in Hippo Regius, which occurred sometime in 396. Fischer, Kunzelman, Anne Marie la Bonnardiere and Hill all date it to either 396 or 397. One scholar, Tarcisius van Bavel, dates it to 412.[280] I doubt that, as does Hill. But even a later date does not really present a problem in my analysis, as Sermon 265B functions as a bookend against which to compare the sermons Augustine preached while still a priest.

There are other sermons that some scholars date to the years 391-96, which I have decided to exclude from my analysis. I will briefly explain why.

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[277] Hill, *Sermons* VIII, 22n2.

[278] Hill, *Sermons* VII, 141n1.

[279] Frede, 144.

[280] Hill, *Sermons* VII, 251n1.

145

Sermon 2: Even though Frede and several other patristic scholars date this sermon to 391[281], I agree with Hill's reasoning that the precision of Augustine's interpretation of the story of Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac suggests a date after he wrote his treatise *The Excellence of Marriage,* which would be about 403. Also, the sermon has no true exordium or peroration, but instead begins and ends with the scripture of the day—a characteristic, I argue, that Augustine developed after 391.

Sermon 20: Frede suggests this sermon was preached after but not in 391[282], but I think it should be marked as 396 or later. That is because, in the very last paragraph, Augustine refers to more sermons to be preached that day from "the presbyters," implying that he is no longer one of them. This indicates he is already bishop.

Sermon 184: Most scholars date this sermon to 411 or later.[283] Hill argues for before 396 because it is highly polished and shows marks of extensive preparation, rather than Augustine's later habit of winging it. I thought Hill's speculations too thin a basis to include this sermon in my analysis.[284]

Sermon 259: Some scholars date this sermon to 393-4, others to 400[285]. This was probably the closest call for a sermon I left out. But Augustine makes a reference in this Easter season sermon to an earlier explanation of the 153 fish in John 21.[286] That

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[281] Frede, 135.

[282] Ibid.

[283] Frede, 140.

[284] Hill, *Sermons* VI, 19n1.

[285] Frede, 144.

[286] Hill, *Sermons* VII, 177.

explanation is contained in Sermon 252, which is part of my analysis, and which dates at least as late as Easter 395. The explanation in Sermon 252 bears no sign whatever of Augustine having ever broached the topic before, so I cannot agree that Sermon 259 pre-dates it. And since Augustine references this explanation with the words "some time ago, if I remember rightly," there appears to have been more than a few days' gap between Sermon 252 and 259.[287] More likely the sermons were preached a year or more apart. Given that Frede dates it as late as 400, I elected to leave it out.

Sermon 260: Hill again dates this sermon to 394, but Frede suggests near after 409.[288] I thought the discrepancy too large to include it in my analysis.

Sermon 351: I agree with Hill's conclusion, echoing Erasmus, that this sermon is spurious, even though the Maurists considered it genuine. The style lacks the feel of Augustine's other sermons. Also foreign is the repeated quoting of a passage of scripture without referring to the earlier citations.[289]

Hill dates several sermons as "uncertain," but then in footnotes suggests a date falling within the 391-396 timeframe. Examples include sermons 199, 200, 210, 219, 223B, 223C, 223G, 271, 292 and 391. Hill's reasoning is based mainly on the apparent polish of Augustine's rhetoric or the length of the sermon, although Hill does not apply these criteria consistently. He dates some sermons early because they are long, but then dates other short sermons early because they are polished. I did not consider his

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[287] Hill, however, interprets the phrase as a joke, and says a few days' gap is possible. Again, I disagree, because the day's text in Sermon 259 is from John 20, not John 21 as in Sermon 252. It is unlikely Augustine spent an Easter season preaching through the gospel in reverse order. Hill, *Sermons* VII, 183.

[288] Frede, 144.

[289] Hill, *Sermons* X, 134-35n1, n11, n38 and n39.

arguments on these sermons strong enough to accept, so I excluded all these uncertain sermons from my analysis. For his aprt, Frede overs a date range on only two of the sermons listed above, suggesting somewhere between 393 and 405 for sermons 200 and 292.[290] I did not consider this range narrow enough to use these sermons in my analysis.

As a final note, the nine sermons included in my analysis are nearly universally considered to have been preached in Hippo Regius or, at the very least, in a town nearby. None appear to have been preached in Carthage, which Augustine visited most summers. In cosmopolitan Carthage, Augustine appears to have used more polished rhetoric than in the shipping port of Hippo Regius. However, because none of the sermons in my analysis was delivered in Carthage, that difference in practice does not affect my observations.

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[290] Frede, 141, 145.

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Education:
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- Master of Arts, History, Indiana University, 2012

Honors, Awards, Fellowships:
- Alliance of Area Business Publications, silver award for industry newsletter, 2011
- Golden Key International Honour Society, IUPUI Chapter, 2009
- Albert J. Beveridge Fellowship, for graduate history study, 2007-2008
- Association of Health Care Journalists, third place for best health care story, 2007
- Charles & Mary Beard Prize, for best history thesis at DePauw University, 2002
- Society of Professional Journalists' outstanding graduate, DePauw, 2001
- Phi Beta Kappa Society, DePauw chapter, 2001
- Rolla M. Malpas Trust Scholarship, paid all tuition and fees, DePauw, 1997-2001
- Valedictorian, Sheridan High School, 1997

Professional Experience:
- **The Indianapolis Star**, business reporter *(June 2001-Feb. 2007)*: Wrote hundreds of articles while covering small business, retail, state legislature and economic development. Reported from Japan and South Korea during 2006 trade mission of Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels
- **Indianapolis Business Journal**, health care and education reporter *(Feb. 2007-present)*: Have written hundreds of articles on the business and financing of health care and education, including extensive analysis during the 2009-'10 Congressional debate of health care reform and the 2011 debate by the Indiana state legislature of K-12 school reforms

Publications: *William Symington's Messiah the Prince*, a modernized abridgment, forthcoming