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Rhetorical Preaching

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ZOLTÁN LITERÁTY

RHETORICAL PREACHING

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RHETORICAL PREACHING



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Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Kálvin tér 9.

H-1091 Budapest, Hungary

T: (+36-1) 455-9060

L'Harmattan Kiadó

Kossuth Lajos utca 14–16.

H-1053 Budapest, Hungary

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St Augustine is preaching to the people. Fresco scene from Life of Saint Augustine by Ottaviano Nelli in the Church of Saint Augustine in Gubbio (Umbria).
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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Prologue to rhetorical preaching 7

ANTIQUITY

Apostle Paul and the Second Sophistic 13

MIDDLE AGES

Augustine 27

HUMANISM

Protestant Preaching as A New Rhetorical Paradigm in the 16th Century . . 45

MODERNISM

László Ravasz on Influence of preaching 59

POSTMODERN

New Song Desired 71

ARGUMENTS

Pathos 85

Ethos 95

Logos 105

Epilogue to rhetorical preaching 111

References 115

PROLOGUE TO RHETORICAL PREACHING

The first sentence of Barth's book on homiletics is that in theology, everything is for the sake of the sermon.¹ A bold statement, and also very rhetorical, in the sense that it makes the author's point clear from the beginning.

I feel I should do the same. My goal with this book is to show that sermons are by nature "rhetorical" speeches. The simplest argument for this case is that it would be difficult to imagine a sermon without intent, but all intentional speeches are rhetorical by nature. In this work I would like to focus on the fact that rhetoric, as the intrinsic cohesive power of speech, is not a question of form, style or presentation, but a practical ability based on "common sense" that produces effective speech in the most optimal way possible.

But what is the difference between rhetoric and rhetorical? It is a difficult question indeed. There are many associative and emotional meanings linked to the word "rhetoric", which makes dialogue about it difficult: there is always the fear that the other means something else by the same word. One fact, however, is strongly demonstrated in the following chapters of the book, namely that going back to the Apostle Paul all theologians and homileticists who have argued against rhetoric have, in fact, built their arguments rhetorically. What is more, the sermons formulated and prescribed in their works are also expected to be rhetorical – well-written, lucid, easy to understand, etc. We scarcely need a stronger argument than this that every sermon has a rhetorical intent.

In any case, this work is not done to rehabilitate classical or modern rhetoric as formalized teachings, but to allow every preacher to think more consciously about preaching, for God considered it good not to keep preaching for himself, but entrusted it instead to the fragile, weak, and often unreliable means of human communication. So we must be aware that if it is important for God to speak to man through human language, and, may I add, in a very rhetorical way as evidenced by the Scripture – we will come across Augustine's and Melancthon's theory in the book as well – it is important for His creation, too, to recognize the importance of the rhetorical nature of human speech. Most preachers have a knee-jerk reaction at this point: after

¹ Karl Barth: *Homiletics*, Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 1991, 17.

all, it is dangerous to wander into an area that is no longer under the authority of man, but of the Holy Spirit! Be assured, though, that is what I am trying to avoid as well. I do not think at all that the ultimate secret of preaching is hidden solely in rhetoric. Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, I agree with Rudolf Bohren, who says that the Spirit does not make the preacher obsolete in the preaching – on the contrary, the Spirit involves him and makes him more active in the act. Bohren expresses the mutual cooperation of the divine Spirit and man with the key term “*theonome Reziprozität*” – divine reciprocity.²

But what exactly do I mean by all these? Well, the debate over rhetoric has been going on for at least two thousand years, and its most recent outburst was just over a century ago in European – mainly German – Protestant theology. Its results are well known. In Thurneysen’s work, it can be seen that theology sought to break all links with human sciences because theologians considered that history did not justify their use in their sacred field. His theological message can be summed up in one word regarding all things humane, including rhetoric: “NO.” During my theological studies, it was exactly this militant “NO” that aroused my interest in rhetoric – after all, what could this thing be which is regarded as the greatest antithesis to homiletics? Coincidentally, it was this time when I happened upon László Ravasz’s Homiletics, which treated the two sciences in synthesis. And so my interest, thus aroused, did not go away to this day, since all human communication – be it individual, communal, or political – has to be constantly measured by its rhetorical quality. Some pass the test, others fail, but the struggle has not ceased for the last two and a half thousand years.

But why does this burning tension between homiletics and rhetoric keep arising periodically for over a millennia now? The reason is that the rhetorical character was often fulfilled by ethically questionable tools. Manipulation, propaganda, deception, agitation, persuasion – words which, for ethical reasons, the sermon cannot have anything to do with. Still, these are exactly the concepts that come to the mind of many when they hear the word “rhetoric” – in the past and in the present as well. It is true that in classical terminology, there were two words for persuasion: *persuadere* and *convincere*. The former persuades by using (and abusing) emotion; the latter by logical arguments. Ideally, these two approaches should complement each other, but somehow they have always found themselves in opposite sides, and this opposition locks their representatives in continuous combat as well. This statement is true in the fields of philosophy, social sciences, and even theology. During the antiquity, Plato used dialectic to defend his arguments against the sophists, who meant solely to influence others; and so did Barth in the early 20th century in the field of theology. Both of them used dialectic

² Rudolf Bohren: *Predigtlehre*, München, Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1971, 76.

very rhetorically. However, like Augustine, Descartes also realized that knowledge of truth, that is, knowledge acquired through pure theological doctrine or logic, is of no value in itself unless, through communication, it starts to build relationships, communities and society – in short, becomes useful practical knowledge. Humanism, as well as the latest era, in their respective interpretations of the *sensus communis*, both discovered that there is still the so-called “practical wisdom” above theoretical knowledge, which, according to Aristotle’s *phronesis*, is knowledge serving both communal needs and concrete situations. This practical wisdom is always for the good of the community, for the education of the community.

That is, the question from time to time comes up again: where is the balance which, for the sake of rhetoric, does not allow logos and pathos to be played off against one another, but allows them both to do their functions? Rhetoric is thus a regulatory force that does not seek hegemony between sources of arguments and argument systems, but seeks a construct that reinforces the utility of speech in the communal-social space. The embodiment of this is language itself. The philosophical research of the second half of the 20th century made language its main subject. To exaggerate a little, a Reformed pastor/preacher, in fact, does nothing more than interpret and speak throughout his life, and both processes occur in thinking and thus in language. Language is inseparable from speech, which is the most essential tool of expression in preaching.

God accommodated himself to us, humans, in speech, recorded in the pages of the Old Testament. Then, reading the New Testament, we learn that He has created a new relationship with us through the life of Jesus, who, in turn, preached to the people: thus, it is evident that God has always reached us through the spoken word.³ This is also evidenced by the Bible, which contains the Word of God as a language system and as a forever resounding word. God’s accommodation to us thus means that he has used one of the universal, all-encompassing, and defining abilities of humans to be in dialogue with His children.

It is therefore God’s purpose to establish a relationship with mankind through the means of language, that is, to allow us to have a dialogue with Him. Augustine, Melancthon, Calvin all say that God uses human language rhetorically in the pages of Scripture. If this is the case, then the great task entrusted to man can be no less than to use the rhetorical cohesive power of language to build a relationship with God, with his fellow human beings and his communities.

³ This is evidenced by the Gospel section of the New Testament, and it also serves as the foundations of theological homiletics.

ANTIQUITY

APOSTLE PAUL AND THE SECOND SOPHISTIC

PAUL. THE FOLLOWER OF JESUS' RHETORIC

Why is it that preaching distinguishes us, Reformed people, and, in a broader sense, Protestants and Neo-Protestants from other religious traditions? One of the reasons lies in the missional practice of the early church, a paradigm adopted from Jesus Christ himself. Jesus made verbal communication, and within that, persuasive communication the instrument for preaching the Kingdom of God. He could write. We witness that in John 8:6. We also know he read in front of an audience from the scrolls of Isaiah in the synagogue of Capernaum. All this of course could not have happened, if he had lacked the skills to read and write. He was addressed as 'rabbi' implying he was a religious master who received a thorough theological training before he called his disciples.

Yet, he left us nothing in written records. Why? The answer is quite simple. Because he lived in a culture where verbal communication was held in high esteem on the scale of social values. Although theological debates over which exact words or phrases originate from Jesus might never reach a consensus, we can still be most certain that Jesus delivered his theological messages verbally. He articulated his words, phrases and thoughts, and it is absolutely certain that all this was performed in a coherent and clearly identifiable manner. He taught as a prophet, as a philosopher, as a lawyer and as a storyteller.

However, Jesus was not the only one in this culture who did not leave any written records behind. His waymaker, the popular John the Baptist did not write down anything either. Instead of following the tradition of the writing prophets, he chose his role models among those charismatic prophets who wielded the power of the word. It is no coincidence that he is mentioned on a par with the prophet Elijah in several parallel passages. However, even Jesus fitted better into this communicative, so-called oral culture, than John. While the Baptist called and drew people out to himself into the wilderness, Jesus travelled into the world of those he wanted to address in person. In fact, he raised the level of communicative effectiveness by sending his disciples in pairs to spread the Gospel in the neighbouring towns. Jesus was the son of a Galilean carpenter, a young Jewish rabbi, who launched the second most

effective communicative movement of his time next to the prevailing imperial propaganda of the ancient world. Oral communication was the only possible channel to get a message through to the masses, all other “media” was under imperial control, which of course was a very costly enterprise.

Amid the flourishing culture of oral communication, the oral tradition of Jesus began to unfold also. Exercising power definitely played a major role in the ministry of Jesus and the wandering preachers who followed him. Now power can be exercised in many ways, for example, in the donor-receiver manner that is based on the distribution of certain allowances and gifts. However, it might also be conducted coercively based on force and intimidation. The persuasive way of exercising power is to gain power by means of persuasion.⁴ The latter will most likely possess the highest degree of legitimacy among a group of people. According to the Gospels, both Jesus and the transmitters of the Jesus-tradition give account of a power endowed by their audience. In other words, whenever we read of the preaching of the Kingdom of God (βασιλεία), we also encounter the art of oral persuasion and the exercise of power as well.

After his death and resurrection, Jesus sent out his disciples once again to go and make disciples of all nations. In the Book of Acts we read of many cases where first Peter, then Paul was preaching the kerygma of Christ. The book further yields theological emphasis on the apostles being compelled to preach Christ regardless of any restrictions (Acts 4:20), but also on the freedom they received from God himself to perform the former (Acts 4:19).

In reality, however, it was not just Peter and Paul who were spreading the story of Jesus, but there were many others as well roaming the roads of the country for the same reason. Among the many, one of these groups was the so called wandering charismatics, who received their call from the Lord himself to spread the Gospel. This, of course, also implied their continuing a wandering lifestyle that they had started with Jesus. They were the ones of unquestionable authority for spreading the message of God from one town to another. Yet, they were homeless, penniless, vulnerable and ever exposed to the hospitality of their listeners. This was a real display of the deep trust they had for their Lord Jesus Christ, who sent them out to continue on and at last, their mission gained credit from their uncompromising loyalty to the radical ethos by which they lived.

The second group in line were the so called friendly receivers or sympathizers. The interdependence of the latter two was not just a physical necessity, but also that of a spiritual one as well: their existence as a community was secured by the authority, teaching and ministry of the wandering preachers.

⁴ For more, see Gerd Theissen: *Die Jesusbewegung: Sozialgeschichte einer Revolution der Werte*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2004, 187–188.

But the religious experiences of these local groups affected the sermons of these preachers just the same. Therefore, it is not true that it was only the wandering preachers who cultivated and transmitted the tradition of Jesus via preaching alone. He was spoken of “on the spot” – and so all the local impact did indeed shape the work of the wandering preachers.

The third group of people, according to Theissen, were not particularly interested in followers of the Jesus movement, but remained in a loose interaction with them nonetheless. Coming from all layers of society, these were everyday people who might have heard or seen Jesus, or even witnessed one of his miracles. It is vital to mention them here as they present a relevant argument for the narrative form in terms of the Jesus-tradition. All the Gospels will give account of how fast news travelled among these people whenever they experienced the miraculous powers and healings of Jesus (Mk 1:28). Even for the wandering-charismatic preachers, the power of healing and other charismatic miracles were the only means of authenticating their preaching (Mk 16:17–18).

SECOND SOPHISTIC

The way to the Second Sophistics starts at the first one, in the Greek culture of the fifth century BC. The fact is that the first sophist played a chief role in the birth of rhetoric – both in the case of sophist and philosophical rhetoric.

They were not ‘sages’ (*sophoi*) a word which connotes not a profession but a state of being. Nor were they ‘philosophers’, for this word suggests a patient search for the truth rather than an optimistic confidence in one’s own abilities. They were masters of thinking, masters of talking. Knowledge was their speciality, just as the piano is the pianist’s.⁵

They weren’t philosophers. At the same time, they had a connection too, for a certain rivalry developed between the two crafts: basically, the Sophists raced with the philosophers for the title of bearers of true wisdom and knowledge.

The difference between the two schools manifested itself in the fact that while the goal of the philosophers – after Plato – was to reach the core meaning of all things, the sophists insisted on examining it from all possible sides, choosing a viewpoint and argue for it in order to convince the audience.⁶ Consequently, they soon parted ways: philosophy aimed at the core of things in all fields of knowledge, while the Sophists developed methods for thinking

⁵ Jacqueline de Romilly: *The Great Sophists in Periclean Athens*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, 1.

⁶ Isocrates is the father of the three-part model in schools (basis, medium, high education)

right and convincing their audience. Five centuries later, by the end of the 1st century AD, philosophy is a craft of only a select few, while the so-called Second Sophism became an applied science of sorts, learned by many.

This applied science is the second golden age of rhetorics, in the first four centuries AD. So rhetoric, from the very beginning, meant a lot more than just style. Forming the frame of public education, it opened ways for everyone to advance in public life. In the first century, Sophist education was clearly viewed as a first step towards entering politics.⁷ The first test of sophism takes place in the works of Plato. Plato's objection is that rhetorics was viewed by the Sophists only as a neutral tool (*techné*), and it was up to the rhetor's character whether he used it for good or ill.

According to Plato, however, the core of things is in the things themselves, so rhetoric cannot be neutral, just right or wrong. Following this line of thought, from his work entitled *Gorgias* we learn what bad rhetorics is (read: sophism), while in his work *Phaidros*, written more than a decade later, he presents us with his vision of good rhetorics. According to Plato good rhetorics is the philosophy of aiming at learning and accepting the truth.

Negative prejudice against Sophism is present in today's literature as well. The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary gives us the definition of the Sophist thus: "In ancient Greece, a scholar, a teacher, spec. a paid teacher of philosophy and rhetoric, esp. one associated with specious reasoning and moral scepticism [...] Now, a person using clever but fallacious argument, a specious reasoner, a casuist."⁸ The Hungarian Dictionary⁹ provides us with two definitions of the word *Sophist*. The first is similar to the English version, which presents us with a current interpretation: "Formally right person, who, in reality, uses false deduction." Under the *Sophistic* headword it gives us a rather historical interpretation, containing a neutral evaluation: "Rational, relativistic ancient Greek philosophical school, which denies the importance of religions."

As we could see, these definitions are not new, but are inherited from earlier criticism. According to Istvan Barany, two interpretations of George Grote's monumental opus¹⁰ present themselves in the neutral and pejorative meanings.¹¹ It is clear that Grote wanted to part ways with the pejorative

⁷ John William Henry Walden: *The Universities of Ancient Greece*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910, 78–79.

⁸ *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, "Sophist" headword, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

⁹ Pusztai, Ferenc – Juhász, József (eds.): *Magyar Kéziszótár*, Budapest, Akadémiai, 2014.

¹⁰ George Grote: *A History of Greece*, New York, Harper&Brothers, 1879, <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/metabook?id=grotegreece> (accessed 25 June 2016).

¹¹ Bárány, István: Szofisták Athénban: egy angol liberális látomása, (George Grote: A History of Greece), *Ókor*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2006, 44–49.

assessments based on mid-19th century Sophistic thought based on Plato, but in his case we cannot speak of “anti-Platonism”, since he liked him, even penning a notable Plato monography.¹² In fact, it is mostly to his merit that we have a neutral interpretation of the Sophists today. On the pages of his 12-volume work, Grote talks about the Sophist in the eighth one,¹³ dwelling on the topic for more than 80 pages, coming to the following conclusions: according to him, there was no such thing as a Sophist school: there were only separate authors and their works. It was not even a school as such, but a craft. Interest in both rhetorical and political problems was common among the Sophists.

Sophism served the needs of the Greek democracy, providing youth training to politicians and public figures leaving higher education. Grote denies that the Sophists would have been detrimental to the Athenian society and political education, what is more, he thinks Sophists influenced Athenian public life positively. As I mentioned before, however, after the negative criticism of Platonism, rhetoric had its golden age in the first three centuries AD, during the time of the Second Sophistic. This golden age was triggered by Aristotle (along with Cicero and Quintilian as well), who was the first philosopher-rhetor to create a synthesis of his philosophically-grounded rhetoric with the philosophical probability (*enthymametic*) evidence. Rhetoric stood the test of time since it met both the criteria of scientific depth and artistic practice.

Viewing the Second Sophistic from Plato’s understanding, we are inclined to think that the Second Sophistic was intended to mislead the uneducated masses. Whitmarsh, however, corrects this belief:

The audiences at the ancient events were not exercising their consumerist rights over their leisure time or ‘witnessing’ the power of the divine; they were gathering as the members of the educated elite, parading and exercising their status, scrutinizing their peers as their reputations were made and broken, and testing the role of the traditional Greek manhood, within the demanding environment of imperial aristocratic culture.¹⁴

The researchers of our age are not able to formulate a consistent theory on the essence of the Second Sophistic, and the even treat its age fairly flexibly.¹⁵

The name is clearly derived from Philostratus, who, in 230 AD, wrote a work entitled *Life of the Sophists*. He is the first to make a distinction between

¹² George Grote: *Plato, and the other companions of Sokrates*, London, John Murray, 1867.

¹³ Grote: *A History of Greece*, Vol. 8.

¹⁴ Tim Whitmarsh: *The Second Sophistic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, 3.

¹⁵ This gives me a chance to examine the Apostle Paul in the frame of the Second Sophistic.

the first and second ages of Sophism.¹⁶ The concept of the Second Sophistic, according to Kennedy, mostly concerns a cultural and literary movement, which started in the first century Greek society and flourished well into the second century. “In the ideological competition of Christianity and the pagan religions the Sophists appeared as teachers of the old order, but starting with the second century AD, a Christian version appeared as well.”¹⁷

THE SECOND SOPHISTIC IN CORINTH

To understand Paul’s – a Jew with hellenistic upbringing, called to be a Christian apostle – relationship to the Corinthian secular situation and the Corinthian Christian congregation, first we have to understand these two environments. In order to do this, I will use the work of Winter as my starting point, who examines the situation of Philo and Paul in the light of the Alexandrian and Corinthian Sophistic position.¹⁸

He lists six arguments, stating that even if the Second Sophistic was not at its peak in Corinth, it still definitely played a major role in 50 AD, Apostle Paul’s time.

First, Corinthian Sophism is the subject of two Dio Krisosthomos speeches written around 90 AD.

Second, a Corinthian speech from a certain Favorinus, a student of Dio, who nevertheless did not share his master’s anti-sophist views was preserved as well.

The third source is an inscription from Herod of Attica, regarded as the benefactor of the Corinthians, and a famous Sophist as well. He was a disciple of Favorinus, and centered his work, *Life of the Sophists* around the person of Philostrates since he embodied everything that the Second Sophistic stood for.

Fourth, Plutarch repeatedly visited Corinth around the end of 70 AD. Fifth, around 90 AD, Epictetus dwelt in the neighboring province, Nikopolis. It is clear from his remaining writings that he repeatedly talked and argued with the Corinthian disciples. Finally, the letters of the Apostle Paul themselves mention the properties characterising the Second Sophistic.

¹⁶ George A. Kennedy: *A new history of classical rhetoric*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994, 230.

¹⁷ Kennedy: *A new history*, 230. The continuation of the quote refers to the Renaissance, namely that sophism persists in the 5th and 6th centuries AD thanks to the tolerance of Christianity. Consequently, sophist tradition, including the Byzantine age arrived to the age of Renaissance in the 15th century with the aid of Greek scholars.

¹⁸ Bruce W. Winter: *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 7–8.

The Apostle Paul defends the *modus* of his own work in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5. The apology of this part is strongly based on rhetorical language and allusions. To understand the Pauline antisophism, now widely accepted among researchers, we will have to examine three areas. First, what do we know about Sophist traditions, especially about the first speech of a Sophist arriving to the city, which was crucial in getting a commission from the city? Second, is Paul the only one who speaks (writes) in a way that medium and method correlate with each other? Third, what kind of rhetorical theories and techniques were the most influential during that time?

Contemporary cities used Sophists to further their goals. These Sophists addressed those affairs of the city, where persuasion and diplomacy were very important to succeed. One's commission depended on the outcome of his first performance in front of the whole city. Russell cites the records of Aristides on his first visit in Smyrna, in 176, which documents contemporary habits in detail. People of the city came out to greet the speaker, whom the young hoped to be students of. All the practical details of the performance had been prepared well in advance, yet they immediately asked him address the city with a speech. Although very few could have heard of the event, the council room was still full of people, so that you could only see a thousand faces, rapt with attention as Aristides delivered his speech.

On the very same day, at the bay – another part of the city – an Egyptian Sophist, following a two-day-long advertisement, held a speech as well, but Aristides notes that, to his satisfaction, only seventeen people had been present at the Egyptian's performance.¹⁹ As we can see from Aristides's description, reception of the Sophists had its own rituals and traditions throughout the ancient world: invitation, announcement, addressing the crowd, and finally, praise or blame.

Condemnation was a likely outcome, which is why if one undertook to face the crowds and deliver his speech, had to realize that his reputation would not stay within the city walls. 1 Corinthians 2:1 commemorates this practice: *And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.*

Therefore, in the following parts I will examine how Paul's message was in accordance with his methods. Paul's apology is not an isolated appearance in front of an audience. In 102 AD Dio in his native Prusa (Bithynia) begins his speech by asking the audience not to await an extraordinary, impressive speech from him. Previously, he had successes, and all had praised him for his bright, convincing speeches, but those times are gone.

¹⁹ Donald Andrew Russell: *Greek Declamation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 76–77.

He has no such abilities anymore – Dio began his speech. The reason for the apology was to secure a grant towards the refurbishment of his birthplace. This was initially agreed by the Council and the proconsul, but others persuaded these decision-makers to cancel the payment of the desired fund. And so Dio was forced into a defensive position.²⁰ In his speech, he argues that the orator's deeds must guarantee the color of his words – that is, word and deed must be inseparable from each other.

Morality, especially the morality of the speech, is essential. So Dio opposes those who attack him with their disgraceful behavior. He encourages his audience to compare his speech with his opponent's, immediately making apparent that his own speech is both amateur and clichéd, what is more, it cannot be called oratory at all. This kind of prologue, which stated that Dio had forgotten the art of oratory, helped him much that no one should be offended by the lack of the usual rhetorical techniques while he puts his opponent in the wrong.²¹ Paul's defense is very similar. He too announces in advance that "*My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power ...*"

Thirdly, I will examine the rhetorical expressions and phrases appearing in Paul's verses. The first and most important of these is faith, in which *peitho* is the root of *pistis*.

In Aristotle's rhetoric, the latter has been introduced as the word of persuasion and conviction. Aristotle distinguishes three *pistis*-es, that is to say, he hopes to achieve the conviction of his audience from three separate areas. These three are the *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*: the emotional relationship between the orator and his audience, the logicand arguments of the speech itself.

Another important word used by Paul in verse 5, is the *apodeicsic*. This word goes back to Quintilian, meaning clear evidence. According to Cicero, this process leads to the point where the state of incomprehension is gradually replaced by understanding. The *logos* appears in this context in Paul's persuasive speech.

The following rhetorical *terminus technicus* is the word *dynamis*, appearing in verses 1 and 5. Aristotle borrows this word from Isocrates, intending to formulate the meaning of rhetorics with its aid. According to them, rhetoric is *dynamis*, that is, an ability, a strength meant to discover the possible methods of persuasion. At the same time, eloquence – at least according to Dio – is a strength as well, or, as Quintilian put it: rhetoric is "*vis persuadendi*".

²⁰ Winter: *Philo and Paul*, 152.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

THE APOSTLE PAUL AND THE SECOND SOPHISTIC

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 is a deviation, a digression in Paul’s train of thought.²² Paul briefly leaves his previous thought, and dwells on his first arrival to Corinth.

This reminiscence is underlined by two autobiographical Greek expressions from the beginning of the first and the third verses (*kago*). Paul seeks to prove that the goal of his arrival is that the faith of the Corinthians would be founded on the power of God, not on a convincing speech. Barrett translates *kago* as “it was in line with this principle”.²³

So all the five verses are connected to the previous part, the core thought of which is the power and wisdom of the speech regarding the cross, closed with a quote from Jeremiah.²⁴ It is important to see that the expression ‘arrival’ used in 1 Cor 2:1 does not signify the end of a journey, but rather a viewpoint declared by the apostle against the expected rhetoric and in accordance with God’s strength. So the Greek text perfectly expresses the essence of the *modus* of Paul’s evangelisation, not only of his arrival to Corinth.

But this word is here precisely because – as we have already mentioned – the arrival of a Sophist to a town is always more than a simple arrival. Paul upends the traditions of this arrival. His arrival was not advertised; he did not contend with the city’s Sophists; they did not decide about him, simply because that was not why he came. The reason of his arrival was decided long ago: he had to speak of the crucified Jesus Christ.

We can see that Paul purposefully avoids the proof Sophists frequently use to bolster up their speeches. For instance, while the Sophists put much importance on the appearance and stature of the orator, as well as to the dignity of his speech, Paul speaks of himself in the third verse as follows: “*I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.*” (1Cor 2:3)

There are many explanations about what Paul thought of this, but Marshall unequivocally correlates this part to the Sophists, going as far as linking it to the expressions of 2Cor 10 (1st and 10th verses).²⁵ Litfin has a similar opinion, stating that it is difficult to ascertain the true meaning of these three words and the context in which they should be understood, but he agrees that they

²² Charles Kingsley Barrett: *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, London, A. and C. Black, 1971, 64.

²³ Barrett: *Commentary*, 62.

²⁴ ...but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD... Jer 9:24

²⁵ Peter Marshall: *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians*, Heidelberg, Mohr Siebeck, 1987, 389.

probably get their full meaning in a rhetorical context.²⁶ So it seems that Paul intends to form an anti-myth, and anti-pathos around himself, diverging from the path of the contemporary Sophists.

In the fourth verse we meet the crucial opposition, which determines the strained relation of preaching and rhetorics to this day, dating back to Paul. *“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.”*

Using the rhetorical categories mentioned earlier this verse is pretty easy to understand: Paul’s *logos* and *kerygma* were not used to convince the audience of his wisdom (the Greek roots used here: *pistis, sofia, logos*) as opposed to the Sophist practice. The exact opposite is true: the proof of the Spirit (*apodheiksis, dynamis*), which belongs to the Spirit and to that only, providing him with the clearest and most evident arguments.²⁷

Barrett’s explanation is that the proof of the Spirit – which could have been supernatural proof as well – is much stronger than those of logic. Whether or not it means that we have supernatural proofs here is hard to tell. Still, I think that exactly depending on the situation – that is, everyone is called by God in different life situations – mere logical arguments and proofs can wield great power as well.

The Apostle Paul has used rhetorics, but firmly opposed the view brought to perfection by the Second Sophistic, and which stated that rhetorics is the art of life itself. Such a *l’art pour l’art* craft of speech cannot be a proper tool of God, for in this case, according to its tradition, the audience would end up criticising the artistic, aesthetic container instead of trying to understand its message. In this context, speech itself would almost have no meaning at all.

That sheds a light on Paul’s vehement opposition against the rhetorical traditions of the Corinthian Second Sophistic. His problem is not with speech itself, but with the tradition which does not care about the speech anymore. It also proves that the assessment of rhetorics and homiletics without knowledge of the present situation can lead to massive misinterpretations.

So Paul used rhetorics,

...to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the

²⁶ A. Duane Litfin: *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Greco–Roman Rhetoric*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 302.

²⁷ Barrett: *Commentary*, 65.

weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1Cor 9:20–23)

Meanwhile, he decided that instead of preaching the gospel, as the Sophists would do, reducing it to the level of an overwrought speech, he will deliver it so that his audience will be able to concentrate on its content instead of its form. Which, of course, also means that Paul opted for the unadorned, humble Attican or Roman style, instead of the meandering Asian one. Paul mocks the Sophistic or overwrought rhetorics “using the very rhetorical weapons of his opponents and thus turning their forms of argumentation against them. This becomes evident in 2Cor 10–13.”²⁸ There is no doubt about Paul’s rhetorical abilities and skills, but we have to see that in his case the Attican style better fits the message of the gospel than the Asian one. Aristotle is the first to note that the best style is the one which cannot be noticed at all. Paul seems to have taken this advice to the heart.

This also shows us that, while observing Paul’s words, thoughts, expressions, we can notice that apart from being skilled and talented in rhetorics, he also used it consciously. Among other things, the classic rhetorical styles of speech can be observed alongside the intentions of the preacher connected to these styled of speech as well.

Namely that while the first letter, read out loud, was basically intended as an advice to its audience (apart maybe from the epideictic heights of the 13th part), the second one was written in a forensic style for the most part, with which Paul intended to defend his apostleship. While the goal of the first letter is to ensure the future of the Corinthian congregation, the second focuses on the past, posing the question: is Paul really the apostle of Christ?

Witherington points out a very interesting connection here. Paul addresses the Corinthian congregation as “*ecclesia*”, using the word which, in ancient times, referred to the people’s committee gathering at the forum. This word originally is not a Christian one. Originally, it referred to the place where speeches of advice were delivered and debates were conducted for the purposes of creating and defending public liberty. It is not a coincidence then, that Paul borrowed this word to express the message of the gospel: to preach God’s liberty itself. It is a fine example of the fact that in Paul’s preaching concepts are always in harmony with their intended meaning and aims.²⁹

Paul’s relation to rhetorics returns several times during the history of homiletics, mirrored by other preachers living and preaching in different

²⁸ Ben Witherington III: *Conflict and Community in Corinth: a Socio-rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995, 46.

²⁹ Witherington: *Conflict and Community*, 47.

situations. Augustine, for instance, re-evaluates his opposition to rhetorics which, following his conversion, he professed for a long time, realizing that rhetorics can be used for good indeed: to preach the gospel more effectively.

The same applies to Calvin, who, based on his education, could have been a perfect rhetor, but in opposition to the oration brought back into fashion by the Renaissance, he opts for a different style instead. In comparison to this oration, his mild, restrained style did not lose its impact on the audience, just like as in the case of Barth, who treading in Calvin's footsteps, stands for the importance of the message while using a similarly humble style.

In all the above cases, as we could have seen in Paul, the *logos* ("speech" – 1Cor 2:4), as the carrier of *kerygma* ("preaching" – 1Cor 2:4) is first and foremost subject to the Spirit. Dynamis, that is: ability, belongs to the Spirit, and comes from Him and Him only.

Preaching could never be, as the Sophists viewed their own speechcraft, a mere product of cultural traditions, a tool for climbing the social ladder, or a branch of the entertainment industry. The mission to preach comes from God Himself, and as such, it does not stem from a decision, but from obedience. Paul, in connection to the epilogue of 1Cor 1, addresses this thought in the 9th part:

For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

Preaching, according to Paul, is a speech about Christ's cross, findings its way invisibly to the listener's heart, unburdened by the frills of style which would divert attention from the message. This style of preaching – remaining invisible while the same time finding its way to the hearts of the audience – remains a challenge to the preachers of all ages and places.

MIDDLE AGES



AUGUSTINE

A BRIDGE BETWEEN PREACHING AND RHETORIC



INTRODUCTION

Augustine. One of the most widely read Christian authors. An early church father who relentlessly fought for the purity of Christian teaching, leaving behind a most remarkable legacy during the dusk of the patristic era. Although his name is mainly associated with Christian doctrines, we yet have to realize that in him not only do we pay tribute to a great theologian, let alone a great orator, but to one of the most important figures of cultural history. He was a man sent by God in turbulent times (during the decline of the empire and the rise of Christianity) to the cultural frontier between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages to secure the essential transmission of classical knowledge into the new era through his works. Augustine conducted a great amount of polemics, but his exceptional level of education enabled him to also pursue a wide range missional work propelled by his sense of responsibility to winning the cultural elite of the western empire for the Christian faith. It may have been a seemingly impossible enterprise, but Augustine proved the contrary. His character therefore stands as an example to us in three ways:

1. His oeuvre is the starting point on the road from pagan Antiquity to the “Christian” Middle Ages.
2. In his biographical development, he represents the synthetic transformation of ancient philosophy into a Christian intellectual lifestyle (as we define Christianity up until the Reformation).
3. Due to his work, Christian communication formally and permanently crossed the Rubicon.

The subtitle for this theological section is: *Forgotten Faces in the History of Religion and the Church*. It is quite clear that the face of Augustine did not fade at all in the realms of systematic theology, but in the realms of homiletics it did so much the more. Therefore from the ‘triple praise above,’ I will elaborate the first two only briefly, but construe the third in detail. Even within the third point, I will examine the fruitful synthesis of preaching, rhetorics and homiletics in Augustine’s system of thought. That is, first I will briefly inspect

his biography with special emphasis on his rhetorical background, continue by analyzing the four books of his *De Doctrina Christiana*, and finish by summarizing the conclusions.

THE RHETORICAL PAST OF AUGUSTINE

Aurelius Augustine³⁰ was born in 354 in Thagaste on the confines of the African desert. His mother, Monica, was a Christian, of whom he would write many a times in his *Confessions*. He started his education in his hometown, moved to Madaurus to study rhetorics, and later continued his education in Carthage for another three years, where he eventually began teaching the very subject. Before his conversion to Christianity, he became a member of the Manichean sect. Later, as a Christian, he wrote many apologetic works against them. In 383, he moved to Rome, and a year later on the advice of Symmachus, the prefect of Rome, he became the official rhetor of the imperial court at Milan, the city which was the centre of western administration at the time. Two years later, Augustine suddenly left his position due to health issues. In the meantime, however, he became acquainted with the bishop of Milan, Ambrose, who himself was also a master of preaching. It was under his influence that Augustine converted and got baptized at the age of thirty-three. In 388, he returned to Africa, where he wrote and worked. In 391 in Hippo Regius, he was ordained as a priest almost against his will, and four years later again appointed as a bishop. Until his death in 430, he remained the bishop of Hippo Regius.

We know of ninety-six individual works written by Augustine. In his early phase, he produced philosophical writings – mainly that of the seven liberal

³⁰ For his biography and works in rhetoric, see the following: *The Confessions of Augustine*, trans. E. B. Pusey, Floating Press, 2008, <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/Englishconfessions.html> (accessed 25 June 2016). (Hungarian trans. *Szent Ágoston vallomásai*, trans. Városi, István, Budapest, Ecclesia, 1975.)
); St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw, New York, Dover Publications, 2009. (Translation from Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, originally published by The Christian Literature Co. New York 1886–1890.) (Hungarian trans. *Szent Ágoston: A keresztény tanításról*, trans. Városi, István, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 1944.); Peter Brown: *Augustine of Hippo: A biography*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2000. (Hungarian trans. *Szent Ágoston élete*, Budapest, Osiris, 2003.); Hughes Oliphant Old: *The reading and preaching of the Scripture*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998, 344–398; Edward P.J. Corbett: *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1971, 603–605; James Murphy: *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1973; George A. Kennedy: *A new history of classical rhetoric*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994, 265–270. George A. Kennedy: *Classical rhetoric and its Christian and secular tradition from ancient to modern times*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1980, 149–160; Adamik, Tamás: *Antik stíluselméletek*, Budapest, Seneca, 1998, 255–282.

arts, such as: *De grammatica*, *Principia dialecticae*, *De musica*, *De magistro*, *De vera religione*. In his second phase, during the first half of his time as priest in 397–398, he wrote his work *Confessiones*, one of the most read books in Christian literature, and the *De doctrina Christiana*, on Christian teaching. The latter is his most significant work from the viewpoint of rhetorics and homiletics. It is not an exaggeration to say that this is the first and intentional work on Christian homiletics. In the third and last phase of his work, he wrote the *De Trinitate* on the Holy Spirit, and the well known: *De civitate Dei*.

The rhetorical skills of Augustine were already evident at an early age. In *Confessions* (I.IX.14.), he reminisces on his school as a place where he was severely punished whenever he was “idle in learning” - something that occurred every now and then, but he soon excelled in rhetorics with his outstanding skills. And Augustine did not hesitate to make the most of it. The self-portrait which he depicts in his *Confessions* of his rhetorical past is a rather interesting one. In book IV. we read: “In those years I taught rhetoric, and, overcome by cupidity, made sale of a loquacity to overcome by.”³¹

And now I was chief in the rhetoric school, whereat I joyed proudly, and I swelled with arrogancy, though [...] far quieter and altogether removed from the subvertings of those “Subverters” (for this ill-omened and devilish name was the very badge of gallantry) among whom I lived [...]. With them I lived, and was sometimes delighted with their friendship, whose doings I ever did abhor [...] They wantonly persecuted the modesty of strangers, which they disturbed by a gratuitous jeering, feeding thereon their malicious birth. Nothing can be more like the very actions of devils than these. What then could they be more truly called than “Subverters”? Themselves subverted and altogether perverted first, the deceiving spirits secretly deriding and seducing them, wherein themselves delight to jeer at and deceive others. Among such as these, in that unsettled age of mine, I learned books of eloquence, wherein I desired to be eminent, out of a damnable and vainglorious end, a joy in human vanity.³²

We have to interpret this reminiscence as an authentic status report, since in 4th century rhetorics the form – completely in line with the already elaborated neo-sophistic (or “Second Sophistic”) tradition – divorced the content, and trivia was flaunting its strength with brilliance. Augustine is also called the creator of Christian rhetorics because he first combined pagan rhetorics with theology. In the fourth book of *On Christian Doctrine* he indeed speaks

³¹ *The Confessions of Augustine*, IV.II.2.; And see 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, Georgia, Scholar Press, 1991.

³² *The Confessions of Augustine*, III.III.5.

several times of the necessity of rhetorics as a device for all preachers, nevertheless, the only way to retrieve Augustine's exact idea on rhetorics is to closely observe the rhetorical and homiletical questions of the first three books. Following the era of classical rhetorics in an already "Christian" empire but still amidst the many tides of false teachings, the fast-growing demand for an authentic interpretation of the Bible was the primary reason that urged Augustine to create the above mentioned groundbreaking work. In the *De doctrina Christiana* he really did the job by laying the foundations of Semiotics, creating the first Christian hermeneutics, and managing rhetorics – the once pagan and suspicious science – to be an accepted form of art.

DE DOCTRINA CHRISTIANA

Right in the very first chapter, Augustine highlights what the theme of the three books will be: rhetorics and homiletics. "There are two things on which all interpretation of Scripture depends: the mode of ascertaining the proper meaning, and the mode of making known the meaning when it is ascertained. We shall treat first the mode of ascertaining the meaning, then the mode of making it known."³³ According to the former, the first three books elaborate the *inventio*, while the fourth book, written thirty years later in 426, is the *elocutio*. Why Augustine waited, we do not know, but his thoughts on rhetorics from the previously quoted *Confessions* (397–398) suggest that he deemed the style to be very dangerous, in fact, he even condemned it, as this was what kept him away from the Scriptures for a very long time. "When I turned to those Scriptures [...] they seemed to me unworthy to be compared to the stateliness of Tully: for my swelling pride shrunk from their lowliness, nor could my sharp wit pierce the interior thereof. Yet were they such as would grow up in a little one. But I disdained to be a little one; and, swollen with pride, took myself to be a great one."³⁴ Considering the relationship between Christianity and rhetorics, it was very typical of the era to have a synod, like the fourth Synod of Carthage in 398, ban all priests from reading pagan books (*libros gentilium*).³⁵ And even if the *elocutio* was born thirty years later, in writing the *inventio* Augustine made great use of his former education in trying to find the true meaning of the Scriptures. That is, he placed his classical rhetorical knowledge at the service of comprehension.

As previously mentioned, in the first three books Augustine lays the foundations of Semiotics. "All instruction is either about things or about

³³ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, I.1.

³⁴ *The Confessions of Augustine*, III.V.9.

³⁵ Murphy: *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 50.

signs; but things are learnt by means of signs.”³⁶ The first book is about things: “I now use the word ‘thing’ in a strict sense, to signify that which is never employed as a sign of anything else...”³⁷ There are three things to be distinguished: the ones to be enjoyed, the others to be used, and the third to be enjoyed and used simultaneously. The first one makes us happy, the second makes the pursuit of happiness possible. Those conducting all this are called humans. There are signs whose sole purpose is only to signify: “for example, words. No one uses words except as signs of something else; and hence may be understood what I call signs: those things, to wit, which are used to indicate something else. Accordingly, every sign is also a thing; for what is not a thing is nothing at all.”³⁸ According to Augustine, every sign is a thing because it exists. However, not every thing is also a sign as there are things that signify nothing. Signs are not rendered by nature, but by use. There are also things that happen to be signs at the same time, hence the possibility to study and understand them in a double manner: as things and as signs. But words are only used as signs, and therefore we may only study and understand them as signs. For Augustine, language is the most important type of sign because, on the one hand, thoughts are primarily transmitted through words, and on the other, all the other types of signs can be articulated in words as well. The latter does not happen vice versa. Today’s contemporary hermeneutics rediscovered this ancient truth, something that Augustine had already concluded, and re-established language as the foundation of understanding.

It is quite clear that Augustine did not treat his semiotic theory as a matter of detail, as he had before, but built his entire theology on this very basis. With that we may rightly say that after Plato and Aristotle he was the greatest scientist to have impacted hermeneutics and the whole field of linguistics in general.

In the second and third books, Augustine elaborates on signs. “For a sign is a thing which, over and above the impression it makes on the senses, causes something else to come into the mind as a consequence of itself.”³⁹ Augustine divides signs into two classes: natural signs (*signa naturalia*), e.g. smoke that indicates fire; and conventional signs (*signa data*). “Conventional signs, on the other hand, are those which living beings mutually exchange for the purpose of showing, as well as they can, the feelings of their minds, or their perceptions, or their thoughts.”⁴⁰ The transmission of signals, however, is not an exceptional skill to humans only, but is also possible among animals. But Augustine focuses on the signs which have been given by God that are contained by the Scriptures

³⁶ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, I.2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I.2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, I.2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, II.1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II.2.

in written form.⁴¹ According to Augustine, the majority of signs are acoustic signs and are the most relevant ones, because almost all signs can be expressed with words, but other signs can hardly do the same: “The signs that address themselves to the ear are, as I have said, more numerous, and for the most part consist of words [...] For among men words have obtained far and away the chief place as a means of indicating the thoughts of the mind.”⁴² With this statement, Augustine again emphasizes an important segment in linguistics, something which 19th century linguistic research has also highlighted.

As words spoken may fly away, it was essential to have written signs in the form of letters. Here he briefly discusses the difficult nature inherent to every language, and according to his opinion, those who study Scripture have to be familiar with the texts written in their original Biblical languages. Augustine sets the standard very high for all those who intend to interpret the Bible. No wonder. Being able to decipher the unknown signs, Augustine sees it as imperative that the reader is familiar – apart from the languages – with the things and the *Realia*, e.g. philosophy, seven liberal arts, literature, folklore or even numerology. We may discover a similar expectation already with Cicero, who demanded the same level of education of every professional rhetor.

Not only would the study of the Bible in this way involve theological speculation through an allegorical method, it could demand a whole range of literary interests unknown to classical readers – a knowledge of Hebrew, of the history of ancient Near East, even of the plants and animals of Palestine. It would also continue old methods: throughout the Dark Ages, the classical schoolmaster, the *grammaticus*, would find his vital position in culture, as the exponent of the precise interpretation of the text by grammatical methods, had been assured by the *imprimatur* of the bishop of Hippo.⁴³

In the third book, Augustine elaborates on the ambiguous and figurative signs. In the case of signs that are troublesome to decipher, one must take into consideration the original text (e.g. Latin and Greek). However, the context, punctuation and church tradition or ancient text segmentation are all equally important as well. If incorrect punctuation is applied to the first verses of the Gospel of John – as he argues in III.II.3 –, then one might receive a heretical meaning, as the final semantic result would be that God and the Word (*Logos*) are two different things. On the other hand, interpreting the figurative parts of the Bible poses a much greater but heavier task. According to Augustine, the signs received from God are only temporal and not for themselves, but exist only to point towards God. Therefore, it is not the signs that need to be considered as things, but God Himself. It is essential to decide,

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., II.3.

⁴³ Brown: *Augustine of Hippo*, 261.

which signs are to be interpreted literally, and which are not. “In the first place, then, we must show the way to find out whether a phrase is literal or figurative. And the way is certainly as follows: Whatever there is in the word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred either to purity of life or soundness of doctrine, you may set down as figurative.”⁴⁴ With this methodology, Augustine moved onto the grounds of allegorization. Due to the heavy cultural influence of Hellenism, allegorization became a very popular method in hermeneutics in the 4th century.

Thus, when Augustine wished to justify the allegorical method of interpretation, by which he extracted such profound meanings from so singularly opaque and unwieldy a text as the Old Testament, he could always appeal to the tastes of his audience. But this general taste does not fully explain Augustine’s attachment to the allegorical method. For, despite its diffused penumbra, a general fashion in cryptic expression, the allegorical method proper had been confined to a precise area of ancient culture, to the philosophical interpretation of sacred texts, pagan, Jewish and Christian.⁴⁵

Augustine borrowed the method of Ambrose and eventually grew very keen on adapting it to his interpretations of the Old and New Testament. But even then, however, allegorization was seen as a dubious science because it allowed the interpreter a certain kind of arbitrary and subjective expounding. Augustine answered these charges by two counterarguments: First, there is a difference between the sign and the thing. Second, if the sign is a thing, then the thing possesses the very same features as that of the sign. Augustine, being a skilled rhetor, knew very well that texts built from words always have another meaning beyond what the words materially carry within. On this hypothesis, he considered figurative interpretation to be right. These books, written not for their own sake but for the sole purpose of better understanding the Bible, rendered Augustine the father of semantics.

Nevertheless, it is important to see that medieval rhetors from Petrarch up to the 16th century, on their shift towards poetry, resorted to the Augustinian teachings on the equivocal or ambiguous with great favour. After all, obscurity and ambiguity fit perfectly well with the idea of medieval literary rhetoric.

As for me, it is the fourth book written in 426 that bears the greatest relevance, for in the closing parts of the book we are introduced to the doctrine of *elocutio*. He calls the first three parts, in rhetorical terms, the exposition of the *inventio*. In the beginning of the fourth book, he immediately clarifies that he does not intend to write a code of principles on rhetorics.

⁴⁴ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, III.14.

⁴⁵ Brown: *Augustine of Hippo*, 257.

In the first place, then, I wish by this preamble to put a stop to the expectations of readers who may think that I am about to lay down rules of rhetoric such as I have learnt and taught too, in the secular schools, and to warn them that they need not look for any such from me. Not that I think such rules of no use, but that whatever use they have is to be learnt elsewhere...⁴⁶

In the last phase of his works he thought that signs, or, more concretely, the language, (apart from the viewpoint of theoretical typology) could be solely interpreted in the context of societal use, or, as he says no man could associate with another without the aid of a common language.⁴⁷ With such a theory, Augustine gave form to the notion that in the study of words as signs the listener's position is an all-important factor, in addition to the effect the speaker has on him due to features inherent in the language. From Cicero, he borrowed the phrase "power of the word" (*vis verborum*), the theory of which he further elaborated on in *De Dialectica* (VII.).⁴⁸ In this theory Augustine unifies the results of both the rhetorical and dialectical study of language. "Behind this is the realization that the meaning of a word encompasses broader than mere cognitive content, that is, those normally accessible with the aid of dialectic (i.e. logic). Using contemporary concepts, we could say that Augustine tried to unify the most important aspects of meaning from a predominantly cognitive and communicative viewpoint in an all-encompassing theory."⁴⁹

In 426, Augustine formulated the same in another way, speaking of acquired truths, which immediately lose their value should we fail to communicate them comprehensively. "Sermons employing rules of the *elocutio* in the protection of Christian truths is a Platonic-Aristotelean heritage."⁵⁰ For the sake of brevity, let the author speak for himself once again:

Now, the art of rhetoric being available for the enforcing either of truth or falsehood, who will dare to say that truth in the person of its defenders is to take its stand unarmed against falsehood? For example, that those who are trying to persuade men of what is false are to know how to introduce their subject, so as to put the hearer into a friendly, or attentive, or teachable frame of mind, while the defenders of the truth shall be ignorant of that art? That the former are to tell

⁴⁶ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.2.

⁴⁷ Saint Augustine: *On Order*, Indiana, US, St. Augustine Press, 2007. (Hungarian trans. Szent Ágoston: A rendről, in Redl, Károly (ed.): *Az égi és a földi szépről. Források a későantik és a középkori esztétika történetéhez*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, 81.)

⁴⁸ Augustine: *De Dialectica*, trans. Jackson B. Darell, in *Synthese Historical Library*, Vol. 16., Dordrecht/Boston, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 101–102; see Latin text: <http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/texts/dialectica.html> (accessed 25 June 2016).

⁴⁹ Kelemen, János: *A nyelvfilozófia rövid története Platontól Humbolddig*, Budapest, Áron, 2000, 58.

⁵⁰ Adamik: *Antik stíluselméletek*, 275.

their falsehoods briefly, clearly, and plausibly, while the latter shall tell the truth in such a way that it is tedious to listen to, hard to understand, and not easy to believe? That the former are to oppose the to melt, to enliven, and to rouse them, while the latter shall in defence of the truth be sluggish, and frigid, and somnolent? Who is such a fool as to think this wisdom? Since, then, the faculty of eloquence is available for both sides, and is of very great service in the enforcing either of wrong or right, why do not good men study to engage it on the side of truth, when bad men use it to obtain the triumph of wicked and worthless causes, and to further injustice and error?⁵¹

Augustine realized the then-Sophist thought that rhetorics – in this case, style –, is neither benevolent nor harmful in itself, but becomes the latter when used for wrong ends.

There are also certain rules for a more copious kind of argument, which is called eloquence, and these rules are not the less true that they can be used for persuading men of what is false [...] Nor is it owing to an arrangement among men that the expression of affection conciliates the hearer, or that a narrative, when it is short and clear, is effective, and that variety arrests men's attention without wearying them.⁵²

So the pivotal question here is not the technique as such, but the *ethos* of the speaker. The whole classical age was unified in the opinion that for the speech to be appropriate, the speaker himself must be a moral, ethical person as well. As we can see, Augustine made ample use of that theory. Still, he was different from Aristotle, for instance, that he did not wish to see the *ethos* built inside the sermon itself, but rather as a Christian personal *ethos*, moulded by God. But how one can achieve such an *ethos*, and what is a moral preacher like? First and foremost, the Christian rhetor should pray for a message with proper meaning, and to perform it the right way. A conversation with God is essential for the purposes of preaching. Without God, there is no Christian *ethos*.

Thus it is true both in the case of a Christian preacher and classical rhetorics that the power of words comes from the authenticity of the rhetor.

⁵¹ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.2. <https://books.google.hu/books?id=aMtFDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA89&lpg=PA89&dq=the+enforcing+either+of+truth+or+falsehood&source=bl&ots=qIgjFtH0xj&sig=ACfU3U0bgVRDE9nj2P61K3YcuRahSaAnvQ&hl=hu&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiexoKw3qzqAhWVHHcKHTGLD1QQ6AEwA3oECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=the%20enforcing%20either%20of%20truth%20or%20falsehood&f=false> (accessed 5 July 2020).

⁵² *Ibid.*, IV.2., <https://books.google.hu/books?id=Z6fVcVAG62QC&pg=PR34&dq=Nor+is+it+owing+to+an+arrangement+among+men+that+the+expression+of+affection&hl=hu&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiC7NCE36zqAhWxtYsKHdSBBvIQ6wEwAXoECAYQAQ#v=onepage&q=Nor%20is%20it%20owing%20to%20an%20arrangement%20among%20men%20that%20the%20expression%20of%20affection&f=false> (accessed 5 July 2020).

As Quintilianus put it (borrowing from Cato): “*vir bonus dicendi peritus.*”⁵³ “But whatever may be the majesty of the style, the life of the speaker will count for more in securing the hearer’s compliance.”⁵⁴ Augustine, however, as a commentary on Matthew 23:1–2, mentions that though there are indeed cases when a preacher’s life does not justify what he says, we must still listen to his words and align ourselves with them, if the sermon in question is rooted in the Bible. “Now these men do good to many by preaching what they themselves do not perform; but they would do good to very many more if they lived as they preach.”⁵⁵ Quintilianus would have been no doubt surprised by such a remark, but this teaching, in harmony with that of Jesus, shows that the *ethos* is surpassed by one thing only: and that is the *logos*. In the light of that, it is no wonder that Augustine would let those without sufficient intelligence and wisdom, yet possessing the gift of eloquence, present the wise and well-written speeches of others. According to Augustine, they still serve their purpose this way. László Ravasz, however, deemed such a leniency positively harmful: “Finally, with his sentiment that if we cannot say our own speech we must say that of others, he sentenced the prophetic tenet of preaching, which affirms that clerical speeches must be subjective testimonies as well, to a slow atrophy. His prudent advices are all but forgotten; the only faulty one is faithfully followed to this very day.”⁵⁶ Still, both Augustine and Ravasz have a point – with certain limitations. Ravasz, referring to the prophetic tradition of preaching, justly fears losing personal involvement with preachers recycling the sermons of each other, instead of creating their own. Yet I hold the opinion that if God speaks to me through a particular sermon, it could be – with ethical considerations regarding plagiarism kept in mind – safely told again. Here, of course, I refer not to the whole sermon as such, word by word, but rather certain borrowed thoughts, images and connections. Such a method could be very successfully employed by young, budding preachers, who lack the practice to perform entirely unaided. Imitation of others still formed the basis of rhetorical discipline well into the time of Augustine, with students learning and performing the speeches of other, famous rhetors.

But most important above all is that the preacher’s morality must be formed according to Biblical norms, and to the likeness of Christ.

On the other hand, the sophist thought declaring the neutrality of rhetorics, and holding that content is communicated through language, is based on strong delimitation: sermons are combinations of content and its carrier, the

⁵³ *Quintilian’s Institutes of Oratory*, trans. John Selby Watson, London, Bell and Daldy, 1873, 12.1.1.

⁵⁴ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.59.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.60.

⁵⁶ Ravasz, László: *A gyülekezeti igehirdetés elmélete*, Pápa, Magyar Református Egyház, 1915, 41–42.

language, both of which could be beneficial or harmful. There are also certain rules for a more copious kind of argument, which is called eloquence. These rules are not the less true that they can be used for persuading men of what is false; but can be used to enforce the truth as well. It is not the faculty itself that is to be blamed, but the perversity of those who put it to a bad use. Augustine argues that false prophets communicate false content but using convincing language, while Christian preachers do the exact opposite, preaching good content in a faulty form. Such a strong delimitation of form and content is present in homiletics until the second half of the twentieth century.

Speaking of the functions of a Christian preacher Augustine lists the parts of speech and functions among others. A teacher of divine writings mostly protects true faith, and makes his audience forget about false teachings altogether. But how could one do that?

It is the duty, then, of the interpreter and teacher of Holy Scripture the defender of the true faith and the opponent of error, both to teach what is right and to refute what is wrong, and in the performance of this task to conciliate the hostile, to rouse the careless, and to tell the ignorant both what is occurring at present and what is probable in the future. [...] to clear up points that are doubtful requires reasoning and the exhibition of proof. If, however, the hearers require to be roused rather than instructed, in order that they may be diligent to do what they already know, and to bring their feelings into harmony with the truths they admit, greater vigor of speech is needed. Here entreaties and reproaches, exhortations and upbraidings, and all the other means of rousing the emotions, are necessary.⁵⁷

Some do this “coarsely, inelegantly, and frigidly”, others “with acuteness, elegance, and spirit”. Still, all things considered, Augustine thinks that it is the inherent wisdom of speech that matters, and the preaching, if not “elegant”, could be still a great boon to its listeners. But he adds: “the work that I am speaking of ought to be undertaken by one who can argue and speak with wisdom, if not with eloquence, and with profit to his hearers, even though he profit them less than he would if he could speak with eloquence too.”⁵⁸ Here he again borrows from Cicero, who, in the beginning of *De inventione*, summarizes his thoughts regarding form and content as such: “wisdom without eloquence does too little for the good of states, but that eloquence without wisdom is generally disadvantageous and is never helpful.”⁵⁹ If those who do not know about “the heavenly wisdom which comes down from the

⁵⁷ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, IV.7.

⁵⁹ Cicero: *On Invention*, trans. Harry Mortimer Hubbel, Harvard University Press, 1949, 3. (“*sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus, eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse numquam*”)

Father of Lights” still press the superiority of truth in a rhetorical speech, then how much more is it the responsibility of the children of wisdom and light, the Christians? – asks Augustine. But who could be regarded wise? The one who is well advanced in the knowledge of the Scripture, laborously studying, expounding and understanding its message.

It is clear, then, that Augustine held both rhetoric and language as a tool, as a means to an end. In rhetoric, *inventio*, that is, content comes first, followed by *elocutio* – the actual presentation. Reducing the duties of the rhetor from five to two shows the influence of Cicero, who tried to strip rhetoric of all system and excessive intellectuality, returning rather to the tenet of naturalism, and cultivating it according to a fine style. On the following pages I will put these tools under close scrutiny, finding out what makes Christian eloquence – according to Augustine.

First and foremost he cites the example of the Bible’s authors, whose writings make wisdom and grace walking hand in hand. Despite the occasional abstruseness of the Scripture, reading the letters of Paul we cannot doubt that he was a practised master of rhetoric. But here the aim is transferring an idea, and the result is that things and thoughts – almost unintendedly – are born fully formed, the proper words already attached. “... as if wisdom were walking out of its house,- that is, the breast of the wise man, and eloquence, like an inseparable attendant, followed it without being called for.”⁶⁰ Citing Romans 5:3–5 among other verses, Augustine points out the rhetorical role of *gradatio* (heightening) and that of the clauses and periodic style. Division of words and sentences was a crucial question of classical *elocutio*, since it was not marked in writing – the reader was left to his own devices in identifying the beginning and the end of sentences according to the natural rhythm of the text.⁶¹ Augustine ponders the question at length, citing many examples. Later on, Augustine returns to Cicero when discussing the role of speech apart from its educational value, pointing out two other uses: “an eloquent man must speak so as to teach, to delight, and to persuade. [...] To teach is a necessity, to delight is a beauty, to persuade is a triumph.”⁶² Education

⁶⁰ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.10.

⁶¹ Adamik: *Antik stíluselméletek*, 272.

⁶² St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.27; Cicero: *Orator*, trans. William Guthrie, Boston, 1822, XXI.69. “*ut probet, ut delectet, ut flectat. Probare necessitatis est, delectare suavitatis, flectere victoriae.*”

https://books.google.hu/books?id=vL88AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA77&lpg=PA77&dq=ut+probet,+ut+delectet,+ut+flectat&source=bl&ots=k_V7Cnqo_N&sig=ynRNeaDySEd8qr-f6I19YdgDG1c&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CC8Q6AEwBGoVChMI7sPWIM3YxgIVRe8UCh27QgA4#v=onepage&q=ut%20probet%2C%20ut%20delectet%2C%20ut%20flectat&f=false
(accessed 27 June 2015).

is necessary, the beginning of thought: without it, the audience cannot take pleasure in unfamiliar ideas, and so won't be moved to act on them. But the final goal, after all, is actuation:

For what does it profit a man that he both confesses the truth and praises the eloquence, if he does not yield his consent, when it is only for the sake of securing his consent that the speaker in urging the truth gives careful attention to what he says? [...] The eloquent divine, then, when he is urging a practical truth, must not only teach so as to give instruction, and please so as to keep up the attention, but he must also sway the mind so as to subdue the will.⁶³

Then Augustine returns to Cicero again:

For it is these three ends, viz., teaching, giving pleasure, and moving, that the great master of Roman eloquence himself seems to have intended that the following three directions should subserve: "He, then, shall be eloquent, who can say little things in a subdued style, moderate things in a temperate style, and great things in a majestic style:" as if he had taken in also the three ends mentioned above, and had embraced the whole in one sentence thus: "He, then, shall be eloquent, who can say little things in a subdued style, in order to give instruction, moderate things in a temperate style, in order to give pleasure, and great things in a majestic style, in order to sway the mind."⁶⁴

SUMMARY

We can safely conclude that the connection between Augustine's teachings and its relations to the field of rhetoric, hermeneutic and homiletic could be only comprehended in the context of the saint's own era. The empire, once great, was slowly collapsing. Christianity had already become the state religion, and its evolving dogmatic system, started to consolidate. Apologetics, as a part of an ongoing theological battle against heresy, is thriving in this era; there is a growing need to win the favors of the societal-cultural elite, and, even more importantly, the masses flocking to the church are in desperate need of appropriate education. All these reasons foster the correct interpretation of Scripture and the presentation of its truths. Therefore, Augustine's previously analysed work should not be viewed as a technical guide as such, distributing practical knowledge to the preacher as the training courses of late. Augustine was well aware that conversion is possible through the Spirit alone, in a divine

⁶³ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.29.

⁶⁴ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.34.

sphere where eloquence has no role at all, so he did not discuss the topic at length. For this reason he dedicated his book, first and foremost to Christian teachers, mostly priests, with the intention of making them able to reveal the meaning of Scripture and then communicate it to the converts as well. The place of eloquence in Augustine's system, therefore, is to realize faith through acts. Such a viewpoint is easy to understand in the fourth century, when the growing church, with its newly converted masses, was threatened by losing the characteristic devotion of the previous centuries.

Yet another fact in Augustine's work affirms my statement that the preacher should be able to address his audience properly, no matter what. "Christian rhetoric, as Augustine dealt with it, is a popular rhetoric. Christianity is inclusive to all, therefore the Christian preacher should be able to address both the unlearned, illiterate layers of society apart from the wise and learned."⁶⁵ With that, Augustine intended to articulate that though classical rhetoric does not solve communicational problems, in his age classical rhetoric was the communicational situation, and he had simply no other choice but to use its styles and forms. It is a very important discovery precisely because every age possesses its own peculiar, "popular" form of communication. So there is no use in being sensitive to classical rhetoric: we must be sensitive to the communication of our own age instead. It is evident from the works of Augustine that he does not really make a distinction between the rhetoric of the church and that of the world. He only has one rhetoric, which is the communicational form known and used by the audience. This intersubjective part of communication was necessary to be used through all ages in the history of homiletics, including the time of Augustine.

As we see, Augustine borrowed heavily from the teachings of the Second Sophism (i.e. rhetoric as a neutral tool, the importance of style, the ethos of the rhetor, etc.) Still, despite this and his early education it would be a mistake to call him a Sophist. Reading his work it soon becomes clear that he resists the bombastic brilliance of rhetoric, advising preachers to employ the invisible, yet at the same time the most effective form of the Scriptures instead.

The structure of the hermeneutics and homiletics of Augustine faithfully follows that of Aristotle, creating the so-called "Christian dialectic" in his first three books, followed by Christian rhetoric in the fourth one. As dialectic and rhetoric go in pairs in the works of Aristotle, together forming a perfect union, so do these four books – even if the fourth was written some thirty years later. Augustine's greatness partially comes from his realization that there is no adequate "Christian dialectic", that is, hermeneutic. There is not enough interpretation and understanding, yet the Word yearns to be heard and understood.

⁶⁵ Kennedy: *Classical Rhetoric*, 158.

But, as we can observe studying the history of homiletic, the church soon forgot about Augustine's discoveries, and adapted a rejective attitude towards rhetoric.

The question of form, though, is richer and deeper than as it was interpreted in classical rhetoric, where the absolute authority was the imitation of the masters of old. Contrary to that, a Christian preacher gets his authority from the Old and the New Testament, thus directly from the authority of God, ensuring in turn the potency of his words. And as for aesthetical beauty, the Scripture guarantees that on its own, provided the preacher doesn't stray from its course.

In a sense, Augustine trimmed the classical system of rhetoric, dealing only with *inventio* and *elocutio* – the first and the third from the five functions of a rhetor, but, at the same time, he broadened it as well, establishing a connection with all other sciences (the subjects of trivium, semiotics and theology), which have something to do with a deeper understanding of the Scripture. Though this became his biggest drawback as well, for Augustine's attempt to connect homiletic to Cicero led to a misinterpretation of rhetoric as stilistics in later ages, which, in turn, resulted in a misunderstanding of the subject both among the supporters and enemies of classical style.

HUMANISM



PROTESTANT PREACHING AS A NEW RHETORICAL PARADIGM IN THE 16TH CENTURY



Homiletics⁶⁶ and rhetoric go back a long way together, but the history they share is hallmarked by a continuously recurring tension – the kind that stems from the proverbial “neither with, nor without you” type of relationship. All this is probably best exemplified in the ambivalent attitude of Augustine towards the subject matter. Before his conversion he was the great master and teacher of rhetorics. His career took him to Milan, to the cultural centre of the Roman Empire of his time, where he became rhetor of the emperor. However, after his conversion (386) he rejected the entire rhetorical tradition as he, in alignment with the contemporary Christian consensus, deemed it to be an academic discipline that was alien to Christianity altogether. An other typical move denoting the relationship between Christianity and rhetorics of the era, for example, was the decision of the 4th council of Carthage in 398 which prohibited bishops from reading pagan books (*libros gentilium*). It was during this period (396) when Augustine wrote the first three parts of his book *De Doctrina Christiana*, which is in fact the basic work of his theological invention. Interestingly though, it was only 30 years later that he drafted the 4th part, which deals with the requirements and practices of ecclesiastic elocution. This fourth part breaks away from the interpretation of the previous 30 years, and legitimizes the use of rhetorics for the sake of improving the efficiency of preaching. Simply put, we may conclude that Augustine was the first theologian in the 4th century who combined rhetorics with homiletics, in other words he wedded the rhetoric and homiletics.⁶⁷

During the theological practice of the last two thousand years, the main emphasis was either on invention, i.e. on teaching and rational arguing (*convincere*), or mainly on elocution, in other words, the aim of homiletics was efficient preaching (*persuadere*), which did not refrain from emotion. At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, modern-liberal theology envisaged the ideal of free men of action moving the world from the non-ideal to the ideal by means of persuasion. This positivist way of thinking, however, was soon eliminated during the First World War and was succeeded by dialectical

⁶⁶ Homiletics is the common name of the science of preparing sermons and practice of preaching

⁶⁷ Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, 125, 4.7.

theology, a new way of theological thinking that is associated mainly with the name of Karl Barth. Now dialectical theology distinguishes rhetorics (as *techne*) from homiletics and rejects it altogether. This is due to the understanding of the total absence of man's efficiency in conveying the Word of God, because that power of efficiency solely resides within the Word itself. Therefore, the only efficient thing to do from our side is to remain in the background and refrain from hindering the efficiency of the Holy Word. Thus it can be said that rhetorics (as *techne*) is indeed an obstacle to be necessarily eliminated.

The practice in the 20th century in homiletics was planted in the theological conception elaborated above. This explains why the majority of the textbooks of homiletics published after the Second World War strictly rejected the use of rhetorics in both the theoretical and pragmatic fields of theology. After decades the American so called New Homiletics rejected the classical rhetoric as well, saying rhetorics belongs to the old homiletics. So around the second millenium it seemed there was no place for rhetoric in the science of homiletics.

After these introductory thoughts on tension between rhetoric and homiletics I attempt to show in this short work that protestant-reformed preaching originally evolved in a humanistic context where rhetorics played a fundamental role in the shaping of society, and had therefore an effect on the formation of principles and practice in the development of the new paradigm in theology and communication. So I do not speak about the use of the technic of rhetoric in homiletics – however debates have been existing on this technical issue for decades – but the use of the original frame of the protestant homiletics that was shaped by the thinking of rhetoric. Through this fact I am going to show in this work that the theory of protestant homiletics can not lack the discipline of rhetoric. Some may think this is too evident, but theologians are in conflict over this question.

The reformed preaching practice even today utilises this 16th century paradigm, it is important therefore that the present homiletical theories should not renounce the theories of the starting point. For these reasons the aim of my work is to find answers to the following problems:

1. How did the humanistic practice determine the development of the paradigm of reformed-protestant communication? Erasmus.
2. How did the re-discovery of rhetorics influence protestant homiletics? Melanchthon.
3. How did the rhetorical knowledge of the 16th century determine the development of reformed theological science? Hyperius and Calvin.

ERASMUS

More than 1000 year after Augustine, Erasmus was the first person who attempted to establish the theory of preaching on the basis of the classical science of rhetoric. Although he was aware that the Italian ecclesiastical oration applied the *genus demonstrativum*⁶⁸ as the foundation of sermons, he did not regard this to be adequate. The fact that in spite of this he still chose classical rhetoric, became a determining feature for several centuries in the European science of homiletics. Because of its wide spread and effect, it was probably Erasmus' handbook, which removed the system of medieval artes from rhetorical thought. This work was his *Ecclesiastes sive Concionator evangelicus*,⁶⁹ published in 1535.

In his work, Erasmus called preaching 'prophesising', in the sense of teaching. The objective of a preacher is to convey God's will clearly and vividly, and to induce the listener to obedience.⁷⁰ However, teaching according to Erasmus is never a didactic, dry flow of thoughts, but one which is always connected to practical life; in other words, the objective of the preacher is to compose his sermon in order to instruct and convince his audience. Erasmus places great importance on the personality of the preacher. He bridges the tension between divine and human speech by applying the teaching of classical ethos, the preacher must be a trustworthy person with moral integrity. Accordingly, a person in whose heart Jesus is living, by the power of the Spirit, cannot preach falsely.⁷¹ Erasmus was also aware of the fact that the object of homiletics differs from that of classical rhetoric. The former does not dwell with persons and deeds, but with parts of the Scripture. In the thinking of Erasmus, instead of the traditional divisions and subjects of oratoria, classical grammatics and the secondary stylistic and exegetical features of literary rhetoric gain importance. "Further concentrating on explaining the text in fact determines homily as the perfect form of ecclesiastical communication."⁷² Erasmus, by the way, introduced a new word into homiletics to express sermon, which has not been defined through the scholastic *ars praedicandi*, but was taken from earlier times. This word is *concio*, which appeared in this sense only rarely in earlier church literature, but from then onwards became common usage. Erasmus begins his work with the following sentence:

⁶⁸ Epideictic or artistic speech

⁶⁹ Desiderius Erasmus: *Ecclesiastes Or the Preacher: An Essay*, Whitefish Montana, Kessinger Publishing, 2003.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 15–22.

⁷² Kecskeméti, Gábor: *Prédikáció, retorika, irodalomtörténet*, Budapest, Universitas, 1998, 154.

The word *ecclesia*, which we translate church, is the same as the latin word *concio*, which signifies an assembly of people called together for the purpose of discussing matters of general concern; and that which is appointed publicly to address the assembly is called *ecclesiastes*... Of these public speakers there are two kinds: the one, whose office it is to declare the laws and constitutions of government to the people... the other, whose duty it is to lay before their hearers the will and commands of the Lord and Sovereign of the world, and exhort them to obedience.⁷³

The word *ecclesia*, used by the apostle Paul, is also connected to sermon; he defines preaching with it also. In other words, with the parallelism of these concepts, Erasmus defined the framework of preacher and sermon and their relationship for the next period of time. As in the antique literature the word *concio* was coupled to the genus *deliberativum*,⁷⁴ the nature of preaching was defined in this form. Erasmus thus interpreted the nature of preaching along these lines, in contrast to the *demonstrativum* used in the 15th century by *oratoria*. The link to *deliberativum* strengthened the intent of persuasion within the theory of preaching, as we have seen in the letters to Corinth by the apostle Paul.

Erasmus never became a true reformer, though one cannot imagine the spreading of Reformation without his activities. He himself, as an inveterate humanist, faded gradually both in the protestant and Roman denominations, but through the fact that he explained homiletics within the framework of rhetoric, had great influence on the theory of preaching in both churches. However, his ideas were developed further, though in different directions, in the two denominations.

The teaching system introduced later by Melanchthon became the most important in the development of protestant homiletics, the *deliberativum* became only secondary. In the Roman church however, the latter kept its leading position even against *demonstrativum*. The initial point with both denominations was naturally Augustine's ciceronian triplet, according to which the task of preaching is *docere, delectare* and *flectere*. While this concept was both imaginable and realizable in the Roman church, in the protestant ethos *doceret* and *delectaret* were regarded as irreconcilable components.

The other great, if not the greatest, influence of Erasmus on protestant homiletics was the *usus-s*, taken from *genuses*, better known as the separation of application within preaching. This phenomenon was observable at around the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. At that time Hyperius's homiletic

⁷³ Ibid., 1. *ecclesiastes* = speaker, preacher

⁷⁴ argumentative speech, persuasive speech, political speech

work (*De formandis concionibus sacris, seu de interpretatione Scripturarum populari libri duo*) was also well known, which had great influence in the protestant practice.

Erasmus's theory on preaching distinguished five types of sermons. Four of these, *persuasio*, *exhortatio*, *admonitio* and *consolatio* originate from *deliberativum*, while the fifth, the genus *laudatorium* has its roots in *demonstrativum*. Beside these five genres, aiming to teach, each sermon contains a sort of metagenus, by which the preacher defers or delays the selection of the genres into the second half of his talk. This teaching metagenus of Erasmus, followed by the five homiletical genres was the first step in the history of homiletics towards the trend, by which the realization of the genres happens towards the end of a sermon. The five genres of Erasmus are therefore relevant at the final phase of the construction of a sermon, and their application depends on the composition of the audience.

We can see from the efforts of Erasmus that he was the first after Augustine who continued consciously to develop rhetorical concepts in homiletics. He also emphasized the importance of the rhetorical situation. Humanists characteristically borrowed conceptions from sophistics. In the case of Erasmus this did not mean the refinement of style, but that type of thought, according to which only rhetoric can secure the development and practice of sciences. Thus, he did not mean to apply a sort of force over homiletics, but he was convinced that only rhetoric represents the sole way by which science can develop in general, and through which different sciences can relate to one another. As preaching always contained certain intentions towards the audience, Erasmus used this thought in developing a realization of the concept of applications. He did what he could towards this aim.

MELANCHTHON

One of the greatest scholars and orators of the Reformation was Melanchthon, professor at Wittenberg. The young professor aged twenty one, in his inaugural lecture, discussed *The Improvement of Studies of Adolescents* (*De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis, 1518*)⁷⁵ outlining the correlating programme of humanism and Reformation. This meant that with the aid of substantial knowledge of free arts one could understand philosophy, and through this also theology. By rekindling the free arts, and within this by attainment of the thorough linguistic culture of trivium, one can return to the source, where Christ can be recognized. At the beginning of the Middle

⁷⁵ I use here a Hungarian translation that was made by the original work from Corpus Reformationum. See Philipp Melanchthon: Az ifjúság tanulmányainak megjobbításáról, in Imre, Mihály (ed.): *Retorikák a reformáció korából*, Debrecen, Kossuth Egyetemi, 2000, 19–31.

Ages rhetoric possessed a sort of integrating dominance over dialectics and grammar, but this integrating power faded in the age of renaissance. It was Melanchthon, who wanted to try to restore this order.

He regarded language as a gift of God, which helps to understand the text of the Holy Scriptures. Only the Bible contains the necessary means to attain salvation, It is the word of God, and because understanding of it leads to salvation, all means must be invested to understand this as well as possible. It was Luther, who dismissed the old hermeneutical methods and stated that the church, which can explain the holy script, is itself the product of the same script, and is not the mother of the gospel. The Reformation, disregarding the hermeneutical methods of the scholastic age, applied new concepts, which were based mainly on the knowledge of antiquity and renaissance, in other words on the rhetorical culture.

Melanchthon, in his essay on *Laudation of eloquence (Encomium eloquentiae, 1523)*⁷⁶ drafts as follows: Now you see for what purpose I suggest you learning rhetoric. There is no possibility for performing and understanding the heritage of our ancestors unless we acquire the rules of the art of speech.⁷⁷ The close intertwinement of rhetorical and hermeneutical heritage is most obvious in the works of Melanchthon, who applied humanistic values in theology. He was of course aware of the fact that rhetoric cannot solve all problems in the understanding and preaching of the Scriptures, nevertheless he regarded it as indispensable. He knew that without the guidance and Spirit of the Lord one cannot understand the holy script, but knowledge of the system of the language is also necessary. The following quotation enlightens this: One has to understand the power of words that as a sanctuary hides the godly secrets. What happens when you preach words the audience does not understand like a magician does? You tell the deaf tales. But nobody can judge the speech only the one who expansively studied the rule of the oratory.⁷⁸

As an example Melanchthon wrote that incorrect interpretation of scriptures ("*corrupta lingua monachorum*") can only result in incorrect doctrines ("*doctrina corrupta*"). This is why the knowledge of linguistic sciences (*the trivium*) is necessary, because only through these can one be lead to correct interpretations.

⁷⁶ See Latin text: [http://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set\[image\]=8&set\[zoom\]=default&set\[debug\]=0&set\[double\]=0&set\[mets\]=http%3A%2F%2Fdaten.digital-e-sammlungen.de%2F~db%2Fmets%2Fbsb00077516_mets.xml](http://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set[image]=8&set[zoom]=default&set[debug]=0&set[double]=0&set[mets]=http%3A%2F%2Fdaten.digital-e-sammlungen.de%2F~db%2Fmets%2Fbsb00077516_mets.xml) (accessed 20 December 2013).

⁷⁷ "Videtis qua ratione nobis eloquentiae studia commendem, quod nec exponere quae nolumus ipsi, nec quae maioribus recte scripta extant, intelligere proximus nisi certam dicendi normam." Ibid., 8–9.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 13. "Verum praeter prophetiam verborum cognoscenda est, tanquam in sacrario quodam, divina mysteria recondite sunt. Quid enim si non intellect verba magico more pronunties none furdo? At de sermone iudicare nemo recte poterit, nisi qui recte dicendi rationem perdidicerit."

Melanchthon thus regards hermeneutics as the science of understanding the Scriptures, while rhetoric is required for the adequate communication of the correctly interpreted message. His rhetorical system can be understood in details from his work: Two books of principles of rhetorics (*Elementarum Rhetorices libri duo* 1549).⁷⁹ As this work is based mainly on the principles of classical rhetoric, I do not discuss further details here, but would like to point out some deviations from these. One most important and definitive of such deviations is Melanchthon's understanding of the nature of preaching. It has been proven that the works of Erasmus induced him to deal with genres. This influence does not originate from the Ecclesiastes, but from a much earlier work, published in 1522, entitled *Opus de conscribendis epistolis* (*The art of letter writing*),⁸⁰ which he wrote for one of his students.

Melanchthon was the first to follow the Italian practice of interpreting and allocating preaching even in the age of Reformation as part of the genus *demonstrativum*, but later realized that such interpretation does not fit into this system. As neither the *genus iudiciale*, nor the genus *deliberativum* or even the *genus demonstrativum* were not adequate concepts to describe the theory of preaching in the reformed church, he extended the originally antique system by a fourth element, the rules of teaching sermons, the genus *didascalium*. Although it belongs to the dialectics, we cannot set *didaskalikon* aside when we use the *genus deliberativum*, especially in today's popular ecclesiastical field, where not only persuasive speeches are held, but more often people are taught about religious dogmas in the dialectic way in order to make them better understand. The *genus* of *didaskalikon* is nothing more than a method of teaching, which is the subject of dialectics and orators preserved its parts in *status finitivus*. The *genus demonstrativum* is adjacent to the *genus* of *didaskalikon*.⁸¹

This has the greatest power and the greatest benefit – he wrote a little later. Evaluating Melanchthon's methodical innovations, I believe that the *didascalium* is the product of an age in which the new type of interpretation of Scripture became important, not so much from the view of *persuadere* but rather from that of *convincere*, thus from the view of intellect. Melanchthon's

⁷⁹ See Latin text: http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/fs1/object/display/bsb10184259_00039.html?zoom=0.5&numScans=2 (accessed 20 December 2013).

⁸⁰ John W. O'Malley: *Content and Rhetorical Form in Sixteenth Century*, in James J. Murphy (ed.): *Renaissance Eloquence, Studies in the Theory and Practice of renaissance rhetoric*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1983, 243–244.

⁸¹ "Vulgo tria numerant genera causarum... Demonstrativum... Deliberativum... Iudiciale... Ego addendum censeo didaskalikon genus, quod etsi ad Dialecticam pertinent, tamen ubi negotiorum genera recentur, non est praetermittendum: praesertim cum hoc tempore vel maximum usum Ecclesiae habeat, ubi non tantum susasoriae conclusiones habentur, sed multo saepius homines dialecticorum more, de dogmatibus religionis docendi sunt, ut ea perfecta cognoscere possint. Est autem didaskalikon genus methodus illa docendi..." *Elementarum Rhetorices libri duo*, 20.

HUMANISM

definitive role had even here an influence on the thinking at the time of the Reformation. Partly, he recognised that preaching cannot be restricted simply to trying to convince (the audience), but that the Bible always talks about the function of teaching. Furthermore, he recognised brilliantly that the areas and congregations, converted from the Roman into the Reformed Churches had to be taught first of all to understand the new system of faith. Thus, as a result of his activities, besides that of the *deliberativum*, the use of an appropriate kind of *didascalion* has influenced the development of homiletics for centuries.

HYPERIUS

As a contemporary of Melanchthon, as a professor at the the University of Marburg from 1542, and as the father of practical theology, Andreas Gerarus Hyperius was a reformer of the Netherlands. His person is rightly esteemed highly in connection with the development of theological science, however, his views on rhetorics cannot be judged from his work on homiletics *De formandis concionibus sacris, seu de interpretarione Scripturarum populari libri duo* (1553). Several researchers feel that his views are strongly conservative and controversial. He tries to divide preaching and oratory – this is reflected by his terminology, when he systematically writes distinctly about *concio* and *oratio*, which denote separate concepts. Hyperius recommends just the opposite process from one we can observe from Melanchthon: he wishes to isolate preaching from secular – classical and renaissance – rhetorical inheritance, or at least tries to restrict its effect. We saw that the conception of Melanchthon is based – in a wide anthropological context – on the cultural integration of the two components. Although in the fourth chapter Hyperius talks about parallels between preaching and oration, he in fact lists the differences and as a result he regards the application of rhetorics with concern.⁸²

In the following I intend to show that Hyperius was a recognized member of the humanist society who was a highly esteemed developer of the science of rhetorics. To do so one has to look further than his textbook on homiletics, and to examine also his other works. I do it by reviewing an article written on the very theme by Gábor Kecskeméti.⁸³ Among others, Hyperius wrote a handbook of considerable length, 190 pages on rhetorics, which appeared together with his book on dialectics, published in 1562 in Zürich. In this

⁸² Imre, Mihály: Melanchthon retorikájától Buzinkai Mihályig, in Imre, Mihály (ed.): *Retorikák a reformáció korából*, Debrecen, Kossuth Egyetemi, 2000, 418–420.

⁸³ Kecskeméti, Gábor: A korai protestáns homiletika szerepe az európai és hazai irodalmi gondolkodás történetében, Budapest, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 107 (2003), 4–5, 367–398.

work he first defines rhetorics (*ars recte et orate dicendi*), which is followed by the five traditional acts of rhetorics, 136 pages on invention, 21 on disposition, and 39 pages on of elocution. Memory and pronunciation share the remaining three pages. As a definition of genres, for example, he follows the classical system when describing rules for the species of *demonstrativum*, *deliberativum* and *iudiciale*. All this means that in his work on theoretical rhetorics Hyperius does not take notice of Melanchthon's innovation: he does not discuss the fourth, pedagogical type of speech in his system. In other respects the work definitively reflects classical tendencies: he illustrates his topic with a large number of quotations from antique literature. Beside homiletics, Hyperius also shows though not only in his rhetoric, but also by his *Topico* that the use of rhetorics is unavoidable for the interpretation of Scripture in order to apply dogmatics correctly. But this is not all that one can find in those writings of Hyperius which are important because of their rhetorical relations. His *Tropico* reveals that rhetorical analysis can even play the role of dogmatical argumentation. This is an unusual, uniquely structured inventive auxiliary book, which attempts Biblical exegesis and drawing theological conclusions when applying the intrinsic structure of the discipline of rhetoric. The whole book proves that Biblical texts with their unfolded theological content are to a high extent influenced by the modes of Biblical expressions. Secular rhetorical tradition and sacred content seem to be strongly integrated. This type of humanistic attitude was decisive in the activities of Hyperius, thus in this respect he did not differ from Melanchthon's thinking. In their homiletical sentiments, however, one can find differences between them, which cannot be discussed in general terms. I believe that the Hyperian treatment can be most convincingly interpreted if one emphasizes that he considered and followed Melanchthon's notes on the application of *genus didascalium* in ecclesiastic communications, and defined considerable differences between secular rhetoric and the system of homiletics. He regarded *genus didascalium* as a homiletical way of expression, but fitted it into a completely new system.

CALVIN

The currently accepted rhetorical framework of the theory of homiletics for the age of Reformation, after the activities of Erasmus and Melanchthon, was developed first of all by Calvin. His exceptional rhetorical skills were known in his age, his early studies and his commentaries on Seneca prove that he was familiar with the whole area of classical culture. Old wrote about Calvin, that his level of knowledge of classics was higher than that of Luther, Bucer, Brenz or even Zwingli. He quickly acquired the new scientific knowledge of the

renaissance like historical criticism or literary arts. He absorbed everything that Erasmus published in the field of antique grammar and rhetoric. He even advised Erasmus about some techniques.⁸⁴

In the following I will attempt to examine how Calvin used his exemplary knowledge of rhetoric in his reforming work. Calvin, making use of the rhetorical science of the 16th century, developed his theory of God's Word. He uses his rhetorical knowledge with such ease that one hardly notices it. Thus, in all his writings there is recognition of scientific rhetoric, perhaps most completely in the later editions of his *Institutes*.

Among all the thoughts of Calvin the recognition that God's Word has been transmitted by human word achieved the greatest effect. In other words, God uses human speech, language and its whole system as the medium through which he reveals himself and makes himself known to humans. God is capable of talking through human language. This is a fundamental, axiomatic belief of Calvinistic Christianity. However fragile and imperfect the human word, it can be the medium of God through which He can reveal himself. Calvin's statement that the human word is capable of transmitting the reality of God, is based on his thoroughly constructed theory on the role and nature of human language. I will now examine the importance Calvin assigned to the role of language at theoretical and practical levels.

Both in the field of preaching and interpreting of scriptures it can be shown that Calvin did not regard a self-contained practice in the explanation of the holy script, and did not satisfy himself merely by creating the correct doctrines. For him the true challenge and purpose meant ensuring that the truth of the Bible should become a real experience. He not only wanted to interpret the text of the holy script correctly, but tried to apply his preaching and explanation in order to change the lives of his audiences. His first purpose was not to induce conversion, as that is only the first step in the lives of believers. His real aim was to lead his congregation through sanctification to obedience of God's Word. One can organize those means by which he achieved these goals. With Calvin the true aim is efficacy, the attainment of the relevant effect. The reformer achieved this goal by using classical models like Cicero of Quintilian, says Gánóczy.⁸⁵ Calvin often regards brevity and conciseness as important. Speech cannot be self-contained, long and incomprehensible; it must aim to be relevant and intelligible by everyone.

After all, in the opinion of Calvin the most suitable tool is speech, which is adjusted to the requirements of the audience – a well illustrated, touching and mobilizing speech.

⁸⁴ Old: *The Reading and Preaching*, 93.

⁸⁵ Gánóczy, Sándor: *Kálvin hermeneutikája*, Budapest, Kálvin, 1997, 68. See: Alexandre Ganoczy: *Die Hermeneutik Calvins: Geistesgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen und Grundzüge*, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983.

In Calvin's theology and communication's model this appears as the theory of adjustment or accommodation. In theology this is known as the doctrine of *acomodatio*.

In the holy scriptures, so says Calvin, God appears verbally, in the form of words. But how can words reach up to the greatness of God? [...] What Calvin says about this problem is regarded as the most valuable construction in Christian thought. His theory is usually referred to as the 'principle of adjustment'. In the revelation God adjusts himself to the abilities of the human brain and heart. God illustrates himself in such a way that we should be able to understand him.⁸⁶

The doctrine of *acomodatio* was not Calvin's invention; it was developed earlier by Origenes. According to Origenes's analogy, if a father wishes to communicate with his child, or a teacher with his pupil, he must adjust himself to the perception of the former. This is also the basis of Calvin's own communication model. Accommodation here means that one has to adjust, shape himself to the necessities of the situation or to the ability of humans, so that the message can be understood, says McGrath. According to Calvin, God in his revelation adjusted himself to the abilities of the human brain and heart. "The analogy which lies behind Calvin's thinking at this point is that of a human orator. Good speakers know the limitations of their audience and adjust the way they speak accordingly."⁸⁷ Gánóczy drafts this in a similar manner as he writes that according to Calvin God accommodates our abilities of perception, and acts as a good educator, a good pedagogue who opens the gate for humans to understand his Word. He reveals himself both in an eloquent, artistic, elevated, sublime talk but also in simple, plain words.⁸⁸

In Calvin's thoughts about God's accommodation to human levels there is the ideal of the reformer about the preacher. The preacher should be able to adjust himself to his audience, and be able to convey difficult theological concepts so that his listeners can understand them. The good orator knows the limitations of his public, and speaks to them accordingly. Orators of the classical age were educated, cultivated people, while their audiences were, in general, poorly educated, and could not express themselves eloquently. Thus, these orators had to stoop to the intellectual level of their audiences, so that they should be able to understand their thoughts. Calvin knew this and used this in his theology and communication theory.

⁸⁶ Alister E. McGrath: *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, Oxford-Massachusetts, Wiley-Blackwell Publisher, 1993, 129.

⁸⁷ Alister E. McGrath: *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Oxford-Massachusetts, Wiley-Blackwell Publisher, 2010, 192.

⁸⁸ Gánóczy: *Kálvin*, 57.

HUMANISM

CONCLUSIONS

As described at the beginning of my paper, I claim that the Protestant homiletical paradigm was conceived by the combination of the humanistic and rhetorical approaches. The developers of the new paradigm were all highly esteemed members of the scholarly and rhetorical elite in their own times, who also made use of their rhetorical expertise in their theological and homiletical activities. Thus, the research of the 16th century requires a comprehensive knowledge of the rhetorical framework of the time, not only from the point of view of ecclesiastic history, but it is indispensable for the understanding of the establishment of theological scholarship (theological hermeneutics - Melanchthon) and also for the appreciation of the nature of religious communications (Erasmus, Calvin) which are applied even at the present. According to the Protestant interpretation, therefore, homiletics and rhetoric are inseparable both at fundamental and practical levels.

MODERNISM



LÁSZLÓ RAVASZ ON INFLUENCE OF PREACHING “PREACHING HAS AS MUCH IMPACT AS THE GAPS IT CAN FILL”



... There must be some change in the soul of the audience through listening to the sermon, because if after preaching, the spirit and the world remain as before, it is superfluous to preach, for there are many more fun things than that.⁸⁹

It takes good style to make an impact and good style can sometimes withstand a bit of irony. “... there are many more fun things...”

The science of speech and the influence it exerts on its listeners was called rhetoric in antiquity and humanism. But as soon as it comes up, the word ‘rhetoric’ already in need of terminological clarification. Is the term’s meaning reduced to just the technique of Greek-Roman classical rhetorics? Or does it encompass the science of effective speech, regardless of age and culture? László Ravasz distinguishes between the two. For him, rhetoric and rhetorical are different beasts. While the former means the communication science of a particular age, the latter is an exact characteristic of intentional speech.

Rhetorics [...] today is a real mummy. [...] The rhetoric is dead. [...] But life did not change. Its nature is same as it was two thousand years ago. ... Today, something much more important, interesting, and universal is something that has been the subject of formal and school rhetoric, too; that is, the power of speech. [...] rhetoric undergoes the same transformation that has happened to psychology, aesthetics, literature; indeed, to every science: by shaking off its cocoon, it finds its new and true form. [...] the central question of new science will be: how does speech work?⁹⁰

How does speech work? Through its truth? Through its beauty? Through its goodness? Through all these three? Or perhaps through none of them?

They have been researching this great riddle for a millennia: how does speech work? And this is neither only the question of rhetoric, nor – in our modern society – of social psychology, but, according to Ravasz, also of homiletics.

⁸⁹ Ravasz, László: *A gyülekezeti igehirdetés elmélete. Homiletika*, Pápa, Magyar Református Egyház, 1915, 281.

⁹⁰ Ravasz, László: Szónoklás és igehirdetés, in *Legyen világosság III.*, Budapest, Franklin Társulat, 137–141.

MODERNISM

...Rhetoric and homiletics have a common root. This common root is that the two disciplines, both dealing with speech intended to transmit the effects of ethical values to others, encounter each other where they discuss how oral transmission of said ethical values is taking place, that is, in their psychological; while they differ from one another in creating the value system that is intended to impact their audiences. We have nothing to do with rhetoric that did not probe these final questions, no matter how skillful their techniques are, but we are obligated to pay attention and learn when the topic is the power of speech. On a psychological basis, the subject of homiletics relates to rhetoric as general does to the particular; while in axiological terms both are *sui generis*.⁹¹

There is a great homiletical tension present in this quote: the achievement of effect on the audience is a matter of common concern with other sciences and yet unique, that is, theological. But how does it work, exactly? What does homiletics have to do with its impact on its listeners?

LIBERAL ERA

The Homiletics of Ravasz was born at the twilight of the liberal age. During his studies in Hungary and Berlin, the young Laszlo Ravasz built his own theological system from these ideas. Theologically, these threads go all the way back to Schleiermacher. The concept of liberalism divides the universe to two things: the self and the world around it. The relationship of the two, until the emergence of liberal philosophy, was a precarious one: the surrounding world, with its laws and rules, kept the 'I' dependent on itself. The great idea of liberalism is that the world can be changed and so is this relationship. A liberal man is a free man who, by his own freedom, is able to shape the surrounding world – based on the ideal of the very freedom he possesses. This changed world is no longer alien; it is already part of the 'I'. So, the relationship is reversed: the man who has been so dependent on his surroundings now becomes free, and becomes the owner of the world changed by his freedom. Thus, the liberal man is an active actor capable of transforming his dependencies so that both he and his world find fulfillment in his idea of freedom.

Thus, the ideal of the liberal age is the liberal man who constantly acts and changes his own world. In practical theology, it meant the effect on people. That is why László Ravasz is so preoccupied with the pedagogical effects of preaching, because every one of its tools ultimately exist only to make an impact, to change the listener. That is, the ultimate impact, according to Ravasz, is to change the listener's ethics.

⁹¹ Ravasz: *A gyülekezeti igehirdetés elmélete*, 252.

PHILOSOPHY OF VALUE

The impact theory of Laszlo Ravasz still holds an important message for us. To understand this, we need to go back to axiology itself, that is, to value theory, the foundations of which he obtained from his teacher, Károly Böhm.

According to Böhm, the spirit is true, good, and beautiful, so subjective idealism gives rise to three normative sciences: logic, ethics and aesthetics. On the logical plane, the spirit becomes real, and the knowledge of the Self increases. On the ethical plane, duty and freedom are intertwined, and the more self-imposed values you have, the greater your freedom is. On the aesthetic plane, the knowing and acting Self will become one, who delights in his knowledge and noble deeds as in his own creations.⁹²

All of this is manifested in the Homiletics of Ravasz that life, in itself, is nothing but a process of filling in missing values. “And because the basic nature of life is self-enrichment, its main activity is to seek and use values. Life is all about seeking, consuming and creating value.”⁹³

...preaching [...] has as much impact as the gaps it can fill.⁹⁴

According to László Ravasz, these values are always ethical values, and nothing can fully provide them, save the possibility of verbal persuasion. Impact can therefore only be achieved through words.

Preaching is only present where I testify of a higher truth in order to make it accepted. Higher truth is always an *ethical* truth because the whole world of rhetoric exists on the moral plane [...] Only ethical truths can be expressed solely through the works of human will.⁹⁵

So the goal is a growth in ethical values, because only this can propel one to the highest goal, that is, to be truly and finally himself. Spiritually, he is coessential with himself because it is the ultimate happiness, which is also the embodiment of truth, beauty and goodness. The man who reaches this highest level is a free man who enjoys the truth and delights in the beauty of his world.

⁹² Böhm, Károly: *Az ember és világa* [Man and His World], philosophical research, Budapest, 1883.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 282–283.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 251–252.

MEANS OF EFFECT

Thus, to grow in ethical values, we need two essential tools: logic and aesthetics, equalling to truth and beauty.

“In essence, the homiletical form consists of values moving on the logical plane are shifted through the aesthetic plane into the ethical plane.”⁹⁶ Which means that truth and beauty are part of the homiletic toolkit of Ravasz – but both are tools and tools only. Because the purpose of homiletics is the effect on its audience, that is, actual growth in their ethical values. And this effect is produced by truth and beauty.

The tension that, from the outset, determines said effect and the ways in which it is achieved, rears its head precisely at this point. Can this effect become more important than the truth? What if someone abuses it, and seeks to make an impact but leaves out the truth? This question is not a theoretical one, probably not even in homiletics, so it is important to find an answer to it. But Laszlo Ravasz has an answer to this dilemma as well, by distinguishing between persuasion, conviction and suggestion.

The Latin language uses two words for persuasion: *convincer* and *persuadere*. The so-called dialectical eras always wanted to perfect the former, while the sophisticated eras sought to elevate the latter. The former means persuasion based on reason, while the latter is the opposite: persuasion through emotion. According to Ravasz, the former is not bound to a concrete act of action, while the latter is ever too eager to spur its audience to action in order to achieve its purpose.

But according to Ravasz, between the two sits conviction.

We consider conviction to be the purpose of ecclesiastical rhetoric, because in our view, preaching is a prophetic act that enriches life with something positive and is perfectly equipped to make this goodness part of the soul of the audience. In order to reach this effect, the preacher needs to have control over the audience, which is very well expressed by conviction.⁹⁷

The primary purpose of conviction is never to do an act, for if it was the goal, then it would be no different from secular rhetoric, which also encourages action. First and foremost, conviction always leads to an inner, spiritual growth. Its purpose is to make the listener accept a value and enrich his or her life, which will then bring its fruits in the forms of actions. Thus, it is characteristic of persuasion that “it is not a result of external action, but of internal growth, and results in the enrichment of the spiritual habits.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ibid., 382.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 436.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 437.

Thus, according to value theory, growth can take place in one way only: if the preacher makes the listener interested to change his or her life for the better by expressing pure goals, pure truths, and pure emotions in the sermon.

PRACTICAL LIFE

The preachings of László Ravasz still speak for themselves. In fact, rumor was that in his time, students of the School of Theater were sent to the Calvin Square church on Sundays to practice the science of fine speech by listening to the man himself.

But there is another factor worth considering regarding the effect we talked about: the openness and sensitivity of Ravasz to the fledling devices of mass media, that is, to the radio and the gramophone. Among other things, Márton Mészáros's monograph addresses this question in detail.⁹⁹

His work compares the attitude of the Catholic Church and the Reformed Church towards the media, and then concludes that the Reformation passed its exams, so to say, in keeping up with the times and adapting to the radical changes of media. The great act of the 16th-century Reformation concerning the field of communication was that it took the lead in the media revolution of the time, and, in accordance with its own hermeneutics, sought to put the new tools at the service of its preachings. This heritage was not lost in the so-called second big media revolution of the early 20th century, either. Thanks to László Ravasz, the spoken word was effectively rediscovered, in part due to the technological explosion.

László Ravasz made theological arguments why worships should be broadcasted to the radio. In his view, mankind has two great inventions that can be put to the service of preaching: the press and the radio. As Imre Szabó writes: technical mediums, "tools of mass emotional control" should not be seen as "devil's inventions"; instead, we should be seeking means as to how to put them at the service of God.¹⁰⁰

In 1931, Ravasz sees the new technical medium as an opportunity that uniquely expands the reach of evangelization.

In our day and age, the human mind has discovered more wonderful inventions aplenty. These inventions have not made people better or happier because they have not yet been used to preach the glory of God. But there is one of them that has been indeed pressed into this noble service and therefore can become a source of

⁹⁹ Mészáros, Márton: *Reformáció, közvetítés, nyilvánosság*, Budapest, FISZ–Ráció, 2015, 161–176.

¹⁰⁰ Református Élet, 1936. május 16. 182. Quotation taken from Mészáros Márton. *Protestantizmus és medialitás*, PhD dissertation, Szeged, 2010, 103, http://doktori.bibl.u-szeged.hu/617/1/disszertáció_100111.pdf (accessed 5 July 2020).

MODERNISM

immeasurable blessings should we use it properly. This invention is the radio, used throughout the world to broadcast worships, and mainly preachings, and it brings to many hundreds of thousands of people the light, honey and balm of God's Word. Except for book printing, there is no other invention that did as much service in building the kingdom of God as the radio.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, gramophone recordings from Ravasz did not survive, but the press of his time was clearly enthusiastic about his use of the device: "The historical importance of this initiative is that evangelical Christianity will be modernized again. Again, it uses the latest and most powerful tools to broadcast the word of God to the world."¹⁰²

OBLIGATION

In his study of *Rhetoric and Preaching*, László Ravasz compares the two situations of secular rhetoric and ecclesiastical preaching. He concludes that in the secular world a rhetorical discourse is called into existence only by situation. If there is no "rhetorical situation," in academic terms, then there is no rhetorical discourse either. Consequently, it is the situation that determines a set of criteria only a rhetorical discourse can fulfil with values such as truth, loyalty, credibility, etc. On the other hand, however, a preaching situation is different from a rhetorical one. Since preaching can be understood merely on theological grounds, its situation is rendered to theological interpretation also. A preaching situation is therefore bound to the elective work of God – first of all by his chosen church, and second, by his chosen preachers proclaiming the Word of God at a given place and situation.

According to Ravasz, "the holy mother is a divine set of situations..."¹⁰³ The process of preaching is not triggered by the outstanding events taking place in the world, and neither is it by the intentions of the preacher, but by God alone. God creates the situation by gathering a group of people together where speaking and preaching His Word becomes an obligation of Church and preacher alike. Seemingly, this does take on an institutional form of a religious organization, but through the eyes of faith it becomes the work of

¹⁰¹ Ravasz, László: A rádiós istentisztelet, *Reformáció*, 1931. augusztus, 132. Quotation taken from Mészáros, Márton. *Protestantizmus és medialitás*, PhD dissertation, Szeged, 2010, 111, http://doktori.bibl.u-szeged.hu/617/1/disszertáció_100111.pdf (accessed 5 July 2020).

¹⁰² Ravasz, László: Igehirdetés gramofonon, *Református Élet*, 1939. december 16. 10. Quotation taken from Mészáros, Márton. *Protestantizmus és medialitás*, PhD dissertation, Szeged, 2010, 111, http://doktori.bibl.u-szeged.hu/617/1/disszertáció_100111.pdf (accessed 5 July 2020).

¹⁰³ Ravasz: Szónoklás és igehirdetés, 157.

His Word and Holy Spirit. Therefore both Church and preacher are under the authority of God. In this regard, preaching may only be an act of obedience, that is, an obligation according to the will of God.

The same applies to the character of the preacher as well. Family traditions, existential needs, competence or academic training will never qualify anyone to become a preacher. It is the sovereign decision of God alone that renders one a preacher. This sort of election or, in other words, *vocatio interna*, defines the entire life of the preacher in such a way that the necessity for preaching becomes an internal obligation. "... The primary duties of a preacher are: faith and obedience."¹⁰⁴ As Paul says: "I believed; therefore I have spoken" (2Cor 4:13). I am unable not to speak it. All he wishes to do is what God wants to perform through him. All he wishes to speak is what God wishes to convey through him. "Preaching is a constraint one cannot resist."¹⁰⁵ Paul articulates this in the most expressive manner: "For when I preach the Gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1Cor 9:16).

FREEDOM

Both obligation and freedom are prophetic attributes to preaching, hence its genuine nature. A prophet may speak nothing but what God commands him to (see Amos 3:8, Jer 1:9, Ezek 3), yet he enjoys utter freedom to express God's message in his own way. For instance, we read of prophets who gave emphasis to their received message via symbolic actions. Or of Jesus, for that matter, who resorted to his favourite literary genre, the narrative, when delivering sermons on his central theme: the Kingdom of God. Preaching in such a manner is feasible only when the prophet submits his own understanding to the message on the one hand, and remains sensitive to his audience on the other.

How? By remaining personal, as it is the personal tone that first bestows credibility and authenticity to prophetic preaching.¹⁰⁶ László Ravasz, for example, construes his homiletical theory based upon prophetic preaching alone. According to his theory, it is impossible for one to preach a sermon of another.¹⁰⁷ All preachers have a unique relationship with God, therefore all will conduct their received obligations and practice their freedom in their own unique way. In fact, they are all shaped by God, and this distinctive process is not any less relevant than that of the invested work when getting prepared

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 159.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 160.

¹⁰⁶ Boross, Géza: *Homiletika*, Budapest, Dunamelléki Református Egyházkerület, 1994, 89.

¹⁰⁷ Ravasz: *Szónoklás és igehirdetés*, 158.

for a sermon. Preachers, therefore, are vested with prophetic obligations.¹⁰⁸ They receive the message from God, but have to formulate and communicate it without losing their genuine nature. Prophetic preaching gains its genuine nature by having the message transmitted through the personality of the preacher. Here lies the temptation every preacher has to face before climbing into the pulpit: letting his rolemodels go. No matter how much a preacher wants to become like another, there remains only one way to authentically represent the message he receives: by preserving his personal integrity. The same way as David was unable to fight in the armour of Saul, so must no other wield the tone, thoughts, style, gestures etc. of others. Living in such freedom will enable the preacher to be authentic, genuine and independent at the same time. Of course not from the Word, but from all other circumstances. This sort of freedom is a gift that can be received only from the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who confirms one's calling. It is the Holy Spirit who obligates one to preach. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the courage to live with freedom. And it is the Holy Spirit who liberates the preacher from his environment allowing him the freedom of independence.

Nevertheless, it is relevant that preachers remain free in the situations they speak. Scripture and hermeneutics here become equally emphasized, where the Scriptures are to be interpreted as tradition. The Creed of the early church and the historical figure of Jesus are jointly present in the kerygma of the Gospels. Ever since, until this very day, this living tradition has been transmitted by the Church, and now it is the responsibility of contemporary churches to continue that tradition. Consequently, finding the contemporary relevance for the text is the last link in the chain of tradition. But transmitting without changing is just not possible. This is why preachers must possess the freedom to reinterpret and contextualize the transmitted Word of God in an ever changing environment.¹⁰⁹ This conclusion remains true through the centuries just the same as it does for all the different cultures of today. In other words, a sermon needs necessarily be relevant, and the character of the preacher to be free and sensitive to contemporary issues. Or, as they say, although Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb 13:8), yesterday and today are never the same.

The freedom of the preacher also has to involve thorough exegesis for his audience. This general truth bears enormous significance today, when secularism is gaining ground quickly within the Reformed Church as well. It is up to preachers to address the so called post-modern way of living. One possible way would be to moralize, that is, to condemn the "world," the masses living outside of the Church. Although this approach was never far

¹⁰⁸ For more, see Ravasz: *A gyülekezeti igehirdetés*, 259–279.

¹⁰⁹ Boross: *Homiletika*, 182.

from preaching in any historical period – supposedly the reason, therefore, why these two notions grew to be synonymous – the vast distance between moralizing and preaching remains more than obvious nonetheless. This phenomenon, however, does indicate that a moralizing preacher does not possess the freedom of the Holy Spirit. The freedom needed to encounter one's environment with courage can be received only from the Holy Spirit, because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2Cor 3:17). Such freedom requires a stable personality and a strong identity, both physically and spiritually as well. The preacher who possesses these two does not feel the constraint to moralize, but is free to represent the kerygma of Christ among all circumstances.¹¹⁰ He is able to relate to his audience with the same love God has for them, and this love (agape) is able to drive out all fear from their hearts. With this freedom devoid of fear, God sends his elect to speak the Word everywhere to everyone.

¹¹⁰ For more, see Hézser, Gábor: *Pasztorálpszichológiai szempontok az istentisztelet útkereséséhez*, Budapest, Kálvin, 2005, 56–62.

POSTMODERN



NEW SONG DESIRED
AESTHETICAL HOMILETIC AND ITS RECEPTION
IN HUNGARY



The metaphor of song and music turns up here and there, over several millennia, in the terminology of preaching. In the following essay I attempt to show through the metaphor of singing how Hungarian homiletics is related to the so called aesthetical homiletics, which appeared both at the beginning and the end of the 20th century in international theological discourses, the effects of which also reached Hungary, albeit to a limited extent.

Songs are popular topics in the Bible. We find several instances in the Old Testament where praising God was done using musical instruments, songs, and sometimes even with dances. These songs are confessions about the greatness and power of God (e.g. Moses, Miriam, David etc.), in other words demonstrating in a unified sense that content and form, cognitive and affective parts are closely related in the sense of homiletics. Singing, as a form of preaching, still strongly tied to the Jewish heritage, is found also in the New Testament, especially in connection with the stories of the birth of Jesus. Mary and Zachariah praise the Lord with a song, as a response to the prophecy of the angel about the coming of the Messiah. On the sacred night of the birth, a choir of angels sing and glorify God.

In the patristic period, following the primeval church, the song, as metaphor, originates mainly from the mythic anthropological images of the pagan world. This had an important effect both in preaching and in the cultivation of apology. Later the Christian kerygma, effected by the entering of the Hellenistic world took on the form of eloquence, which defined through several centuries its mainly deductive understanding and explanatory system. After this we find 'preaching in song' in the era of the Reformation. Martin Luther, in particular, was the great master of this, able to interpret theological concepts by song.

Beside the interpretation of theology by oral means, its appearance in other arts (like literature, song, later theatre) has always been an exciting topic, in which the age of Reformation produced outstanding results. Although functionally 'singing theology' was counted as the best method of learning in a society where most people could hardly read, we cannot regard it solely and exclusively as a conscious approach. Aesthetic values cannot be evaded

when branches of art are combined with preaching. And is there any form of preaching which is not connected to some form of art? Asking this question is important, especially in the case of Hungarian homiletics.

At the end of the 20th century the problem of song and music appears in the discourses of homiletics, as a metaphor of an event, a sort of analogy, which assists preaching, aside of rationality, to become an eventful, intuitive experience. This tendency is prominent in the American New Homiletic movement, mainly in the detailed problems of the combination of content and form.

First I will try to examine the metaphorical approach of music and song in the patristic age through Clement's *Protrepticos* on the basis of the so called Orpheus legend. Secondly I will introduce, through the metaphor of song/music the new aesthetical approach in the postmodern age. Thirdly, I will discuss how the 20th century Hungarian homiletical schools relate to aesthetical homiletics, that I call the modern age.

AESTHETICAL HOMILETICS IN THE PATRISTIC AGE

Orpheus, the mythological hero, is regarded as the symbol of music/song and the strength of love; as a result his person became the icon of music and love. According to the myth, which was formed in the 6th century B.C., Orpheus was a Greek shepherd in Thracia, and was favoured by the gods because of his singing and playing of instruments like the zither and lyre. He enchanted birds with his voice, and tamed beasts. Nature was revitalized around him, trees and even lifeless objects like stones began to move when hearing his music. When his beloved Eurydice died, the gods allowed Orpheus to descend into the underworld and to bring back his love. Charon took him across the river of death, and under the spell of his singing, left the barge and followed him. Cerberos, the three-headed beast, affected by the music, stopped barking and became calm. The fiery wheel of Ixion came to a halt and vultures stopped tormenting the liver of Tityus. The daughters of Danaos discontinued the useless carrying of water, Sisyphus sat down on his rock, Tantalos' hunger and thirst ceased and the judges of the dead were in tears.

In one of the vaults of the Domitilla catacomb in Rome one can see a portrayal of Orpheus. Surrounded by trees and beasts, he wears a Phrygian cap, in his left hand he holds his lyre and on his right hand there is the plectrum, a small stick, with which he plays the cords. There arises a valid question: how did a mythological hero get into an ancient Christian burial site?

The answer is as follows: Orpheus is Christ. Christ is the symbol of the animated singing, Christ is the New Song.

According to the Greek myth, despite his endeavours, Orpheus could not bring his beloved back from the underworld, but in early Christian symbolism the descent into the inferno and the momentum which changed everything there was sufficient imagery for him to be regarded by the pagan world as the precursor of Christ in preaching. In the syncretic practice of religions in the Roman Empire several gods and religions communicated with one another, sometimes these gods and beliefs even merged. Often it happened that gods or ceremonies from other religions were adapted in the other's practice, or the older gods were identified as the new ones and their characteristics were united. Early Christian art did not exclude former pagan symbols from its practice. Thus, early Christian painting included both elements of pagan visual art as well as the then existing fashionable styles of painting (e.g. emphasis of the head and eyes indicates influence from the East). In Greek mythology Orpheus was depicted as a Greek youngster, with a lyre, in a green, flowery background, or sometimes later in the underworld in front of Eurydice. On the frescoes of various representations of Christ one can observe clearly the influence of style and dressing of the given age. On one of these for example, Christ appears as a young man in Roman clothes, with fashionable curly hair, without a beard and with a plectrum, when resurrecting Lazarus. This Jesus is the same as Orpheus used to be, he revitalizes the dead. In theological terms Jesus descended to earth, that means into the world of the dead, even died himself, descended into hell to give those men who obediently listen to his singing, eternal life.

Let us observe in a few citations how Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticos* (it means: exhortation) allegorizes this Orpheus-symbol in his work *Exhortation to the Heathen*.¹¹¹ In this work we can encounter the characteristic contextual theology of the 2nd and following centuries, when he introduces Christ-Orpheus, as a new bard to the Greeks. The church in this era uses pagan images of their mythical anthropology to attract people to Christ. They tell by these images that our Christ is the marvellous lyre player, of whom you talked in the times of your myths.

It alone has tamed men, the most intractable of animals; the frivolous among them answering to the fowls of the air, deceivers to reptiles, the irascible to lions, the voluptuous to swine, the rapacious to wolves. The silly are stocks and stones, and still more senseless than stones is a man who is steeped in ignorance. As our

¹¹¹ Clement of Alexandria: Exhortation to the Heathen, in Alexander Roberts – James Donaldson (eds.): *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, translation of The writing of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Fathers of the second century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus and Clement of Alexandria*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 163–206, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02/Page_i.html (accessed 23 December 2012).

witness, let us adduce the voice of prophecy accordant with truth, and bewailing those who are crushed in ignorance and folly: “For God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham” [...] Behold the might of the new song! It has made men out of stones, men out of beasts. Those, moreover, that were as dead, not being partakers of the true life, have come to life again, simply by becoming listeners to this song.¹¹²

Christ’s preaching, and indeed the incarnation, according to Clement, is a new song. This is such a metaphor in his draft, which succinctly, but still easily explains to us that preaching is nothing else than a song of joy. This joy expands the dimensions of life for those who listen to it. Such songs do not want anything else but to make people free for a new life, which the Master of Life presents to them. Such songs give possibilities to blind, deaf, lame, straying, disobedient people, and even murderers to start a new life.

What, then, does this instrument – the Word of God, the Lord, the New Song – desire? To open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf, and to lead the lame or the erring to righteousness, to exhibit God to the foolish, to put a stop to corruption, to conquer death, to reconcile disobedient children to their father. [...] And do not suppose the song of salvation to be new, as a vessel or a house is new. For ‘before the morning star it was’ and ‘in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Error seems old, but truth seems a new thing. [...] Well, inasmuch as the Word was from the first, He was and is the divine source of all things; but inasmuch as He has now assumed the name Christ, consecrated of old, and worthy of power, he has been called by me the New Song.¹¹³

Later Clement says: “This is the New Song, the manifestation of the Word that was in the beginning, and before the beginning.”¹¹⁴ And at the end of his work we read: “...this is symphony, this the harmony of the Father, this is the Son, this is Christ, this the Word of God.”¹¹⁵

What is therefore the meaning of the metaphor song/music/tune in the second century, as well as in today’s homiletic terminology? The song penetrates the depths of the soul. It not only enters the brain, not only transfers

¹¹² Ibid., 172. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02/Page_172.html (accessed 23 December 2012). See in Greek: *Protrepitkos* Ὅρα τὸ καινὸν ὅσον ἴσχυσεν: ἀνθρώπους ἐκ λίθων καὶ ἀνθρώπους ἐκ θηρίων πεποίηκεν. οἱ δὲ τὴν ἄλλως νεκροί, οἱ τῆς ὄντως οὐσίας ἀμέτοχοι ζωῆς, ἀκροατὰὶ μόνον γενόμενοι τοῦ ἄσματος ἀνεβίωσαν. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0555.tlg001.perseus-grc1:1> (accessed 23 December 2012).

¹¹³ Clement: Exhortation, 172–173, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02/Page_173.html (accessed 23 December 2012); ὁ Χριστὸς καινὸν ἄσμα μοι κέκληται, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0555.tlg001.perseus-grc1:1> (accessed 23 December 2012).

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 173.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 205, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02/Page_205.html (accessed 23 December 2012).

knowledge, but touches the psyche and has influence on the body too. These last two effects bind men to the whole creation. Redemption has influence on the whole creation, "... that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" says the apostle Paul in Romans 8. This is how early Christians regarded Christ, and interpreted Christ-Orpheus who, at the fullness of time will equalise this world subject to corruption and inequality, and fulfils the perfect peace as prophesised. Every sermon has the aim to declare and sing this Good News. If not in completeness, at least the beginnings of this eschatological peace is already present where the song of the gospel is heard. It creates a large space – "wide place" in Ps 18 – of protection, in which people learn how to live in peace, how to encourage one another, how to wipe out tears, how to laugh and weep together. Where this new tune of preaching is heard, there is no further need for the culture of violence, there will be no more persecution and captivity, dictating and intimidation, the presence of menace and fear. In the 'broad place' of the new song there is no domination over others, only love and its consequence: freedom.

From the point of preaching we must see, that God's own soul provides through people the liberating tunes of the new song, the tune of life and hope. Thus, the lyre in the hand of Christ-Orpheus is in fact the body of Christ. As He appeared once in body during the course of history, He is present ever since in the body of the community of believers. According to Ignatius of Antioch¹¹⁶, the Christian church recites this new tune in history. The plectrum, on the other hand, is the Holy Spirit, which touches the members of believers and makes them resonate and create the tune of the new song.

And He who is of David, and yet before him, the Word of God, despising the lyre and harp, which are but lifeless instruments, and having tuned by the Holy Spirit the universe, and especially man, – who, composed of body and soul, is a universe in miniature, – makes melody to God on this instrument of many tones; and to this instrument – I mean man – he sings accordant: "For thou art my harp, and pipe, and temple." [864] – a harp for harmony – a pipe by reason of the Spirit – a temple by reason of the word; so that the first may sound, the second breathe, the third contain the Lord. A beautiful breathing instrument of music the Lord made man, after His own image.¹¹⁷

Of course, Clement does not write homiletics, but an apology against pagans. However, it is shown here how important is the new tune produced by Christ. This new song shows God as a power who induces amazement and attraction

¹¹⁶ Ignatius of Antioch: *Letter to the Ephesians*, IV.1.–IV.2., <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-ephesians-lightfoot.html> (accessed 23 December 2012).

¹¹⁷ Clement: *Exhortation*, 172.

opposed to powers which create fear. This is Christ's new song, this was Jesus's preaching, and any Christian sermon must conform to this new tune of Christ. This new tune resonates in people who vibrate together with the liberating movement of the Spirit, and who convey the vibration of this new tune both in content and form. Also in the theology of the Reformation, this foundation of homiletics is important, meaning that the preacher does not simply talk about God, does not objectivise Him, but that he allows God himself to sing through him, in other words, God should speak in the sermon. As Jesus as Lord was revealed by his incarnation, now the Lord wishes to sing this new tune in body. In other words, God does not wish only to teach people, but wishes to be present, together with his people, so that they can experience His presence. The preacher therefore can achieve most if he does not merely talk about God but allows the liberating tune of God to be heard, and provides the new song through the presence of the Spirit.

AESTHETICAL HOMILETIC IN POSTMODERN AGE

In the following section I try to examine how the movement of New Homiletic uses the metaphor of song/music in the formation of its homiletic messages. The first step was taken by Craddock in his work *As One Without Authority*¹¹⁸, in which he calls into account the prevailing homiletic theories, that if the Bible provides such a wide range of forms of expression, why are the 20th century preaching theories so much attached to the forms of classical rhetoric. Research on the connection of content and form soon arrived at the realization of Biblical artistic forms. Thomas G. Long in his work *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*¹¹⁹ investigated the major artistic forms of the Bible. Mike Graves in his publication *The Sermon as Symphony*¹²⁰ discusses the correlations between existing literary forms of the New Testament and forms of preaching through the metaphor of music, more precisely through symphony. Graves believes that the foundation of the metaphor becomes obvious when the preacher regarding the form of the Biblical text poses three questions about the reading, and tries to formulate his sermon around the answers. First he examines what the text says, secondly what it does, and thirdly he tries to show how his sermon can say and do these simultaneously.¹²¹ Just like the content and tune of music together produce

¹¹⁸ Fred B. Craddock: *As One without authority*, Saint Louis, Missouri, Chalice Press, 2001.

¹¹⁹ Thomas G. Long: *Preaching and the literary forms of the Bible*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988.

¹²⁰ Mike Graves: *The Sermon as Symphony. Preaching the literary forms of the New Testament*, Valley Forge, Judson Press, 1997.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

the effect to the audience, the unity of content and form should appear in the sermon. Graves later explains the purpose of the sermon is not simply to present the content or to accommodate it in the theological system, but to make the text an experience for the listener.¹²² To demonstrate this he uses the following analogy: when a musician wishes to compose music for a poem, he not only uses the meaning of the words, but also their mood, disposition, movement and occasion. When the orchestra plays, many instruments will be brought together, with their many different sounds, but still remaining in harmony, nevertheless several of these will become predominant in the symphony, and these together provide the experience for the audience. Thus, it becomes an event, a happening in the lives of persons present.

“The sermon as symphony, then, consists of an interpretation of a text, a searching for its mood and movement, an artistic blending of text and tune, a moving performance, and an acoustical event in which something happens.”¹²³

Thomas Troeger, a professor at Yale University used the metaphor of music in his works on homiletics – he made himself known by several publications on aesthetical homiletics. In one of his later works he devotes a separate chapter to the place of “beauty” in preaching.¹²⁴ A detailed investigation of the metaphor of music is found in his work entitled “*Imaging a Sermon*”.¹²⁵ Here he emphasises the musical characteristics of speech, which is an acoustic phenomenon. He uses the example of the fact, that a recited text has its own musicality, and a deeply intuitive speech has its own tune.¹²⁶

“The physical properties of speech – its rhythm, pitch, volume, and inflection – are a kind of music that makes the imagination dance.”¹²⁷ According to Troeger the congruency of sound and words is a complex issue. “It requires a spiritual, theological process of finding that place of the heart where the Gospel has touched the preacher’s own life. Nothing can replace speaking out of that spiritual center. It is the place from which the melody of redemption arises and permeates our voice.”¹²⁸

Naturally, the development of aesthetical homiletics can also be traced to groups outside America. Following the new turns in hermeneutics, distinguished experts of German homiletics also turned attention to the fact

¹²² Ibid., 18.

¹²³ Ibid., 19.

¹²⁴ Thomas Troeger: *Wonder Reborn. Creating Sermons on Hymns, Music, and Poetry*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2010, 3–28; Thomas Troeger: *Preaching and Worship*, Saint Louis, Chalice Press, 2003, 43–72.

¹²⁵ Thomas Troeger: *Imagining a sermon*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1990, 67–88.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 69.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 75.

that aesthetics and homiletics are inseparable. Gert Otto¹²⁹ emphasized this standpoint in the area of linguistics, while Rodolf Bohren¹³⁰ and Albrecht Grözinger¹³¹ pointed out the importance of aesthetics from the standpoint of practical theology. Gerd Theissen writes in his work, that “Religious texts [...] through their relationship to transcendence have an aesthetic quality. In addition, they share four qualities with poetic texts: by their nature they are poetic, pictorial, fictional, and form giving.”¹³²

The paradigm of aesthetical homiletics, which has a predilection for the metaphor of music in its terminology, attempts to emphasize the relation of preaching and beauty. It regards preaching as an art, which uses the revelations of other arts, and applies these in its own area. Brueggemann¹³³ for example advocates that the preacher should also be a poet, who can unite sermon and poetry to oppose the narrowing tendencies of spoken language. Buttrick¹³⁴ uses the art of motion pictures as the basis of composing a sermon as a sequence of moves, and applies the phenomenology of these moves by developing his homiletic theory. Jana Childers¹³⁵ on the other hand mentions theatrical dramaturgy as an example to follow, which leads the tensions of conflicts to solutions. All these arts operate in a different manner and visualise in different ways, but one principle is invariably there: the unity of form and content. This statement is not only accepted by theory (like linguistic philosophy) but in reverse, also by the applied principles of theology. In other words, preaching is not simply theory and abstraction, but at the same time a live phenomenon, and thus an event. This event is in all cases an integrated phenomenon, where content and form cannot be separated.

The starting point of traditional homiletics is just the opposite, that is the precedence of content is at best followed by secondary criteria of form. Linguistic philosophy, which started during the Enlightenment but peaked in the 19th century, emphasized the priority of thought, its strength for creating reality, the relation between subject and object which formulates statements. The abstracting and summarising tendencies of linguistic thought unambiguously valued content above everything else, and rendered to this culturally available formation systems, classical oratorical forms (polished over the ages) and its operating method: deductive argument. Aesthetical

¹²⁹ Gert Otto: *Predigt als Rede. Über die Wechselwirkungen von Homiletik und Rhetorik*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer 1976; Gert Otto: *Predigt, als rhetorische Aufgabe. Homiletische Perspektiven*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 1987.

¹³⁰ Rudolf Bohren: *Dass Gott schön werde. Praktische Theologie als theologische Ästhetik*, München, Kaiser Verlag, 1975; and different parts from Bohren: *Predigtlehre*.

¹³¹ Albrecht Grözinger: *Praktische Theologie und Ästhetik. Ein Beitrag zur Grundlegung der Praktischen Theologie*, München, Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1987.

¹³² Gerd Theissen: *The New Testament. A Literary History*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2012, 3.

¹³³ Walter Brueggemann: *Finally Comes The Poet*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1989.

¹³⁴ David Buttrick: *Homiletic. Moves and Structures*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1987.

¹³⁵ Jana Childers: *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1998.

homiletics does not aim to reverse this order – that is first form, then content second –, but wishes to create an integrated union of the two. The principle is the same, and is as Paul Valéry described: beauty cannot be summarized. (*Rien de beau se peut résumer.*) As art explains and visualizes reality, in other words does not summarize or compress it, but rather opens it up for the recipient of artistic values, aesthetical homiletics can have only one aim, to expand and to lift the recipient, the listener to a “broad place” (Ps 18:19).

AESTHETICAL HOMILETIC IN THE MODERN AGE IN HUNGARY

Finally I will discuss how Hungarian homiletics reacted to the aesthetical homiletics at the beginning and end of the 20th century. In the subtitle I do not unintentionally use the term “modern age”, because in Hungarian homiletic schools modern thinking reigns in the philosophical and theological sense.

László Ravasz, the outstanding personality of Hungarian homiletics, was a practical theologian blessed with artistic sensitivity. He published his textbook on homiletics at a relatively young age in 1915 (he was 33), in which aesthetics has an emphasized presence. (He used many German homiletic works among his sources in his book).

Ravasz does not loosen the unity of content and form.¹³⁶ He talks about preaching as a work of art (artwork), which requires by nature adequate material, in which the thought can be expressed.

Work of art is a two-sided idea, it can be regarded both as subject and object. It could mean the activity which produces a piece of reality in which homogeneous and organically valuable spiritual content obtain a sensuous expression. It can also be said that a work of art is the result of all such activities, which express valuable spiritual content in a sensuous way. Thus, essential characteristics of a work of art are: meaning, material, form of art and the power which creates all these into a new, lively unit.¹³⁷

The material of speech is the word, which provides their form for the mind. According to Ravasz, speech is the most suitable artistic form of expression to achieve the wanted effect. And because it is speech, he talks continuously about an acoustic phenomenon, which has tune and music. (He never talks about visual texts, that is about written sermons.)

¹³⁶ Ravasz, László: A beszéd mint műalkotás [Speech as artwork], in *Legyen világosság III*, Budapest, Franklin Társulat, 1938, 33.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

Artistic effect touches those chords of the spirit, from its continued intonation the melody of religious experience is formed, as long as the artistic form represents a cleansed, higher existence, which has the marvellous strength to awake slumbering feelings. A tuneful religious hymn sometimes has a better effect than the most scholarly composed catechesis. [...] The sermon can partly win the battle if it awakes aesthetical effects, but can completely lose if it damages the requirements of aesthetic impression. Joy of art is always a fruitful beginning, but a revolt of taste represents always a sad ending.¹³⁸

Ravasz expands the practical usefulness of aesthetics, but here I omit these quotations. In the following I concentrate on how he discusses aesthetical homiletics in other correlations.

...The most important features of homiletic artistry we can observe in the theology of church speeches. Under theology we mean that the sermon has its own path, it begins with a precept and reaches a need for action. The statics of preaching dissolve in dynamics, because its nature is not that it states something, but that it has an effect... In fact the workart of homiletics consists of the movement where values of logical level through the aesthetical level arrive finally to the ethical level. In this sense a homiletic object of art resembles drama.¹³⁹

Later he expands on the dynamics of drama, which is connected by two completely different conditions, by which the original state of affairs is entirely changed. A similar process is present in preaching, where the path between “is” and “must” has to be passed by the preacher, who must stretch the dynamics of the sermon, itself a work of art, so that the listener should never be the same, as he/she was before the sermon.

In his homiletics Ravasz differentiates the nature of preaching from being solely a logical or aesthetical process. In contrast, this value-based homiletics, which Ravasz thinks has a pedagogical nature, blended well into the positivist theory of continuous development of faith, where the recipient of the sermon moves further and further upwards through ethical stages as the effect of listening. For Ravasz therefore the paradigm is not the aesthetical, but prophetic preaching. At the same time we can see from the quotations that for him the metaphor of music – melody – is not unfamiliar, thus, he preceded the results of the new movement of homiletics by 60-70 years, when at the beginning of the last century he regarded drama and theatrical art as the best analogy to preaching, from the point of view of its form. Reading his discussions on works of art one can observe parallels with the argument

¹³⁸ Ravasz: *A gyülekezeti igehirdetés*, 380.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 382.

of new homiletics. Ravasz does not separate content and form; he uses both as tools of pedagogy, that is tools for ethical development. In this sense his homiletics are tied more closely to the theology and philosophical thinking of the 19th century, and precedes the disputations of New Homiletic about the relation of content and form. At the same time it is very interesting and exciting to see the parallels at the aesthetical level which can be observed between László Ravasz and the New Homiletic movement. In his homiletics both the logic and aesthetics can be interpreted from the viewpoint of the effect of preaching. At the same time one can observe differences from the aesthetic homiletics which appeared at the end of the 20th century – that each sermon is a rhetorical achievement, with a strategy of communication which concentrates on the final effect. But there is a difference in the rhetorical principles between the Ravasz-system and New Homiletic. The rhetorical usage of the 19th century does seem to appear in the system of László Ravasz, where the purpose of the orator is to convince the listener. This system regards the listener only from the point of view of convincibility, in other words, communication is necessary, but the listener has a passive role. New Homiletic, on the other hand, induces a dialogue between preacher and listener. The act of communication is a two-way process. This system does not aim to convince or conquer the listener, but allows him/her freedom of decision during or after the sermon. This difference between old and new homiletics appeared in connection with the hermeneutical changes in the 60s and 70s of the last century.

Following the homiletics of László Ravasz, that is from the 1930s, but especially after the Second World War, Hungarian homiletic discourse fitted well into the theological conceptions of Barth. The homiletic school initiated by Sándor Czeglédy understood homiletics solely on the basis of the Theology of the Word. Said or unsaid “content first” has been the coordinating principle and still is. The secondary role of form prevails even today as an uncontested axiom. Thurneysen drafted this in the most pronounced way, when saying “The content, the clarification of the message is always the first homiletic assignment. The ‘how’ always secondary, it is subjected to the primary one.”¹⁴⁰

This homiletic school is defined from the view of the speech by a “*sui generis*” distinction of the sermon, in other words there is a big difference between the »religious speech« based on the formal rhetoric of the 19th century, and the theologically mature “*praedicatio verbi Dei*”. Czeglédy, who devotes a mere 17 pages in his 204 page long work to formal homiletics, begins his treatment of saying that the separation of content and form is problematic, but his reasoning moves in the direction that the power of Jesus’

¹⁴⁰ Eduard Thurneysen: *Az Ige szolgálata* [Ministry of the Word], Sopron, Evangélikus Hittudományi Egyetem, 1942, 60.

speeches were probably not acknowledged because of the question of their form.¹⁴¹ The basic difference in theological conception is always articulated through the theocentric versus anthropocentric systems. The Hungarian homiletic school in the 20th century uses mainly arguments of systematic theology about the relation of preaching and the Holy Script. In the section of material on homiletics (we use the word: *homileticum*) it appears pronounced Biblical theology provides only for material content, which also declares content against form as predominant. Even Sándor Szénasi, who published abundantly about the form and rhetoric of the sermon in the second half of the 20th century, begins his essay on the formal questions of preaching in the handbook for preachers: “The summary of our introduction is that form is secondary to the content.”

After the 70s in homiletic publications and textbooks one finds more and more questions, path-searching, mainly taken from German sources, but the system does not change substantially. Homiletic school with subjunctive separation of content and form distinguishes itself from aesthetic homiletics even today and keeps a distance from it.

Aesthetical homiletics is of course represented in the Hungarian homiletic discourse of the new millennium. This is done partly through publications of foreign texts (in the edition of sister denominations: Catholic¹⁴² and Lutheran¹⁴³) as well as through theological students with scholarships to foreign universities.¹⁴⁴ Among preaching ministers and students of theology one can see an increasing interest in this theme.¹⁴⁵ I believe that in Hungary discussion between ordinary church members, preachers, theologians, church leaders, artists as well as professional communicators and aestheticians can lead to fruitful results. To initiate such discussions must be a primary aim for interested bodies.

¹⁴¹ Czeglédy, Sándor: *A homiletika vázolata*, [An Outline of Homiletic], Debreceni Református Teológiai Akadémia Jegyzetkészítő Irodája, Debrecen, 1971, 187.

¹⁴² Rolf Zerfass: *Nevedet hirdetem*, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 1994; in German: Rolf Zerfass: *Grundkurs Predigt*, Patmos Verlag, Düsseldorf 1987.

¹⁴³ Martin Nicol: *Dramatizált homiletika*, Budapest, Luther, 2005; in German: Martin Nicol: *Einander ins Bild setzen: Dramaturgische Homiletik*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2002.

¹⁴⁴ Literáty, Zoltán: Új homiletika [New Homiletic], in *A tudomány és az oktatás a tudásközpontú társadalom szolgálatában. A Selye János Egyetem III. Nemzetközi Tudományos Konferenciájának tanulmánykötete*, Komárom, Selye János Egyetem, 2011, 716–747.

¹⁴⁵ Proven by a few faculty homiletic workshops that I have offered in the last 10 years.

ARGUMENTS



PATHOS

ANCIENT PATHOS IN NEW PREACHING



PATHOS: PERSUASIVE APPEALS TO LISTENERS' EMOTIONS

The question guiding homiletic pathos is: “Why should my listener care?” The preacher searches for ways to engage the worldview and emotions of the congregation in order to persuade them that what is being said is true and should be taken seriously. Preachers use empathy and identification to enter the lives of the congregation in search of ways to connect the message with things that truly matter to listeners. [...] The goal of sermon pathos is an open, empathetic correlation of the sermon’s message with important concerns in the lives of listeners, so that they will personally invest in what is being said.¹⁴⁶

NEW HOMILETICS

The movement called *New Homiletic* developed in America and had its heyday during the last quarter of the 20th century. This meant that it coincided with the narrative perception of faith, borrowing many impulses from the latter. Generally it is difficult to understand this development, which resulted in New Homiletics being what it is. While in Europe homiletics of Barthian “theology of the Word”¹⁴⁷ dogmatically secluded itself from experimental practice, the same Barthian theological movement in the US believed that dogmatic and definitive assessment does not provide suitable answers to problems encountered in practice. Thus, experimentation was natural in America. There is a great difference between American and European homiletics in the 70s.

¹⁴⁶ John S. McClure: *Preaching Words: 144 Key Terms in Homiletics*, Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, 101–102.

¹⁴⁷ Karl Barth was a Swiss reformed theologian in the 20th century. He rejected the predominant liberal theology. Instead he embarked on a new theological path initially called *dialectical theology*. His theological work usually is known as “*a theology of the Word*”. Barth emphasized the sovereignty of God, particularly through his reinterpretation of the Calvinistic doctrine of election, the sinfulness of humanity, and the “*infinite qualitative distinction between God and mankind*” (Kierkegaard). See more: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Barth (accessed 20 December 2013).

The “*quo modo*” of preaching thus gained greater and greater emphasis overseas, but at the same time it did not separate itself from those directions of homiletics, which search the depth of preaching. An important breakthrough in forms of preaching was achieved, among others, by the analogy of Grady Davis, in which he compared the development of a sermon to living organisms, like a tree.¹⁴⁸ The indistinguishable unity of form and content began to show up in such analogies to living, natural beings, and became definitive in homiletic thinking of the age. In other words, only what is alive can develop within its own framework.

New Homiletic is new in the sense that in contrast to traditional and kerygmatic types of preaching. *New Homiletic* is based on speech event and methodically on inductive orientation. *New Homiletic* found its philosophical principles in new hermeneutics. New hermeneutics promulgated that with the aid of “hermeneutical circle” the person and the text develop together. This means that the commentator not only explains the text to his audience, but tells it in a new way, accommodating to the new situation, because the language of the text sometimes makes it unclear. It is not enough to outline the text for the present situation, but both the text and present case must be interpreted, if possible, unifying these two horizons.¹⁴⁹ Fuchs called this “speech event”.¹⁵⁰

Achievements of speech event (or speech act theory) therefore appear not only at theoretical, but also at practical levels in homiletics. Thus, most practising homiletics regarded this as a “litmus test” to see, “what happens in the sermon”. Here not simply the fact that the sermon has happened and transmitted the truth is important, but, from the practical point of view, what happens during the half hour, when the preacher talks to his audience. The aim was that the audience should become an active participant in the speech event – in other words that the listener should gain new knowledge and experience during this process. The sermon, in the presence and reality of God, becomes a real event. The most important criterion of this event is the unbreakable unity of content and form.

As in real life, every content can be understood within its own form, even abstract concepts of faith and theology depend on the formal characteristics of their expressions.

The other supporting pillar of new homiletics, besides the unity of content and form, is that the sermon is an event which occurs continuously in

¹⁴⁸ Grady Henry Davis: *Design for preaching*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1958, 15–16.

¹⁴⁹ Anthony C. Thiselton: *The New Hermeneutic*, in Donald K. McKim (ed.): *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986. See the same: Anthony C. Thiselton: *The two horizons, New Testament hermeneutics and philosophical description*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980, 10–16.

¹⁵⁰ Ernst Fuchs: *Hermeneutik*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1970.

time, in other words, it can be observed only as part of a historical process. It cannot be regarded on its own as an abstract concept; it must be examined as a process. Thus, observation and experience become dominant features of homiletic discussions.

The methodology of new homiletics is based on induction. It should not try to use general, but concrete truths of faith when speaking to the audience, who then can themselves draw the relevant conclusions. If the sermon is developed well and reached its target, then the conclusion of the listener and the general truth of the Bible become identical. This method is secured by the unity of the aesthetically examined reality and the language, thus the language becomes not simply the instrument of existing realities, but its product. Thus, a sermon while strictly adhering to truth, can only express it through the language and to make it an event.

The above mentioned phenomena resulted in the strengthening of pathos as a rhetorical argument in New Homiletics. The action, involvement, emotive participation, empathy and encounter all aimed to strengthen to the maximum the link between the speaker with his theme and the audience. The homiletic context of the sixties and seventies was the context of ineffectual preaching. Most homiletic textbooks tried to find a solution to newly establish the relevancy of preaching, asking the question, how can a Christian sermon become effective again? Naturally, there were theologians who wanted to base this on theological principles, but New Homiletics found these fundamentals in New Hermeneutics, its motto being: in dialogue with the receiver (listener). Therefore New Homiletics concentrated all its efforts on the listener of the sermon, with whom it tried to pursue a dialogue. This approach was based on the reasoning of pathos, which they expressed as: “turn to the listener” or “hearer-driven homiletic”.

For homileticians, New Hermeneutics and movements in linguistic theory inspired a new appraisal of the role of listeners, their perceptions, and needs as integral to the preaching event. This move toward anthropological concerns resulted in listeners becoming central to the preacher’s consideration of not only what to say but how to say it. Sermons were understood as capable of making their appeal not only through rational arguments but evocation, imagination, and addressing listeners’ emotional needs as well.¹⁵¹

New Homiletics found the answer to *how* in the narrative paradigm; therefore I will try to present the connections between narratology, rhetoric, theology and homiletics.

¹⁵¹ Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm: New Hermeneutic, New Homiletic, and New Directions: An U.S. – North American Perspective, *Homiletic*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2010, 20.

NARRATIVE TURN

Our everyday life, culture, history, care of ourselves and self-reflection are narrative in style. One expresses his own world, his life and identity in narrative terms. Reflections on our past, present and future are all embedded in the structure of time, resulting clearly in the historical understanding of life.

However, narrative thinking nowadays has outgrown the simple explanation and classification of events. The innovations of the seventies, which influenced substantially the development of science, are nowadays often termed as the narrative turn. This means that narrative is a much more general category than the study of fairy tales and short stories. Besides structural analysis of texts it is also applied in other disciplines. It is characteristic mainly of the social sciences (history, philosophy, sociology, politics, psychology and recently also in theology) that their object is of narrative nature. This means that in these various sciences similar phenomena occur in relation to the nature of the discipline and their discursive strategies. These common phenomena, with parallel rules, form the scientific structures of narrative, which can be applied also in theological investigations.

In narrative discourse Walter Fischer introduced the concept of narrative paradigm.¹⁵² According to his interpretation all forms of communications, which affect our intellect, have to be understood as such an eventuality, which is shaped by history, culture and character. Fisher's aim was that besides didactical or descriptive communication narrative communication has a basic importance. The concept of narrative paradigm was an answer to the view of science in the seventies. In other words, according to Thomas Kuhn¹⁵³ the solid structure of any science is indicated by generally accepted paradigms. Researchers of communication tried to define such a paradigm, which perfectly explains the behaviour of communication, and therefore provides a solid basis for the theories of communication. Thus, he suggests, among others, that narrative paradigm should not be approached as special rhetoric, but as a fundamental, on which the entire rhetoric can be built.¹⁵⁴ His main work referenced above begins with a quotation from Scripture: "in the beginning was the word (Logos)". As he explains, the Greek word means an event, argument, discourse, principle, concept, thought, in other words, all forms of communication. According to him in those times imagination and thought were not separated. With philosophical writing one can observe that special usage, where the meaning of Logos moves towards

¹⁵² Walter R. Fisher: *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1987.

¹⁵³ Thomas S. Kuhn: *The structure of scientific revolutions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012, 43.

¹⁵⁴ Fisher: *Human Communication as Narration*, 194.

thought and assertion. As a result, imagination, aesthetics and art are of secondary importance. Eventualities [tales, stories] do not fit pure logics, as they only affect sentiments; they become tools of delusion rather than those of noble persuasion.

This struggle between pure logics, sentimental effect, rationality and emotions not only characterised the classical age, but has continued to do so ever since in our cultural life and in homiletics, too.

NARRATIVE IN CLASSICAL RHETORIC

In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* one can read that "narration" is that part of speech, which is positioned in the first part of "tractation", in the invention. Introduction (*exordium*) is followed by the *narration* just before the *propositio* and *argumentatio*. "In political oratory there is very little opening for narration; nobody can 'narrate' what has not yet happened. If there is narration at all, it will be of past events, the recollection of which is to help the hearers to make better plans for the future."¹⁵⁵ The fact, that according to Aristotle narration can not only be used after the introduction, but at other parts of the speech, or that it can be applied in all kinds of talk, can also be suggested through the paradigm mentioned before – not only for pragmatic reasons (information, understanding) but also by anthropological reasoning. Thus, events, happenings, persons and characters linked to these, and the whole environment is secured and interpreted as a great personal history.

One can distinguish several types of narration:

- *Prodiegesis* – a short, condensed, purposeful narration about essentials
- *Hypodiegesis* – an enlarged narration (suitable to strengthen probability, which first looks unimportant but which gains relevance later in the verification)
- *Antidiegesis* – narration which formulates opposition, disapproval
- Sidetracking the object with a parable – describing it with analogy or a parable

An indispensable part of any narration is an internal order. This can be either natural or artificial. The former is structured around chronology, space, reason and its consequence etc, while the latter is arranged by the speaker according to the subject or theme.

¹⁵⁵ Aristotle: *Rhetoric*, <http://reader.epubee.com/books/mobile/5a/5ac48c01a0dcdb5a71a9ef8e225352e7/text00109.html> (accessed 5 July 2020).

Among the antique criteria of narration brevity, clarity and probability were most important (see Cornificius). These ensured acceptance, understanding and empathy by the listener. Classical orators unambiguously used persuasion to convey real or possible events; in the law courts they tried to use it for conviction. This renders a sort of vehicle for special purposes in oratorical skills. In this sense Greco-Roman rhetoric regarded persuasion/verification as the primary aim, placing other parts of speech under this.

It is easy to see therefore that the so-called illustrative theory of preaching tradition drew on the system of classical rhetoric. The thought, the content, is often illuminated by an analogy, an image, an example or a story. As C. H. Spurgeon, a leading preacher of the 19th century wrote, an illustration is like a window, it illuminates the subject, brings air into an airless room.¹⁵⁶ Compared to the understanding of narrative of the 20th century, antique rhetoric regarded the function of narration quite differently.

The Biblical (eastern-semitic) approach of narration was also quite different from the concepts of antique rhetoric, and in some ways it is closer to today's theories. For example the prophet Nathan did not prove the guilt of David by legal means (with a speech in the courts), but by telling a parable. The king declares sentence over himself. Persuasion reached its target; David shows remorse and accepts the verdict (see 2Sam 12).

I regard the research of George Kennedy, published in 1998 on comparative rhetoric interesting.¹⁵⁷ The aim of his research was to examine how people, outside the Greco-Roman societies (where there is no exact equivalent of what we call rhetoric) discuss their problems with each other. He points to several cultures, where the judge uses proverbs or a short story when pronouncing verdict to the disputing parties, who have to draw appropriate consequences from these.

This type of gaining knowledge is of course not alien to the European way of thinking. Rhetorical tradition using analogical reasoning accompanies the history of communications (e.g. when the orator strengthens his subject with an anecdote or a story). We call these stories *exemplums*. An example of this rhetorical induction is the work of Aristotle. The use of this example was especially favoured during the Middle Ages. There is a curious early literary work, which is generally regarded as the first modern novel, and is entirely based on such *exemplums*. I think of the Catalan philosopher and author, Ramon Llull who in 1288–89 wrote a novel entitled *Felix or the book of wonders*. In this novel, Felix is sent by his father to the world in order to find out why the Christianity of the age distanced itself from the faith and thinking of the apostles and martyrs. Felix tries to tackle his task systematically. In a hierarchical way

¹⁵⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *The Art of Illustration*, London, Passmore&Alabaster, 1894.

¹⁵⁷ George Kennedy: *Comparative rhetoric: an historical and cross-cultural introduction*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998.

we read about God, angels, heaven, plants, even hell. Felix enquires, converses, researches, but there are no definite conclusions. For questions (like “Who is God?”, “Who are the angels?”) they tell him one or more stories. The end of the novel is telling. Felix now knows everything. He lives in a monastery and is revered by his brethren. When he dies, at his funeral the priest tells the story of Felix’s life to the congregation. This has a great effect on one of the friars. He memorizes everything and, with the permission of his authorities, he also goes wandering as a “second Felix” to observe the world, and so on. Newer and newer Felixes emerge, who seek truth, knowledge, laws in the world, and they find these in the large labyrinth of stories.

Regarding the narrative possibilities of rhetoric within ecclesiastic life, one can see even at the level of common phenomena, that personal and genuine histories of faith are more convincing compared to direct communications. Communication theories say that in the influencing of cognitive and affective spheres the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the listeners, like a respected speaker, or a friend, or a member of a congregation has at least a proportion of 70 per cent. We call this the argument of pathos.

NARRATIVE THEOLOGY

In this part I do not wish to discuss the deep relationships between theology and its adhering disciplines like history and philology, but would like to describe briefly the initiative which theologians have drafted in the last quarter of the 20th century. Among the most prominent representatives are the researchers of Yale University: George Lindbeck, Hans Frei, Ronald Thiemann or the authors of the most important articles like Johan B. Metz, Harald Wienrich, Paul Ricoeur from Europe.

The origin of the theological trend cannot be related to one person or school, but it is generally accepted that the beginnings are connected to Erich Auerbach’s epoch-making work.¹⁵⁸ It was he who opened the path for the theological application of Biblical narrative research.¹⁵⁹ Most people trace the origin of narrative theology back as far as Karl Barth, who added new authority to Scripture, as the history of God. According to Richard Niebuhr God has revealed himself in the course of history – liberation from Egypt and Babylon, liberation of Jesus –, and therefore the best way of expressing the

¹⁵⁸ Erich Auerbach: *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2003.

¹⁵⁹ He compared Homer’s *Odyssey* and the Genesis 22. He continuously emphasizes that the aspects of the Bible (historical, temporal, conscious) are deeper than in Homer’s work. According to him the quality of the Biblical narrative is very specific and realistic.

nature of revelation is narration.¹⁶⁰ The spirit of enlightenment did not favour the expression of truth in history. The first important work was published by Hans Frei in 1974,¹⁶¹ which strongly criticised the thinking of enlightenment about content and form. His view was that this era restricted theology into a general rational theory, and this necessarily led to the downgrading of the historical books. It also meant that history had no role in theology, its only aim being the verification and refinement of rationally structured principles. Bultmann's trend of suppressing myths was also part of this approach, which held that the timeless person of Jesus can be separated from the descriptions left to us in the scriptures. If we define the importance of Jesus as timeless, these descriptions lose their meaning, in other words content have priority over the form of revelation, which attains at best secondary importance.

I also refer to another publication, which interestingly does not apply the form of Biblical narratives as the basis of its reasoning. Johan B Metz provides theological arguments for the necessity of narrative tradition, i.e. the importance of narrative memory.¹⁶² His emphasis is based on experiences of faith, for which neither rites nor dogma were able to provide adequate form. Only historical narration is the revelation, in which creation, resurrection, the history of Jesus' suffering, healing and redemption can be adequately expressed.

According to Ricoeur the understanding of existence through events and self-interpretation ensures the solid foundation for narrative theology and Biblical research. That is, as far as Scriptures are concerned, one has to see that a substantial part of Biblical stories appear as "narrative Creed". Various aspects of faith, like creation, the flood, liberation, declaration of law, captivity, gospel, redemption etc. appear as human experience through narration of events and history. The language of redemption is therefore not argumentative, but narrative. Furthermore, the story of suffering cannot be explained simply through argumentative means, it basically is memorative-narrative theology. Remembrance and narration relativises the argumentative theology, making it necessary to rethink the relation of history and interpretation. One cannot accept the view that the gospel narrates stories, while theology has to take up its interpretation.

Although, as I pointed out earlier, Logos was in initial form already Logos, i.e. all ways of expression were free to use, among others for the historical and event-like narrations. The tension between the approach provided by the enlightenment and by the narrative method has however emerged

¹⁶⁰ Richard Niebuhr: *The meaning of revelation*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

¹⁶¹ Hans W. Frei: *The eclipse of Biblical narrative: a study in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics*, Michigan, Yale University Press, 1980.

¹⁶² Johann Baptist Metz: *Kleine Apologie des Erzählens*, *Concilium*, Vol. 9, 1973, 329–334.

much earlier in the development of theology. This happened in connection with the Hellenization of eastern-semitic history. Namely the character of Christianity has been fundamentally altered as a result of Hellenization. It was not the Logos which became of narrative character, but in reverse narration disappeared in the dense system of logics. In the Biblical stories however, interestingly the process was reversed, i.e. not that the concept took up an abstract meaning, but the Logos became historical.

Going back to the article of Metz, by his advice we are bound to observe three objects, if we do not wish to be trapped by anachronism or by superficial modernization. These objects are borrowed from the area of systematic theology: remembrance, narration and solidarity. We should remember our freedom, our own history with God, as a deed of God. This remembrance is first of all *memoria passionis*, the remembrance of Jesus' passion, to remember those who were made sacred during the course of history. This remembrance also saves us from the notion that we require the sufferings of others to facilitate our own progress. Narration thus is about those who suffer or suffered in the past. The narrator accepts solidarity with them.¹⁶³ He accepts this solidarity, because he is talking to the oppressed and forgotten people in the hope of release and freedom. In this sense theology becomes politicised. Its basis is the faith of first Christians, who narrated to one another the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, and they understood their own situation through remembrance, history and solidarity. According to Metz a narrated story is always a story with understanding, thus narration and argumentation are intertwined.

THE EFFECT OF NARRATIVE THEOLOGY ON NARRATIVE HOMILETICS

This source of tension which occurs in narrative theology has its effect on the discussions in narrative homiletics. The first question which appears is whether content and form are separable or inseparable. According to the narrative approach content cannot be distilled from the form.

The Biblical stories are not simply illustrations attached to a thought, but they are forms of expression. Also in preaching the stories have greater relevance than secondary illuminations. A narration cannot become ideological if it is more than the illustration of the topic. If a narration is merely an illustration, it is difficult to liberate it from allegorical approaches. However, instead of allegory a metaphor is capable of securing that activity, which points beyond itself and which at the same time secures the relevance of the form.

¹⁶³ Liberation theology and narrative theology are very close to each other.

The effect of narrative theology on narrative homiletics is often misunderstood. When we speak about something or someone (descriptive style), we may think that we are preaching narratively. The fact is just the opposite. Description does not necessarily mean narration. Argument often uses the tool of description (as in classical rhetoric). Narrative homiletics (just like narrative theology) thinks in terms of events. If in a sermon God is not merely the object of description or its person, but begins to “happen”, i.e. becomes part of the story, this is when we can talk of narrative preaching, and about the maximum effect of the pathos. Narrative preaching discloses what happens in the presence of God. For this reason the form of narrative preaching is multicoloured. It cannot be compared to the two and a half millennia-old propositional speech of Aristotle. The emphasis of narrative preaching is not based on didactics, but on history itself, or on its relation to history, in other words what the story induces in us. We may open up or seclude ourselves, we may become more daring or timid, or we may get consolation or distress. Our faith is not articulated for ourselves in concepts, but in events, especially in self experience.

The encouraging and consoling character of a sermon draws its message from the knowledge, that if God was able to do his great deeds in the distant past, he can achieve these even nowadays, also in the life of the listener. Faith becomes active (in its fullness, in emotional, rational or voluntary spheres), i.e. it becomes stronger rather than weaker as the effect of listening to the sermon.

To achieve this, it is not sufficient to use simply topics illustrated by analogies, short narratives or examples. New Homiletics regarded the whole sermon as a full plot based on events, where the totality of time, characters and happenings bring a ready message to the audience. New Homiletic analogues became the vehicle of the message. They are no longer illustrations, but they are the message themselves. A chain of stories or a longer story has a plot with succeeding moments or moves, a whole movement. It includes the message in itself. Such complete narratives can visualize the whole Christian narrative, the story of Jesus even on a small scale for the listener, by means of which the listener can take part in the narrative. This is the maximum effect of the argued system of pathos, when the effect on the listener means that he/she is fully included in the rhetorically presented text, and can identify with the values presented in the sermon.

ETHOS PARADOX OF THE PREACHER



Where God and man meet, we inevitably encounter paradoxes. Any contact between the two worlds results in apparent conflicts, among which incarnation itself is perhaps the most salient. But there is another example as well: preaching. Preaching encompasses two radically different worlds, or, more precisely, two radically different personalities, and by its miracle the acts of God and the acts of man become a single, inseparable unit. This merging poses an almost irresolvable paradox to the human mind.

In this essay, I wish to shed light on the paradoxical persona of the preacher in the context of our age. The main problem with approaching the preacher's role is that it can be done both empirically and theologically. It is crucial, however, that the miracle itself can happen – that is, the different interpretations converge toward a common goal. So, at the end of this essay – after introducing and analysing the paradox, I will propose some possible solutions.

Preaching is a verbal act, where the context is provided by a sacral-liturgical and a rhetorical situation at the same time. This dichotomy results in two possible viewpoints where the preaching can be expounded from: a theological and a communicational one. Theological practice views the preacher in the light of compressed Biblical truths, both descriptively and prescriptively. From the viewpoint of communication, however, the ideal preacher can be described based on empirical data. At first, these two approaches may seem paradoxical – and rightly so.

In a broader context, this paradox determines not only the preacher's role, but the communication of the whole church. In the 70s, Moltmann already alluded to the dual crisis of church and theology, calling them the “*crisis of relevance*” and the “*crisis of identity*”¹⁶⁴, respectively. These crises are in close correlation with each other: the more the church tries to remain relevant in the modern age, the faster it loses its identity, and vice versa – the more the church tries to keep its identity by conforming to its traditions (which

¹⁶⁴ Jürgen Moltmann: *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993, 7.

are not necessarily grounded in theology), the less it will be able to reach today's people. The formula seems to be clear: the church either gives up on its traditions or on the people, but it cannot keep both.

The crisis of relevance has more than one cause. According to Klaus Douglass, we cannot elude the problem of language. After many centuries of stagnation, at the end of the 20th century, the church had to change its communication to reach its audience. To paraphrase Tillich: while Luther made enormous efforts to speak the language of the people of his age, his successors do everything to revert to Luther's language. The other cause of this crisis of relevance is the individualization and pluralization of modern societies. There are no self-explanatory things anymore: everything is possible everywhere, including religion, and topics which once everyone was involved in disappeared. It means the following: there are hardly any topics left which could move everyone, there are hardly any forms left to which everyone could conform, and that there are hardly any answers which could satisfy everyone.¹⁶⁵ Thanks to this situation, the preaching as an act of ecclesiastic identification is bound by determined boundaries. The church service and the sermon in it are the most potent communication forms the church can use to reach its audience, and, as a result, the preaching must be textual, Biblical, and conforming to the Creed while remaining interesting, exciting and communal at the same time.

Thus, the preacher must reckon with this dichotomy during a sermon, which must be both theologically recognizable and – from the viewpoint of communication – interesting. First, let's see what theology demands from the preacher.

According to the 2nd Helvetian Creed, the preacher's person cannot guarantee the authenticity of the sermon, saying "bad servants of the church must be listened to as well" (Chapter XVIII). Jesus himself mentions this as well when warning his audience to accept the teachings of the Pharisees, but do not follow their acts (Mt 23:3). Paul also knows those who preach from false motives, but still approves of their ministry (Phil 1:18). So, according to the credo, authentic preaching is based on the purity of the teaching, not on sanctity, as it was held by the Donatists in the 4th century¹⁶⁶ – that is to say, the preaching of the Reformed Church must have its roots in strict adherence to the Creed instead of the preacher's moral discipline, which is only secondary in this regard. The reformers of the 16th century were very strict in adherence to the Creed, but when it came to the question of ethics, they had to make certain compromises. "That's why the Lutheran church introduced the practice of 'visitations' to control the life-style of the ministers: 10% of them were suspended during a

¹⁶⁵ Klaus Douglass: *Die neue Reformation: 96 Thesen zur Zukunft der Kirche*, Kreuz Verlag, 2001, 27.

¹⁶⁶ Augustine of Hippo: *The Writings of St. Augustine Against the Donatists*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014, 134–135.

round of these visitations.”¹⁶⁷ This is what László Ravasz was writing about in his homiletic, where he stated that leaving the authenticity of the preaching to the preachers’ moral code was never a comfortable task: “since the beginning of the world, priests always had questionable morals.”¹⁶⁸

From the viewpoint of theology, it is all right, as reflected in the famous reformer’s saying: „predicatio verbi Dei est Verbum Dei”. Bohren borrows this sentence from the reformers when trying to define the kernel of preaching, even emphasizing the word “est”. “Everything comes down to these three letters. I have no other intention with my homiletic to explain these three letters to our age. If I can make it clear, then I shed light on the miracle of preaching.”¹⁶⁹ So, the roots of the identity go back as far as the 16th century, when the demand for theological correctness was greater than the demand for unquestionable morals. Because of this, identity and authenticity were separable. Being exact in theology was the only criterion of correct preaching. Should we approach this question from the side of logos, making the preaching dependable on the morals of the preacher, both the preaching and the preacher would suffer as a result. As per the Creed, the only benchmark is the Word of God – so, if the preacher is a Verbi divini minister, then – both in the sense of theology and in the sense of identity – the Verbum Divinum is more important than its vessel, the minister. This phenomenon can be fully understood in a contemporary polemical context, where dogmatic arguments between different churches were the most important factor – more important than the ethos, the communicational factor. But this thought is not restricted to the 16th century. The neo-reformed theology represented by Karoly Barth also tried to reduce the role of the preacher in the act of preaching.¹⁷⁰ Barthian theology was an answer to the theology which idealized the image of the German national preacher, and viewed man in the mirror of various philosophies: according to Positivism, man was capable of continuous development; according to Liberalism, in which he ceaselessly seeks his freedom, and according to Romanticism, which emphasized him as having national sentiments. Barth’s answer to this theology was a resounding “no”. The basis of his homiletics is “Deus dixit”, or, with his own words: “God alone must speak”.¹⁷¹ The act of man is the act of God through consecration. The individual must disappear to allow God to act via the act of

¹⁶⁷ Hézser: *Pasztorálpszichológiai szempontok*, 41.

¹⁶⁸ Ravasz: *A gyülekezeti igehirdetés*, 265.

¹⁶⁹ Bohren: *Predigtlehre*, 51.

¹⁷⁰ André Resner: *Preacher and Cross, Person and Message in Theology and Rhetoric*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, 58–65.

¹⁷¹ Karl Barth: *The preaching of the Gospel*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1963, 15. See more: „Revelation is a closed system in which God is the subject, the object and the middle term.” *Ibid.*, 12.

„Preaching is the Word of God which he himself has spoken.” *Ibid.*, 9.

the preaching: at most, he can be the messenger, but only through obedience in faith.¹⁷² When it comes to the preacher, Barthian theology acknowledges only one merit: the merit of staying in the background.

Barthian theology provides an answer to certain 19th century homiletical theories, which could be safely labelled as personality-oriented homiletics. The most apparent phenomenon of the Great American School-movement is the significance of the preacher's personality. According to Beecher, the preacher is necessarily a teacher at the same time, but also much more than that. A teacher only communicates a certain thought or truth, but the preacher also shares his personality with the audience. The preacher is an artist, but not in the sense of shaping content and matter, but in the sense of revealing his soul.¹⁷³ Beecher thinks that only moral truths are capable of becoming a part of the human soul, physical or scientific ones are not. Numbers, weight, dimensions – unlike hope, fear, joy, love or faith – cannot touch the audience. The preacher is the personal embodiment of truth. The scripture is just ink on a paper: the Word of God only comes alive through the preacher, just like in the times of the prophets and the apostles.¹⁷⁴ All true preaching contains something from the preacher's personality. "Christ is in you." The truth represented by the historical Jesus is now the truth in yourself. There is a strong Kantian influence in this thought, in the sense that the "object" (that is, the world outside the subject, including God) can only become truth to the extent it is internalized through the subject and the consciousness.

In the 19th century, one of the most influential American writer of homiletics summarized the essence of preaching as "communicating the truth to a person by another person".¹⁷⁵ This sentence also summarizes the core of his homiletic. His system stands on two pillars: truth and personality. We need both when we talk about preaching. Even the greatest truth – he says – cannot be called preaching unless it is communicated between two people. But the reverse is true as well: no matter how brilliant something is someone says to me, it cannot be called preaching if there is no truth in it. Preaching is exposing the truth through personality.¹⁷⁶

This 19th century homiletics is resurrected today, in the 21st century: the preacher's (real or perceived) moral purity comes before faithfulness to the Creed – Biblical preaching is less important than authentic Christianity. Instead of theological exactness, the audience is moved by the preacher's

¹⁷² Barth: *Homiletics*, 71–75.

¹⁷³ Henry Ward Beecher: *Yale Lectures on Preaching, Delivered before the theological department of Yale College, New Haven, Conn., as the first series in the regular course of the Lyman Beecher lectureship on preaching*, New York, J.B. Ford and Company, 1872, 2.

¹⁷⁴ Beecher: *Yale Lectures*, 3.

¹⁷⁵ Phillips Brooks: *Lectures on preaching, delivered before the Divinity School of the Yale College in January and February 1877*, New York, E. P. Dutton and Company, 1878, 5.

¹⁷⁶ Brooks: *Lectures on Preaching*, 5.

ability to integrate theological truths into his own life and to communicate this transformation toward them. Abstract truths take second place to impressions and experiences. 21st century man is motivated by the preacher's personality instead of dry theoretical-dogmatical exhortations. Boredom is more dangerous than making theological mistakes.

The same applies to authenticity, which is an essential factor. Today it is almost impossible to imagine a situation when a teaching, no matter how faithful it is to the Creed, is accepted by the public if it is communicated by an unauthentic preacher. In fact, the reverse is true. Craddock cites the following 6 areas where the communicational approach is just as important as the theological.

1) One is the early situation of American Christianity, or, more precisely, the imperfections of the tenets preached by the Social Gospel Movement. In the late 19th and early 20th century Europe concerned parties got tangled up in furious theological debates, while in the US, the aforementioned movement's motto was "Deeds, not words".¹⁷⁷ They wanted to give social meaning to Christian ethics, which is a noble attempt, but unfortunately it also led to a devaluation of words and preaching in general. This process was coupled with the general social experience that words completely lost their power, which, naturally, also influenced homiletical thought. "The starting point for the study of homiletics has been radically shifted. All considerations of structure, unity, movement, use of text and so forth, must wait upon the prior consideration of what words are and what they do."¹⁷⁸

2) Citing Ebeling, Craddock traced the second reason of renewal to traditional religious speech. "Unfortunately, the church has no retirement program for old words that fought well at Nicea, Chalcedon, and Augsburg. They are kept in the line of march..."¹⁷⁹

3) The third and arguably most important experience which – according to Craddock – enforces change is the "effect of television". He holds that visuality created a crisis between the functions of the eyes and the ears. Thanks to television, the role and place of orality changed dramatically: both the hearing and the speech of people got tied to images. In the 60s, many have thought that the efficiency of preaching depends on whether the preacher can preach the way the people "see today".¹⁸⁰ Craddock went against this change by wanting to restore orality's role, since the emptiness of words is not the same as their essence. Words seem empty because they are used the wrong way.

¹⁷⁷ Craddock: *As One*, 6.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

4) The fourth argument is the argument of temporality, that is, the question of the preacher moving to a temporary home – a tent – from his castle. The church must, again, make the transition from space to time, accepting volatility.

5) The fifth argument¹⁸¹ for change is transforming the aforementioned relationships between preacher and audience. The earlier approach assumed a preacher bearing the full authority of the Creed and an audience thirsty for teaching. Often, this passive listening to the Word is comfortable, but not effective. Craddock thinks that democracy has already reached the pulpit: people want to take an active part in things relevant to them, and preaching cannot be an exception.

6) Finally, there is the question of communication. Speaking may be easy – says Craddock –, but communicating something is much harder. Communication always struggles with the question of effectiveness, and since communication is a part of preaching, it must be considered over and over again.

So, as we see, for a preacher authentic communication correlates with authentic living. All trust that is invested into the preacher on behalf of the audience heavily depends on communication. And this trustworthy communication stems, primarily, from authentic living and not from dogma.

The paradox, therefore, is this: from a theological perspective, the truth of God's Word does not depend on the preacher's way of life, however, from the perspective of communication, authentic living is the first criteria. If we were to ask today: can a sermon with its theological truth counterweigh the inauthentic ethos of a preacher? – then the answer is always a blatant NO. And the reason is pretty straightforward: in a 21st century context, theology is something that is lived, experienced and carries the weight of life. This theology actually walks the talk and becomes alive in the life of the preacher.

How, then, are we to dissolve the paradox in order to allow the preacher to preach within an everyday context? Allow me to present a few ideas according to the following:

ERUDITION

Among the many ways to dissolve the paradox, one of them is qualification. The Scriptures point it out clearly. According to 2Tim 2:15, a good preacher is someone “who correctly handles the word of truth” (NIV). The verb ‘handle’ in the original Greek translates into ὀρθοτομέω, which literally means ‘to cut straight,’ or ‘rightly divide.’ The word denotes the act of a surgical intervention

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 11.

where the surgeon uses his scalpel for medical reasons. For the preacher it is therefore indispensable to use the sharp knife of the Word in a healing and reconstructive manner. It is required of him to scrub in, cut straight into the text, find the message and implant it into the soul of the audience. Hence the need for a qualification when one is to become a preacher, or in other terms a professional. In the 16th century, the understanding of the pastoral self was pushed towards the brink of a paradigm shift once an increasing number of pastors began to find themselves right outside of their once hermetically sealed monasteries amidst the trials and tribulations of everyday life. Their identity crisis, however, was quite understandable: the overall dramatic changes left them far behind in a world that soon became obsolete. Thus, a new type of pastor was needed. One who was efficiently trained in theology. The reformers well understood this from the beginning and did everything they could to foster the new identity of the pastor in their changing times. As history knows it, their efforts were not in vain, as they finally ushered in the anticipated paradigm shift: the Catholic idea of the ‘pious priest’ was successfully challenged with the Protestant scholar-priest alternative. Cloister cells with prie-dieus were soon relocated to library rooms that were equipped with books. And within this process of intellectual development, a new species of pastors finally emerged (and remained dominant until the mid 19th century): the *sacerdos literati*.¹⁸² The meaning of even our liturgical clothing in Hungary is found in exactly this idea, for at the time the pulpit robe was not an ecclesiastical garment customarily worn by ordained ministers, but a gown worn only by the scholarly class. So, concluding the above, as a preacher it is necessary to be academically qualified in order to maintain a well grounded theological standpoint when it comes to defining the three basic pillars of the preacher’s personhood: a) personality, b) office, and c) calling.

PERSONALITY

I would like to present the typology model based on the research of Fritz Riemann who investigated the personality traits of preachers.¹⁸³ According to the model, there are four types of personalities. Riemann postulated that every person based upon the first 6 years of their childhood development will develop one of the four types of personalities: schizoid, depressive, obsessive, or hysterical.

¹⁸² Hézszer, Gábor: *Pasztorálpzichológiai szempontok*, 42.

¹⁸³ Fritz Riemann: Die Persönlichkeit des Predigers aus tiefenpsychologischer Sicht, in Richard Riess (ed.): *Perspektiven der Pastoralpsychologie*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1974, 153–166.

Driven to find the absolute truth in life, the schizoid type of preacher will relentlessly unveil the issues of life and faith for this very sake. He is determined to know and to understand, everything else is but a secondary concern. To him, traditions are on the periphery of his respect. The discovery of truth is the only way that leads to God. He requires a critical and independent audience who is able to find solutions to their own problems. His source of identity rests within his inner freedom, and should he remain alone with his convictions that is not an issue at all. He is not lenient towards the spirit of his age, but will fight against the emptiness and unsubstantiality of the Church. His genuine nature will either cause awe or stumbling from his audience.

The depressive type of preacher tends to avoid conflict and is inclined to foster a childlike faith in himself. His primary motivation is not about changing the circumstances, but rather getting them accepted by the believers. The content of his sermons will likely revolve around the empathetic and caring God, and will include the theme of suffering to be endured. Also, he will probably not urge his believers to practice individual responsibility, but instead will comfort them. One of his greatest assets is empathy.

The intolerant behaviour of the obsessive type of preacher functions many times as a self-defense mechanism, as he easily gets irritated by the fact that others pursue forbidden things while all along he remains abstinent. He is loyal to traditions and values institutions. He is a man of confession and a guardian of true faith. His sermons are therefore logical, well built, give food for thought, and convincing.

The hysterical type of preacher wants to make sure he has created the maximum impact on his audience. He is well aware of and enjoys his talent. To him, from a homiletical perspective, the basic characteristics of preaching (e.g. faithfulness to the text, to the Scripture, to the Creeds, etc.) are less important and function only as if they were customary accessories. In his sermons, the content of truth is usually outweighed, even endangered, by his style and intended impact. On the other hand, however, the speeches delivered are eloquent, catching and heart-stirring. The strongly suggestive preacher will also be found in this category. Their sermons are always a fascinating experience, and they themselves are a role model to many. Most of the famous and popular preachers are from this type.

Although the above mentioned types have only been applied to preachers so far, we must not forget that the audience is not exempt from the typology model either. Members of the audience will fall into one of the four categories too. Therefore, it is vital for the preacher to bear in mind that he will likely fail in meeting all the different expectations of the entire audience. Nevertheless, self-knowledge is an essential asset for the pastor: with the improving of self-reflective skills he may contribute a great deal in learning how to listen and decipher the words, feelings and expectations of his audience. Consequently,

ETHOS

this will further contribute to the development of a communication where the personality and the life of the preacher are openly discussed. I find this to be a great opportunity for the preacher in easing his frustrations. In Hungary, there are new and developing models that aim to support and serve pastors in their development of self-reflection skills.

OFFICE

The role of the pastor often encompasses the tasks of the ecclesiastical office. The office of the pastor requires awareness of the preacher unless he desires to overload himself. There are many and sometimes impossible expectations towards the pastor that come from his environment, but this is equally true for the preacher as well.¹⁸⁴ People who help others always have an image of how they want to see themselves in their office. For the preacher, it is important to handle his role consciously and with control. According to the Jungian archetype theory, the pastor is between two worlds: it is expected of him to be a saint but also to remain wholly human at the same time. The 'this and that' state of being evokes the formerly discussed paradox once again. It is very challenging to meet all the expectations of those who "want change without change." The preacher has to be fully aware that he cannot live up to all of these expectations, but understand that this state of being is like a coin: it will always be double-sided. The pastoral office incorporates at least three different archetypal elements: prophet, rabbi, and priest. That is, prophet as in being the divine messenger of God addressing socio-political stability; rabbi as in being the wise sage who explains life; and priest as in being the liturgist who conducts the cult. These three elements constitute together the office of the pastor.

CALLING

The term calling is a spiritual notion. It denotes the personality of the newborn preacher who experiences the will of God through the call. This is vital because aside from his scientific competencies and self-reflective skills, the pastor will also have to utilize the potential of his regenerated heart. Each and every homiletical book that has been published ever since Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* agrees that without spirituality, no one can become a preacher or a teacher of God's Word. Spirituality is the experience of walking together in freedom with the Holy Spirit. In spirituality we experience the

¹⁸⁴ H. J. Thilo: *Beratande Seelsorge*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971, 31.

freedom that is indispensable to the ministry of the preacher. One of the key notions of *Predigtlehre* is maintaining the freedom of the preacher. This notion embraces freedom of all kinds: it includes the freedom from audience, the freedom from the pastoral self, the freedom of the Gospel, and the freedom of the congregation. “If homiletics is about protecting the freedom of the preacher then the miraculous nature of the sermon is secured and its arrival guaranteed.”¹⁸⁵ It is important that the preacher maintains his freedom from his audience, namely that his ministry does not get defined by church expectations.¹⁸⁶ However, the preacher also has to remain free from himself: “If homiletics provides the preacher with freedom, then it will attempt to free the preacher from his own prison.”¹⁸⁷ Accordingly, it will also attempt to free the preacher who is entrapped in the church officer spirit. However, we must not forget that the preacher also happens to be a church officer, and whenever the preacher speaks, so does the officer. “Church officers are usually nice guys” – says Bohren, and then continues “I fear we have sacrificed countless souls on the altar of niceness and I am against niceness that sacrifices humans. Nice is not to be confused with self-discipline. Niceness deconstructs the human, but self-discipline will conquer it. Therefore, the opposite of niceness is not negligence, but freedom. Nice preachers are not free and they do not wield liberating powers. Niceness will always feel a bit like prison or captivity, which can take on many forms. One might be held captive by exegesis, by dogmatics, or by themselves. And such captivity, once displayed on the pulpit, will become immediately evident to the whole church, as the Gospel will suffocate and choke in these chains in front of their very eyes. The audience might actually hear a sermon on the Gospel, but the Gospel itself will remain silent. This is what I mean when I say niceness sacrifices humans: when it becomes more important for the preacher to preach well than to liberate the audience and have them rejoice over the Gospel.”¹⁸⁸ The freedom of the pastor is best experienced in the freedom of the Gospel. As Paul puts it: “Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible” (1Cor 9:19–23). In other words: calling requires obedience, and by it we transition into a servant-like condition. God commands, and the preacher follows. The freedom of the Holy Spirit is always realized within our relationship with God, that is, within the Lord-servant relation. This is the eternal paradox for the preacher: he is free until he remains a servant, a *Verbi divini Minister*. Until these two conditions remain in constellation, the audience will experience preaching that is authentic both theologically and rhetorically.

¹⁸⁵ Bohren: *Predigtlehre*, 54.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 444–448.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 403.

LOGOS

EXEGESIS AS RHETORICAL INVENTION



Jesus had a message that he preached consistently and frequently. He said that unity, here I mean political unity, serves to preserve the people of God. This deeply emphasised message was relevant not only two thousand years ago, but still today. The divided church, the divided body of Christ cannot exist; it needs unity not only in a spiritual meaning, but organisationally as well. I am going to bring an interpretation here that may be very different from the familiar one, but with this we can see how unity serves the life and work of the Christian church.

What does a “different message” mean? Many passages of the Bible have as many interpretations as interpreters. As Umberto Eco says they are open works.¹⁸⁹ The interpretations can differ. For example: Jesus blesses the children (Mk 10:13–16). If you cannot accept the kingdom of God as a child, you cannot enter, says Jesus. “...Like a child...” (Mk 10:15). What is a child like? Jesus gives no description, he uses the analogy only. At the same time, the more understandable meaning of the analogy remains uncovered. Is it so evident? Or can any characteristics of a child fulfil the analogy? The messages of preaching on the above mentioned passage point in many directions. The dominant interpretation – the unconditional trust of a child (e.g. this is the most easily interpreted part of the analogy) – can be changed effortlessly. In this case, the different interpretations do not exclude each other. This example shows that many times we can find fixed interpretations that can hardly be changed, but we have the chance to try by the work of exegesis. The textual interpretation alongside the socio-cultural interpretation can be considered.

Let us have a look at a single interpretation of a well-known passage to examine if its hundred- or thousand-year-old message can be reversed. Could we abandon the tradition and get back to the starting point, to the original context to see what the sentence meant at the moment of its birth?

The periscope is the story of taxpaying from Mk 12:13–17. The tempting question is a political question. “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” Jesus’s answer to be interpreted is: “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things

¹⁸⁹ Umberto Eco: *The open work*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1989.

that are God's." (RSV) According to the interpretation of centuries, the first part of the answer has material message (taxation, administrative and financial issues, etc.), while the second part has a spiritual message for the audience (relationship with God, repentance, surrender, conversion etc.).

The theological content and the rhetorical message always depended on the context in which these words were spoken. The rhetorical message was influenced by the very context. We should have a look at the moment of the birth of the apothegm of the taxpaying.

We know a lot about Roman taxation of that time, and about the resistance of the Jews, the uprisings and Jude of Galilee. I will not describe all of these factors, only the most important sociological facts that may demonstrate the correlations.

In AD 6, Samaria and Judea became part of the Roman administration and taxes had to be paid directly to the Romans, collected by the governor of the provinces or by their representatives. The most important one was the estate tax (*tributum soli*) paid by the proprietary after the harvest of their fiefdom.¹⁹⁰ The capital tax (*tributum capitis*) can be considered as a direct tax, too. According to the research of Gerhard Lenski, in antiquity, the net fiscal burden was quite considerable. As Lenski points out: "On the basis of available data it appears that the governing classes of agrarian societies probably received at least a quarter of the national income of most agrarian states and that the governing class and ruler together usually received not less than half. In some instances their combined income may have approached two-thirds of the total."¹⁹¹ So, the problem originated in the legitimacy and not in the measure of the taxation in Judea. This direct taxation form was inadmissible for the Jewish elite because of two theological points of view: the estate tax was in conflict with the concept that the Promised Land is God's own property. "Die Grundsteuern (*tributum soli*) kollidierten mit der jüdischen Landtheologie, nach der Gott der einzige Legitime Eigentümer des Landes ist. Der Kaiser konkurrierte mit Gott".¹⁹² The capital tax was considered a symbol of slavery even by the Romans. For the Jew living in the province the value of his own labour was being given to Rome. In this manner, this act is the symbol of slavery. The actual labour loses its value for the worker, and the man held captive by the payment loses his dignity: these are the signs of deprivation of liberty. "Tertullian sah in der Steuerzahlung ein Symbol der Sklaverei: Steuerbelastete Ländereien verlieren an Wert, mit einer Kopfsteuer belegte Menschen an Ansehen: denn das sind Zeichen der

¹⁹⁰ Everett Ferguson: *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, 95.

¹⁹¹ Gerhard Emmanuel Lenski: *Power and privilege. A theory of social stratification*, Chapel Hill, The North Carolina Press, 1984, 228, 267–270.

¹⁹² Theißen: *Die Jesusbewegung*, 157.

Unfreiheit (*notae captivitatis*).¹⁹³ Jude of Galilee reinforces this method of thinking when he says “that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty.”¹⁹⁴ Jesus shows the same way of thinking when he speaks about the tax exemption of the free children in Mt 17:25–26.

Before Jesus, many theologically based uprisings were violently destroyed without mercy. Roman politics were characterised by two principles: peace and taxation income. If these two were realized, the local political elite had a free hand: anything could be done.

What was the case in Israel? How was the political elite formed? The Roman administration had to make a choice in Palestine. In most countries, it was evident who belonged to the political elite. Not in Israel, where the secular and the religious elite had long been in conflict since the captivity. Finally, Rome chose the secular elite, the Herodians. But the religious elite did not lose out completely. The only privileged territory of the Jew was the temple, where Rome did not dare to enter for the sake of peace. The temple tax was connected to the temple. The religious elite tried to accentuate the conflicts to the limits, but yet stay within the borders of peace. Basically, this meant fuelling fire by referring to national emotions to make the taxpayers want to pay to the temple. “Eine Folge der Konkurrenz beider Steuersysteme war auch, dass Ethnocentrismus und Xenophobie der Aristokratie willkommen sein mussten, um durch den Verteilungskampf genährte Aggressionen auf die Römer ablenken zu können. Die Aristokratie spielte hier mit dem Feuer...”¹⁹⁵

Dual taxation was accepted in this age: local taxes were allowed by the Romans, and people accepted them because they thought the temple was fighting for some sacred causes.

During the first century A.D. the wealth of the temple probably reached its greatest amount. A major source of income was the half shekel tax (Mishnah Shekalim) that was supposed to be paid by every male Jew over twenty. It was a sign of the attachment of Jews everywhere to their homeland. [...] Sources of revenue available to the priest included perquisites from sacrificial animals, firstfruits of the grain and fruit harvests, and tithes. (Josephus: Ant 20.7.8. [181]; 9.2. [206]).¹⁹⁶

According to Sanders, the dual taxation was not directly responsible for the national agitation before the Jewish war.¹⁹⁷ However, the risk was increased

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Josephus Ant. 18.3.

¹⁹⁵ Theißen: *Die Jesusbewegung*, 158.

¹⁹⁶ Ferguson: *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 475; Jacob Liver: The Half Shekel offering in the Biblical and post Biblical Literature, *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 56, 1963, 173–198.

¹⁹⁷ E. P. Sanders: *Judaism: practice and belief, 63 BCE-66 CE*, London, SCM Press, 1992, 157–169.

because of the divided elite and because of the different interests of dual taxation. The conflict of interests between the Pharisees and Sadducees (origin of the religious elite) was resolved by the time of the first century. If the Pharisees had a religious interest, it was an economic one for the Sadducees, e.g. the tithes. Briefly, while the Romans had a military force to protect their interest, the Jewish religious elite could use the theological and national legitimacy given by the law. Accordingly, the Jewish elite was interested in making peace with Rome, but for its own political survival – national hostilities could not be given up. However, the struggle for the distribution of goods caused conflicts within the local elite, since this layer did not constitute a homogeneous unit. The Herodians and the aristocracy of the church did not only compete with Romans, but also with each other. The Herodians offered themselves as guarantee of order in the country: for the religiously sensitive Jews paying taxes to the Herodian was more acceptable than paying directly to the Roman emperor. The Herodians functioned as a religious money laundry for the Romans. As for them, they paid their taxes from their personal incomes. In such a paradoxical way, they were interested in the rejection of direct taxation by the Romans. They remained undisturbed while the Romans were probably assured of a more regular tax income than the procurators could manage. So, it is not at all surprising that the Herodians together with the Pharisees confront Jesus with the question on the legitimacy of tax payable to the emperor. They expected that Jesus would prefer the obligation towards God to the one towards humans (or the emperor) (Mk 12:13–17).

It is important to note that the Jewish war originates in the fact that taxation and the repartition of goods became intolerable. So, Jesus meets a political question, a total trap.

The question is clear: can we pay tax to the emperor or not? It was the most burning contemporary dilemma. But only a “wrong” political answer existed: if Jesus says yes, he becomes unpopular amongst the people; if he says no, it is Rome’s turn. But Jesus does well in this rhetorical fight: “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

How can we interpret this answer? According to the traditional interpretation – at least according to ancient church tradition – on the material level, we have to pay the taxes, and on the other, spiritually we have to repent to God.

But the *sitz im Leben* of Jesus allows another interpretation: pay what the Empire asks of you as tax, and pay to the temple what it asks from you as tithes. Do it to preserve the peace. Do not make it dependant on how much the authority takes away from you, or which authority takes it. Jesus’s phrase could be interpreted this way too. Pay your taxes according to the current laws, and reconcile yourself to it. It is a highly ironic message, even

though Jesus himself was against the temple tax (see Mt 17:24). However, the aforementioned locus shows that the preservation of peace is above all for Jesus.

So, he gives a clear answer, although at the time of the creation of the gospels the question of the temple tax was irrelevant. That is why the interpretation has had a spiritual perspective. But how does this story apply to our age? The interpretation that was described as a *sitz im Leben* with some sociological facts at the creation of this apothegm could be legitimate as well. In that case, there is no need to place the second part of the phrase into a spiritual frame, because in a material context it possesses an important and considerable theological meaning – as it did at the time of Jesus Christ. So the story of the taxpaying was interpreted regarding the actual sociological context, my observation is that it is in this context that the rhetorical message is to be understood.

The homiletic question is – is it legitimate to preach on charity, church tax or tithes on the basis of Mk 12:13–17? If the question is asked just like this, I think it is not legitimate. In this case, tradition is more fruitful than its absence. At the moment of its birth, Jesus' phrase cannot be interpreted as the legitimacy of preaching about charity, as the message is not about that.

The message points in another direction. Jesus's answer has a pragmatic target, as far as the ironic tone and the peace aspirant attitude as theological content can be a pragmatic target. It is easy to forget in the middle of text interpretation that Jesus does not want to save himself but his followers, his enemies, his people. So, he knows well that the social-economic and spiritual crises will lead to the dissolution of Jerusalem. His prophecies of Lk 19:41–44; Mk 13:1–2; Lk 23:26–31 are evidence of this. The theological message of Jesus' answer reinforces the message of the phrase "Blessed are the peacemakers..." In a society suffering from power rivalry on every level, the realization and the experiencing of Jesus's message could have serious consequences in individual and in collective terms as well.

It is relevant to reconciliation within the Church, as it could reinforce credibility. These peace-making messages are still current and relevant in our society. Without any exaggeration, in any country, the ruptures are visible between traditions and methods, between the interests of the church and the state because of power and because of personal conflicts. Every Christian man has the task as a primary mission to bring peace and to reconcile according to the gospels. The method of *divide et impera* is practised on every level of politics even nowadays. The parable about the divided country (see Mk 3:24) is a kind of critique of this type of exercise of power. The story of the taxpaying is a critical message primarily not only for Rome, but for the Jewish elite, who want to ensure power and income for themselves by dividing the people. From this point of view, the people in their charge are only instruments to achieve

their goals. The name of God remains a pretext for some less sacred goals. Jesus judges this hypocritical behaviour as everywhere in the gospels. Why? Because he believes that the demolition of the nation can only be avoided if this nation – by the will of God – stays unified. For this reason the religious leaders are in charge as the shepherds of the flock. This message is valid nowadays too, not only in Hungary but everywhere in the world. The self-interested *divide et impera* are judged by God in our age too.

The question was if tradition can be abandoned or changed if the results of exegesis support it. For me, the exegesis of the story of taxpaying cannot be restricted to the field of taxation. So tradition is legitimate in the term if the text has a theological message that is not identical to what Paul talks about in Rom 13:6. The theological message, by a proper consideration of the context, is the call of unity, peace-making and repentance to address divisive behaviour. This theological message has much to say in the current social and religious or church organisation frame of reference.

EPILOGUE TO RHETORICAL PREACHING

After a comprehensive examination of several eras, I have finally come to the end where I want to offer a synthesis of what seems to be irreconcilable conflicts. The theory I am about to present was developed by Gadamer in his main work, *Truth and Method*.¹⁹⁸

Gadamer made an attempt to reinterpret, among other things, rhetoric. While historical and grammatical methods focused mainly on the author and the era the work was created, followed by structuralism's focus only on the text itself and its internal structure, from the 1960s onwards, the new hermeneutics made the reader and, with it, the actual interpretation the centre of its research. The essence of this hermeneutical method is the dialogue, or, more precisely, that the understanding of self can only happen while dialogue with the other. That is, at first there must always be an opening, a reception; the expression, the sharing will naturally follow afterwards. This process, in turn, enhances the role and subjective experience of the recipient. Such an emphasis on host and application has always been an important driver behind the appreciation of rhetoric.

Earlier eras judged the spiritual sciences on the basis of their scientific authenticity. Gadamer discontinued this approach when he reached back to humanist sources and revived criteria that resulted in a particular form of knowledge. Thus, the definition of the Gadamerian form of knowledge is fundamentally linked to humanist values, especially to the *sensus communis*. According to Gadamer, Vico¹⁹⁹ "The school relies on the contrast of the scholar and the wise man [...] its material basis [...] the conceptual contrast between sophia and phronesis, first developed by Aristotle and further developed by the peripatetic school as a critique of the theoretical idea of life."²⁰⁰

And later, "what we can see here is the old Aristotelian contrast between practical and theoretical knowledge, and it cannot be reduced to the opposite of the true and the probable. Practical knowledge, *phronesis*, is another kind of knowledge entirely. This means, first and foremost, that it focuses

¹⁹⁸ Hans Georg Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, London, Continuum, 2004.

¹⁹⁹ Giambattista Vico: *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990.

²⁰⁰ Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, 37.

on the concrete situation.”²⁰¹ With this, Gadamer takes over Vico’s view that theoretical knowledge is secondary only, and therefore science cannot be studied theoretically, but on a practical level, manifesting the role of Aristotle’s philosophy of practice. Of course, Vico no longer fights against scholasticism, but with the modern scientific thought.²⁰² He does not contest the latter’s virtues, but seeks to show his limitations. This is how he arrives to the wisdom of the ancients’, which is, according to him, much needed today: “the nurturing of *prudentialia* (cleverness) and *eloquentia* (eloquence) is now essential, even with the rule of science and its associated mathematical methods. The purpose of upbringing is still something else: the training of the *sensus communis*, which is not based on the truth but on the probable... the training of this common sense is crucial to life.”²⁰³

Nothing restricts the appearance of rhetoric everywhere. It is only through rhetoric that science becomes a social factor in life [...] The fundamental function of rhetoric within social life can hardly be questioned. All practical sciences rely on it.²⁰⁴

We defile the meaning of rhetoric when we view it as a mere technique, or tool of social manipulation. In fact, it’s one of the essential qualities of all meaningful behavior. Even Aristotle does not refer to rhetoric as *techne*, but as of *dynamis*, precisely because it is such an integral part of the definition of what it means to be human.²⁰⁵

Concerning the field of homiletics, these statements are also valid. The science of homiletics, like all other sciences, is structured so that this science has its own system and methods. In particular, homiletics, as a science of preaching, must necessarily have a theological and, at the same time, a communication framework that defines the minimal theological, conceptual, contentual, and formal requirements of preaching. By presenting the humanist era, I made an attempt to make the reader understand the contemporary homiletics framework of the Hungarian Reformed Church. During the era of humanism, the homiletics of the Reformation was not simply in a formation period, but it was making a regular – rhetorical – paradigm shift by putting the science of homiletics on a whole new foundation. Or, as Thomas Khun put it, there was a “scientific revolution” in the field of homiletics in the 16th century.²⁰⁶

Scientific advances necessarily entail paradigm shifts. And these paradigm shifts do not occur in an isolated manner, but are organically embedded in

²⁰¹ Ibid., 38.

²⁰² The first edition of his work was published in 1708.

²⁰³ Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, 38.

²⁰⁴ Gadamer: *Hermeneutics*, 176.

²⁰⁵ Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, 381–382.

²⁰⁶ Kuhn: *The Structure*, 6–7.

the spiritual, philosophical, and social context of the era. Thus, this work was created to illustrate the broader context of the communication framework of homiletics and to illuminate its changes during the eras.

In the age of humanism, the starting point for the paradigm shift was to focus on the individual and his decisions. It is a well-known fact that humanism provided a fertile ground for the development of the Reformation. But what did that mean for homiletics, exactly? Essentially, there was a paradigm shift that fundamentally defined 16th century homiletics. The new, reformed theology growing from the foundations laid by humanist spirituality, as opposed to scholasticism, no longer identified itself as speculative, but as an applied or, more precisely, applicable science.

According to the reformers, any theology practiced only for its own sake is far from the truths of the Bible. With this realization, the Reformation returns to the standards of the early church, where the individual's spiritual and spiritual development was strongly emphasized, drawing upon the Holy Scripture for support and guidance. During the first centuries of Christianity, the mission, or, to put it more bluntly, "efficacy" depended primarily on the theology of martyrdom, which, through individual development and behavior, could manifest in radical ways. That is, the emphasis was not as much on the dogma justifying hierarchical order but rather on religious teachings affecting the person and his conscience.

This kind of approach fits perfectly into the humanist viewpoint. Good theology is the theology that can exert an influence on the individual, that is, offer usable and useful knowledge in a practical sense, the medium of which is language, speech, and their governing science: rhetoric. That is why the direct consequence of this paradigm shift was the growing appreciation of sermons, through which the Word of God could influence people's lives in the shortest and most effective way.

That is, the humanist reformers were fully aware of the rhetoric ideal and regarded it as the natural lebensraum for preaching the Word of God. This Reformed rhetorical paradigm has remained unchanged ever since, and therefore awareness of it is crucial for every preacher.

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L'Harmattan France
5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique
75005 Paris
T.: 33.1.40.46.79.20
Email: diffusion.harmattan@wanadoo.fr

L'Harmattan Italia SRL
Via Degli Artisti 15
10124 TORINO
Tél: (39) 011 817 13 88 / (39) 348 39 89 198
Email: harmattan.italia@agora.it

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