

Classical Rhetoric And Our Preaching: Formalization, Anathematization, Utilization

[The General Conference of the Pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod : Sep. 24, 1986]

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Paul Tillich, who is a preeminent example of liberal theology in our era, at one point makes the statement that

no minister should proclaim more than his intention to speak the Word when he preaches. He never should assert that he has spoken it or that he will be able to speak it in the future, for since he possesses no power over the revelatory constellation, he possesses no power to preach the Word. (qtd. in Preus, H. 648)

A recent review in *Homiletic* of a homiletics text by James W. Cox similarly echoes this sentiment. Thomas E. Ridenhour, Sr., of Lutheran Theological Seminary, in Gettysburg, PA, criticizes Cox's text in stating that

There is a major difficulty in Cox's book. The difficulty is as not one limited to this particular book in the field of homiletics. The issue is the use of insights from communication theory. Cox is not always clear, precise, nor consistent in the use he makes of these insights. He speaks of "communicating God's truth" in preaching, but he is not at all clear as to what he intends by this phrase. Is there a "truth of God" that can be communicated from one person to another? What is such? How does one communicate "truth"? It appears that "God's truth" is a substance that can be transferred from one person to another. In certain contemporary theories of human communication such a view of truth and its communication is highly questionable. (11)

While there are, indeed, many useful insights from modern communication theory which may be applied to our preaching, from the *previous* statements we see a major shortcoming in the epistemology (theory of knowledge) behind much modern writing on communication. Governed by a predisposition that there is no absolute truth, communication theorists carry on a never-ending dialogue about incomprehensibles and uncertainties.

Contrasted with this view of truth in preaching is the one which Confessional Lutheranism subscribes to:

Our preaching and teaching, applied as it is to our own day, although it departs markedly from the so-called materia, the very words, of Scripture, conforms nevertheless to the content of the divine Word. This fact should be of great comfort to us. What we proclaim is nothing less than the Word of God. (Preus R. "The Power of God's Word" 457)

Despite the unscriptural world-view of the Greeks and Romans, we at least find among their writings on rhetoric and communication a belief in absolutes. While homiletics texts have been abandoning insights from classical rhetoric for sometime now, I think Lloyd Perry is right

when he says: “It is unfortunate that we have not made more of an attempt to correlate the best of classical rhetoric with homiletical theory” (25). While we are currently seeing in the writing field examples of militant anti-classicalism (Knoblauch for example), this paper takes the position that much may be gained from a study of past rhetoricians of Greece and Rome. This essay, then, looks at the classical tradition, at the formalization of rhetoric into a system, its anathematization by the Church, and finally, its utilization. Because this paper takes the form of a survey, an overview, it makes no claims to completeness. If the paper generates discussion in our midst, further study, and especially the desire to improve our preaching of the Gospel, it will have accomplished its purpose. Preaching ought to be the top priority on our list of pastoral duties. Our confessions recognize it by stating that, “There is nothing that attaches people to the church as does good preaching” (*Triglot* 401, 51).

I. Classical Rhetoric: Formalized and Recognized

While the purpose of this essay is not to provide a detailed survey of the tradition of ancient rhetoric, it is crucial to our discussion to mention a few key people and ideas. Rhetoric has a long tradition and so we first look to Greece especially, and Rome, because there rhetoric was first formalized. For our purposes, “rhetoric” is “the art of effective communication.” As Kennedy points out, “most subsequent rhetoric all over the world has been influenced by Greek ideas on the subject” (*Classical rhetoric* 7). It is significant, I think, that Christianity grew out of a Greco-Roman culture and not, let’s say, an Indian-Chinese culture. While Lutherans regularly use the legacies of western tradition, logic and dialectic, classification, definition, clarity of thought, these are “far less favored in traditional literature of India and China ... ” (Oliver 10-11). It was the Greeks and Romans who, preeminently, sought to analyze, identify, and formally order the concepts of communication.

Classical Rhetoric: Formalized

Homer’s *Iliad* speaks of “the winged words of good speakers,” and features Nestor “the orator-king.”

Nestor is an elder who possesses both wisdom and rhetorical skill to express his wisdom effectively. It is this combination of wisdom and good speech that is admired, not just excellence in speech alone. Nestor illustrates the continuous concern of the Greeks for the *logos*, which might be defined as “thought-plus expression.” (Murphy *A Synoptic History* 4)

While the seed ideas of formalized rhetoric are expressed already in Homer, Corax the Sicilian (ca. 476 BC) is credited as the inventor of rhetoric. Tisias, his pupil, transmitted rhetoric to the mainland of Greece. With rhetoric came the Sophists. While the Sophists are traditionally thought of as rhetoricians guilty of ornamental excess in their oratory, expression-without-substantial thought, not all the Sophists were guilty of unethical rhetoric as the term seems to imply today.

Gorgias (485-380 BC) “believed that certain stylistic features—notably alliteration, assonance, antithesis, and parallelism—would make his prose persuasive” (Murphy *A Synoptic History* 10). Isocrates (436-338 BC), John Milton’s “Old Man Eloquent,” is chiefly quoted

because of two of his works. In “Against the Sophists” he wrote: “The Gods have given us speech—the power which has civilized human life; shall we not strive to make the best use of it?” (Murphy 12). In his “Antidosis” Isocrates names the three things needed to make a great speaker: natural ability, practice or experience, and education (Murphy 12). Isocrates encouraged his students to read the eloquent writers of the time and to practice “imitation” of their style. As well, “Old Man Eloquent” contributed the periodic sentence to rhetoric.

Plato (427-347 BC) who was highly critical of rhetoric in his earlier works, contributed insights to rhetoric through the so-called “Socratic Method.” In a typical dialogue of Plato one sees: 1) key terms defined, 2) a proposition stated, 3) possible contradictions identified, 4) ideas applied. In the *Phaedrus* Plato lauds rhetoric as “the art of winning the soul by discourse.” He further states that a discourse ought to have a beginning (preamble), middle (argument), and end (conclusion). It ought to display “unity” of thought and be “neither long nor short, but of reasonable length.”

Aristotle (394-322 BC), who studied under Plato and served as tutor to Alexander the Great, spoke of three kinds of persuasive proofs in his *Rhetoric*. One persuades a listener by appealing to his rational faculties (*logos*), his emotional faculties (*pathos*), or by building one’s own credibility through the speech (*ethos*). Audience analysis was an important part of Aristotle’s system. One must speak to be understood. That put *clarity* at the top of communicative priorities, for “... a good style is, first of all, clear” (185). In speaking clearly to one’s audience, holds Aristotle, one must shape the speaking in the light of the particular audience addressed.

Cicero in his *De Inventione* establishes the well known “canons” of rhetoric which affect most every rhetoric thereafter. How does one go about creating rhetoric? Cicero says that first, we must find out what we are going to say: Invention (*Inventio*); second, arrange or structure the material: Arrangement (*Dispositio*); third, find the appropriate language, the best word or expression: Style (*Elocutio*); fourth, memorize the speech: Memory (*Memoria*); last, deliver the speech: Delivery (*Pronuntiatio*), which involves voice and use of the body. According to Cicero, each speech ought to have six parts. Cicero’s six part structure reflects the legal setting in which the speech is delivered. There is the beginning, where you to seek to capture the audience’s attention and good will (*Exordium*); next, the speaker gives background (*Narratio*); third, the speaker establishes matters agreed upon with opponents and the plan or method for tackling the ensuing matters (*Partitio*); fourth, the arguments proceed (*Confirmatio*); fifth, the counter-arguments (*Reprehensio*); last the summary and conclusion finish the oration (*Peroratio*). In Cicero’s estimation, the orator should possess a liberal arts background in all subjects and should be able to use all the ornaments of style. Three styles emerge from Cicero’s theory: the plain, moderate, and grand styles.

Quintilian (ca. 40-95 AD) in his *Institutio Oratoria* establishes an educational program to produce the ideal orator, based on Cicero. The *Institutio* has great implications for the church’s later history. “In the classical period, his precepts furnished the model for Roman provincial schools, which were later attended by some of the early fathers of the Christian Church” (Murphy *Rhetoric* 22) The list includes Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory of Caesarea, Eusebius of Caesarea, John of Antioch (Chrysostom) and Basil of Caesarea. In the Reformation, Quintilian (and thus Cicero) would have been known thoroughly by theological graduates at Wittenberg University. As Schwiebert has noted: “Before entering the School of Theology, the student was required to obtain a master’s degree in Liberal Arts. The textbook in rhetoric was the large work by the Roman Quintilian which, Melanchthon claimed, would provide complete

mastery of dialectics and rhetoric” (“The Reformation ... ” 25). It was Quintilian’s opinion that students should read the best writers. Above all, the highest ideal of rhetoric was for the speaker to be a “*vir bonus dicendi peritus*” (a good man speaking well).

Classical Rhetoric: Recognized

As the curriculum at Wittenberg shows, the influence of classical rhetoric, obviously, did not die out, but came to play a critical part in the program of education spearheaded by Melanchthon. Classical rhetoric became the recognized approach for teaching communication. Melanchthon’s rhetoric, *Elementorum Rhetorices Libri Duo* was used widely in Europe. The first English rhetoric by Leonard Cox, was based on Melanchthon’s rhetoric (LaFontaine 71). In 1535, when the curriculum was revised at Cambridge, both Melanchthon and Aristotle were both required reading (Meyer 534, citing Porter). Luther himself, while purging Wittenberg of Aristotle’s philosophical works, nevertheless recommended Aristotle’s *Logic, Rhetoric, and Poetry*, because of their useful insights for preachers (Schwiebert *Luther* 299; Becker 78). Graebner in describing the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s genesis, during the last century, indicates the enduring influence of classical rhetoric to pastors in the parish.

Who were those men that in the swamps and clayey hills of Perry County, Mo., laid the foundations of a confessional Lutheranism? The fathers of our church were scholars.... In that malarial frontier solitude one could hear men converse in Latin; Hebrew and Chaldean lexicon, Luther, Calovius, Loescher, *Aristotle*, and *Quintilian*, and many another pig-skin-covered tome looked down from shelves made of hewn oak boards.... (My emphasis, *The Pastor* 37)

We need not go beyond Bethany to discover the recognition afforded classical rhetoric. Pastors of this synod who attended Bethany experienced its influence. Bethany’s Freshman English Communication courses combining speech and writing are “indirectly traceable to Cicero and Quintilian”(Golden 89; Lindemann 42).

After rhetoric had been systematized and formalized, it became *recognized* and established as a useful tool for communication.

Unfortunately, some apotheosized, glorified rhetoric in an unnatural way. Some made eloquence to be only a matter of style, ornamentation without concern for substance. Others ascribed to rhetoric an unsavory means of power, power which rested in style. Truth became less important; the substance behind the words mattered not so much as winning one over by clever words.

The classical ideal of humanism, which centered on eloquence, sought to create a super man, who needed no one but himself, ultimately, so that, “once the mind had been trained it was pure power, completely free, ready for any demands that might be made on it” (Marrou 305-06).

Centuries later, rhetoric in the hands of unconscionable men, men operating apart from grace, would be used as a power to move the masses to suit the chimera of a grotesque Hellenism. The moving speeches of Hitler are witness enough to the evil heights to which eloquence might ascend. *Der Führer* drunk on the ideal of his own Dorean myth (Marrou 36) spewed forth an eloquence which enthralled thousands. In his *Mein Kampf* he wrote: “I know that one is able to win people far more by the spoken than by the written word, and that every

great movement in the globe owes its rise to the great speakers and not to the great writers: (qtd. in Kennedy *His Word* 17).

Of course, Hitler would have been condemned by Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero and Quintilian. Rhetoric, they would have claimed, is a neutral thing; it is simply the art of communication. It can be used by evil or ethical men. The Sophists gave up the substance for the sake of style or ornamentation in order to gain “results.” In the hands of a Gorgias, rhetoric could work like *magic*, to make anything seem tantalizingly like truth, whether or not it actually was in reality. It was Gorgias who had said in his “Helen” that “the very principle of the art of speech was to stir passions, and thereby to deceive” (de Romilly 25) Plato banished poets from his Republic. With their rhetorical embellishments, their poetic speech, they could, like Sirens, work spells upon men so that whatever was preached in elegant style, became truth. There was no substance, just skilled rhetoricians of the word, masters of verbal necromancy, masked actors manipulating myths until they seemed glorious truth. Not only Plato but Quintilian would have thrown Hitler out of his kingdom. An orator must be a “good man speaking well.” Dieterich Bonhoeffer would have pointed to Churchill in his own time as an example of proper rhetoric. Recognizing the positive value of classical rhetoric (while Hitler moved the crowds) Bonhoeffer lectured on preaching at the so-called “Confessing Church seminary at Finkenwalde, citing Cicero’s rhetoric” (Fant 161).

II. Classical Rhetoric: Anathematized

God’s people have always been cautious about the world’s wisdom, because often the world’s wisdom issues from an antithetical *Weltanschauung* with an agenda actively contrary to God’s will. Daniel and his three scholar friends thrust into Babylon (“In every matter of wisdom and understanding ... ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters,” Dan 1:20), and Moses, washed on to the shore in Egypt (“... educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians ... powerful in speech and action) knew that the worldly wisdom that they had been allowed to possess must bow before God and his wisdom. Luther, who said, “as we prize the Gospel, let us sustain classical studies,” (qtd. in Graebner *The Pastor* 38) would have also agreed with Martin Franzmann: “Before the Cross, vast sections of our libraries, huge areas of our civilization, recede into insignificance and irrelevance” (83).

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the message of the cross was foolishness, but wisdom at the same time, the power of God for salvation unto fallen mankind, he spoke in a way which seemed to anathematize the entire system of classical rhetoric. He discounted in 1 Cor 1:18-25 the scholarship and scholars, intelligence and the intelligentsia, wisdom and the wise of this world. In ink, the stylus penned those words which elevate God to the preeminent position in matters of salvation over against speech or eloquence as a thing in itself.

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.... My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.
(NIV 1 Cor 2: 1, 4, 5)

The criticism after Paul seems to increase. James J. Murphy in his *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* lists the voices who dissented against the Greek system of rhetoric and thought. Numbered among them are Lactantius, Cyprian, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Gregory

Nazianzen, Basil of Caesarea, Ambrose and Jerome (48-55). To Lactantius, the Greek and Roman works were “sweets which contain poison” (49). Tertullian’s reply is perhaps best known: “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians?” (49). Gregory Nazianzen criticized Gregory of Nyssa for becoming a rhetorician; Basil of Caesarea scorned the idea of “polishing periods” and the “laws of the encomium” as “sophistic vanities” (71). St. Jerome, sounding like Tertullian, asked, “What communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? What has Horace to do with the Psalter ... and Cicero with Apostle [Paul]? ... we ought not to drink the cup of Christ and the cup of devils at the same time” (53). Cyprian in comparing pagan eloquence and preaching says,

In courts of law, in public meetings, in political discussions, a full eloquence may be the pride of vocal ambition, but in speaking of the Lord God, a pure simplicity of expression (*vocis pura sinceritas non eloquentiae*) which is convincing depends upon the substance of the argument rather than upon the forcefulness of eloquence. (51)

Thus went the “rhetoric” against rhetoric in the first centuries.

And yet, during the Reformation we find the same kinds of things said. The issue of “substance” versus “expression” continues on. Luther with contrasting himself with Melanchthon, Karlstadt and Erasmus and “their capacity for substantial thought, *res*, and expression, *verba*,” stated that Melanchthon had *res et verba*; Erasmus, *verba sine re*; Luther, *res sine verbis*; Karlstadt, *nec res nec verba* (Caemmerer *The Melanchthonian Blight* 322). If Luther would have lived longer to experience Melanchthon’s defection, to evaluate not just the “capacity for substantial thought and expression,” but the actual, sustained *use*, he would probably have classified Philip, his close friend, as *verba sine re*, like Erasmus. Luther’s dealings with Erasmus reveal his antipathy to rhetoric—style without substance. In *The Bondage of the Free Will* Luther says about Erasmus:

... he avails himself of a rhetorical device for changing the subject, and tries to drag with him us, who know nothing of rhetoric.... no rhetoric can cheat an honest conscience. The arrow of conscience is proof against all the forces and figures of eloquence. I shall not allow our rhetorician thus to dissimulate and change the subject. (221)

Norman Madson, Sr., seems to depreciate the use of rhetoric in his article, “The Power of The Word,” reprinted recently in *The Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. “But God’s Word does not operate in a natural way, which would mean that it appeals to man’s reason; nor does it operate through what we call rhetorical eloquence, appealing to men’s emotions. No, it operates in a supernatural way” (54).

H. Grady Davis warns the preacher about being a technician rather than a preacher of the Gospel. Such a person “may become a rhetorician, an attractive speaker, but he will turn out to be something less than a preacher of the Gospel” (9).

Of course, this is a fairly depressing point to be at in a paper, which proposes to offer “Insights from Classical Rhetoric for Our Preaching.” With all the evidence against classical rhetoric perhaps it would be better to offer “Alternate Insights from Non-classical Christian

Rhetoric for Our Preaching.” Is there any way to escape the conclusion that classical rhetoric is harmful or dishonest, a method to be avoided? The last part of this paper searches for a baptized classical rhetoric, captive to Christ and sanctified for the sake of the Gospel.

III. Classical Rhetoric: Utilized

No matter what impression of rhetoric one may have, at this point, history reveals that rhetoric, and specifically, classical rhetoric, has been used by the church in its preaching and its apologetic. Whether Paul was trained in rhetoric, or not, some scholars have claimed that classical rhetorical elements exist in his writing (McLaughlin 40ff.; Lane Cooper in his introduction to Aristotle, pp. xxvii-xxix). While, as Lactantius says, Greek and Roman works were “sweets which contain poison,” Paul was not against quoting the pagan poets (Epimenides) or Luke (Cleanthes?, Aratus) to serve the Gospel commission. One may question whether Paul uses classical rhetoric in his Acts speeches, etc., but most will see in some of Paul’s writings an eloquence which matches any writer. What can compare with the substantial thought (*res*) and style (*verba*) of Romans 8:37-39?

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.
For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is not time to read 1 Cor 13, or dwell upon the irony that it comes at the end of the very same letter in which Paul says, “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence ...” (1 Cor 2:1).

George Milligan in his introduction to *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* says of these two epistles, that they are “moved by a heart-felt eloquence which makes them, regarded as literature, as notable as anything ever penned” (Moulton xx).

The key issue, I think, which puts the entire matter of rhetoric in perspective, here, is the issue of “substantial-thought,” or “content” (*res*) and “expression,” or “style” (*verba*). Already among the Greeks, you recall, we find Plato accusing Gorgias of using words, apart from truth, to persuade men to believe this thing or that thing. Paul lived in a day when philosopher preachers still scoured the streets and market places seeking to win over people to their view (Franzmann *The Word* 7). Although the grandeur of classical Greece was, by now, past, yet oratory, eloquence was viewed as a power in itself. But even if these men came with the finest style, beautiful words to match 1 Cor 13, even if they displayed the finest content (*res*), could their speech compare with the power behind Paul’s message? Whether Paul’s so-called eloquence was waxing or waning, his message of the Gospel possessed the very power of God. The Spirit of Christ in the message of the Gospel made the eloquent words of natural man seem like a Japanese ice sculpture. They were pretty, but ephemeral, and incapable of saving lost mankind from their sins. Paul preached Christ, the power of God, who was himself the incarnate “*res*” and God’s “*verba*”—God’s substantial expression of his grace and mercy, the Word made flesh, God’s “*verba*” without ornament, Christ unadorned servant. God. Man. God’s eloquence, without style. Yet what power there was in his words and work, what power in and through his life, his death, his resurrection.

The problem with rhetoric as an expression of Greco-Roman culture was its ultimate ineffectiveness to save. Man-made rhetoric could convert man to another philosophical system. It could not turn men's hearts to God. The drunken Polemon, who came breaking into the lecture hall of the philosopher Xenocrates (as the story goes), denounced his life of sin and became a philosopher himself, a highly moral man. *Xenocrates's* eloquent words had done it. But could rhetoric save him from death, sin? Could Xenocrates guarantee him everlasting life? He could not. He had no real power. Paul came, as do we, preaching the power of the Gospel of Christ, a message with divine content and divine power, because God is behind it and in it.

In the light of this discussion, perhaps we can understand how the church, despite its criticisms of classical rhetoric came to use some of its insights. The key of resolution came when the church realized that any form of communication used in apologetic or preaching must serve the Gospel and not itself. If the vehicle, language, which bears the king is made to be more important than the king, it has lost its value. It would be an entire paper in itself to demonstrate how the same Fathers of the early church who condemned rhetoric *used* classical rhetoric to condemn classical rhetoric as well as defend the Christian faith. Tertullian is the classic case in point (Sider 126). Jerome, who renounced rhetoric, did so only for fifteen years (Murphy *Rhetoric* 54).

St. Augustine, resigning his chair of rhetoric at Milan, following his conversion, spent the rest of his life writing. One of his works was the *De Doctrina*, the first Christian homiletics textbook. It drew its insights from Cicero. While it addressed itself to the art of hermeneutics and homiletics, it also contributed insights which were used in the church's apologetic. It is in Book Four that Augustine gives his classical defense of rhetoric as a *neutral* tool which ought to be put in service to the church.

Who would dare to say that truth should stand in the person of its defenders unarmed against lying, so that they who wish to urge falsehoods may know how to make their listeners benevolent or attentive or docile in their presentation (ile., in the exordium), while the defenders of truth are ignorant of that art? Should they speak briefly, clearly, and plausibly [in the narration] while the defenders of truth speak so that they tire their listeners, make themselves difficult to understand and what they have to say dubious? Should they oppose the truth with fallacious arguments and assert falsehoods [in the proof] while the defenders of truth have no ability either to defend the truth or to oppose the false? Should they, urging the minds of their listeners into error, ardently exhort them, moving them by speech so that they terrify, sadden, and exhilarate them [in the peroration], while the defenders of truth are sluggish, cold, and somnolent? Who is so foolish as to think this to be wisdom? While the faculty of eloquence, which is of great value in urging either evil or justice, is in itself indifferent, why should it not be obtained for the uses of the good in service of truth if the evil usurp it for the winning of perverse and vain causes in defense of iniquity and error? (qtd. in Kennedy *Classical* 155)

While the section of *De Doctrina* above may apply more to apologetic writing, the *De Doctrina* includes other classical precepts. Augustine, like Cicero encourages the imitation of models to develop "eloquence." But he says that above eloquence the preacher's *ethos*, his life,

has great bearing upon the effectiveness of his message. Augustine adopts Cicero's three types of oratorical purpose: to teach, to delight, to move.

As the centuries past by, the imprint of classical rhetoric upon medieval preaching manuals is manifest (Murphy *Rhetoric*). We have already discussed certain influences upon the curriculum at Wittenberg.

We cannot possibly, in the time allotted, survey the influence of classical rhetoric upon modern homiletics textbooks. There is, however, even in the newest texts, unquestionably, classical influence. The influence may be reflected in the structure of texts, where the five canons of rhetoric are used to structure the major parts. Take as one example from our own midst Gerlach and Balge's *Preach the Gospel*. Chapters two and three deal with studying and analyzing the text to generate sermon material: *Inventio*. Chapters four through seven deal with structuring the sermon, sermon types, outlining, introductions and conclusions: *Dispositio* (Chapter six could also be placed under *Inventio*, since it deals with putting meat on the bones of the outline). Chapter eight deals with style: *Elocutio*. Chapter nine deals with memory and delivery: *memoria* and *pronuntiatio*. An examination of the typical homiletics texts used in our circles reveals that the mark of Augustine, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian are very much present. Again, some by structure, some by quoting, some without any credit given, the texts are indebted to the ancients. The list includes Reu's *Homiletics*, Lenski's *The Sermon*, Graebner's *Inductive Homiletics* (Parts III and IV), Fritz's *The Preacher's Manual*, and *The Essentials of Preaching*, Friedrich's *The Art of Preaching*, Otto's *Notes on Preaching*, Gerlach and Balge's *Preach the Gospel*, Caemmerer's *Preaching for the Church*. Caemmerer seems least indebted to classical rhetoric, Reu the most. Caemmerer ignores Quintilian and Cicero, but cites Aristotle four times. Reu in his index lists five citations of Aristotle, nineteen of Cicero, fifteen of Quintilian. Lenski, while not citing the classical rhetoricians, nevertheless assumes the student possesses knowledge of rhetorical precepts. "The sermon must use the art of rhetoric. While homiletics demands a thorough knowledge of rhetoric, ... homiletics cannot teach rhetoric, just as it requires, but does not teach logic, psychology, languages and other branches of learning which every preacher should know" (71).

This essay, so far, has been highly theoretical, historical and analytical. Therefore, I will end with a twist of practicality, to see if we can't glean some of the insights from these ancients which are worth taking home with us. Let's let each of the major figures we've encountered give us a few tips. Since I've already typed my bibliography on page twenty-one, we'll have to be extremely brief. We may have to cut them off so there's time for a peroration. It would be a grave injustice not to end in classical style. Since these experts on rhetoric are not Christians, we'll take their comments and modify them as we see fit. Shall we listen to these men, then, for a few moments as they recapitulate? Let's let Plato go first, since he got burned so bad at Gorgias years ago, that he still can't stand being around rhetoricians for long.

Preacher: Plato, what insights could you leave us with regarding communication?

Plato: In my opinion rhetoricians need to remember, always that truth must always, always govern style. People who fall in love with words for words sake, obscure truth just as frost does a pane of glass. Along those lines I would advise every speaker to clarify and define abstract terms, state your propositions or themes clearly. Anticipate the objections of your audience, the contradictions they may see, and deal with them. And don't forget to apply the truths to the lives of your hearers. You know those sophists love to speak in high sounding terms so that the people never can quite find what's relevant for their lives. Make your speeches neither long nor short,

but of a reasonable length. Last make sure that your discourse has a clear beginning, middle and end.

Preacher: Thank you Plato, and now Isocrates do you care to add anything to our discussion of tips for speaking?

Isocrates: Just a couple things. One, I would say that natural ability is very important, but practice and study can do much to improve even old speakers. Especially work on studying the eloquent speakers of your day. And learn everything you can in every imaginable field of knowledge. You'll be amazed how the liberal arts will serve your speaking needs in a way that no "techniques" can.

Preacher: Aristotle, in some ways we Lutherans have a love/hate relationship with you. You are totally wet when it comes to philosophy and ethics and about three or four other subjects. On the other hand, we have always found your *Rhetoric, Logic and Poetics* useful for our preaching.

Aristotle: Yes, you're right about those other subjects. I was wrong. I would say that in your speaking, in order to be effective communicators, you must have good arguments, well thought through discourse. Please don't forget your audience. So many speakers become subject-oriented and they forget about the people they're supposed to be talking to. Evaluate your audience and then shift the diction so that it matches your audience. Some of you speakers, if you are at all average, sound dry-as-dust, and you forget the emotional needs, biases, opinions of your audience, which affect the way they listen. Don't forget that you must maintain your credibility throughout the speech. The last thing I want to say today I save for last, because it's the most important. In my *Poetics* I discuss this kind of structure as the climactic ordering. What is the climax of my speech? Be clear. Clarity is of all things most important. Use concrete words, not abstract. Paint word pictures with your speech capturing the sounds, smells, tastes, sights, feelings of life. You will do well if you follow this advice.

Preacher: Cicero you're next. What would you like to add?

Cicero: First of all, I would like to say that an apple tree doesn't become a pear tree, a cow doesn't become an ass; therefore it's necessary to conclude that the world is ruled by divine providence.

Preacher: Excuse me, Tulli, if I may call you that, but we're running out of time and you have to get to the point, since we still have to hear from Quintilian yet.

Cicero: Yes, well, so much for attempts at eloquence. I will get to the point. By the way I would like to point out to you that I'm not using any ornamentation, because I know that some of you preachers dislike flowery speech. Each of you should spend the greatest amount of time discovering material to use in your speech. Structure helps your hearer remember and you speakers memorize. Why is it that so many speak from a manuscript rather than extemporaneously? Is it not partially that they do not write a speech which lends itself to memory. There is no order, no parts, no unifying theme. I want to say this to those of you who are against style. You all have style whether you want to have it or not. If you are dull, arrogant, pedantic, wishy-washy, that will come across as part of your style. I ...

Preacher: Sorry, Tulli, I'm going to cut you off so that Quint can have a moment. Go ahead Quint.

Quintilian: As you know, little of what I have said is original. So I'll need little time. Guard your life closely. An orator should be a good man speaking well. And last, read. Read the best writers of your time.

Preacher: Thank you gentlemen, you have been a good group, I only wish that we could have shared eternity together. What a sad thought to close on. Plato, Isocrates, Aristotle, Cicero,

Quintilian, the most gifted speakers in the world, the most eloquent of men and yet they never had the most eloquent message of all, the Gospel. Well, Sunday will soon be here. Time to get going on the text. Let me see if I can remember some of the points, *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*. Speeches neither too long or short. Yes, I will have to remember that one next time. Sorry Cicero, Luther never used perorations.

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*This extensive bibliography of resources relating to rhetoric and preaching is included to stimulate further reading, study, and conference papers on preaching. It should serve as a beginning for those who wish to read further.