III

The Rhetoric of the Sermon on the Mount

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

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

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

1 Lovejoy [1936] 1960, 5.

2 Jackson and Kessler 1974; Kennedy 1984.

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

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

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

3 *LW* 9:16.
4 *Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a.
5 Kennedy 1991, 37-38.
6 *Rhet* II.i.1-4 1377b-1378a.
7 Jn 1.1-14.
8 *Chrys* 6.14-15.

7

Êthos: The Character and Authority of the Speaker

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

1 *Rhet* I.ii.3-4 1356a.
2 Kennedy 1991, 39.
3 Thucydides *Peloponnesian War* II.34-46; Plato *Phaedrus* 270a.
4 Kennedy 1991, 184.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 Augustine *Reply to Faustus the Manichean* xx.1-8 (NPNF-1 4:252-55).
15 Augustine *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 69.3 (NPNF-1 7:325).
16 Burnaby 1938, 115-79.
17 *Aug* 5.3.
18 *Aug* 5.9.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> Who is it who agrees with divine Scripture except the one who reads or hears it piously, granting it the highest authority, so that he does not therefore hate what he understands when he feels it is opposed to his sins, but rather loves its correction and rejoices that his faults are not spared until they are healed? Indeed, when something sounds obscure or absurd, who but this person does not for that reason stir up a contest of contradictions, but prays that he may understand and remembers that goodwill and reverence are still to be shown to such a great authority?[34]

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

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

Christ the Speaker as "Virtue" Personified: Chrysostom

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

34 *Aug* 5.25-26.
35 *Aug* 5.5.
36 Mt 7.24.
37 *Aug* 7.24.
38 *Luth* 5.13.
39 *Chrys* 5.43-45.
40 Mt 5.16, 45, 48; 6.1, 4, 6 (twice), 8, 14, 15, 18 (twice), 26, 32; 7.11.
41 Mt 6.9.
42 Mt 7.21.

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

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

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

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

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

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

48 Cf. 2 Cor 10.1.
49 *Chrys* 7.20.
50 *Chrys* 5.37.
51 *Chrys* 5.17, referring to Jn 1.3, 10.
52 *Chrys* 6.28-29.
53 1 Cor 15.8.
54 *Chrys* 7.11, quoting Rm 8.32.

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

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

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

> In the case by which I have illustrated it [the development of the requirements of the divine law from Moses to the New Testament] the change is made by successive subtractions [for example, of circumcision and of the dietary regulations]; whereas here perfection is reached by additions. For the matter stands thus. The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New [Testament] manifested the Son, and suggested the Deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit Himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of Himself. For it was not safe, when the Godhead of the Father was not yet acknowledged, plainly to proclaim the Son; nor when that of the Son was not yet received, to burden us further (if I may use so bold an expression) with the Holy Ghost..., but that by gradual additions, and, as David says, "goings up,"[60] and advances and progress from glory to glory, the light of the Trinity might shine upon the more illuminated. For this reason it was, I think, that He *gradually* came to dwell in the disciples, measuring Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him.[61]

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

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

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

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

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

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

73 *Chrys* 6.28-29.
74 *Chrys* 5.2.
75 *Chrys* 5.37.
76 *Chrys* 5.17.
77 *Chrys* 5.22.
78 *Chrys* 7.21.
79 *Chrys* 5.27-28.
80 *Chrys* 6.24.
81 *Chrys* 6.19.
82 *Chrys* 6.34.

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

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

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

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

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

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

83 Tappert et al. 1959, 345.

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

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

84 *Luth* 5.1-2; 5.9.
85 *Luth* 5.16.
86 *Luth* 5.19.
87 See pp. 89-90 above.
88 *Luth* 5.7.
89 *Luth* 5.25-26.
90 *Luth* 5.3.

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

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

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

91 *Luth* 5.6.
92 *Luth* 5.19.
93 *Luth* 5.13.
94 *Luth* 5.19.
95 *Luth* 5.13.
96 *Luth* 5.10.
97 Daniélou, 1960, 159-60.
98 Jn 1.17.

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

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

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

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

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

104 *Aug* **6**.9-13.
105 Mt 5.12, 46; **6**.1, 2, 4, 5, **6**, 16, 18.
106 *Luth* 7.28-29.
107 *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.
108 Jn 1.14.

8

Pathos: The Frame of Mind of the Audience

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Audience as "Soldiers for God": Augustine

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

5 Kennedy 1991, 299-305.
6 *Chrys* 5.1-2.
7 *Rhet* I.i.12 1355a; I.i.14 1355b; II.i.4 1377b; III.vi.7 1408a.
8 Mt 5.1-2.
9 Mt 5.3-12. The phrase "cost of discipleship" is, of course, from Bonhoeffer 1957.
10 Mt 5.17-20.
11 Mt 5.48.

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

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

12 *Aug* 6.9.
13 *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.
14 *Chrys* 5.1-2.
15 Jn 17.20.
16 *Aug* 6.10.
17 *Aug* 5.13.
18 *Aug* 6.3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 See pp. 9-14 above.
28 Augustine *The City of God* XIX.4 (NPNF-1 2:402-3).
29 *Aug* 6.31-33.
30 Augustine *Confessions* III.vi.10 (Chadwick 1992, 42-43).
31 *Aug* 5.41.
32 Mt 5.17.
33 *Aug* 5.17.

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

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

34 *Aug* 5.1-2.
35 *Aug* 5.41 (cf. 1 Kgs 18.40).
36 Gn 16.1-3.
37 *Aug* 5.32.
38 *Aug* 5.1.
39 *Aug* 5.3.
40 *Aug* 5.8; Wis 1.1 (Vulg).

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

The Audience as "All Through Them": Chrysostom

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

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

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

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

44 *Chrys* 5.11-12.
45 *Chrys* 5.23-24.
46 *Chrys* 6.14-15.
47 *Chrys* 5.27-28.
48 *Chrys* 5.17.
49 *Chrys* 5.27-28.
50 *Chrys* 5.43-45.
51 *Chrys* 6.11.
52 *Chrys* 6.24.

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

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

53 *Chrys* 6.34.
54 Cf. *Rhet* II.vi 1383b-1385a.
55 *Chrys* 5.47-48.
56 *Chrys* 5.3.
57 *Chrys* 5.1-2.
58 *Chrys* 7.24.
59 *Chrys* 7.25.
60 *Chrys* 7.26.
61 *Chrys* 6.27.

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

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

> If anyone accuses the ancient law..., he seems to me very unskillful in the wisdom that becomes a legislator, and ignorant of the virtue of opportunities, and the gain of condescension. For if he considers who were the hearers of these sayings, and how they were disposed, and when they received this code of laws, he will thoroughly admit the wisdom of the Lawgiver, and will see that it is one and the same, who made both those laws and these, and who wrote each of them exceedingly profitably, and in its due season. Yes, for if at the beginning He had introduced these high and most weighty commandments, men would not have received either these or the others; but now ordaining them severally in their due time, He has by the two corrected the whole world.[68]

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

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

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

68 *Chrys* 5.38-40.
69 *Chrys* 5.46.
70 *Chrys* 6.11.
71 *Chrys* 6.10.
72 *Chrys* 5.40.
73 *Chrys* 6.27.
74 *Chrys* 6.16.
75 Mt 5.48.
76 *Chrys* 7.3.

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

The Audience as "Christians Living in Society": Luther

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

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

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

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

82 *Luth* 5.5.
83 *Luth* 5.27-30.
84 *Luth* 5.8.
85 *Luth* 5.27-30.

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

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

86 *Luth* 5.5.
87 *Luth* 5.38-42.
88 *Rhet* II.xxv.1 1402a.
89 *Luth* 5.5.
90 *Luth* 5.14-15.
91 *Luth* 5.38-42.
92 *Luth* 5.8, citing and paraphrasing Acts 10.15.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9

Logos: The Message of Change

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

1 *Rhet* I.ii.3 1356a.
2 *Rhet* I.ii.12-13 1357a.
3 *Rhet* II.xxii.16 1396b.
4 *Rhet* II.xxi.14, 16 1395a-b.
5 Grimaldi 1980-88, 2:251.
6 *Rhet* II.xxi.15 1395b.
7 *Rhet* II.xix.23 1393a.

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

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

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

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

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

18 *Rhet* III.xii 1413b-1414a.
19 *Aug* 5.10.
20 *Aug* 5.11.
21 See p. 46-47 above.
22 *Aug* 6.13.
23 *Aug* 6.31-33.
24 *Aug* 5.45.
25 *Aug* 5.45.

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

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

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

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

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

33 *Aug* 5.43-48.
34 *Aug* 5.23-24.
35 *Aug* 5.33-37.
36 *Aug* 5.21-22.
37 *Aug* 6.31-33.
38 *Aug* 5.31.
39 *Aug* 6.31-33.
40 *Aug* 5.27-28.
41 *Aug* 5.44, citing Acts 5.1-11.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Message of "Becoming Like God": Chrysostom

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

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

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

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

58 *Chrys* 5.5; see pp. 46-47 above.
59 *Chrys* 5.9.
60 *Chrys* 6.33.
61 *Chrys* 6.10.
62 *Chrys* 5.15-16.
63 *Chrys* 7.20.
64 *Chrys* 5.37.
65 *Chrys* 6.22-23.
66 *Chrys* 7.13-14.

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

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

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

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

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

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

78 *Chrys* 5.20.
79 See pp. 105-10 above.
80 *Chrys* 5.45.
81 *Chrys* 5.22.
82 *Chrys* 5.25-26.
83 *Chrys* 7.12.
84 *Chrys* 6.16; see Sawhill 1928.
85 For example, *Chrys* 5.40.

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

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

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

86 *Chrys* 6.34; italics added.
87 *Chrys* 6.11.
88 *Chrys* 6.10.
89 *Chrys* 5.1-2.
90 *Chrys* 6.9.
91 *Chrys* 5.22.
92 *Chrys* 6.27.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

106 *Luth* 5.42.
107 *Luth* 5.14-15.
108 *Luth* 5.21.
109 *Luth* 5.12.
110 *Luth* 5.43-48.
111 *Luth* 6.25, quoting 1 Cor 13.5.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

122 See p. 131 above.
123 *Luth* 5.38-42.
124 Phil 4.11-12.
125 *Luth* 5.4.
126 *Luth* 5.8.
127 *Luth* 5.31-32.
128 *Luth* 5.27-30.
129 See p. 139 above.

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

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

10

Epilogos: Questions on Summa and Sermon

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 *Rhet* I.i.1 1354a.

5 Florovsky 1972-89, 7:240-41.

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

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

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

6 *Aug* 5.1.

7 *Luth* 5.16; see pp. 90-91 above.

8 *Rhet* I.ii.3-6 1356a.

9 *Rhet* II.i.5 1378a.

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

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

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

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

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

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