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VIEWPOINT

This issue has been selected as one in which the editor makes his every-second-year appeal for you to send in that article you've been wanting to write. This issue contains two articles by the editor, which is obviously not a healthy practice. We are interested in good articles of various types. Perhaps you have a research article, or on the other hand a how-to-do-it type of article. Perhaps there is a point-of-view stance you would like to share with our readers. Maybe you would like to organize a symposium on some relevant topic for publication in our journal. At any rate, we need your support and your contributions, not only through financial avenues such as patron memberships, but also through the publication of articles. After all, someday state colleges and universities will be able to rejoin our colleagues in education, and be granted salary increases. Good articles published in this journal will be helpful when that time comes.

This issue was delayed as long as possible in an effort to prevent the editor from publishing two of his own articles. The outlook for the fall issue, however, looks better. We already have one excellent article in forensics that is ready to be typed up for publication. We, shortly, hope to have an index to the first nine volumes ready for publication. But we still need, however, several additional quality articles for this fall. And now, you are going to sleep--When you awaken, you will go to your typewriter, bang out an article, and mail it to this editor. Yes, you too will become an author.

On a recent Thursday, this writer attended the committee meetings of the June meeting of the State Board of Regents. There, what everyone knew would take place became a reality--if you're teaching in a state institution, you're virtually assured of no salary increase this year. This fact of life is not, of course, the responsibility of the SBR. Rather, state employees have had to pay the price of the political wars taking place in the state.

In the early 60's, people in Speech were among the most politically active and assertive in the United States. What is our reaction in 1983 to our situation? Are we just complacent and willing to say there's nothing we can do? And settle for the crumbs that fall from the master's plate? Or are we ready to become assertive again? Can we weld ourselves into a viable force that will demand to be heard? A further development of this question will appear in the next issue.

THE SONGWRITER: ADAPTING TO THE 60's & 70's

Frank Mayo

The intention of the songwriter changed dramatically from the 1960's to and through the 1970's. The internal and external struggles of America during these two decades played a key role in motivating the songwriter to not only resound his message, but to also find that formula for success--the hit song! It would seem imperative to chronologically review the attitudinal changes of Americans during these twenty years, and even more imperative to start with and note the significance of the Kennedy administration and assassination. Although the threat and influence of Communism pre-occupied the fears of many Americans--the effects of McCarthyism still lingering--the country felt relatively secure under its leader. Information gathered by the Gallup Poll during the early sixties revealed an almost naive outlook that Americans had concerning the future. The results of a poll released August 29, 1962 indicated that 55% of the people polled believed that life would get better as the sixties progressed; 69% believed that there would be no serious racial trouble in the succeeding two or three years.¹ There was virtually no discussion of the Viet Nam crisis, and the leadership of John Kennedy and the Democrats remained convincingly popular throughout the President's short lived administration.

However, when President Kennedy died on November 22, 1963, so died with him the concepts of Idealism and Nationalism that were known prior. The country was marked for change--radical change. Again, information gathered by opinion polls throughout the remainder of the decade reflected a dramatic change in the attitudes of Americans. The country was growing increasingly suspicious of its government and of the future. The results of a Gallup Poll released October 31, 1965 revealed that 48% of the people polled believed that corruption in Washington was increasing; by 1968, with the Viet Nam War becoming a main issue of concern, 51% of those interviewed expressed displeasure with the way President Johnson was handling his job, and 66% vowed that they would vote for a candidate who would support troop withdrawal.² Americans were simply not content and growing more restless by the day. On August 14, 1968, the results of yet another poll revealed that 61% of Americans polled believed that life in the United States was getting worse in terms of honesty (the highest negative rating among twelve nations polled).³ Inevitably this suspicion and pessimism spread to the college campuses, and by June of 1970 the most important problem concerning the nation's citizens was campus unrest.⁴

Born out of these changing times were folk singers--in many cases singer-songwriters--whose lyrics were clung to by an ever changing counter culture desperate for leadership and theme. Such noted artists as Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Tom Paxton, and Joan Baez wrote and sang what would prove to be anthems that accompanied

the various marches, demonstrations and movements throughout the sixties. Bob Dylan, in particular, made his mark indelible. With such thought provoking songs as "Blowin' in the Wind" and the "The Times They are a Changin'" Dylan became acclaimed not only as a singer-songwriter, but as a poet and prophet. Indeed, his lyrics eerily forewarned the generations who were listening of inevitable change. However, though not to belittle the purism in Dylan's style, the artist was, in fact, writing for the times and making whatever compromises necessary to achieve success. Quite simply, it was fashionable and practical to write protest songs during the early and mid sixties. Dylan, himself, admitted that "his main responsibility was to himself, and that protest songs were a means to an end, that is, a way of launching his career."⁵ Again, there is no doubt that the then shy and elusive Dylan was as concerned about the domestic struggles of the individual and the country as were those who idolized him and his songs; yet, and with full intent, ". . . he did what was necessary to reach stardom."⁶ Eventually, and most notably with his 1965 hit "Like a Rolling Stone," Dylan 'electrified' his acoustic sound (a move scorned by some critics while, on the other hand, praised by those who credited him with the invention of folk rock). Perhaps Dylan--with his keen sense of prophecy--perceived the direction popular--or commercially successful--music was heading. The political overtones in his lyrics began to disappear and the writer became more self-indulgent (definitely

evident in "Like a Rolling Stone"--a precursor to the theme of the 1970's). "Dylan's shift away from protest material established him as a bona fide commercial artist."⁷

Songs by such writers as Dylan, John Lennon and Paul McCartney shall remain timeless; established as well as new artists are still consistently recording these tunes--primarily songs written during the sixties. How glorious was this decade for the songwriter! Although the main route to a hit song was the same as it is today--constant and consistent airplay on Top 40 radio stations--the exploration of lyrical and musical themes seemed limitless. Consequently, even the obscure artists and writers--who perhaps started with exposure on underground radio stations--worked their ways to and up the charts. In contrast, the formula construction of a hit song during the mid to late 70's was much more rigid and defined. The industry was not as open as it had been, and underground movements had not raised their heads in the way folk, or folk rock, or the psychedelic sound once did.⁸ After Dylan had opened the door, songwriters during the sixties were able to confront topical situations and actually give meaning to self expression through song. "Abraham, Martin, and John," written and sung by Dion, not only lamented the loss of these fallen leaders, but mournfully professed the senselessness of their assassinations and the uncertainty of the future. The mourning never stopped; as if with eerie timing the loss of Bobby Kennedy is mentioned in the last refrain. The song was a hit in

1968. The Canadian rock group The Guess Who scored a huge hit with their self-penned song "American Woman." Although the message in the lyrics rejected "the United States as a domineering world power"--with the lines "I don't need your war machine, I don't need your ghetto scene"--constant airplay pronounced the song as one of the summer themes of 1969.⁹ The Buffalo Springfield spoke out against police harassment of youth with the 1966 hit "For What It's Worth"--although the group didn't stay together long the song became a classic and launched the careers of Stephen Stills, Neil Young, and Jim Messina. In 1965, one of the most biting political ballads ever recorded became a national best seller. Written by nineteen year old P. F. Sloane and sung by ex-Christy Minstrel Barry McGuire, "The Eve of Destruction" shocked the nation with its blatant protest against hypocrisy. The folk rock anthem haunted the airwaves, and, perhaps, illustrated more than any other song, the freedom of speech that the songwriter had during the sixties. There seemed to be no stopping the songwriter from either dealing with his own true feelings and emotions, echoing the voice of the populace, or, simply, confronting whatever topic was timely in order to attain a hit song. Disturbing topics such as drugs, social, economic, and racial strife gave way to light--even sing-a-long--melodies. Ray Stevens' "Mr. Business Man," Joe South's "Walk A Mile in My Shoes," The Association's "Along Comes Mary," Steppenwolf's "The Pusher Man," and even Sonny and Cher's "Laugh at Me" explored

repression among the classes and generations and freedom for the individual with unforgettable melodies. Finally, as the decade of the sixties was ending, and the new decade of the seventies beginning, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's "Ohio"--commemorating the death of the four Kent State students--chilled and reminded the nation what it had been through and what was possibly ahead. Released in May of 1970, "Ohio"--with its lush harmonies characteristic of CSN&Y--rose to the top of the charts.

The universal experience of the individual became the theme of the 1970's. Often referred to as the "I, Me, Mine" decade, self-indulgence, individual freedom, and love were the main topics--and for all practical purposes, the only topics--from which the songwriter had to choose. Although the first few years of the decade still refrained the topics of the 60's, by 1973--with the Viet Nam War all but over--the nation was eager to forget and 'get down.' Many of those who had protested in the 60's were growing up, wearing three piece suits, and figuring out ways to afford a monthly lease on a Mercedes. Again, the Gallup Opinion Poll reflected a satisfaction--blind as it may have been--among the working class. In figures released April 3, 1973, 52% of the people polled were simply "very happy," and 77% were satisfied with their jobs.¹⁰ Up until the so-called "recession" during the Carter administration, the individual American was spending more time and money on himself--being spurred on by commercial advertising--than, perhaps, the days of the Roaring 20's.

Advertisements on radio and TV, in magazines and movie theatres, and on billboards across the nation all reverberated one of the stellar themes of the 70's--"if it feels good - do it!" The music industry took an exception to this spendthrift attitude, and the 70's witnessed the birth of many new record companies and record paid advances to recording artists--established and new. David Geffen, often referred to as the "boy wonder" of the early 70's, created Electra-Assylum records by signing three of the hottest singing-songwriting acts of the decade: Jackson Browne, Joni Mitchell, and the Eagles. Browne's debut "Doctor My Eyes"--the lament of the weary traveler who had seen too much pain--, Mitchell's critically acclaimed album Court and Spark--a self portrait of the artist's psyche--, and the Eagles' "Peaceful Easy Feeling"--the relaxed, but expressed urgency of making love lest the chance be gone tomorrow--well defined the attitude and responsibility of the singer-song-writer during the early to mid 70's. Elton John (together with Bernie Taupin), James Taylor, and Jim Croce further epitomized the singer-song-writer of the 1970's. Although many of their songs shall forever be considered classics, they were, nonetheless, expressions of self-indulgence reflecting the light and dark sides of the artists' own personal experiences. John's "Your Song," Taylor's "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight," and Croce's "I Got A Name"--though written by the writing team of Fox and Gimble--all bared the soul and yearned for self-identity.

If the songwriter of the 70's was not the likes of the previously mentioned singer-songwriters, he had to compete not only with their material, but with the legend of their beings. Publishers and producers went to the well of their favorite writers more often than not to ensure the likelihood of a hit song. Newcomers were screened with obsessive subjectivity, and unless someone in the industry chain--the publisher, the producer, or the record company--recognized the immediate hit potential of a song, the artist or the song was passed--"regardless of the artistic talent."¹¹ Even the trade magazines--such as Rolling Stone--paid particular and consistent homage to the same superstars over and over throughout the 70's.¹² The music industry was calculated to bank on a 'sure thing.' Of course, many songwriters--whose names will remain obscure but whose songs will live on--were very successful during the 70's. However, it is not necessary to chronicle them and illustrate the fulfillment of the American Dream. It is the challenge and limitations placed upon the songwriter by this decade that is of more concern. With the arrival of Disco in 1976, popular music had culminated the most diverse blend of musical styles of any decade. However, with less emphasis on the lyric, an even more perplexing problem faced the serious songwriter.

This writer's experience could, perhaps, provide some first hand authenticity to the dilemma that faced many songwriters during the years 1976 through 1979. After carefully crafting

the lyric and melodic structure of a particular song, and then, ultimately, spending approximately three hundred dollars on the studio demo, it was less than amusing to find a publisher or producer screening my songs with a stopwatch; the purpose of which was to make sure that the song had the then mandatory 132 beats per minute necessary for a hit Disco song! Experiences such as this made me glad that I finished college. Concerning lyrical content, my most memorable experience of frustration would have to refer to an incident at ABC Music (before it was purchased by MCA). Aside from racing disco songs, love ballads were very popular during the late seventies. Having often chosen between the two, my catalogue of ballads had become stockpiled! The absolute head of ABC asked me to write an erotic, groping, four letter song. Peter McCann's "Do You Wanna Make Love (Or Do You Just Wanna Fool Around)" was given to me to use as an example. Again, thankful that I held a college degree, I compromised to the task. As it turned out, I lacked the tact that some of the more refined balladeers of eroticism had, and my resulting song was given an "X" rating. However, I did get invited to parties. Enough! Quite simply, the successful songwriters of the sixties and seventies were those who adapted to the times and made whatever compromises appropriate. It would appear that some of these compromises were made freely, while others were made with some reluctance. Nonetheless, it was the mood of each decade that dictated to the music industry--which, in turn, dictated to the songwriter--the requirements for a hit song.

NOTES

Frank Mayo is a graduate student in English at Middle Tennessee State University.

¹William P. Hansen and Fred Israel "ed." The Gallup Poll Public Opinion 1935-1971 (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 1782.

²William P. Hansen and Fred Israel "ed." The Gallup Poll Public Opinion Vol. 3, 1959-1971 (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 2167.

³Hansen and Israel, p. 2153.

⁴Hansen and Israel, p. 2252.

⁵Serge R. Denisoff, Sing a Song of Social Significance (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1972), p. 112.

⁶Serge R. Denisoff, Great Day Coming! Folk Music and the American Left (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972) p. 181.

⁷Serge R. Denisoff, Sing a Song of Social Significance, p. 18.

⁸Jean and Jim Young, Succeeding in the Big World of Music (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1977), p. 169.

⁹Denisoff, Sing a Song of Social Significance, p. 185.

¹⁰Hansen and Israel, The Gallup Poll Public Opinion, 1972-1977, (Willmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1978), p. 11.

¹¹Jean and Jim Young, p. 169.

¹²Jean and Jim Young, pp. 169-170.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF AUGUSTINE'S RHETORICAL SYSTEM TO TODAY'S MINISTER

David Walker

Andrew Blackwood, in the preface to one of his books, asks this question: "Why should not every minister strive to excel in the finest of all the fine arts, that of preaching?"¹ Of the many who have echoed this sentiment, Augustine, writing around 426 A.D., is remembered as one of the more prominent writers who presented some high principles to guide the minister.² The teachings of Augustine continue to influence the homiletical materials, as is seen from the references made to his writings by John Broadus³ and Andrew Blackwood.⁴ Many of Augustine's suggestions are of such enduring value that today's minister would profit from an application of them.

In the training of the Christian orator, Augustine urges the use of models as a means of inspiring the student to eloquence. Those of quick intellect, he thought, could learn eloquence easier by listening to and reading the works of eloquent speakers than by following rules for eloquence.⁵ Likewise, today's ministerial student would profit by listening to the speaking of outstanding contemporary ministers. Regardless of whether he agrees with a particular preacher's doctrinal positions, the minister may be moved to produce eloquence similar to that which others have produced.

Uppermost in the thinking of Augustine is his insistence upon truth in the Christian's oratory. Truth or wisdom is of

much more importance than eloquence. One should beware of the orator who speaks "eloquent nonsense;" such an orator may make the audience think he is eloquent, whereas he is actually presenting nothing which is worth their attention.⁶ Surely this is a more noble attitude than that of Quintilian when he says: "To tell a falsehood is sometimes allowed, even to a wise man....Unenlightened men sit as judges who must, at times, be deceived, that they not err in their decisions."⁷ The importance of the centrality of truth is described by Phillips Brooks when he states that "preaching is the communication of truth by man to men."⁸ Furthermore, one "speaks with more or less wisdom just as he has made more or less progress in the knowledge of the Scriptures."⁹ If one were describing Augustine's rhetoric, he might thus style it not so much as a speaker-center rhetoric as a "Scripture-centered" rhetoric.

The need for such an approach to preaching remains the same today. A young minister may be tempted to unload such a display of oratorical fireworks that his hearers stand amazed at his ability, but fail to understand the message. Such an effort would result in the failure of the mission of preaching, for Paul told the church at Corinth that it was the pleasure of God to save the world through the "foolishness of the thing preached."¹⁰

Although Augustine emphasized the importance of truth, he did not eliminate eloquence from his rhetorical system. "If a man be not moved by the force of truth, though it is demonstrated

to his own confession, and clothed in beauty of style, nothing remains but to subdue him by the power of eloquence."¹¹ The sacred writers are given as examples of those who unite eloquence with wisdom. This type of eloquence is to be one which is appropriate to preaching; it is to be conspicuous neither by its presence nor by its absence.¹²

This concept likewise needs to be attained by today's effective minister. Many ministers present to us the picture, perhaps, of a "Lifeless Lump" -- an "orator" with no visible means of animation. Still again, we may have been forced to listen to a "Sleepy Slump" -- a preacher evidently presenting what has become to him a required ritual in which he has no interest. Or finally, a preacher may appear to be a "Gloomy Glump" -- one who casts over his audience such a feeling of dismay that no eloquence can truly be manifested. The remedy for such a situation would be for the minister to study, either by means of rules or examples, the ways in which he can present his message in such a manner that the audience may be impressed with its value.

In accomplishing his purpose, the Christian orator will manifest at least three characteristics of style: clarity, elegance, and variety. Augustine considers clarity of style to be essential for, without it, a discourse will fail to instruct the audience. The necessity for clarity is demonstrated by the speaking situation in which the audience is unable to

ask any questions concerning doubtful points.¹³ For this same reason, Augustine believes that the orator should discuss a subject so long as is necessary to make it understood -- neither too long nor too short a period of time. If a point is discussed for too great a length of time, the audience will lose interest in things which they already understand.¹⁴ John Broadus has commented on the same point:

The most important property of style is perspicuity. Style is excellent when, like the atmosphere, it shows thought, but itself is not seen.... Good style is like stereoscopic glasses, which, transparent themselves, give form and body and distinct outline to that which they exhibit.¹⁵

Many modern sermons would be greatly improved by adding the quality of clarity. The young minister may attempt to impress his audience by using some ten dollar words, or perhaps by throwing in a few Greek, Latin, or Hebrew phrases. The older minister may have allowed himself to get so engrossed in his studies that he fails to present an audience-adapted lesson, but rather something which would find a happier home in a scholarly work. The result of either extreme would be a lack of instruction for the audience.

But then, a second characteristic of style is necessary for Augustine's orator -- that of elegance. Unless the Christian orator used elegance, Augustine believes that the benefit from a sermon will not extend beyond a few who are anxious to know whatever can be learned on a subject.¹⁶ This realistic approach to the sermon would be valuable for any minister. A minister may allow himself to adopt a philosophy which will allow him to present a

lesson in a rough, unpolished style -- thinking that the responsibility for the acceptance or rejection of a speech will rest solely with the hearer. The minister must make the conscious effort to clothe his thoughts in such language as will impress his lesson on the mind of the listener.

A third characteristic of style is that of variety. Augustine mentions the traditional classifications of style as subdued, temperate, and majestic. Usually, little things are presented in a subdued style; moderate things, in a temperate style; great things, in a majestic style.¹⁷ Granted that the Christian orator is constantly dealing with great matters, Augustine still insists that the style be varied.¹⁸ Although the subdued style is used primarily in teaching, there is a strong need for it when one is explaining a difficult point in a majestic sermon. Furthermore, the majestic type sermon should be introduced by an introduction of a temperate style.¹⁹ In addition, the temperate style may be used in an attempt to move men who are not so hardened as to need to be moved by the majestic style.²⁰ Unless the orator varies his style, the speaker will lose the attention of the audience.²¹

Although Augustine quotes from Cicero to tell us that the aim of the orator is threefold (to teach, to delight, to move), he actually believes that there are two essential aims: to teach, and to move. Of these two, teaching is the more essential, for it depends on what one says rather than how he

says it;²² men must have something to know before they can be properly moved.²³ The idea of delivering a sermon for the purpose of giving pleasure is strongly repulsive to the thinking of Augustine. To him, this is not a worthy end.²⁴ The type of pleasure which may be enjoyed will be that resulting from a knowledge of the truth. "Truth, when it is exhibited in its naked simplicity, gives pleasure, because it is the truth."²⁵

This idea is certainly worthy of modern consideration. Sometimes, one receives the impression he is listening to a speaker who is not trying to teach something instructive or needful, but is trying to present to his listeners that which they would like to hear. Or again, one may hear a speaker as he attempts to move an audience without first giving them the reasons why they should be moved. The result of the first attitude would be the reduction of Christianity to a series of epideictic speeches in which one praises his audience as being a group of perfect people -- a type of people who, if it were possible that such people might exist, would have no need of redemption. The result of the second approach would be confusion; men would embrace a cause without knowing what the cause was -- a cause which they might soon abandon. These comments should in no wise minimize the importance of moving an audience, for Augustine himself repeatedly emphasizes the fact that the Scriptures give us the best examples of writings designed to move audiences.²⁶ So, although the orator must

instruct, he must not be content with stopping at this level, but should stimulate the Christian layman to the acceptance of the truths presented and to the exertion of greater efforts.

One other qualification for the Christian orator should be noticed -- that of ethical proof. Augustine would agree with Quintilian that the orator must possess nonartistic ethical proof, for he says: "The man whose life is in harmony with his teaching will teach with greater effect."²⁷ Henry Ward Beecher expressed this same idea when he told a group of prospective ministers: "You have got yourself to bring up to the ideal of the New Testament." Beecher told his students that they must be "pattern" men.²⁸ Numerous modern examples could illustrate this point. Everyone is familiar with the old expression: "How can I hear what you are saying, when what you are speaks so loud, it drowns the message out?" Churches have prospered when ministers who teach benevolence, practice it; when preachers who emphasize personal work, engage in it; when Christian orators who preach the Golden Rule, believe in it.

All of these principles are designed to help the Christian orator toward a single goal -- to produce the desired effect. On this point again, Augustine transcends the thinking of his day when he announces that the principle of effectiveness is not the applause which one may receive from an audience; rather it is demonstrated by a change of life in the audience.²⁹

Thus the Christian orator who proclaims the life of Christianity may see that his preaching is effective when men repent and reform.

Although the writer is somewhat hesitant to level this criticism against contemporary preaching, the principle of effectiveness does not appear to have reached the stage of development which it should have attained in preaching circles. A Christian minister has so often adopted the standards of the world that the effectiveness of his sermons is measured, by him, in terms of the material things which he possesses. Thus the minister who is making \$1000 a week in a wealthy congregation which is spiritually dead is often styled as more successful than he who is having to assume an additional occupation to make a living, but who is also bringing about a spiritual reformation in a congregation. One question that may enter into a preacher's mind before changing locations might be whether he would be "stepping down" by assuming a new work.

These principles, set forth in Augustine's On Christian Doctrine over 1500 years ago, may still serve as helpful guides to the minister of today. The principles may seem to be demanding, and they are. Just as they transcended the ordinary rhetoric of that day, so they would largely transcend the rhetoric of today.

NOTES

David Walker is the desperate editor of this Journal who is in urgent need of good articles.

¹Andrew Watterson Blackwood, Preaching in Time of Reconstruction (Great Neck, 1945), p. 7.

²Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, Speech Criticism (New York, 1948), pp. 111-113.

³John Broadus, On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons (Garden City, 1929), pp. 5, 99, 138, 354, 541.

⁴Andrew Watterson Blackwood, Preparation of Sermons (New York, 1948), pp. 15, 73, 110, 124.

⁵Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, iv. 3. 4.

⁶Ibid., iv. 5. 7.

⁷Quintilian, Institutes of Oratory, ii. 17. 27, 28.

⁸Phillips Brooks, Lectures on Preaching (Grand Rapids, [n.d]), p. 5.

⁹Augustine, iv. 5. 7.

¹⁰I Cor. 1:21.

¹¹Augustine, iv. 13. 29.

¹²Ibid., iv. 6. 9.

¹³Ibid., 10.24.

¹⁴Ibid., iv. 10.25.

¹⁵Broadus, p. 361.

¹⁶Augustine, iv. 11. 26.

¹⁷Ibid., iv. 19. 38.

¹⁸Ibid., iv. 18. 35.

¹⁹Ibid., iv. 23. 52.

²⁰Ibid., iv. 25. 55.

²¹Ibid., iv. 18. 35.

²²Ibid., iv. 12. 27.

²³Ibid., iv. 12. 28.

²⁴Ibid., iv. 25. 55.

²⁵Ibid., iv. 12. 28.

²⁶Ibid., iv. 6. 9.

²⁷Ibid., iv. 27. 59.

²⁸Henry Ward Beecher, Lectures on Preaching (Glasgow, 1880)
p. 33.

²⁹Augustine, iv. 24. 53.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON TAKES OFFICE

David Walker

During the first five months of Lyndon Baines Johnson's administration, quite a few impressionistic comments were made concerning his speaking abilities. His delivery was said to be inferior to that of Kennedy's; one writer referred to it as a "drone." Thus, we were left with the impression that Johnson was, as a speaker, considerably lacking. These comments were evidently made, however, by those who consider delivery to be all-important, and who would relegate content to a very minor place of importance. This paper is concerned with a content analysis of Johnson's speeches during his first five months as President.

That a President does not write his own speeches is generally taken for granted. An article in the U. S. News & World Report of February 3, 1964, pointed out that several people assisted in the composition of Johnson's speeches--including Adlai Stevenson and Pierre Salinger. The most frequent ghost writer, however, was Horace Busby, a Texan who had worked with Johnson for a number of years.¹ Therefore, we are not analyzing Johnson's written speeches, but Johnson-directed addresses.

When Johnson became President in November, an uncertain attitude was present in the minds of many people. In its edition of November 24, the New York Times carried the reactions which

foreign countries were having to his succession. Britain was experiencing "anxiety;" France had a "fear of great changes in foreign policy:" it was said that "uncertainty is likely" in relations between the United States and Germany. Johnson's Presidency, furthermore, it was said, "stirs misgivings" in India.²

The same reaction was present in the minds of many people at home. Louis E. Lomax affirmed that the nation's Negro community was enveloped by "deep anguish and apprehension."³ In spite of his being Vice-President, Johnson was not too well known. Many people were asking such questions as: Who is Lyndon Johnson? Where does he stand on key issues? Can he carry on the programs started by President Kennedy? Johnson faced the problem of proving not issues, but himself; his was a problem of ethos.

Evidently realizing his need to build his ethos, Johnson used several artistic methods to enhance his audience's concept of him. Throughout his speeches, we find references to President Kennedy as Johnson attempted to identify himself with the late President. In speaking to the United Nations General Assembly on December 17, Johnson urged:

John Kennedy was the author of new hope for mankind, hope which was shared by a whole new generation of leaders in every continent, and we must not let grief turn us away from that hope. He never quarreled with the past. He always looked at the future. And our task now is to work for the kind of future in which he so strongly believed.⁴

Johnson used the same technique in his address following the signing of the tax bill when he reminded his audience: "This legislation was inspired and proposed by our late beloved President, John F. Kennedy."⁵

Johnson further strengthened his ethos by his frequent references to the Deity; he was thus pictured to us as a man concerned with religion. On an address broadcast on Thanksgiving Day, Johnson prayed:

Let us pray for his Divine wisdom in banishing from our land any injustice or intolerance or oppression to any of our fellow Americans....on this Thanksgiving Day as we gather in the warmth of our families, in the mutual love and respect which we have for one another, let us also thank God for the years that he gave us inspiration through His servant.⁶

In speaking to the U. N., Johnson declared: "Man's age-old hopes remain our goal--that this world, under God, can be safe for diversity, and free from hostility, and a better place for our children and for all generations in the years to come."⁷

Johnson's ethical proof was further enhanced when he showed his right to speak on a subject. In a speech delivered to Congress on November 27, he reminded his audience: "For 32 years, Capitol Hill has been my home; I have shared many moments of pride with you." In the same speech, Johnson demonstrated his right to speak on the civil rights issue when he pleaded:

I urge you again, as I did in 1957 and again in 1960, to enact a civil rights law so that we can move forward to eliminate from this nation every trace of discrimination and oppression that is based on race or color.

He attempted to show his familiarity with the responsibilities of the Chief Executive when he recalled: "I have seen five Presidents fill this awesome office. I have known them well, and counted them all as friends."⁹ In speaking to the U. N., Johnson showed that he was qualified to speak about poverty."

In my travels on behalf of my country and President Kennedy, I have seen too much of misery and despair in Africa, and Asia, and Latin America. I have seen too often the ravages of hunger and tapeworm and tuberculosis, and the scabs and scars on too many children who have too little health and no hope.¹⁰

Johnson's ethos was further strengthened on the occasions when he expressed a feeling of good will to his audience. In a speech of January 18, in dedicating the new National Geographic Society Building, he stated:

In the homes of our land and in all lands around the world, the National Geographic Society and its magazine are old friends and a very welcome companion. You have broadened the horizons and narrowed the misunderstandings of many generations--and you have helped us all to be better citizens of the world and better citizens of our times.¹¹

In a speech of February 21, delivered at U. C. L. A., preceding the presentation of an honorary degree given to President Adolfo Lopez Mateos of Mexico, Johnson used the same technique:

It is altogether appropriate that in this place of learning we should honor President Lopez Mateos. His qualities of mind and heart have made him the leader of Mexico and an example of the Hemisphere--a product of revolution and an architect of freedom.¹²

In speaking to the U. N., Johnson also strengthened his ethos by showing good will:

My friends and fellow citizens of the world, soon you will return to your home lands. I hope you will take with you my gratitude for your generosity in hearing me so late in the session. I hope you will convey to your countrymen the gratitude of all Americans for the companionship of sorrow you shared with us in your messages of the last few weeks.¹³

Johnson further enhanced the audience's concept of his character when he demonstrated humility on his part. In his speech to Congress of November 27, Johnson humbly said:

All I have I would have given gladly not to be standing here today. ...An assassin's bullet has thrust upon me the awesome burden of the Presidency. I am here today to say I need your help. I cannot bear this burden alone. I need the help of all Americans in all America.¹⁴

The following day, in an address to the nation, Johnson asked for the prayers of his audience.¹⁵

Johnson further developed his ethos by the sense of urgency and determination which ran throughout his speeches. The feeling is imparted that Johnson was a man of action--someone who wanted to get things done. His speeches were filled with the two words "we must." His determination was further shown by such statements as this one from the "State of the Union" address:

We shall neither act as aggressors nor tolerate acts of aggression. We intend to bury no one, and we do not intend to be buried. We can fight, if we must, as we have fought before, but we pray that we will never have to fight again.

In speaking to the U. N., Johnson further demonstrated his determination to honor all United States commitments:

I have come here today to make it unmistakably clear that the assassin's bullet which took his life did not alter his nation's purpose. We are more than ever opposed to the doctrines of hate and violence, in our own land and around the world. We are more than ever committed to the rule of law, in our own land and around the world. We believe more than ever in the rights of man--all men of every color--in our own land and around the world.¹⁷

As a final touch to his artistic ethos, Johnson, in his speeches, associated himself with what is right. Rather than acting from a basis of political expediency, Johnson showed himself to be concerned with whatever is the right thing to do. In his speech of March 16, the special message on poverty, Johnson explained why the program was to be carried out: "We do this, first of all, because it is right that we should."¹⁸ In his "State of the Union" address, Johnson urged: "Let us carry forward the plans and programs of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, not because of our sorrow or sympathy, but because they are right."¹⁹ In speaking to the delegates of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on April 3, Johnson affirmed: "We believe in the Alliance, because in our own interest we must, because in the common interest it works, and because in the world interest it is right."²⁰

Having noticed the major characteristic of Johnson's speeches, this paper will now consider some other aspects of his

rhetoric. In examining Johnson's stock of ideas, we find five recurring themes: (1) There is a need for national and international cooperation; (2) A war must be waged against poverty; (3) Every citizen must receive his full civil rights; (4) This administration is pledged to economy; (5) The future is bright.

Johnson pleaded for cooperation on a national scale in his message of November 27: "The time has come for Americans of all races and creeds and political beliefs to understand and to respect one another." Johnson affirmed that:

It is this work that I most want us to do--to banish rancor from our words and malice from our hearts--to close down the poison springs of hatred and intolerance and fanaticism--to perfect our unity North and South, East and West, to hasten the day when bias of race, religion, and region is no more and to bring the day when our great energies and decencies and spirit will be free of the burden that we have borne too long.²¹

On an international scale, Johnson reiterated the same theme in speaking to the U. N.: "Every nation must do its share. All United Nations member can do better. We can act more often together. We can build together a much better world."²²

In an address of February 12 honoring Abraham Lincoln, Johnson effectively brought in the second and third of his major ideas:

The American promise will be unfulfilled, Lincoln's work--our work--will be unfinished so long as there is a child without a school, a school without a teacher, a man without a job, a family without a home; so long

as there are sick Americans without medical care or aging Americans without hope; so long as there are any Americans, of any race or color, who are denied their full human rights; so long as there are any Americans, of any place or region who are denied their human dignity.²³

The theme of economy was pointed up in his "State of the Union" address as Johnson pledged "a progressive administration which is efficient and honest and frugal. The budget to be submitted to the Congress shortly is in full accord with this pledge."²⁴

The final theme of optimism was demonstrated by this short excerpt. When speaking to NATO, Johnson showed this enthusiastic outlook:

Proven in danger, strengthened in freedom and resolute in purpose, we will go on with God's help to serve not only our own people but to serve the bright future of all mankind.²⁵

Johnson used a variety of supporting materials--historical examples, facts and figures, specific instances, comparisons, and quotations. One of his favorite types of supporting materials seemed to be the use of personal examples. For instance, in a speech of February 11, to field officials of the Internal Revenue Service, he condemned discrimination by telling the touching story of a lady who had worked with Johnson:

She has been with us 20 years, she is a college graduate, but when she comes from Texas to Washington she never knows where she can get a cup of coffee. She never knows when she can go to the bathroom. She has to take three or four hours out to go across to the other side of the tracks to locate the place where she can sit down and buy a meal.²⁶

Johnson was effective in his use of emotional appeal. He appealed to man's desire for adventure when he mentioned "the dream of conquering the vastness of space." Appeals to the desire for security were used as he advocated legislation to produce more jobs and to build a stronger nation. He appealed to love and friendship as he advocated a spirit of cooperation on a national and international level. Appeals to sympathy were used as he pictured the conditions of those who are poor, or disease-ridden, or deprived of their civil rights. Representative of his appeals to fair play is this short excerpt: "Today Americans of all races stand side by side in Berlin and in Vietnam. They died side by side in Korea. Surely they can work and eat and travel side by side in their own country."²⁷ Likewise appeals to patriotism, reverence of Deity, freedom, anger, and hero-worship were used. What was noticeably lacking in Johnson's emotional appeals was any appeal to one of the strongest emotions possible--that of fear. Here is a man, then, who was an optimist and who wised to motivate his audience not by painting dark, gloomy pictures, but by inspiring a positive outlook.

One of the most noticeable features of Johnson's rhetoric was his characteristic style. As one writer has noticed: "It is crisp, punchy, given to short, factual declarations. Rarely

do sentences run longer than 25 words." The same writer quoted an unidentified aide of Johnson's as explaining that the essence of Johnson's style was brevity. The aide continued:

When the President was a boy, some editor told him he should keep his sentences under 25 words, and even less if possible. He hasn't forgotten that. The President has a set of rules in his mind. They boil down to this: Keep sentences brief and simple. Emphasize force more than style. Don't use semicolons, or, if you do, use them sparingly. Don't string out sentences. You will notice that in his own conversation the President uses lots of flowing sentences, but when it comes to making a particular point he underscores it in staccato phrases.²⁸

Johnson made frequent use of repetition. In an address to Congress, he spoke of Kennedy:

Today John Fitzgerald Kennedy lives on in the immortal words and works that he left behind. He lives on in the mind and memories of mankind. He lives on in the hearts of his countrymen.²⁹

In his "State of the Union" address, Johnson pleaded with Congress:

Let this session of Congress be known as the session which did more for civil rights than the last 100 sessions combined; as the session which enacted the most far-reaching tax cut of our time; as the session which declared all-out war on human poverty and unemployment, in these United States; as the session which finally recognized the health needs of all of our older citizens; as the session which reformed our tangled transportation and transit policies; as the session which achieved the most effective, efficient foreign aid program ever, and as the session which helped to build more homes and more schools and more libraries and more hospitals than any single session of Congress in the history of our republic.³⁰

Johnson's style delighted in making use of familiar phrases to underscore a point. Several times, he declared; "Let us here highly resolve that John Fitzgerald Kennedy did not live--or die--in vain." In speaking of Kennedy, Johnson said that the late president had malice toward none. He had charity for all." In honoring Lincoln, Johnson spoke of a "new birth" of freedom. In urging his audience not to heed alarmists, Johnson said that the best way to treat them is just "God forgive them, for they know not what they do."

A brief note might be said about organization. Johnson's speeches were organized to the point where one could easily outline them while listening to them. His addresses marched steadily toward their goals without deviation from their purposes.

What then, can be finally said about the content of Johnson's speeches? His speeches were well organized, he used emotional proof effectively, he had a variety of ideas--this can be said about a number of speakers. Two noteworthy conclusions--one positive and one negative--can be drawn.

On the negative side of the picture, Johnson's speeches were filled with a style that becomes almost annoying. Some

repetition is good in a speech, but to see every other paragraph utilizing it becomes bothersome. Again, Johnson's key phrases were rarely his own--they are instead borrowed from someone else. Alber and Rolo once wrote of Winston Churchill that "as a phrasemaker he is unmatched and unmatchedable." We may paraphrase this statement to say of Johnson, "as a phrase-borrower he is unmatched and unmatchedable." Some of his wording becomes trite.

On the positive side of the picture, we must credit Johnson--or at least his ghostwriters--with considerable insight into audience analysis. Johnson was speaking to an uncertain audience--an audience to which he had to prove himself. Through his identification with the late President Kennedy, by his references to the Deity, by his demonstration of his right to speak on subjects, through his expressions of good will, through his association with things which are right, Johnson constructed an image of an optimistic person in whom you can have full confidence, a person who can run the government. Of course, whether the image is accurate or not is now within the scope of this paper; this is, however, the image which Johnson's speeches have created to his audience. Johnson adapted to his audiences, and used the type of proof--ethical--which was most needed to win assent to his ideas.

What has been said in this paper is true for the first five months of Johnson's administration. After he had been in office longer, a new problem of ethos--Vietnam--arose to plague him.

His lack of success would be the subject of another paper.

NOTES

The author is still desperate.

¹"When Johnson Plans a Speech," U. S. News & World Report, LVI (February 3, 1964), 33.

²New York Times, November 24, 1963, p. E4.

³Louis Lomax, "Negro View: Johnson can free the South," Look, XXVIII (March 10, 1964), 34.

⁴New York Times, December 18, 1963, p. 14.

⁵Lyndon B. Johnson, "The Tax-Reduction Bill," Vital Speeches of the Day, XXX (March 15, 1964), 322.

⁶New York Times, November 29, 1963, p. 20.

⁷New York Times, December 18, 1963, p. 14.

⁸New York Times, November 28, 1963, p. 20.

⁹New York Times, November 29, 1963, p. 20.

¹⁰New York Times, December 19, 1963, p. 14.

¹¹President Johnson Dedicates the Society's New Headquarters," National Geographic, CXXV (May, 1964), 671.

¹²New York Times, February 22, 1964, p. 3.

¹³New York Times, December 18, 1963, p. 14.

¹⁴New York Times, November 28, 1963, p. 20.

¹⁵New York Times, November 29, 1963, p. 20.

¹⁶Lyndon B. Johnson, "State of the Union," Vital Speeches of the Day, XXX (January 15, 1964), 196.

¹⁷New York Times, December 18, 1963, p. 14.

¹⁸New York Times, March 17, 1964, p. 22.

¹⁹Johnson, "State of the Union," p. 194.

²⁰New York Times, April 4, 1964, p. 2.

²¹New York Times, November 28, 1963, p. 20.

²²New York Times, December 18, 1963, p. 14.

²³New York Times, February 13, 1964, p. 14.

²⁴Johnson, "State of the Union," p. 194.

²⁵New York Times, April 4, 1964, p. 2.

²⁶New York Times, February 12, 1964, p. 19.

²⁷Johnson, "State of the Union," p. 194.

²⁸"When Johnson Plans a Speech," p. 33.

²⁹New York Times, November 28, 1963, p. 20.

³⁰Johnson, "State of the Union," p. 194.

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