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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jennifer Elise Merriman entitled "George Campbell and the Ethics of Pulpit Oratory." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Janet Atwill, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

GEORGE CAMPBELL AND THE ETHICS OF PULPIT ORATORY

A Thesis
Presented for the
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Jennifer Elise Merriman
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband

George Joseph Merriman II

whose love and support have made it possible.

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ABSTRACT

George Campbell, eighteenth-century Scottish minister and rhetorician, uses a consistent model of religious and secular epistemology, which relies on experience and rational conviction. He finds that this model creates problems when applied to preaching, a field where the goal is typically practical conviction, or "faith," rather than the probabilistic rational conviction. The problems arise from an inherent clash between the dedication of the rational-empiricist theologian or secular scientist to his experiential *means* of discovery, as contrasted with the rhetorician's emphasis on the persuasive *ends* of his art.

Campbell illustrates this problem by showing the "excesses" or inappropriate modes of persuasion he believes it can cause. These excesses he identifies with "enthusiasm" and "superstition," prejudicial terms for the rhetoric and belief systems of Dissenters, Methodists, and other groups separate from or critical of the established churches of England and Scotland and for Catholics.

Campbell addresses these problems by creating a pulpit ethics composed of rhetorical elements: ministerial ethos, perspicuous style, and a non-coercive context. His solution, at the last, is to subordinate successful proselytizing to rational integrity of orator and audience. He ends up, perhaps unconsciously, using rhetorical terminology to ever-so-slightly "disable" the rhetoric of the pulpit when it threatens to overwhelm the conditions for rational conviction.

PREFACE

George Campbell's use of a consistent model of religious and secular epistemology, which relies on experience and rational conviction, creates problems when applied to preaching, a field where the goal is typically faith, or absolute conviction. The problems rise from an inherent clash in goals: the rhetorical goal of persuasion and the rationalist goal of probabilistic conviction.

Although scholars such as Lloyd Bitzer, Paul Bator, and Lawrence Hugenberg tend to separate Campbell's religious and rhetorical writings, Campbell's epistemology varies little from *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* to *Lectures on Systematic Theology.* The real conflict lies between Campbell's epistemology and his rhetorical theory of assent. The one is part of the natural theology tradition of the English church, which blends experience and commonsense assumptions to create probabilistic arguments for the existence of God and analogical arguments establishing His nature. The other, while classically derived, has its contemporary expression in the belletristic rhetorics of Adam Smith and Hugh Blair. These eighteenth-century "belletristic" rhetorics teach that appeals to the "passions," that is, emotive or pathos-based appeals, spark practical conviction and therefore action.

Most of the time Campbell endorses this teaching wholeheartedly, but its possible consequences for religious conviction alarm him enough that he creates a compensatory pulpit ethics safeguarding probabilistic conviction *against* absolute practical conviction. Campbell believes that appeals to pathos or emotion can produce practical assent without

rational conviction, a production which he believes results in a flawed epistemology and a false faith. Specific manifestations of such abuse include "superstition" and "enthusiasm," two critical and highly generalized images of flawed religion, evoked frequently throughout the eighteenth century. "Enthusiasm," which includes Methodists and dissenting groups of all kinds, is characterized in his mind by ranting, irrational, and super-emotional discourse. Its epistemology, Campbell says, is nothing more than blind faith in personal fancies or desires. Catholicism, or "superstition," Campbell identifies with scholastic and metaphysical sermons full of divisions, subdivisions, foreign quotations, and frivolous quibbles about terminology. And discovery, in this picture, consists of unthinking adherence to the words of a temporal authority, who usually commands obedience through fear. Inappropriate homiletic practices also include the efforts of anyone who wants to win public sympathy, especially the sympathy of the poorly-educated, through overly emotive religious pleas. Religious persecutions, for example, he often attributes to the machinations of unscrupulous rhetoricians who seek to produce practical without rational conviction.

Campbell addresses these problems by creating a pulpit ethics composed of rhetorical elements: ministerial ethos, perspicuous style, and a non-coercive context. The pulpit ethics that Campbell creates does nothing to resolve the epistemological tension between his model of knowledge and the belletristic requirements for practical conviction to which he also subscribes. Instead, his ethical precepts tackle the problem in rhetorical terms, and ask that the minister keep the space for *dissent* open through avoiding the most dangerous appeals to passion. This ethical model of preaching, identifiable by an

experiential system of invention, plain language, and ministerial integrity, represents a middle ground between what Campbell describes as two forms of error. Just as moderate clergy use polite, moralistic (rather than evangelistic) pulpit delivery, these forms of delivery are also associated by Campbell with a rational-experiential model of thought.

Most at issue here is the nature of conviction: What forms and means of conviction are necessary and appropriate in an experientially-based epistemology? What forms and means of conviction are necessary and appropriate in a religious context? Where do the two overlap, and where do they exclude one another? What compromises at last become necessary? Campbell's solution, at the last, is to subordinate successful proselytizing to rational integrity of orator and audience. He ends up, perhaps unconsciously, using rhetorical terminology to ever-so-slightly "disable" the rhetoric of the pulpit when it threatens to overwhelm the conditions for rational conviction.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

We cannot appreciate Campbell's theories of rhetoric and homiletics without placing him in his social and religious context. Britain in the middle to late eighteenth century was a place of optimism and change, but material growth and improvement, while it benefitted all to some extent, did not tend to modify the distribution of wealth. Improved travel and communication brought more people into contact with each other, and popular feeling struggled between impulses towards religious and regional tolerance, and backlash effects which could veer from mockery to the murderous Gordon Riots which followed the Catholic relief laws passed by Parliament in 1778. It was the year after these riots that Campbell's house was stoned, following publication of a sermon in which he advocated religious toleration (Bitzer ix).

The established churches of England and Scotland, while politically powerful, experienced what many religious historians call a wilting or dissipation of spirituality (Foster 293). Natural or rational religion, with roots in Continental rationalism and the writings and sermons of the Cambridge Platonists and the empirical scientists of the seventeenth century, was favored by intellectuals. Whether expressed as theologically moderate Latitudinarianism or outright deism, natural religion offered little in the way of spiritual consolation.

Some Latitudinarians emphasized social change, as Henry Fielding did. But despite this, and though poor relief laws and parish-sponsored education provided intermittent fields of material and intellectual improvement, they did not satisfy everyone–notably laboring people–either materially or spiritually. The dissatisfaction of

working people with the established church is apparent in the success of evangelical ministers like George Whitefield and John Wesley. Though the characters of individual clergymen determined whether, and to what extent, the church served the local poor, established religion was mostly perceived to be in the service of polite middle and upper-class congregations. The dissenting denominations also lost influence, except among their traditional supporters, the urban laborers and middle-classes. The spiritual gulf was filled by the work of so-called enthusiast ministers who emphasized the spiritual relevance of the Gospel to poor people and themselves labored among the poor.

How does Campbell fit into this picture? Socially, he was of the respectable sort; he attended grammar school and college, and was apprenticed to a lawyer before he determined to study divinity. He worked where he was sent, and did not, as did many clergy of the period, farm out his duties to a curate. A strong partisan of education, Campbell identified teaching as one of the preacher's major duties. Theologically, Campbell was Presbyterian or Calvinist rather than Anglican in his leanings. For the most part, he kept away from fine points of religious difference, but he did argue against the necessity of baptism for salvation (*The Spirit of the Gospel* 72).

Critical Context

The two topics of critical debate about Campbell most important to this essay are that of his epistemology and that of the relationship of religion to his *Philosophy of Rhetoric.* Critical debate about George Campbell has tended to take two positions about Campbell's epistemology: either he is he is an empiricist, a follower of men like John Locke, and especially David Hume, who believe that humans derive knowledge from

immediate sense experience, and, secondarily, from memories and associations derived therefrom; or he is a Common Sense philosopher who finds the source of human knowledge in "an innate capacity to recognize first truths" (Bevilaqua 7).

In either case, scholars seem to believe that Campbell collapses invention into the media of apprehension preferred by the particular epistemology–or, to put the problem another way, he ignores invention entirely. This argument seems to follow in part from how strictly scholars define their terms. Campbell praises experiential knowledge and "empiric" thinkers (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* lxx) while also using "common sense" to describe one basis for moral evidence (38-42). The first section of this chapter will lay out the major points in the Campbell-as-empiricist position, held by Lloyd Bitzer, Paul Bator, and others, and in the Campbell-as-Common-Sense-philosopher position, held by Dennis Bormann. This chapter's discussion of Campbell's epistemology will draw upon both these arguments freely; without entering into a philosophical debate over terms, I will use "experiential" knowledge rather than "empirical" knowledge, and "reasonability assumptions" as a wide category that includes both Common Sense and other tenets (such as the universality of moral sentiment) Campbell uses to interpret experience.

The second topic of critical debate acting on this essay is the place of religion in Campbell's work. Critics such as Bitzer, who view Campbell primarily as an empiricist, regard religion as largely an exception to his epistemology. While no one denies Campbell's position in the church, the suggestion is that religious concerns can never be real epistemological concerns. The major exception to this position is Douglas Sonheim, whose dissertation, *George Campbell's Theory of Pulpit Discourse*, focuses almost

exclusively on Campbell's homiletic treatises. Sonheim combines theology and rhetorical theory by making the categories of study found in Campbell's *Lectures on Systematic Theology* identical with common topics of invention.

Early critics like Douglas Ehninger claim that many late eighteenth-century rhetoricians, including Campbell, focus on disposition, style, and elocution almost exclusively, "managing" information supplied them by others. James Golden and Edward Corbett summarize the managerial conception of rhetoric in their Introduction to *The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately*:

> By eliminating the role of discovery from *inventio*, Campbell, Blair, and Whately altered the starting point to be used on speech preparation. Speakers can assume that since arguments and proof are present from the outset, their principal challenge is to learn how to manage rather than invent or discover ideas. (14)

But epistemology is very important in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and in Campbell's religious treatises. Lloyd Bitzer's Introduction to his edition of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* responds to Ehninger's contention by arguing that, in Campbell's view, not only the subject-matter but also the *means* of rhetoric–audience psychology (the faculties) and the principles of persuasion (need for vivacity, for appeals both to reason and to the passions, etc.)–are founded empirically. Empirical epistemology, says Bitzer, is *the* groundwork for rhetorical invention in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Bitzer claims that, for Campbell, "art," or doing, and "science," or observing, illuminate and inform one another (xxiii). Bitzer then places the most emphasis on the observation half of this duo, an emphasis he claims results from Campbell's debt to Hume and his model of the "new

science of human nature" (xxiv) which is based upon observation. "Theory construction should adhere strictly to the empirical methods of observation and experience; in his view, after all, there is no other legitimate and natural source of relevant propositions" (xxiv). Bitzer makes it clear that, for Campbell, both invention and audience psychology are governed by experience. Campbell "chose to regard empirical procedures as the inventional and investigative route appropriate to all discourse treating matters of fact and of human affairs" (xxix), and "the strategic effectiveness of the rhetor's message [is] also founded empirically" (xxx).

Bitzer seems to admire the empirical grounding of Campbell's philosophy of rhetoric, but finds troubling his perception that this grounding removes the possibility for arguments about value. For these arguments, Campbell must default to religious arguments, and "in this he is in accord with most thinkers who find ways, sometimes religious, to protect the category of the valuable" (xlii). In his first edition of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Bitzer ignores the religious dimension of Campbell's thought almost altogether. In a 1988 edition, though, Bitzer adds a section on his religious beliefs, creating a two-part overview of Campbell's philosophy: "Rhetoric and Human Nature: The Natural Grounds" and "Religious Principles: The Supernatural Ground". Here he discusses the parallel nature of revealed and natural truth for an orthodox eighteenth-century thinker; he suggests that Campbell advocates a semi-empirical method of scripture reading, with an "implicit expectation...that careful and searching examination of revealed data will yield a doctrine that is univocal and in almost all parts clear" (l). But in the end, says Bitzer, Campbell's provision for religious truth undermines the empiricism of *The*

Philosophy of Rhetoric; a rhetor, dealing in "moral feelings and truths, which lack epistemic grounding according to the theory of human nature and reasoning announced in the *Rhetoric,*" has to resort to revelation and to faith in conscience, without which

> the whole territory of feeling and moral utterance would rest upon the *Rhetoric*'s secular, natural, and empirical theory, which cannot account for justified confidence in the correctness of feeling and in the integrity of moral discourse. (li)

Bitzer's description of Campbell-as-(failed)-empiricist is opposed by Vincent Bevilaqua, who connects Campbell with the Scottish Common Sense school. Bitzer's account is also criticized at length by Dennis Bormann, whose "Some 'Common Sense' about Campbell, Hume, and Reid: The Extrinsic Evidence" uses letters, reports of conversations, and contemporary histories to argue that Campbell is a Common-Sense philosopher after the school of James Beattie and Thomas Reid, and an opponent rather than a disciple of Hume. Bormann also demonstrates Campbell's ideological affinities with the moral sense philosophies of Francis Hutcheson and Joseph Butler (397). Bormann argues that Campbell's debt to Hume is purely negative: "Where they impinged on philosophy, Campbell's writings, in general, were attempts to refute Hume's skeptical position..." (397). He cites numerous instances in which Campbell figures as the "opponent" of David Hume and of skepticism in general. More important to this argument, Bormann points out that a simple emphasis on "observation" or "experience" is not enough to make Campbell a skeptic; Lord Kames, one of the founders of the Scottish/Common Sense school, had proposed a science of human nature based upon internal observation:

> His purpose, on writing on criticism, was to "examine the sensitive branch of human nature, to trace the objects that are naturally agreeable, as well as those that are naturally disagreeable; and by this means to discover, if we can, what are the genuine principles of the fine arts." He hoped to reduce the principles to an empirical science. In short, he hoped to do a psychological analysis of perception. (401)

In other words, Campbell need not depart from the traditional Common Sense school and their formative authorities to appreciate the importance of direct experience to the rhetorician or theologian.

While Bitzer seems to find Campbell's real niche in philosophy, Bormann holds that Campbell turns to philosophy, and especially epistemology, primarily as a defensive tool against the animadversions of skepticism upon religion. He refers respectfully and emphatically to "Rev. George Campbell" and "Principal Campbell of Marischall College"and places him squarely with the "parsons" of Hume's comment: "I wish...that the Parsons would confine themselves to their old occupation of worrying one another, and leave Philosophers [alone]" (qtd. 396). Campbell's epistemological concerns, says Bormann, clearly extend no further than the realm in which they might be useful to the spread and maintenance of religion.

> He was...interested in philosophy insofar as he thought it might lead to skepticism in epistemology, but he was particularly concerned about those doctrines that might lead to moral or religious skepticism. In his day...many people thought a skeptical epistemological stance alone would eventually lead to religious

skepticism." (409)

Campbell thus figures as a pragmatist, concerned with the here-and-now, whose philosophy stems from his religious conviction, and supports it, because, as he believes, religion preserves the peace, order, and virtue necessary for "promoting the happiness of social life" (*The Happy Influence of Religion* 3).

Douglas Sonheim's dissertation provides a detailed treatment of Campbell's philosophy of specifically pulpit rhetoric. Sonheim plays down *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and emphasizes the homiletic treatises, both sermons and lectures, as the most immediate guides to the rhetoric which Campbell practiced and taught. He briefly praises Campbell for uniting religion and science by creating a communication paradigm which includes both religious and rhetorical elements: "God, Bible, preacher, congregation, history, theology, language, and purpose" (iii). It is clear from his article that the science in question is the experiential-based audience psychology which Bitzer describes. People "read" God's word just as they "read" the work of a human author, and the conditions for belief are largely the same: the Common Sense proofs supplied by Campbell in Book I, Chapter 5 of *The Philosophy of Evidence*; the known character of the author; outside testimonial evidence as provided by the apostles and by miracles; and the agreeableness of the discourse to right reason and sentiment. God-as-author, of course, has persuasive powers beyond those available to man-as-author (miracles) but the models parallel closely. Sonheim follows Bitzer in admitting that arguments about value are strictly limited by this model: once the extrinsic proofs have shown the text in question to be of God, there is no debating with the rightness of the content. Our passions and disposition will affirm the

moral beauty of the truths advanced, but apparently, in Sonheim's reading, they can constitute no counter-argument.

Sonheim provides, as a modest qualifier to this authoritarian model, the argument that Campbell has in mind a literate, Reformed Protestant auditory who will pick out the text in their Bibles, follow the minister's exposition carefully, and independently judge the correctness of the exposition. Even so, the audience's discretion can extend only so far as a rational assessment of the *interpretation* provided by the minister; the "real" Scriptural message, once determined, is not open to evaluation once it is identified. From this survey, we can see that students of Campbell often find him divided or contradictory, or else create divisions by making opposed arguments about him: Campbell is an empiricist and not a Common Sense philosopher, or vice versa. And, though it is never so stated, a second, more insidious division appears in most approaches prior to Sonheim's, not a division between scholars so much as a division of scholars from Campbell: the suggestion that religious concerns can never be real epistemological concerns.

Plan for Essay

The first chapter of this essay will establish some general background evidence for continuity between Campbell's religious treatises and *The Philosophy of Rhetoric.* Then it will focus upon Campbell's experientially-based epistemology, which applies equally to the finding of "moral evidence"–the discovery of proofs used in natural science and secular rhetoric–and to Biblical interpretation–the discovery of proofs used in theology and homiletics. In each case, experience is interpreted based upon assumptions of reasonability. In each case, the goal is rational or reason-based conviction.

The second chapter of this essay will discuss Campbell's teachings about language and argumentative style. While he culls ideas from both empiricist and belletristic models of language, he makes clarity and perspicuity the most important aspects of pulpit oratory. This decision has implications for the ethics as well as the style and effectiveness of preaching.

The third chapter, this essay will discuss how the need for a pulpit ethics arises from Campbell's religious and psychological sources. New interest in individual will and independence, though mostly ignored by Campbell, influences him to some extent when he advocates non-coercive, non-seductive ethos for the preacher. At times this essay will compare examples of "enthusiasm" to Campbell's positions, to determine whether and to what extent his doctrines of knowledge, conviction, and pulpit ethics were distinctive.

Chapter Two: Discovery in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Campbell's Religious Treatises

Despite the separation we today tend to perceive between "science" (including psychology of the kind in which Campbell bases theories of persuasion) and "religion," the greatest opposition in Campbell's work is not between religion and science but between"science" and "art." With this dichotomy, he separates "knowing" things from "doing" them. Science, for him, includes all branches of observed and theoretical knowledge, from theology to psychology to astronomy. Art, in Campbell's terminology, means any practice or activity. Art springs *from* science; for example, navigation (an art) draws upon astronomy (a science). Not from two different methods of discovery, but from differences between accepted means of discovery and accepted and necessary means of effective action do the real conflicts in Campbell's work arise. The "ends" versus "means" dilemma is always with him, not addressed as a distinct topic, but cropping up in exceptions, warnings, and sudden exclamatory passages.

This chapter will address the first part of this argument, that Campbell's epistemology does not vary greatly between his "general" work, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, and his avowedly religious works. The chapter will detail his probabilistic, experience-based and reason-based system of discovery in some detail, first in general and then specifically as applied to Scripture-reading.

General Continuity from Religious Treatises to The Philosophy of Rhetoric

It is hard to find a work in Campbell's body of writing which does not contain both religious and rhetorical arguments. In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, the ideal or default

orator is the preacher. Identifying the three conventional types of oratory–forensic, deliberative, and epideictic–Campbell links them with the professions of lawyer, politician, and clergyman respectively. Both of the first two are flawed, or readily susceptible to flaws. The lawyer, with his job of arguing for clients no matter the cause, can be accused of "barefaced prostitution of his talents" (101). The politician is likely to be infected with "pernicious" party-spirit or partisanship (97). The minister, on the other hand, serves one cause consistently: the propagation of the gospel, and the consolation and improvement of mankind. In both the difficulty of his task and the sublimity of his subject matter, the minister is superior to the lawyer and the politician. The especial difficulties encountered by the minister stem from three causes:

1--The background knowledge the ministry requires. The minister must know Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; he must be familiar with ancient history and church history; and he must know the general outlines of contemporary religious controversy.

2--The moderate, gentle yet dignified and authoritative character which the minister is obliged to maintain. The "characters" of lawyers and politicians matter little (100-101).

3--The nature of the minister's task. Here Campbell's moderate, Latitudinarian tendencies color his definition of the minister's job. The all-important aim of the evangelist–the moment of conversion–matters little to Campbell. His minister is portrayed as laboring continuously within a community–not as traveling preacher like Whitefield or Wesley–and establishing a paternal relationship with his parishioners characterized by gentleness, authority, and duty on his side, and trust, respect, and reciprocal duty on

theirs. His aim for his charges is the good life, compounded of spiritual elevation, social harmony, and the "refinement of manners and morals" (107). A single moment of persuasion, such as is needed to get a jury conviction or a transport of religious ecstasy, falls short of the minister's goal.

> It is not a momentary, but a permanent effect at which he aims. It is not an immediate and favorable suffrage, but a thorough change of heart and disposition that will satisfy his view. (108)

In this way, by devaluating the virtue and importance of forensic and deliberative orators, Campbell, through process of elimination, creates the Christian orator as his exemplar even in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. The limited auditories of the lawyer and the politician (102), the immediacy and the temporality of the judgments at which they aim, and the partiality of their arguments, all show them to be less important practitioners of the art rhetoric than the minister, who repeatedly proclaims a consistent body of knowledge and judgments that are assumed to be right and just.

And if *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* can be seen as a rhetoric about preaching, Campbell's published sermons often preach about rhetoric; in specific about systems of proofs, evidence, and persuasion. *The Character of a Minister of the Gospel*, Campbell's first published work, expands on the minister's need to maintain a good *ethos*; his character forms a major part of his persuasive repertoire. Here Campbell makes the distressing argument that lesser, but more noticeable sins ("insobriety, incontinence, drunkenness, fornication" for example) are worse for the minister than greater, less noticeable ones ("pride, vanity, covetousness, envy, malice, revenge" [40]) because they

more directly impact his appearance as a "good man" and therefore the value of his witness or testimony.[1] This sermon prefigures the section in Book 1, Chapter 10 of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, which compares "the different kinds of public speaking in use among the moderns" (98), and makes similar remarks, in brief, about the delicacy of the parson's character.

The Spirit of the Gospel a Spirit Neither of Superstition Nor of Enthusiasm, published almost twenty years later, again dwells on proofs as conducive to religious faith; in this instance affirming that the "spirit which [the gospel] breathes" serves as intrinsic evidence of its divine origin, because

> whatever...tends to exhibit our religion as amiable, is, in fact, an intrinsic evidence of its truth; and consequently tends as really, though not so directly, to render it as credible, as arguments deduced from prophecy or miracles. (2)

The beauty of the gospel carries another form of proof: the ability–necessary to produce practical, in addition to rational, assent–to sway the passions. While "*the devils believe, and tremble,*" "we must possess the love as well as the belief of the truth, if we would be saved by it" (3). In this sermon, Campbell establishes rational conviction as the most important basis for religious persuasion, over and above either the coercive or the merely pathetic. While the Christian orator may aim at the reform of society, he can produce

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I do not think Campbell repeats this argument. While he repeatedly stresses the character of the minister ("The Spirit of the Gospel," *Lectures on Systematic Theology*), he appears to shift from an emphasis on ethical or pathetic appeals to a concern for rational persuasion and assent, and the honesty of the minister's character becomes more important–[see *Systematic Theology* 21, 296].

conviction only on the level of individual experience and reason.

The Success of the First Publishers of the Gospel a Sign of Its Truth again enters into questions of rhetorical proof. In this sermon, Campbell makes the odd argument that the very lack of ethos on the part of Christ and the apostles–their poverty, the abjectness of the deaths of many, their inexpert speech–forms yet another proof of the truth of the gospel, because (says Campbell) such very despicable messengers could only have succeeded in their mission if they had supernatural aid. Such an argument goes quite contrary to his emphasis on testimonial evidence for its own sake–consistent from the first appearance of *A Dissertation on Miracles* in 1762 at least through the publication of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* in 1776–and contrary to his explicit praise of Paul's character as the type of a disinterested witness in the *Dissertation*. The trend of preaching *about* evidence and the propagation of knowledge, though, is maintained.

All these sermons tend to reflect on their own practice, and are as much about the acts and character of preaching and believing as about the content of preaching or belief. It is true that these sermons are mostly synod or assize sermons, preached before gatherings of social authorities such as ministers and magistrates, whom it would be logical to instruct in their duties. But the fact remains that preaching and rhetoric can only be awkwardly divorced in either Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* or in his sermons.

Likewise, Campbell's *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence* share material with *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. His famous distribution of the four ends of speaking among the faculties of understanding, fancy, passion, and will appears in the *Pulpit Oratory* lectures almost exactly as it does in the *Philosophy*, and in fact the sermon

types he lists are bent even more carefully to each combination of faculty and purpose than is any particular form of discourse mentioned in the *Philosophy*. His comments on the ministerial character, found in both *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and "The Character of the Minister of the Gospel," have a chapter in the *Systematic Theology* lectures. On a first reading the general religious character of *all* of Campbell's works is striking.

Consistent Epistemology

This section will show how continuity between rhetorical and religious texts is maintained at the level of Campbell's treatment of invention. The means of discovering "moral evidence" in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* are analogous to methods of theological investigation described in the *Lectures on Systematic Theology*. As Bitzer establishes in his Introduction to *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, invention for Campbell is almost identical with epistemology. To both the general reader of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and the ministerial student hearing the *Lectures*, Campbell teaches a rhetoric that bases its concepts of epistemology and conviction on principles of experience and reason.

H. Lewis Ulman says that Campbell "links two epistemological principles. He establishes intuitive evidence as the cornerstone of his doctrine of logical truth and assigns a central role to experience in both moral and demonstrative reasoning" (*Things, Thoughts, Words, and Actions* 78). This two-step process of discovering/recognizing evidence has its origin with the natural theologians of the second half of the seventeenth century, who built a model of knowledge in which the mind moves from "visible evidence to an inward conviction" of moral certainty (Foster 298). James Downey shows the joint influence of natural science and theology in natural theology, claiming in particular that

Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* and Tillotson's *His Commandments Are Not Grievous* form the natural-theological sources of Latitudinarianism (14).

A two-stage method of discovery or invention, composed of experience and reasonability assumptions, serves the needs of both the secular person and the clergyman. Even the moral or emotive components, such as "goodness, amiableness, [or] moral excellency" outlined in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* are termed "reasonable" (80)–the proper natural reactions of man to certain stimuli. Meanwhile, agreement with the conclusions or predictions advanced by the orator depends upon how well his argument stands up empirically–how well it matches the personal or testimonial experience known to the auditors. With the heavy experiential value which Campbell attributes to persuasion, the success of any argument can never be absolute–only degrees of assent, roughly corresponding to degrees of repeated experience, are possible.

Because this section uses some specific terms, some culled from Campbell and other eighteenth-century writers, others coined by the author to cover clusters of related terms, a brief set of definitions precedes the argument of this section. "Reasonability assumptions" or "rationality assumptions" refer to the interpretive assumptions Campbell applies to both common experience and Scripture reading. These assumptions include some Common Sense tenets, some beliefs about the universality of human moral sentiment, and some typical eighteenth-century Moderate assumptions about the nature of God and Scripture. In many cases, the same assumptions of basic reason and order can be found as Common Sense tenets in one instance, as Scriptural-interpretive principles in another. "Rational conviction" refers to belief that a proposition is probably true. This

belief is based upon experience, rationality assumptions, and/or simple agreement between the terms of the proposition. Important to note is that this term concerns intellectual agreement and not faith or action. "Rational conviction" appears as "rational assent" in Hartley, as the result of successful appeals to "reason" or "understanding" in Campbell. "Practical conviction" refers to belief that evokes action. It combines rational conviction with the arousal of the passions. It carries a proscription: it should always follow upon rational conviction. This does not mean that it always *does*, however. "Practical conviction" appears as "practical assent" in Hartley, as "persuasion," "practical effect," and the result of successful "pathetic" appeals in Campbell. "Moral evidence," as it is used in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, is most likely to concern "pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, wisdom and folly, beauty and deformity" (43) but its actual sphere encompasses all evidence not derived from mathematical or axiomatic demonstration: it deals with reality or fact, which

> comprehends the laws and the works of nature, as well as the arts and the institutions of men; in brief, all the beings which fall under the cognizance of the human mind, with all their modifications, operations, and effects. (46)

"Moral" in this usage suggests not "righteous" but "concerning fact or existence" (Hume 35).

Campbell grounds religious discovery and interpretation in the same mixture of experiential knowledge and reasonability assumptions he does moral (non-mathematical) discovery and interpretation. In "Of the Different Sources of Evidence," Campbell divides evidence into two sorts: the intuitive, or that nearest to direct sense experience, and the

deductive. Intuitive evidence consists of mathematical axioms, consciousness, and common sense. Deductive evidence consists of demonstration and moral evidence. For the rhetorician, the most important of these categories are the "consciousness" and "common sense" modes of intuition, and the "moral" mode of deduction, because these are the ones which deal with human experience. In this plan, sensation is utterly necessary to knowledge, but it becomes knowledge only as it is passed up through a chain of interpretative processes. Sense data in themselves mean no more to the grown man than to the baby, but the grown man has developed, as a property of his human nature, certain interpretive or "reasonability" assumptions that let him hold his experience in a more orderly pattern than does the baby. Many of Campbell's reasonability assumptions follow from Common Sense tenets:"Whatever had a beginning has a cause," "the future will resemble the past," "there are other intelligent beings in the universe besides me," "the clear representations of my memory, in regard to past events, are indubitably true" (40). Such tenets do not set up an opposition between common sense and experience; for Campbell, they are the assumptions a person must make if he is to put his experience to any practical use, whether that use is simply increase of knowledge or real worldly activity.

Between experience and its use lies interpretation, which turns raw sense data into general precepts or observations–moral evidence–upon which moral reasoning can be built. Campbell does not call this intermediate between experience and reasoning "interpretation" in the *Philosophy*, but he does so describe the philosopher's job in the *Systematic Theology* lectures: "Now the philosopher is by profession the interpreter of

nature..." (52). Common people also participate in this kind of interpretation (296); and the difference between the common man and the philosopher is in training and practice, not in kind. Interpretive or reasonability assumptions form the underpinnings of moral evidence which Campbell outlines in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* Book I, Chapter Five. They also form the basis for the investigative procedures he recommends to the young theologian in his *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (93-99). Some of these reasonability assumptions are identical with Common Sense truisms: "Whatever has a beginning has a cause," "When there is in the effect a manifest adjustment of the several parts to a certain end, there is intelligence in the cause," "the course of nature will be the same tomorrow as it is today; or, the future will resemble the past," "there is such a thing as body; or, there are material substances independent of the mind's conception," "there are other intelligent beings in the universe besides me," and "the clear representations of my memory, in regard to past events, are indubitably true" (*Philosophy* 40-41). These tenets fall *between* sensation and intellection; they are rudimentary interpretative assumptions upon which moral evidence can be constructed.

Moral evidence "is founded upon principles we have from consciousness and common sense" (43); for example, acting on the axiom that the future will resemble the past enables us to make judgments concerning the future. Moral evidence admits of degrees, from possibility to probability to "moral" certainty, admits contrary proofs, and combines independent arguments about the same topic. Kinds of moral evidence include experience, which is built upon sensation and memory and is the "criterion of all moral reasoning whatsoever" (44); analogy; testimony; and calculations of chances. Moral

evidence enables us to interpret our immediate experience in terms of our past experience, or reports we have heard from others of their past experience. Like circumstances ("experience") we think produce like results, or result from like causes; of similar circumstances ("analogy") we assume the same with less certainty; and of circumstances merely reported ("testimony") we judge much as we would of our own experience, making allowances for our knowledge of the reporter's character. Trust in one's own moral sentiments forms another reasonability assumption. We determine the merit of a proposition in part by its "reasonableness," a term which describes how well the actions conform to our passions and/or moral sentiments. The dictates of God, interpreted correctly, are assumed to have a foundational interconnection with the dictates of "conscience" or "moral reason," both being the language of the same author. Campbell includes as criteria of "reasonableness" "goodness, amiableness, [or] moral excellency"–those qualities which appeal to "the moral powers of the mind, [which are] not so properly denominated the pathetic, as the *sentimental*" (*Philosophy* 80).

Having traced this epistemology from direct sense experience through a series of rationality assumptions, we can now describe several important features. This epistemology desires and espouses certain qualities: order, repetition, predictability, trust in the self as interpreter of outside information. It turns away other qualities: disorder, anachronism, anomaly, trust in the self as source of information. It relies heavily but not exclusively on experience, values repeated above anomalous experience, and, in general, requires no proofs for the rightness of conscience. These ingredients together are the basis for rational conviction in Campbell's analysis of persuasion.

Applied to Scriptural Interpretation

In Campbell's religious treatises the two-part epistemic model serves as a method of Biblical interpretation. It is evident that Campbell thinks there is no substantial difference between first-hand and received knowledge, and that he classes books and personal conversation together rather impartially as sources of second-hand (testimonial) knowledge. His *Philosophy* makes little distinction between the orator and the author. Occasionally he makes a slight distinction: solecisms are more glaring in print than in speech, for instance (180). But for the most part, we learn from books as we do from live testimony, only, perhaps, less vividly. Sources for discovery being largely analogous, it follows that methods of discovery and interpretation must be similar for the theologian (who works from books) and the natural scientist (who works from "live" experience). And in fact, they are.

First, the manner of study which Campbell recommends to the young theologian builds upon similar precepts and contains similar methods to those he suggests to the general scientist–the theorist of rhetoric, for example. The minister is encouraged to use his experience, rather than the teachings of theologians, as his source of Scriptural knowledge. Although Campbell does believe that the Christian faith can be described by means of a set of predetermined categories–including historical information (Adam's fall, Jesus' birth, identity, deeds, and death), general statements about God and humanity (that human nature is sinful, the doctrine of the elect, etc.), and moral precepts (defining and advocating piety, righteousness, and the like) (*Systematic Theology* 93-99)–his *Lectures on Systematic Theology* form not a finished theology, but rather a series of precepts and

directives for the young divinity student to use in constructing *his own* "contents" for each category. Campbell wants each young man to rely on his own experience as he creates a ministerial character and system of theology. The student should draw upon his own reading, rather than upon professors or published theologians, to determine the truth of Scripture (93). He should follow a program of making abstracts of historical conditions; making and comparing translations from Hebrew, Greek, and Latin texts; comparing passages which treat of the same subjects; and making his own abstracts of Christian doctrine and Christian morality. In this way, says Campbell, the student can come to know God's word as far as moral certainty allows.

The methods which the student should apply for discovering the truths of the faith are largely rational and experiential. Personal experience is said to be the best guide to faith, but this experience ought to be rational rather than derivative or intuitive/mystical: Bible-reading, rather than direct communion with God, is the ordinary believer's method of discovering important truths. Campbell implies that people can have mastery over scripture as they can over nature, through knowledge derived from observation. Because super-personal avenues to knowledge (dreams, revelations) are suspect, religious belief is, while not exactly communal, subject to rational debate and to continued improvement, just as is knowledge about the natural world. At the same time, personal discovery is valuable to the minister not just for its empiric merit and the independence of thought it fosters, but also for its intrinsic worth, "that we may be fitted for infusing into the hearts of our hearers the spirit of the gospel, we need first to experience it in our own" (*Character of a Minister of the Gospel* 52).

Not only does experience figure largely in the epistemology of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric, Lectures on Systematic Theology* and Campbell's other religious treatises, but the interpretive assumptions Campbell holds about the Bible echo the reasonability assumptions found in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Interpretive assumptions include (for Enlightenment Christians) that God is reasonable; that he tells the truth; that truth does not contradict itself; that God is not subject to passions (does not feel emotion); that everything necessary for salvation can be found in the Bible. These criteria determine, for example, which passages are to be read as literal and which as metaphorical. For instance, if God cannot be said to suffer passions, descriptions of him as "jealous" (Exodus 20:5) must be read as metaphorical. Many specifically Common Sense reasonability assumptions concern, directly or indirectly, religious belief, and those that do not are applicable to religious texts. The assumptions that everything that has a beginning has a cause, and that an orderly and intelligible system implies the agency of an intelligent creator, have obvious applications to arguments about creation and the existence of God. Assumptions that there are other intelligent beings besides oneself, and that there exists a material world independent of one's mind, provide a groundwork for assumptions about communicability of knowledge. Such assumptions are extremely important to a text- and sermon-based religion. They suggest that the mind does not *create* knowledge, that things–including scripture–have their own independent existence, and that therefore people can come to at least tentative agreement about the nature and meaning of those things. The assumption that the course of nature remains the same, or that the past will resemble the future, allows people to believe that scriptural teachings apply, in more or

less the same form, to contemporary situations, barring such temporal changes as can be discovered through the study of history. In this epistemology, reasonability assumptions establish the rational integrity and predictability of Scripture, and the possibility of interpretive consensus among readers of Scripture.

The kinds of moral evidence upon which the veracity and meaning of Scripture are determined are the same kinds of moral evidence listed for the general use of the rhetorician in Book 1, Chapter 5 of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Here reasonability assumptions teach us to establish rational conviction by drawing on repeated experience, testimony of others, analogy, and moral sentiment. Experience, for both the rhetorician and the theologian, refers to repeated observation; the scientist in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* who sees four four-petaled flowers growing on a stem and knows that similar flowers will likely also have four petals but may or may not grow four to a stem bases his prediction–his interpretation of the evidence of THIS stem of flowers–on repeated instances of observation, which teach him that the number of petals is more likely to be constant among flowers of a like species, than the number of blossoms to a stem. In the same fashion, Campbell tells both his ministerial students and his general auditors that the most important truths and precepts of the Bible have been reinforced through repetition (*The Spirit of the Gospel* 39): many passages, for instance, outline the duty of loving one's neighbor. Single, puzzling passages are less important than multiple, clearly iterated dicta; in this way, repeated experience–reading–of the Bible will provide the reader with a body of observations which emphasizes the general trend of God's law. Campbell here follows the tradition of George Berkeley and others who urged Christians to take their notions of

revealed truth "not from the uncertain interpretation of a particular text, but from the whole tenor of the divine oracles" (320). Contrast may be found in the beliefs of preachers like George Whitefield, who held that every passage of Scripture was equally true and equally important (Downey 159). Interpretation based upon experience, in this sense, privileges the more common over the less common examples, suggesting that the former tend to explain–or, if a contradiction seems apparent, to trump–the latter.

Analogy, or argument from similar rather than repeated experience, figures in both *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and the sermons. Campbell often interprets passages by making analogies to other, similar constructions. For instance, in determining the sense of "spirit" in "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7), Campbell brings up three possible meanings for "spirit" in this instance: extraordinary or miraculous power, the third person of the Trinity, and human temperament. The first possibility he weeds out by means of association: the powerful gifts of the spirit (speaking in tongues, etc.) do not generally appear coupled with love and a sound mind. Between the second and third possibilities he negotiates by means of analogy:

> The same term is frequently, in the language of holy writ, and even in common language, employed to denote both cause and effect. Thus the luminary itself, and the rays issuing from it, we indiscriminately denominate *light*: and that in scripture-idiom the word *spirit* often signifies an habitual frame or temper is undeniable. We are therefore to conceive of the Apostle as exhibiting here the outline of the Christian character, as describing in brief that temper of soul which the religion of

> Jesus is so admirably fitted to inspire into those who by faith receive it. (*The Spirit of the Gospel* 9-10)

The analogy is LIGHT: 1. Sun (cause) and 2. Beams (effect)::SPIRIT: 1. Holy Spirit (cause) and 2. The Christian Character (effect).

Analogy is a popular form of moral evidence in the sermons of eighteenth-century divines. Examples include Berkeley's comparison (*The English Sermon* 327) of Jewish institutions to Christian doctrine (a clear use of analogy to give meaning to Old Testament texts) and Butler's analogy comparing the structure of the mind to that of the body (346). But just as Campbell makes analogy less important than experience or testimony in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, so he makes less use of analogy in his religious treatises. The ground of much of Campbell's theology is, of course, an analogy: the relationship between natural and revealed truth. He has read Butler's "excellent treatise," the *Analogy of Religion* (*Philosophy* 54), but never carries his analogies into such plain contradiction with observed experience as does Butler–never arguing, for instance, that the eternal punishment of sin has its analogy in the sure punishment of vice here on earth.

The third kind of moral evidence listed in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, testimonial evidence, is probably the most important to Campbell's religious writings. Testimonial evidence resembles one's own memory and experience, barring, of course, doubts about the character of the witness. Campbell bases his claims for the truth of the Scripture largely on assumptions about the value of testimonial evidence. Most of his *Dissertation on Miracles* describes and defends testimonial evidence. Campbell's position on testimonial evidence is not always consistent in practice, however. When he claims that a

person with no experience of a solar eclipse is quite justified in accepting an astronomer's testimony that one will occur tomorrow, he places testimony before personal, experiential knowledge. But when he rejects "enthusiasts'" claims to mystical experience, he allows that some propositions are beyond the pale, and that no amount of testimony can redeem them.

Contrasting Model of Knowledge

In sermons like *The Spirit of the Gospel*, Campbell compares his epistemology of (textual) experience and reason to an "enthusiastic" epistemology which he says relies upon a combination of ignorance and presumption. The enthusiast, says Campbell, substitutes his own desires and fancies for "divine illumination" (28). His conviction of these not only deceives him but authorizes him to persecute others. Enthusiasm can be identified, says Campbell, by impassioned or immoderate discourse on the part of its adherents. The source of enthusiasm, in this sketch, is rhetorical. Its structure is based on the same psychological model as Campbell's rhetoric of assent. Rational assent to moral evidence has been inverted, with the "moral evidence" now being, not observed life, but internal feeling, image, or desire. And practical assent has taken predominance, the enthusiast's passion for his fancy overwhelming his assessment of its probable truth.

In fact, though, enthusiasm is varied. Some forms of enthusiasm match parts of Campbell's description. Campbell condemns overly passionate preaching, and George Whitefield bases his preaching on vigorous pathetic appeal. Campbell associates revealed law with natural law or conscience, and some antinomians claim that faith supercedes law completely. But by such general assaults, Campbell prevents himself from analyzing the

real differences in epistemology between himself and other moderates, and the best-formulated of the "enthusiasts" teachings. The differences are not always so great as he fears. "It was through the power of personality and the strength of conviction, not through any reformation of systematic theology, that men like John Wesley and George Whitefield achieved their success as preachers" (Downey 20).

A reader of John Wesley's sermons will find an epistemology that is remarkably similar to Campbell's, with one major exception (grace or "spirit). In advocating attention to lived experience, in making Scriptural experience equivalent to lived experience, and in recommending experience moderated through reason as the path to most forms of knowledge, Wesley is as much an inheritor of natural theology as is Campbell. Wesley makes experience, lived and Scriptural, the basis of most forms of knowledge. We interpret and use our experience, he says, by means of reason (*The Case of Reason* 590). The combination of experience and reason produces all the useful and polite arts (*The Imperfection of Human Knowledge* 569, everything from agriculture and navigation to rhetoric and mathematics to government and ethics and theology.

For Wesley, lived and Scriptural experience are very much alike in kind. They can be understood by the same rational faculty and interpreted by the same reasonability assumptions. Wesley describes the rational faculty fairly conventionally: it is made up of the processes of apprehension, or conceiving, judgment, or discerning similarity and difference, and discourse, or moving from one judgment to the next (*The Case of Reason* 590). Reason uses assumptions of predictability and the repetition of important experience (*The Nature of Enthusiasm* 55), of a commonness of experience between

people, and of trust in one's own conscience. Human reason, says Wesley, can take a person as far as right action. There is a "plain, scriptural, rational way to know what is will of God" composed of "Scripture," lived "experience," and "reason" (55). This way of knowledge is available to everyone. Reason can also bring a person to sincere religious profession (*The Almost Christian* 39), which proves that it contains, as in Campbell's description, components or powers of conscience. Wesley does not go so far as to say that reason can answer all doubts against religion, but reason applied to experience is the only means of knowing what are the truths of natural and scriptural religion (*The Case of Reason* 592).

So the experience-through-reason epistemology follows the same structure for Wesley as for Campbell. The moral evidence categories of repeated experience and testimony also remain the same. The only one of Campbell's major forms of moral evidence that loses much of its force in Wesley's writings is analogy: Wesley does not completely hold the analogy of revealed religion to nature. Although he claims that both God and nature are understandable (insofar as people need to understand them *[Imperfection of Human Knowledge* 569]), and understandable through the same epistemology, he holds that their truths are not analogous. This disjuncture arises from the visible unfairness, even cruelty, of lived experience:

> We know not why one man is born of rich or noble, the other of poor parents; why the father and mother of one are strong and healthy, those of another weak and diseases; in consequence of which he drags a miserable being all the days of his life, exposed to want, and to pain, and a thousand temptations from which he finds

> no way to escape. We cannot give any reason why of two persons equally athirst for salvation one is presently taken into the favor of God and the other left to mourn for months and years. (*The Imperfection of Human Knowledge* 582, 584)

Analogy from lived experience cannot explain or make predictions about any thing other than lived experience. Our conscience or moral sense demands justice. We cannot prove God's goodness from lived experience. Our good fortune, if we have it, is more than requited by the ill fortunes of others. *Because* we look at scriptural and lived experience with the same eyes, and *because* we make the same reasonability assumptions, including moral assumptions, of both, we cannot find them commensurable.

Chapter Three: Pulpit Ethics and Plain Style

The first chapter of this essay argues that George Campbell's homiletic treatises are consistent with his religious treatises. In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell sets up a theory of moral evidence in which there is a continuum between experiential knowledge and reasonability assumptions. The same epistemology works in his specifically religious works, where both an emphasis on experience and a rationally-based model of moral evidence help the reader to determine the meaning of the Scriptures.

Using the language of faculty psychology, we can say that this model influences understanding or reason only; it produces rational conviction. It does not result in practical conviction, in action. The preacher, though, wants to evoke active faith, not coolly rational agreement alone. For this, again in the faculty-psychology language which Campbell uses, the preacher must inspire practical conviction or assent. To do this, he must move the passions of his auditors through fine or grand language, vivid portraiture, appeals to self-interest, and images that associate themselves with strong emotion. Most often, Campbell believes that the language and rhetorical techniques required to create rational conviction ("evidence," "reasons," "demonstrations,") work in tandem with the language and rhetorical techniques required to create practical conviction ("pathos") (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 77-78). But at rare times the language demanded for practical conviction clashes with the demands of the experiential, rational epistemology which underlies Campbell's model of moral evidence and Scriptural interpretation. And at all times it is much easier to abuse the pathos-based rhetorical techniques aimed at practical conviction than it is the reason-based techniques aimed at rational conviction. Too much

emphasis on rational assent seems insufficient to the nature of religious truth; too much emphasis on practical faith appears irrational, even dangerous in its reliance on unrestricted passion. For this reason, an ethics of pulpit oratory becomes necessary.

Campbell's pulpit ethics is composed of two related parts. In the area of style or language, Campbell balances the language models and goals of empirical science with those of belletristic rhetoric. The first he finds to be preferable because it allows people to see a matter clearly and make a decision about rational conviction or un-conviction. The second, while by far the most effective means of persuading an audience to a desired disposition, must be moderated because of its aptness to be abused.

Language

There appear to be two distinct pictures of language in eighteenth-century language theory. The first portrays language as arbitrary, a human emanation arising without plan or method, subject to error of all kinds, and likely to mislead its users. The second picture is more affable. A man's speech, far from being an unreliable tool, is a near-perfect mirror of himself. The style in which a man writes or speaks reflects him plainly for all to read or see. As he educates or modifies his character, his language likewise changes; as he refines his style, his character is likely to change for better as well.

These descriptions rest on two sets of assumptions. The first set concerns the most important ends of language. Human improvement is at all times the final end, but the intermediate goals, those which really define the kind of improvement desired, differ. The painters of the first, suspicious picture of language see words as means of acquiring knowledge, and knowledge, they say, is found through individual sensory experience. The

kinds of knowledge that interest them are facts or experiences that are repeatable. The painters of the second, belletristic picture of language look to different ends. Words are meant to communicate not physical facts but humanity–the character of a speaker or writer and the nature of his particular sensibilities, as well as shared sentiments such as patriotism or piety.

The second set of assumptions, which in each case serves to validate the first set, concerns the ways in which thought and language relate. The strict empiricist claims that ideas arise independently of language, and before language:

> Man...has a great variety of thoughts, and such from which others, as well as himself, might receive profit and delight; yet they are all within his own breast, invisible and hidden from others, nor can of themselves be made to appear. (Locke 3.2.1)

Thoughts are better than language, but because man's nature condemns him never to know the thoughts of others, he invents language as a kind of second-best measure. Language comes about by hazard,

> not by any natural connexion that there is between particular articulate sounds, and certain ideas, but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an idea. (3.2.1)

The matching belletristic assumption is just the opposite: that language has a natural resemblance to thought. For Hugh Blair, style

> has always some reference to an author's manner of thinking. It is a picture of the ideas which arise in his mind, and of the manner in which they rise there...it is usual

> to talk of a nervous, feeble, or spirited style; which are plainly the characters of a writer's manner of thinking, as well as of expressing himself, so difficult it is to separate these two things from one another. (66)

A series of analogies is suggested; language/style echoes thought which echoes nature. Blair employs adjectives like "feeble" and "spirited," normally used to describe bodies, to styles. Joseph Priestley more explicitly makes grammar analogical with natural science (vi) and, reversing Locke's assumption, places words before thoughts in his discussion of how people learn: "When, by enlarging our acquaintance with men and books, we increase our stock of words, we at the same time make a proportionate augmentation of our ideas" (47). Ideas belong to language, and to community ("men" and "books"). And words take their proper meaning "communally," not through one-to-one correspondence with things, but through webs of association. The belles-lettres approach to language finds this state of affairs to be, not a dilution or corruption of language, but one of its virtues.

Campbell employs notions from both these schools of thought. In his mind, the work of the preacher is divided between theology and pulpit oratory, complementary but separate realms, which requires different kinds of language. Theology, a "science," demands a scientist's language, with its emphasis on perspicuity, one word for one thing. Pulpit oratory, an "art" involving other human beings, asks for a more community-oriented language, one which relies on sympathy and elegance as much as it does on rational argumentation. Karen Rasmussen, among others, has noted the inconsistency in Campbell's beliefs, and these beliefs, of course, include ideas about language. At times Campbell seems to follow the empiricists in considering language as arbitrary (*Philosophy*

of Rhetoric 139) and troublesome. Examples are his harangues against scholastic "logomachies" and "syllogizing" (*The Character of a Minister of the Gospel* 22-24). At other times, echoing the belletristic critics, he finds language to be a medium for sympathy and vivacity needed to appeal to the fancy and so to the passions (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 286). Grammatically and stylistically, though, the theologian or scientist considers his language to be less important than the object under investigation, and so considers clarity or perspicuity as the first qualities of elocution.

Perspicuity and Plain Style

Perspicuity, the first demand placed upon a stylist, requires him to "make [his] meaning clearly and fully understood, and understood without the least difficulty" (Blair 67). For more ardently belletristic theorists like Hugh Blair, perspicuity is important chiefly because it allows the style to be more fully enjoyed, and the author (who is largely defined by his style) to shine through (66). Other rhetoricians and grammarians weigh the two poles differently. Campbell casts further back for his supports, linking perspicuity with the demands of experiential science and natural theology.

H. Lewis Ulman traces Campbell's position about words to John Locke ("Thought and Language" 270). In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell makes perspicuity serve as a partial remedy to the inherent offense against truth that Locke and other empirical thinkers find in language. The limitations of Campbell's "Lockean" view of language are traced by Ulman in *Things, Thoughts, Words, and Actions* (95-97). Ulman demonstrates that, while "purity and perspicuity determine the 'beaten track' or foundation of discourse" in Campbell's thought (103), Campbell makes plenty of exceptions on the basis

of use or effectiveness. It may be that Campbell makes the perspicuity exhortation more forcefully in his homiletic treatises because he believes theology to be an empirical science, applying itself to revealed truth much as natural science applies to physical truth. Several of his rules for perspicuity follow from Locke's account of the abuses of language, and speak directly to these abuses as they appear in religious controversies and "logomachies" as he calls them.

> In such like disputes, when examin'd with accuracy, one shall discover, either that the adverse positions of the combatants are at bottom absolutely intelligible, and have no meaning at all, or secondly, that the difference, where there is a meaning, is not real but verbal, each side having espoused a peculiar set of phrases, whereof they are inflexibly tenacious (both of which are call'd logomachies, meer contentions about words) or lastly, that the debate regards some abstruse point, upon which the scripture hath been altogether silent; and which over and above is far above the reach of human reason. Now all these kinds of disputation, how can we more accurately define, than in the apostle's words to Timothy, VAIN BABBLINGS, and oppositions of science, falsely so called. (*The Character of a Minister of the Gospel* 14).

Here are Locke's abuses of supposing the words we use to have evident meanings (3.10.22), applying words unevenly (3.10.5), making words stand for essences which cannot be known (3.10.7), and, by implication, affecting obscurity (3.10.22). Campbell assumes that obscure discourse makes for both false science and (this is a sermon instructing preachers on decorous teaching and living) bad homiletics.

Under the question of perspicuity versus obscurity, Campbell takes the subject of style very clearly into the debate of ends (persuasion, practical conviction) versus means (clarity, accuracy). In at least one instance, the use of clear and precise language becomes an overtly ethical issue, reflecting on the virtue of the speaker and the "real" merit of his argument. In Book II, Chapter 8 of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell discusses the place of perspicuity in arguments to the understanding and to the passions, and finds it everywhere necessary. From the qualities he opposes to perspicuity, "obscurity," "ambiguity," and "sophistry" (276-7), it is plain that perspicuity includes practices of *integrity* as well as of clear speech. Critic Lawrence Hugenberg argues that Campbell permits sophistry in arguments to the understanding, especially when the orator is refuting a stronger claim. But Campbell obviously places the position Hugenberg describes in the mouth of an interlocutor: "Perhaps it will be urged [that] in this case, whatever is spoken on one side of the question, as it is spoken in support of error, must be sophistical" (275-6). Campbell then refutes his imaginary interlocutor, saying that error in argumentation is rarely absolute on either side. Orators should present their evidence as clearly as possible. If a case is at all "dubious and disputable" (276), as most are, there is no need for sophistry. The only real place for deceit, Campbell finishes, is when the orator is trying to refute arguments "both clear and convincing." He concedes the point with a growl: "A little sophistry here will, no doubt, be thought necessary by one with whom victory hath more charms than truth" (276). The passage continues sarcastically: sophistry or "nonsense" (277) works best in the mouth of the self-deceived, and has a real home in only one genre–"mystical theology." Despite the two part or "synthetic" model of

language use that Ulman describes (*Things, Thoughts, Words, and Actions* 110), Campbell at times like this sets up ends-versus-means arguments about language. In such instances, the subject is almost always religion, and the "means" side always wins.

Ornament, or at least its finer points, is clearly second to perspicuity. Comparing "Christian zeal" to superstition and enthusiasm, Campbell argues that people should not be "allured" or "terrified" into a profession of faith (*The Spirit of the Gospel* 84). This subordination is in part clerical-political: a flowery pulpit style was associated with old-fashioned metaphysical preaching, and so with ornamental or Catholicized religious practice, while cruder extravagances of style suggested the enthusiasm of the field-preachers. Campbell repeatedly advocates a "manly" plain style for his students.

Another recommendation for perspicuity or plain language is the bridge it creates between the educated minister and the presumably less well educated congregation. Campbell's definition shifts a bit: perspicuity is no longer opposed to elegance but to obscurity. Of plain style he writes:

> It is reported of Bishop Tillotson, that he was wont, before preaching his sermons, to read them privately to an illiterate old woman of plain sense, who lived in the house with him, and where ever he found he had employed any word or expression, which she did not understand, he instantly erased it, and substituted a plainer in its place. (*On Pulpit Eloquence* 186)

In proclaiming the simplicity of Christianity he follows Berkeley: "The Christian religion was calculated for the bulk of mankind, and therefore cannot reasonably be supposed to consist in subtle and nice notions" (*A Sermon Preached...* 329), as well as Wesley's "how

easy to be understood, how plain and simple a thing, is the genuine religion of Jesus Christ!" (*The Scripture Way of Salvation* 155). Campbell argues,

> If the truths of the gospel were intended for the instruction of ALL mankind, and if unerring wisdom knows how to proportion the means to the end; they are doubtless level to the capacity of ALL. We must be careful, not only that our doctrine be itself untainted, but that it be delivered in such a proper and familiar stile, as is best adapted to the subject, and to the capacity of the hearers...cautiously avoiding both extremes, either creeping, or descending, or rather sinking into a grovelling diction, so as to rebute [sic] those of better taste, or of soaring above the apprehension of the lowest. (*The Character of a Minister of the Gospel* 20-22)

Here we can see a direct link between Campbell's reasonability assumptions, his convictions about pulpit style, and his desire to promote ministerial ethos. His belief in the plainness of Scripture truth corresponds with assumptions that people can trust their (reading) sens(ibiliti)es; and that the whole way of salvation can be found in Scripture. The plainness of the text is to be reproduced by the plainness of the preaching style, and the auditors are to imitate the preacher-as-empiricist investigating revealed truth as they apply themselves to *his* words.

Perspicuity represents both the subordination of language to subject matter, and also a kind of plain or self-effacing ethos, a signal that the minister is emphasizing subject rather than rhetoric. As will be seen in the next chapter, the minister's ethos, even when seen as a passive or negative construct, forms an important of Campbell's pulpit ethics.

Chapter Four: Pulpit Ethics and Ministerial Ethos

As seen in the first chapters of this essay, argumentation based on experience filtered through reasonability assumptions is, in Campbell's belief, as necessary to the knowledge of religion as it is to the knowledge of nature. The natural theologians and later Latitudinarians tend to regard muted appeals to passion as sufficient for the pulpit (Brinton 53). But Campbell, in his analysis of rhetorical persuasion in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* advocates a more robust approach to pathos-based appeals. The only place in his writings where this position falters is when he writes about religion, religious sects, or homiletics. Then he associates overly-emotive preaching and religion with a negative picture of "enthusiasm" and with obscurist or coercive ministerial practices. But practical conviction, he believes, is required for the spread of religion. Practical conviction demands pathos-based language that threatens the integrity of rational conviction. Most often, says Campbell, rational and practical conviction work in a complementary manner, but he senses enough tension between the two to create, in various digressions, side-arguments, and passages of epideictic, a system of pulpit ethics to deal with the conflict.

Not consistently, but with sufficient, notable repetition Campbell endorses a model of pulpit ethics consisting of perspicuous style and ministerial ethos. The purpose of this ethics is to keep open space for rational *dissent*, the space which gives rational and practical conviction its worth. This section will look more closely at the model of persuasion, or assent-building, which Campbell employs, and test its merits against some contrastive models.

Preacher's Ethos in Rhetorical Structure

Structurally, Campbell's blueprint for religious (or other) persuasion is linear and accumulative. Experience passed through reasonability assumptions produces knowledge in the form of moral evidence. Such knowledge is the basis of rational conviction. Moral evidence passed through the passions results in persuasion, or practical conviction. Just as Campbell depicts the faculties as working in regular, ascending order, so he diagrams a rhetoric of moral certainty and practical assent working in just the same way. So the rhetorical of logos, pathos, and ethos becomes a rhetorical vector: logos to pathos, pathos to action. This is not to say that ethos is absent from Campbell's thought. In some places, he associates ethos with the virtues, or moral sentiments, and makes it halfway between imaginative and pathetic discourse on the persuasive vector: "[The ethical or sentimental] occupies a middle place between the pathetic and that which is addressed to the imagination" (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 80).

At other times, discussing ethos as character, Campbell praises the role of the minister and describes him:

> Though firm in declaring the will of God, though steady in maintaining the cause of truth, yet mild in his addresses to the people, condescending to the weak, using rather entreaty than command, beseeching them by the lowliness and gentleness of Christ. (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 100)

But this description comes as supplementary to Campbell's "analysis of persuasion" (78). And Campbell soon begins to extol the less robust qualities of the minister, as seen even in

the passage above. He urges the minister to instruct the congregation on Scripture, without, so to speak, blocking their view. The preacher, by heading his sermon with a text, providing background history, and the like, gives the congregation tools with which to "begin their own interpretive process...which may or may not end in agreement" (Sonheim 89).

In *The Spirit of the Gospel, The Success of the First Publishers of the Gospel,* and *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Oratory,* while he never abandons his emphasis on the practical nature of homiletics, Campbell begins to make plain that rational conviction is the glory of faith and of action, and that rhetorical treachery on the part of the minister is a worse failing than the failure to win converts or influence lives. Campbell repeatedly refers to the minister as a "teacher," and the implication is that he assists the congregation in reading the Bible, rather than giving the Bible to them. Sonheim argues that when Campbell follows the practice of introducing a sermon with a text, he envisions an "interpretative process *in the audience*" (89)–a congregation who examine the lesson in their Bibles as the preacher reads it, or who go home and look up the passages in question, and work out their own reading, assisted by the specialized knowledge (linguistic, historical) which the minister provides them, and by his trained powers of reason, but without an obligation to believe his conclusions.

The most important facet of the preacher's ethos is not style or delivery but honesty. He should represent Scripture as best he can. Here is the test of Campbell's commitment to rational conviction: a failed sermon which accurately reflects Scripture is preferable to a successful one that misapplies or misrepresents a passage, or presents

history falsely (*Systematic Theology* 296). The auditory's own experience, not the preacher's rhetorical art, takes them the final steps to conviction.

> If it be safer to be under God's direction, than under any man's, it must be safer to exhibit the sacred oracles purely and candidly, leaving it to them to form the conclusions and make the application. (296).

Despite Bormann's argument that Campbell uses epistemology primarily as a means to an end, the refutation of skepticism, Campbell consistently values means over end whenever the question arises explicitly.

The ethos component of the rhetorical triangle is subsumed into logos, as the character of the minister is translated into that of a teacher. Because it is composed of restraint or negation (the preacher *doesn't* threaten, *doesn't* act unseemly, *doesn't* misinterpret Scripture), the ethos or character element of Campbell's rhetoric does not interrupt its linear, progressive structure, but, by effacing itself before the text or subject at hand, facilitates the forward progress.

Context of Models of Assent

The context of the above diagram of religious persuasion grounded in moral evidence can be described as partly natural-theological, partly psychological. In basing his religious epistemology on experience and reason, Campbell joins a line of thinkers that extends back to the natural theologians of the seventeenth century. Like them, he advances a rhetoric of rational assent assisted by "contextualizing 'reason' as a flexible instrument capable of developing conviction on the basis of the probable" (Foster 293). Men like Edward Stillingfleet defined "Faith" as "a rational and discursive act of the Mind.

For Faith [is] an assent upon evidence or reason" (qtd. Foster 297). Others, like Samuel Clarke, spoke of how passion should be governed by reason (Brinton 57). The proofs of the existence of God offered by natural evidence are sufficient for the "ordinary," "honest" man. Only an atheist, "too crazed or prejudiced to respond to probable argument" (Foster 299), demands miracles, revelations, or, alternately, absolute demonstrative evidence of the truths of religion.

To this structure for rational conviction is added a second tier, the need for the passions to add practical assent to rational, or action to belief. To produce action, says Campbell, the preacher must stir the passions of his auditory, not merely regale them with arguments to moral probability. This is faculty psychologist David Hartley's schematic for assent. While rational conviction is more emphasized in Campbell's sermons, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* adopts a rational-practical model that very nearly duplicates Hartley's.

To establish this point, this section will return briefly to the definitions of rational and practical conviction, first as found in Hartley's *Observations on Man,* then as found in Campbell's "analysis of persuasion" in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric.* Hartley claims that

> Rational assent...to any Proposition may be defined as a readiness to affirm it true, proceeding from a close association of the Ideas suggested by the Proposition, with the Idea, or internal feeling belonging to the Word Truth. (344)

In other words, as Hartley's examples show, the proposition appears to conform to the rules or grammatical structure of the system to which it belongs, or to confirm the auditor's previous observation and experience. Practical assent appears to be a

continuation of the rational; it is a "Readiness to act in such a Manner as the frequent vivid Recurrency of the rational Assent disposes us to act" (324-25). In the case of religious or philosophical propositions, rational conviction relies on the grammatical relations between the terms of the proposition (332), or their analogy to other experience. Practical assent draws on the "affections" of reverence, duty, jealousy, etc., which associate themselves with the terms of the proposition, and with the nearness of the proposition to the auditor. Campbell turns this analysis of assent into an analysis of rhetorical persuasion, which he says results from a successful mixture of rational and pathetic proofs. Again, this is a vector-like model of persuasion.

This description of the relationship between the aspects of conviction is persuasive because it suggests that the only proper basis for passion–and action–is intellectual comprehension. "It may be observed," says Hartley, "that Children, Novices, unlearned Persons, etc., give, in many Cases, a practical Assent upon a single Instance" (*Observations* 330); in other words, upon insufficient rational deliberation or knowledge. Campbell states the case more pointedly. The uneducated are easy prey for quacks and pretenders of all kinds, because they require only emotive, and not rational, persuasion (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 78). Too-ready practical conviction, or too-ready emotion, is characteristic of the unlearned; it is a flaw to be remedied; and it is potentially dangerous to society and to religion.

Now more of the ground for Campbell's suspicion of pathos-based appeal becomes clear. When seen as part of a faculty-psychology model, the passions can be stirred through *automatic* chains of association. Therein lies the danger. The passions are

just as liable to be swayed to evil deeds as to good, says Campbell.

> It is wonderful, but it is too well vouched to admit of a doubt, that by the powers of rhetoric you may more easily produce in mankind *almost any change more easily than this* [towards "meekness and humanity"]. (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 108, my italics)

An overly-passionate rhetoric may overwhelm the reason of an auditor and carry him into error or madness. From false and overly-*rational* discourse, no one is in danger. The ignorant will not understand it, while the educated will see through it. This ability to "see through" an argument implies a kind of freedom on the part of reason (at least in some people) that is not present in the passions. From this freedom it is short leap to the core of Campbell's discourse of assent. Not only does this freedom of reason from coercion or flattery have the possibility to exist, but it is also very important, partly because it is so easily threatened. Without the free self-determination of the rational faculty to belief, based on the evidence at hand and its own apprehension of "right reason," conviction is worthless.

The abuses of practical conviction which Campbell fears most are those which can render religious faith valueless because based on misinformation, ignorance, or coercion. These abuses include rhetorical trickery, actual dishonesty on the preacher's part, physically coercive religious "persuasion," and the kinds of party-spirit, as he calls it, that lead to riots, massacres, and inter-denominational violence. In specific, Campbell links deceitful, pathos-heavy rhetoric with "enthusiasm" and "superstition."

Independence of Auditor

The effacement of the orator, at least in his more coercive guises, parallels that which Lawrence Hugenberg describes as a late-eighteenth century "shift in emphasis from state and government concerns to the concerns of the individual" (36). These concerns appear, in Campbell's writing, in a very limited but absolutely protected space. In *The Nature, Extent, and Duty of Allegiance*, a sermon preached against the American Revolution, the only case in which Campbell says rebellion is permissible is when a government commands a person to alter or give lie to his opinions (11). "A man's right to his opinions may be truly said to be both natural and inalienable" (10). Campbell believes that conviction, or even action, is worse than useless if it does not spring from real belief:

> Are the threatenings of the racks and gibbets the evidences of truth, or the means of giving conviction to the understanding? Is it then the way of promoting truth, to tempt men to become liars? Do ye advance righteousness by forcing them to commit iniquity? Do ye contribute to their peace, by making them give a mortal wound to conscience? (*The Spirit of the Gospel* 79)

In summary, Campbell's pulpit ethics urges plain, perspicuous style and semi-effacement of the minister, especially in his role as a temporal power, to promote two ends. These ends are the primacy of the object of experience (the Scriptures) and the independence of individual reason or opinion. To sustain a rhetoric capable of producing persuasion, Campbell constructs a sort of "rhetorical vector" in which pathos appeals and practical conviction should follow, and follow from, strong moral evidence and rational conviction.

To highlight this picture, and by way of comparison, we can turn back to Wesley's

model of epistemology/conviction begun in chapter one. In the main, Wesley's epistemology is similar to Campbell's, consisting of experience filtered through reason. The avenue to knowledge and religious "sincerity" (*The Almost Christian* 39) and practical conviction is again linear and forward-moving. But Wesley does not consider either rational or practical conviction or both sufficient to being "*altogether* a Christian." A third element is introduced, grace, which first appears as *praeveniens,* the first-coming of the Holy Spirit in a soul, "the first dawning of grace" (*The Scripture Way of Salvation* 155) and upon acceptance becomes a full-blown, new faculty. Through grace,

> We see the *spiritual world,* which is all round about us, and yet no more discerned by our natural faculties than if it had no being; and we see the eternal world, piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity. (155)

Prevenient grace, while an essential component of Wesleyan epistemology, can not figure as more than a trope rhetorically. It is not demonstrable, subject to moral proof, or transferrable by vivacity or sympathy, or in any way public or communal.

At the same time, like Campbell, Wesley takes care to remove the possibility of coercion both from temporal authorities and from God. "Do not dream of forcing men into the ways of God. Think yourself, and let think. Even those who are farthest out of the way never 'compel to come in' by any other means than reason, truth, and love" (*The Nature of Enthusiasm* 59). People are not to deceive or scare others into religious profession. And as for Godly persuasion, Wesley is equally scrupulous in defining away the possibility of force. He makes the action of grace by the Holy Spirit, who is said to be resistible, rather than by the Father, whose force is said to be absolute. This kind of precise

theology is meant to counter the ideas of God's encroachment on the individual.

> He did not take away your understanding, but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections; rather they were more vigorous than before. Least of all did he take away your liberty, your power of choosing good or evil. (*The General Spread of the Gospel* 489)

The structures of Wesley's and Campbell's epistemic and rhetorical thought are remarkably similar. Both begin with experience and emphasize reason, both limit the scope of human rhetoric by clearing the ground for "that liberty which is essential to a moral agent" (*The General Spread of the Gospel* 489). Wesley allows prevenient grace, and later full-blown grace, to fill the empty zone. Campbell maintains a simple clear space for human assent or non-assent. He follows Tillotson, who, as Swift complained, "would not allow a Miracle sufficient to give Credit to a Prophet who taught anything contrary to our natural notions" (Nye191) in finally allowing human reason liberty to reject even the teachings of the apostles if they run counter to reason.

> It is not within the compass of possibility, to produce a proof of your claim, which shall counterbalance the evidence I have that it is contrary to the will of Heaven, to lie, to betray, to murder. Miracles themselves will not answer your purpose. Reason and scripture both teach me...that these cannot be admitted in proof of what is either absurd or impious...there are doctrines which, though an apostle of Christ...should preach to us, we ought not to receive. (*The Spirit of the Gospel* 61)

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