THE RHETORICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE
OF HUGH BLAIR

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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By

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PREFACE

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE "LECTURES ON RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTRES"

Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres occupy a prominent place in the history of rhetorical theory. Although the chief merit of the work lies in its influence on contemporary thinking, the lectures are also important to the present-day student of rhetoric. To make a just estimate of the influence of the lectures, let us develop the following points: (1) the reception of the lectures; (2) their effect on Eighteenth-Century style; and (3) their present value.

When the lectures were first published in 1783, they became an immediate success. Schools in England and America introduced them into their curricula and thus within a short period of time, "half the educated English-speaking world studied" the rhetorical theories of Blair with approbation.

The initial reaction proved more than a passing fancy. As time progressed, the public demand was so great that the first edition of the Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres was followed by many other editions in England, in America, and on the continent. From 1783 to

1873, sixty-two complete editions and fifty-one abridgments appeared. In addition, there were ten translations in French, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. Ten textbooks, containing representative lectures, were also used in English and American schools.2

These statistics reveal that Blair achieved a degree of recognition as a popular rhetorician that few modern critics have enjoyed. Qualified observers read the lectures with a more critical eye than the general public, but even they reached favorable conclusions concerning their merit. Most contemporary critics agreed that Blair was deficient in originality of thought and ornament of style, but they believed that his clear, concise restatement of classical doctrines more than offset his imperfections.

Throughout the discourses Blair reveals his admiration for a perspicuous style. He carefully examines the writings of such authors as Addison and Swift; and while he does not hesitate to point out blemishes when they occur, he recommends these writers as exemplars of good style. It is not surprising, therefore, that "the lectures expressed the canons of taste of the time in which Addison, Pope, and Swift were recognised as the sole models of English style . . . ."3


The effect of Blair’s style rendered him a writer worthy to be imitated. Gosse, who was not at all inclined to praise the Scottish minister’s work, readily admitted the influence of his style on contemporary writings.  

What benefit can a present-day student of rhetoric derive from a study of these lectures? The advantages to be derived are two-fold. First, the student can get an insight into the taste that typified the literary productions of the last half of the 18th century. Secondly, he can better understand the art of preaching.

Blair served as a link between the age of reason and the period of romanticism which followed. In spite of his willingness to repeat what others had said, observed Monk, he “is an important figure, for in his lectures is reflected much of the changing taste that goes to make up pre-romanti-cism.”

Blair’s contribution to the eloquence of the pulpit is significant. He was especially qualified to adapt the tenets of classical rhetoric to the pulpit. He not only had studied the teachings of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian but also had been a successful minister for twenty-five years prior to the first edition of the lectures.

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From this happy union of theory and practice evolved a series of rules which are, in many ways, still applicable to the preaching of today.

II. THE POPULARITY AND INFLUENCE OF BLAIR AS A PREACHER AND SERMON WRITER

In 1777, six years before the Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres appeared, Dr. Blair's first volume of sermons was published. Unlike most of the English books labeled "Sermons", Blair's work interested the public. The sale was so rapid and extensive, records Boswell, that the publishers showed their approval by rewarding the author with a bonus. The original sum of 100 pounds was doubled, and when the second and third volumes were sent to the printers, Blair received 300 pounds and 600 pounds, respectively, making a total of 1100 pounds for the first three volumes.6

Although the sermons did not have the durable quality of the lectures, they, nevertheless, were widely read for many years. Thirty-six editions were printed in England and the United States between 1777 and 1847. The sermons were also translated into French, German, Dutch, and Gaelic. In addition, many of the discourses were separately published,

while others appeared in various anthologies. 7

Blair's position as a sermon writer and preacher was enhanced by the praise which he received from such eminent literary figures as Kames, Johnson, and Boswell. In a letter to Kames, Blair states that it was due to the insistence of Kames that the sermons were first produced. 8

Kames' appreciation for Blair's ministry increased steadily. A few months before he died, the author of the Elements of Criticism observed that Blair "was the best preacher in Britain." 9

Although Johnson had little faith in the tenets of the Presbyterian church, he was impressed by Blair's pulpit eloquence. "I love Blair's Sermons," he said. "Though the dog is a Scotchman, and a Presbyterian, and everything he should not be, I was the first to praise them." 10

Johnson recommended the first sermon of Volume One as an excellent work of art. This praise, according to Boswell, was instrumental in changing the unfavorable o-

7 Schmitz, op. cit., p. 143.
9 James Boswell, Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle (Privately Printed, 1828-34), Vol. IV, p. 287.
pinion which Strahan had formed of the initial sermons. 11

Boswell likewise commended the preaching ability of Blair. He recorded in his diary that "Blair would stop hounds by his eloquence." 12 Of course, this is an exag-
gerated statement which does not accurately represent Boswell's true attitude toward his friend's preaching. At times he readily admitted that he received little help from a particular discourse. But, for the most part, he was satisfied with the sermons. This can be attested by the fact that he made written notations concerning at least seventy sermons that he heard Blair preach in Edinburgh be-
tween 1774 and 1786.

III. PREVIOUS WRITINGS ON BLAIR

The references to Blair which are available to the modern student are not proportional to the success which Blair enjoyed as a rhetorician and minister. Very few comprehensive studies, dealing with him as a central figure, have been made. In most cases, his biographers and critics have presented nothing more than a sketchy outline of his life and writings.

James Finlayson, Professor of Logic at the University of Edinburgh and Blair's successor as minister of the High

11 Ibid., p. 69.

Church at St. Giles, wrote the first biography of his colleague. In 1801, his "Short Account of the Life and Character of the Author" was prefixed to a complete edition of Blair's Sermons. His account contains some valuable information, but as the title indicates, is too short to portray adequately the life of Blair.

In 1807, John Hill's Account of the Life and Writings of Hugh Blair was published. Hill, like Finlayson, was well qualified to produce such a work. He was Professor of Humanity at the University of Edinburgh and a former pupil of Blair. The author attempted to develop the life of Blair from three points of view: the critic, the minister, and the man. Although the book presents more factual details than that of the previous biography, it is structurally weak. Macaulay asserted that it is "not a life, but a series of disquisitions on all sorts of subjects."13

When Leslie Stephen characterized Blair in the Dictionary of National Biography, he had access to three important books unknown to Hill and Finlayson. They were Burton's Hume, Carlyle's Autobiography and Tytler's Kanes, all of which relate interesting anecdotes concerning the character of Blair. Stephen's inquiry, however, is too brief to be of much value.

In 1938, William H. Hawley completed a thesis entitled, Hugh Blair: Moderate Preacher. This is a comprehensive study which has utilized many original sources, a large proportion of which appear for the first time in the literature dealing with Blair. The dissertation is constructed along the following pattern: early life; late life; the literary critic; the preacher.

Hawley's main contribution is in his discussion of Blair as a minister. The section on literary criticism, which includes an analysis of The Lectures On Rhetoric and Belles Lettres is very brief.

Recently Robert Schmitz published a book which supersedes anything previously written about Blair. The author, after a long period of research, has gathered source material, hitherto unknown to the writers which have been mentioned. Schmitz states

I have added much that lay scattered far and wide in the principal libraries and collections of Scotland, England, and the United States, hoping that from the mass of materials I might bring forth a real and lively picture of Blair.14

IV. PURPOSE AND METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The purpose of this investigation is to determine to what extent Hugh Blair observed, in the preparation and delivery of his sermons, the rules which he advocated in his

14 Schmitz, op. cit., p. vii.
lectures at the University of Edinburgh.\textsuperscript{15}

The first half of the study will consist of a re-
statement of the leading rhetorical principles set forth in
The Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. After a brief
survey of the introductory chapters which contain a dis-
cussion of such subjects as taste, criticism, genius, and
language structure, the lectures on eloquence, XXV-XXXIV,
and those on style, X-XIX, will be more carefully examined.

Using Blair's theory as a standard of eloquence, the
writer will then examine a group of his representative
sermons to discover wherein Blair adhered to or deviated
from his rhetorical teachings.

It is important to note that although the fundamental
aim of the study is to determine the relationship that exists
between the rhetorical theory and practice of Blair, other
significant conclusions may be drawn. For, in analyzing the
lectures and the sermons, we will be in a position to
evaluate Blair's contributions to rhetorical theory and his
significance as a preacher.

\textsuperscript{15} For similar studies see: Horace G. Rashkopf,
"John Quincy Adams' Theory and Practice of Public Speaking,"
in Archives of Speech, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 7-98; and,
Roy C. McCall, The Public Speaking Principles and Practice
of Theodore Parker (Doctor's Thesis, University of Iowa,
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THE RHETORICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE OF HUGH BLAIR

PART I. THEORY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Blair, as Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh, delivered a series of lectures which were published in book form in 1783. The content of these lectures represents his theory of rhetoric.  

1 In 1746 Adam Smith was selected as the first teacher of rhetoric at the University of Edinburgh. He continued giving the annual lectures until his appointment as Professor of Logic at the University of Glasgow in 1761. (See John Rae, Life of Adam Smith, London; Macmillan and Company, 1896, p. 30). Robert Watson, who succeeded Smith, held the position until 1788, at which time he was appointed to the Chair of Logic and Rhetoric at St. Andrews. Kames' influence then resulted in Hugh Blair's choice as Watson's successor. In 1759 Blair began his discourses. Though they were given at the University of Edinburgh, no college credit was allowed. One year later the Town Council appointed Blair professor of Rhetoric and thus the lectures became a recognized part of the college curriculum. (See Sir Alexander Grant, The Story of the University of Edinburgh, London; Longman, Green and Company, 1894, Vol. I, p. 376). It was not, however, until 1762 that he officially received the title Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. Blair, after serving in this capacity for more than twenty years, retired in 1783.

The Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, published in 1783, was, for the most part, a reproduction of the discourses which the author had delivered at the University for twenty-five years. Blair explains in the preface that many students, relying on superficial notes, were circulating imperfect copies of his lectures. The purpose of the book, therefore, was to give to the public an accurate account of his teachings. (See Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, Philadelphia: T. BIlwood Zell, 1882, Preface, 3.
Blair’s lectures were systematic discussions "of the best ancient and contemporary thought on the topics of rhetoric and belles lettres." These lectures—forty-seven in all—covered the following subjects:

(1) Taste, criticism, and genius  5 lectures
(2) Language  4 "
(3) Style  15 "
(4) Eloquence  10 "
(5) Literature (historical and philosophical writing and poetry)  13 "

47 lectures

Although Blair developed these topics at length, only a brief summary will be given in this introductory chapter.

I. TASTE, CRITICISM, AND GENIUS

The first five chapters of the book deal with the subjects of taste, criticism, and genius. The discussion of these topics is important to the design of the work as a whole because it lays a solid foundation for all that is said in the succeeding lectures. Let us investigate the nature and sources of these arts which are so essential to the development of eloquence.

Taste

Taste, which the author describes as "The power of

receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art," is a faculty of the mind common to all men and which can be influenced by exercise and reason. Taste, like the body, responds to exercise. Diligent practice, for example, enables a polisher to improve his sense of touch or an instrument maker his sense of vision. Using the same line of reasoning, Blair proceeds to show that he who assiduously studies the compositions of approved models will improve his taste.

Taste is also influenced by reason. Although these qualities are separate faculties of the mind, they are closely related. Taste produces pleasure; reason explains the nature of that pleasure. It is the duty of reason to determine the accuracy of a production of nature. Whenever a pleasure derived from nature or art is consonant with sound judgment, the taste is perfected.

Blair realized that taste is a fluctuating quality which varies with the nature and cultural background of an individual. It is conceivable that two people may react differently to the virtues of a given writer. One might be impressed by Virgil's style; another, by his thought. Such differences are not inconsonant with reason. If, however, one denies the existence of any virtues in Virgil, then the

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3 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (Philadelphia: T. Ellwood Zell, 1882), Preface. (Note: All references to the lectures throughout this study will be taken from this edition).


views of the critics are diametrically opposed.

Who is going to decide, in such cases, which judgment is the better? The author answers this question by stating that "his taste must be esteemed just and true, which coincides with the general sentiments of men." 4

The two main sources of the pleasures of taste are sublimity and beauty. Sublimity may be found in inanimate objects and in human nature. It implies vastness, force and power. Nature, with its oceans, its heavens, and its infinite space, pleases the imagination. That which is most effective, however, is mighty power and strength. Ideas which express solemnity, obscurity, disorder, and above all, the Supreme Being, exemplify force.

The sublime is often seen in human nature. A magnanimous or heroic spirit instills in the mind a feeling of admiration. When a story is told of a courageous warrior, the grandeur of character displayed usually produces the noblest form of pleasure.

Sublimity in writing is characterized by simplicity, consciousness and strength. The true sublime is an expression of bold, pathetic thoughts in language that is not profuse nor superfluous, not bombastic nor frigid, but at the same time, is sufficiently strong to give a clear and full impression of the object described.

4 Ibid., Lecture II, p. 34.
Beauty is a calmer, but more lasting quality than the sublime. It is portrayed in nature in the form of color, figure, and motion. Color simply implies those sensory stimuli which come to us through one source only, the structure of the eye. Figure is composed of two categories: regularity and variety.

Regularity is seen in geometrical constructions such as a triangle, a square or a rectangle. These simple designs serve as patterns for more complicated figures, which are a familiar part of modern culture. Thus everyone admires the regularity which is present in a well-proportioned chair, cabinet, or table.

The beauty of variety surpasses that of regularity. Nature employs the varied to enhance its beauty. The flowers, leaves, and brooks are not content to remain in one form, but rather they are constantly undergoing a change in structure or movement. Such variety inevitably pleases the sense of taste.

Gentle motion is also a trait of beauty. When that motion becomes forceful, however, the end result is the sublime. A smooth-running stream, for example, is a form of beauty; but as that stream progresses into a mighty river, then the sublime supplants beauty. The difference between these two prime sources of pleasure with respect to motion, therefore, is one of degree only.

The truly beautiful object is one which combines
regularity, variety, and motion. The human countenance is an excellent illustration of this pleasing combination.

Criticism

As I have previously indicated, criticism is closely allied to taste. The application of reason and good sense to the pleasures of nature and art is the criterion by which the merit of a production can be determined.

True criticism is not based on abstract reasoning. It is the result of a careful analysis of facts. To substantiate this belief, Blair points out that Aristotle's opinions concerning the three unities were formed after a thorough examination of the works of the great writers of antiquity. Criticism is an empirical art, therefore, which is never independent of facts and observations.

The purpose of critical rules is to help the writer or speaker avoid faults in his compositions. Beyond this, criticism cannot go.

Genius

Blair makes a definite distinction between taste and genius. "Taste consists in the power of judging; genius, in the power of executing." Taste can be acquired, but genius is a gift of nature. "Refined taste," asserts the author, "forms a good critic; but genius is farther necessary to

5 Ibid., Lecture III, p. 29.
form the poet, or the orator. Since genius consists of inventive and creative ability, it is obviously a higher virtue of the mind than taste.

Although genius can never be acquired, it is, like taste, an improvable faculty. Criticism is an instrumental factor in rendering this improvement possible. Its task here is not to compensate for a defect in genius, but to guide existing genius in the proper direction.

II. LANGUAGE

Blair devotes four lectures, the sixth through the ninth, to the subject of language. He begins by tracing the history of language from primitive times to the modern period. This is followed by a brief survey of the history of writing and the structure of modern English.

It is obvious, thought Blair, that primitive man depended largely upon divine teaching or nature, for the ability to communicate. The only possible medium of expression before the existence of words was the cry of passion which was an inherent sign in man.

The most logical method of procedure employed by early man to construct an adequate language was that of imitation. Many objects were characterized by particular sounds, such as the crashing timber, the flowing stream, and

6 Ibid.
the familiar noise of the cuckoo. Through a process of analogy, objects received names which corresponded to the sounds they emitted. A recent writer calls this the "bow-wow" theory; that is, "all the word stock is thought to have originated in a way parallel to the child's calling a dog 'bow-wow' or a duck 'quack-quack'."7

After these introductory remarks, Blair then analyzes the character of language in its early state more fully by comparing it with modern speech. The first inference that may be drawn is that primitive language was comprised of a minimum number of terms; yet because of its picturesque quality resulting from sound imitation, was, as far as it went, more expressive.

Secondly, the limited vocabulary necessitated an exaggerated pronunciation. Meaning was made clear only by ejaculatory speech characterized by excessive gestures and an oversumphas of pitch inflection. At this point the author states that the Greeks and Romans retained "this musical and gesticulating pronunciation in a very high degree."8

Next, the style of primitive language, was of necessity, metaphorical. Since there were insufficient names to

8 Blair, op. cit., Lecture VI, p. 64.
represent every object, the same connotation was used for numerous objects. Living conditions also made it possible for early man to utilize his imagination to a great degree. It is clear, therefore, that language, influenced by fancy, is more descriptive than that which is dependent upon the understanding.

As a last point of comparison, Blair shows the apparent differences in word arrangement. Again the imagination inherent in early man resulted in a more animated, yet less clear, and distinct word order than that of the present system. Thus, even the Greeks and Romans "place that first which strikes the imagination of the speaker most."9

The initial step in the history of writing consisted of the use of pictures to represent visible objects. This primitive form of writing was superseded by the development of hieroglyphical characters; that is, "symbols, which are made to stand for invisible objects, on account of an analogy or resemblance which such symbols were supposed to bear to the objects."10 An eye, for example, stood for knowledge; a circle for eternity.

Invention of an alphabet of syllables, followed by the alphabet of letters, are the concluding steps in the progress of writing.

9 Ibid., Lecture VII, p. 69.
10 Ibid., p. 75.
After discussing the structure of the English language, Blair then asserts that the three fundamental qualities of any language are copiousness, freedom of arrangement, and harmony of its sounds. Greek excels in all three. But English, while abounding in copiousness and freedom of arrangement, is deficient in harmony. No other European dialect, however, is as simple in its form and construction as English.

III. STYLE AND ELOQUENCE

Since style and eloquence will be discussed under the heading of Blair's theory of public speaking, only a brief survey of what is contained in these lectures will be considered here.

Blair's interest in style is evidenced by the fact that he devoted fifteen lectures to that subject. The topics included in these discussions and the amount of space allotted to each are as follows:

1. Periplicity and precision of words and sentences

2. Structure and harmony of sentences

3. Figurative language

4. General characters of style

5. Critical analysis of the style in Addison's Spectator

6. Examination of Swift's style

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It is surprising to note that only ten lectures, XXV-XXXIV, deal specifically with eloquence. The subjects in their order of presentation are:

1. History of Elocution 2 lectures
2. Elocution of Popular Assemblies, the bar and the pulpit 3 "
3. Analysis of representative sermon of Bishop Atterbury 1 lecture
4. Conduct of a discourse in all its parts 2 lectures
5. Delivery or pronunciation 1 lecture
6. Means of improving eloquence 1 "

10 lectures

IV. LITERATURE

The last group of lectures deals with literature in general. The discussions are separated into two categories: historical and philosophical writing and poetry. The former, which consists of three lectures (XXXV-XXXVII), is preceded by a comparison of the merits of the "ancients" and "moderns". The section on poetry includes almost every type of composition, written in verse style. It extends from the simple forms of the pastoral and lyric to the more artistic forms, the epic and drama.

V. CONCLUSION

Since the Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres
contain not only an analysis of eloquence but also related arts. Blair begins his discussion by treating those subjects which are of common interest to all of the polite arts. Taste, criticism, genius, language, and style are equally important to oratory, poetry, history, drama, and philosophy.

To write or speak well, advises Blair, an author must first improve his taste; that is, he must develop an ability to judge accurately the quality of a work. Taste, originating in sublimity and beauty, enables the writer to criticize with propriety. Whenever taste is supplemented by genius, which to Blair meant the power of executing, a speaker will inevitably produce pleasure.

The four lectures devoted to language consist of a discussion of its origin and history, followed by an examination of the comparative merits of Greek, Latin, and English. In tracing the history of language, Blair was greatly influenced by previous writers, many of whom were contemporaries. This is substantiated by the fact that he alludes to numerous studies dealing with the same subject.\[11\] A more original contribution was made in showing the simi-

\[11\] On concluding his discussion of language, Blair makes the following recommendation: "On this subject the reader ought to peruse Dr. Lowth's Short Introduction to English Grammar, with Critical Notes; Dr. Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric; and Dr. Priestly's Rudiments of English Grammar." (See Lecture IX, p. 101).
rarities and contrasts that exist among the various languages.

With these preliminary studies serving as a foundation for the rhetorical theory, Blair next considers style, along with other elements of oratory. He then concludes with a critical examination of the leading ancient and modern works of prose and poetry.
CHAPTER II

INVENTION AND DISPOSITION

In the ten chapters which Blair devoted to a study of eloquence, he was primarily concerned with invention and disposition. Throughout these lectures he stressed the importance of a character of probity appearing in the speaker, solid argument, and a clear method. His views on these phases of oratory will be discussed under the following headings: (1) nature of public speaking; (2) ethical requirements of a public speaker; and (3) conduct of the discourse in all its parts.

I. NATURE OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

The ancient rhetoricians, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, placed all forms of oratory in three categories: demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial. Blair, in an effort to adapt classical principles of rhetoric to modern needs, accepts judicial eloquence as such, combines demonstrative and deliberative speaking under one head which he calls eloquence of the public assembly, and adds to these the eloquence of the pulpit. ¹

Blair agrees with his predecessors concerning the three aims of oratory. The first and weakest aim is that of

¹ Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (Philadelphia: T. Ellwood Hall, 1792), Lecture XXVII, p. 265.
pleasing the audience. The types of speech-making which apply to this group are panegyrics, inaugural orations, and addresses to great men.

The second aim is to produce conviction. In accomplishing this task, the orator may delight his hearers, but it should be remembered that the purpose of pleasing is subordinate to that of informing and instructing the understanding. All discourses at the bar, have as their main goal, conviction.

The third and highest aim of oratory is persuasion. Here the author makes a distinction between convincing and persuading. To convince necessitates an intellectual acceptance of truths; to persuade goes one step beyond. Not only is the mind instructed, but the heart is moved. That listener who is persuaded is not content to "nod" his head in approval, but instead, he has a strong desire to act. Public assembly debates and sermons are the best examples of this form of eloquence.

From this cursory treatment of oratorical types and aims, let us next consider more specifically the particular objectives of the three categories of public speaking.

Since most demonstrative speaking has as its aim, to please the audience, Blair considers it the lowest form of eloquence. Deliberative speaking, the other branch of

2 Ibid., Lecture XIV, p. 263.
popular assembly eloquence, is a nobler art which usually finds expression in the debates in popular courts and in the Parliament of Great Britain. Its ultimate end is persuasion. The speaker strives to persuade his listeners to make a certain choice or follow a particular course of action. This goal may be achieved by first appealing to the understanding, then to the heart.

The purpose of speeches presented at the bar is different from that of the debates delivered in the public assemblies. The judicial orator proposes to convince the judge, not to persuade him. Because "conviction is the great object," states Blair, "... it is not the speaker's business to persuade the judges to what is good or useful, but to show them what is just and true."

Probably no place affords a better opportunity for persuasion, than the pulpit. The task of the preacher is to persuade men to live a better life. Whatever the minister may accomplish, if he fails to fulfill this duty, he has not succeeded as a representative of God.

The author reminds his readers that...

...all the preacher's instructions are to be of the practical kind, and that persuasion must ever be his ultimate object. It is not to discuss some abstruse point, that he ascends the pulpit; it is not to illustrate some metaphysical truth, or to inform men of...

3 Ibid., Lecture XXVII, p. 285.
4 Ibid., Lecture XXVIII, p. 299.
something which they never heard before; but it is to
make them better men; it is to give them, at once,
clear views and persuasive impressions of religious
truth."

True eloquence then, according to Blair, is the art
of presenting truths in such a manner that the end result is
conviction and persuasion. The extent to which each of
these ends should be developed is dependent upon the oc-
casion. This much is certain, however, that although con-
viction can result without persuasion, the converse is never
true. The avenue that leads to the heart originates in the
mind.

II. ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS OF A PUBLIC SPEAKER

Blair's concept of ethical appeal was similar to that
of Quintilian. Like the Roman teacher, he emphasized the
importance of a virtuous character and a comprehensive know-
ledge of the liberal arts. This section will contain an
analysis of the ethical requirements of a public speaker.
These requirements may be classified under two headings:
(1) the orator must be morally good; (2) he must be well
trained in such cultural subjects as poetry, history, phi-
losophy, and rhetorical criticism.

5 Ibid., Lecture XXIX, p. 315.
Moral Qualifications of the Orator

Quintilian, in his *Institutio Oratoria*, asserted that "no man can be an orator unless he is a good man." While Blair does not make such a bold statement concerning the morals of a speaker, he realized as did the classical rhetorician, the necessity of a virtuous character. "For it must never be forgotten," he said, "that there is no instrument of persuasion more powerful, than an opinion of probity and honour in the person who undertakes to persuade." If the orator is going to give the impression that he is morally good, it is essential that he cultivate particular virtues. One of the first traits which should be developed is that of sincerity. Nothing is of more consequence to the speaker than that he firmly believe the truth and importance of the doctrines which he espouses.

Many potentially good speakers have failed because of a faulty choice of subject matter. In their eagerness to obtain certain ends they have chosen causes which are unjust. This is, at best, a form of artifice which must be avoided.

Blair disagrees with the ancient rhetoricians who advocated that the orator should be able to speak on both

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6 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., MCMLXXVI), 121.i.5.
7 Blair, *op. cit.*, Lecture XXVIII, p. 304.
sides of a given cause. Such a practice inevitably leads to insincerity. For how can any man feel the impact of truth which his message contains if he argues first on one side, then on the other? It is a cardinal principle, therefore, that a public speaker always choose that side of a question to which he is most inclined.9

It is also essential that a speaker be modest, but courageous, in presenting his views. Modesty is almost always indicative of merit. The appearance of it is usually conducive to a favorable audience reaction. It is important to remember, however, that when modesty leads to timidity, it has gone too far. The orator ought to convey to his listeners the feeling that though he be modest, he is, at the same time, confident and firm in the belief, that he is advancing a worthy cause.10

The ideal orator should likewise possess generous sentiments. He cannot afford to devote his time and energy to trivial objects. Instead, he should turn his mind to those objects of a higher nature, which mankind inherently admires.

This does not mean that by centering his attention upon the nobler things of life, he will disregard the needs of his fellow man. The truly good man will look with com-

9 Ibid., Lecture XXVII, p. 297.

10 Ibid., Lecture XXXIV, p. 380.
passion upon those poor individuals who are distressed, sorrowful, or injured. It is through the combination then of "manly virtues" and a keen sensibility towards the sufferings of others, that an orator displays the sentiments which are necessary for persuasion.  

Blair's conception of ethical appeal with respect to the moral qualifications of the speaker may be summed up in the following paragraph from his lecture on "Means of Improving Eloquence":

... what stands highest in the order of means, is personal character and disposition. In order to be a truly eloquent or persuasive speaker, nothing is more necessary than to be a virtuous man. ... consider first, whether anything contribute more to persuasion, than the opinion which we entertain of the probity, disinterestedness, candour, and other good moral qualities of the person who endeavours to persuade? These give weight and force to everything which he utters; may, they add a beauty to it; they dispose us to listen with attention and pleasure; and create a secret partiality in favour of that side which he espouses.

Knowledge of the Orator

Blair, like Cicero and Quintilian, recognized the value of a thorough education. It is incumbent on him who wishes to speak effectively, reasoned Blair, to obtain an adequate fund of knowledge.

Since rhetoric embraces the broader aspects of cultural learning within its sphere, the aspiring orator should

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11 Ibid., Lecture XXXIV, p. 379.
12 Ibid., p. 378.
acquire at least a working knowledge of the liberal arts subjects. He should be able to speak intelligently on those ideas which are vital to mankind.

The first concern of the orator, pertaining to his education, is that he have adequate training in his own profession. The lawyer should study the problems that are involved in legal procedure; the parliamentary debater should study the theory of political science; and the minister should study religion, morals, and human nature.13

How effective can a speaker be if he is deficient in the subject matter of his specialised field? Blair would probably answer by saying that the lawyer, under such circumstances, would have few clients, the parliamentarian would yield to one of superior knowledge, and the preacher would seldom move his parishioners.

In addition to a profound understanding of his own profession, the speaker should be acquainted with polite literature. This includes training in poetry, history, criticism, and philosophy.

A knowledge of poetry assists the orator in improving his power of expression. For the figurative language which characterizes the poet's style, often lends dignity to a deliberative speech or a sermon.14

13 Ibid., Lecture XXXIV, pp. 380-381.
14 Ibid., p. 381.
History provides excellent examples of eminent characters, and relates facts in such a manner that the whole "course of human affairs" is clearly explained. Thus by alluding to an interesting and timely historical fact, the speaker often increases the effectiveness of his discourse.

Above all, a study of the teachings of rhetorical writers must not be neglected. In this connection Blair shows his classical leanings by pointing out that

It is to the original ancient writers that we must chiefly have recourse; and it is a reproach to any one, whose profession calls him to speak in public, to be unacquainted with them.  

Among those ancient orators who deserve special praise are Aristotle, Demetrius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cicero, and Quintilian. The author of the *Institution Oratoria* is the most useful member of this group.

From these observations, it is apparent that Blair saw a close relationship between a man's character and his ability to persuade. The content of a discourse cannot be separated from the virtues of the speaker. It is expedient, therefore, that an orator be a morally good man who has obtained an adequate knowledge of his own profession and related arts.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., pp. 385-386.
III. CONDUCT OF THE DISCOURSE IN ALL ITS PARTS

As we have previously seen, a total of ten lectures deal specifically with Blair's theory of public speaking. Since six of these lectures are concerned with such topics as history of eloquence, kinds of speaking, and an analysis of one of Bishop Atterbury's sermons, only four are devoted to what is called "conventional" rhetoric.

In discussing the "conduct of the discourse in all its parts", I will adhere to the same method of procedure as used by Blair in Lectures XXXI-XXXIV. An outline of the material to be covered in this section and the order in which it is to be arranged is as follows:

I. Exordium or Introduction
A. Ends of an introduction
B. Rules for composition of an introduction

II. The state and division of the subject

III. Narration or Explication

IV. Reasoning or arguments
A. Invention
B. Disposition and conduct of arguments
   1. Methods of reasoning
   2. Arrangement of arguments
C. Expression

17 When Blair takes up "expression" of arguments, he refers to style and delivery. Because of the emphasis placed on these subjects, they will be considered under a separate head.
V. The pathetic part
VI. Peroration or conclusion

Introduction
Blair concurs with Quintilian in the belief that the introduction of a discourse has three ends: (1) "to con-
ciliate the good will of the hearers... (2) to raise the
attention of the hearers... and (3) to render the hear-
ers docile, or open to persuasion."  

Since it is the purpose of the exordium to prepare the
way for what is to follow, it is often necessary to establish
rapport between the speaker and the listener. A strong
ethical appeal is the means by which this conciliation is
made possible.

A second function of the introduction is to arouse
audience interest. This may be accomplished by emphasizing
the "importance, dignity, or novelty of the subject" and by
pointing out the clear, precise, and brief method to be used
in treating it.

Frequently the members of an audience may have formed
unfavorable opinions of the particular cause being advocated.
In such cases, the orator must strive to remove these preju-
dices, before attempting to advance his arguments.

18 Blair, op. cit., Lecture XXXI, p. 342; See I.0. 4.1.5.
19 Blair, op. cit.
The exordium, therefore, serves primarily as a stimulant to put the hearers in a proper frame of mind. If this attitude is present in the beginning of a speech, a formal introduction may be omitted.  

In composing an exordium, says Blair, there are six rules which should be observed. First, it "should be easy and natural." Blair condemns the ancient rhetorical method of choosing introductions from commonplaces. Such introductions are often unrelated to the plan of the speech.

To render this part of a discourse "easy and natural" one should not plan it until the arguments have been carefully prepared in advance. Blair asserts that if the beginning is planned first, the substance of the address will be influenced by that beginning. In such cases, the entire discourse would be forced to accommodate an introduction which had been previously written.

It is more effective to study the design as a whole, before concentrating on a particular part. For, after the heart is warmed by meditating on the subject, "materials for the preface will then suggest themselves much more readily."

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p. 343.
22 Ibid., p. 344.
23 Ibid.
Although correct expression should be fused throughout the speech, it is of special importance in the introduction. This is due to the attitude of the listeners. Since, as yet, no arguments have been presented, their attention is centered upon the speaker, rather than the subject. Consequently they are apt to be critical of the speaker’s style and manner. "A correct plainness, and elegant simplicity," therefore, "is the proper character of an introduction." 24

Modesty is another essential characteristic of a good introduction. 25 The orator’s modesty should not only be exemplified in his expression, but also in his delivery. His countenance, vocal tones, and gestures add to or detract from the dignity which is required for the establishment of good will. This being true, the speaker should endeavor to perfect a mild manner of delivery, which is the appropriate type to be employed in an exordium.

Since the emotions can only be aroused through a gradual process, vehemence is seldom in order in this part of the discourse. In proportion as the mind is prepared, the strength of the appeal should increase. Blair acknowledges the fact that there are some instances in which this general rule does not apply. These exceptions, however,

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24 Ibid., p. 345.
25 Ibid.
represent, at best, a minimum number of cases.

At the same time the author points out that it is the function of the introduction to prepare the hearers for the pathetic appeals which are to be made later. "The orator should, in the beginning," therefore, "turn the minds of his hearers towards those sentiments and feelings which he seeks to awaken in the course of his speech." 26

Blair, recognizing the value of novelty in a speech, advises the orator to refrain from mentioning in the introduction some integral part of the subject that is going to be discussed. For experience reveals that any point, however vital it may be, loses novelty on appearing the second time. 27

As a last suggestion, Blair recommends that "the introduction ought to be proportioned, both in length and in kind, to the discourse that is to follow . . ." 28 There is no rule that can be set forth concerning the exact length of an exordium. It varies according to the subject and the audience. It is conceivable, thought the author, that a speaker may sometimes begin without any introduction, or at most, with one or two sentences.

In composing sermons, two kinds of introductions may

26 Ibid., p. 346.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
be used: explanatory and historical. The former is an explanation of the context. This is a very useful method, but because of its tendency to become dry, it should be as brief as possible.

The historical type has this particular advantage: it is apt to arouse the attention of the audience. Whenever an example is drawn from the past to illustrate the text of the message, the substance of the sermon is made clear.29

State and Division of the Subject

Blair, after observing that the proposition of a subject should be as distinct and concise as possible, next considers the rules which govern the division. The sermon, more than any other form of address, divides the subject into various heads. This, of course, gives the speech "less of the oratorical appearance,"30 but it is, nevertheless, more easily understood by the majority of listeners.

These partitions also assist the hearer in recalling the main ideas of the sermon. They further enable him to follow the arguments with greater facility; and, in addition, provide him with an opportunity to reflect on what has been said.

Blair realized that some critics might object to the

29 Ibid., p. 347.
30 Ibid., p. 348.
division of a sermon into several heads, on the grounds that it breaks the unity. He answered this objection by asserting that the contrary is often true. Divisions which are properly stated tend to make the discourse more "conspicuous and complete,"31 for the relationship of the parts is clearly shown.

Blair then gives five rules32 which should be followed in formulating the leading ideas of the discourse.

1. Each part should be exclusive from the others. In other words, no points should be treated under different heads that logically fall under one. If, for example, the advantages of virtue are developed as a first main idea and next, those of courage, honesty, and wisdom, then it is evident that a faulty division has been made. Since the former is composed of these individual traits, virtue and its component parts cannot be separated.

2. The points should be arranged in a logical order, that is, beginning with the simplest, but necessary steps. As the speech progresses, the ideas may become increasingly difficult, but since they are built upon each preceding part, they are apt to be clear.

3. There should be a sufficient number of heads to cover the subject completely.

31 Ibid., p. 349.
32 Ibid., pp. 349-350.
(4) The terms used to express the divisions should be concise. Nothing should be said but what is absolutely essential for the clarification of the idea.

(5) It is advisable to avoid "an unnecessary multiplication of heads . . . . In a sermon, there may be from three to five or six heads, including subdivisions; seldom should there be more."

**Narration or Explication**

The function of narration is to give an insight into the subject matter of a speech. It must of necessity, therefore, be clear and concise. Since there is seldom cause for the use of narration in sermons, explication is usually substituted for it.

Through explication the doctrine of the text is clarified. The verse of scripture which serves as the central theme is expanded in such a manner that the audience can readily understand the nature of the discourse. Precision of style, is the medium by which this part of the sermon is expressed. In short, it prepares the way for the persuasion that follows.

In the following paragraph, Blair gives some suggestions to those who wish to develop facility in expli-

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... meditate profoundly on the subject, so as to be able to place it in a clear and strong point of view. Consider what light other passages of scripture throw upon it; consider whether it be a subject nearly related to some other from which it is proper to distinguish it; consider whether it can be illustrated to advantage by comparing it with, or opposing it to some other thing; by inquiring into causes, or tracing effects; by pointing out examples, or appealing to the feelings of the hearers; that thus, a definite, precise, circumstantial view may be afforded of the doctrine to be inculcated. Let the preacher be persuaded, that by such distinct and apt illustrations of the known truths of religion, he may both display great merit in the way of composition, and, which he ought to consider as far more valuable, render his discourses weighty, instructive, and useful.35

Reasoning or Arguments

Three factors must be considered when dealing with the argumentative part of a discourse. They are the invention, the arrangement, and the expression of the arguments. This section will contain an examination of each of these requisites in the same order.

Invention. Blair devotes about two pages in Lecture XXXII to invention. On the surface, it would appear by this cursory treatment that he underestimated the value of invention. A more thorough investigation reveals, however, that he considered it "the most material, and the groundwork of the rest."36

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., Lecture XXXII, p. 365.
Blair, for the most part, rejected the ancient doctrine of "Loci Communes". Commonplaces, he thought, are of little aid to the speaker in preparing either the introduction or the line of reasoning. He supports this view by pointing out that "knowledge and science must furnish the materials that form the body and substance of any valuable composition."37

To those who believe that knowledge of the commonplaces will increase their inventive ability, Blair recommends the reading of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. But when they are confronted with the task of preparing a persuasive speech, continues the author, they should disregard the ancient topics and concentrate on their subject.

He then adds that

Demosthenes, I dare say, consulted none of the loci, when he was inciting the Athenians to take arms against Philip; and where Cicero has had recourse to them, his orations are so much the worse on that account.38

Blair's discussion of invention is similar to his treatment of genius. Although these terms are not synonymous they are closely allied in meaning. To say that a man possesses genius is to imply that he has unusual inventive and creative powers.39

37 Ibid., Lecture I, p. 11.
38 Ibid., Lecture XXII, p. 384.
39 Ibid., Lecture III, p. 29.
Invention, on the other hand, requires a thorough knowledge of the subject, and the ability to reason adequately concerning the subject. It is evident that the man of genius has a greater capacity to analyze the particular problem.

A defect in genius or invention cannot be supplied by art. The only source from which these powers can be derived is nature. All that rhetoric or art can do is to guide genius in the proper direction or to assist the speaker in arranging arguments that invention discovers.

Because rhetorical rules, therefore, have little, if any, effect on the improvement of invention, Blair apparently felt justified in giving this subject a minimum amount of space in his lectures.

**Disposition and Conduct of Arguments.** The two methods of reasoning are the analytic and the synthetic. The analytic is employed when an orator establishes a general rule, after examining a series of related truths. In developing his ideas by this procedure, the speaker often conceals his purpose from the audience.

He begins by citing a fact which even the most discerning listener will accept. He then advances by individual steps from one known truth to another. When the conclusion is finally reached, the listeners are apt to accept it as a sound premise.
Blair illustrates this method by showing how a man, in attempting to prove the existence of God, may begin by observing that

... every thing which we see in the world has had a beginning; that whatever has had a beginning, must have a prior cause; that in human productions, art shown in the effect, necessarily infers design in the cause; and proceeds leading you on from one cause to another, till you arrive at one supreme first cause, from whom is derived all the order and design visible in his works.40

Blair admired this Socratic system of reasoning, but admitted its limitations. Although it is especially appropriate for conciliating a hostile audience, it is not adaptable to all subjects and circumstances.

Synthesis is a more practical mode of reasoning.41 A general principle is set forth as a theory to be proved. Arguments are then assembled in such numbers as are necessary to determine the validity of the original assumption. This method is used in most of the speeches designed for a popular audience.

Choice and Arrangement of Arguments. One of the first points that an orator must consider in preparing an argumentative discourse, is the proper selection of ideas. He must take care to choose, from the numerous arguments which present themselves, those which are pertinent to the

40 Ibid., Lecture XXXII, p. 365.
41 Ibid.
cause.

It is a useful exercise, thought Blair, for the speaker to place himself in the position of the hearer. While in this state of empathy he can, by meditating on the main propositions of the subject, determine what persuasive effect they will probably have on the audience.42

Once the arguments have been chosen, the next step is to arrange them with propriety. The author gives four rules for arrangement.

(1) "Avoid blending arguments confusedly together, that are of separate nature."43 The purpose of all arguments is to prove at least one of three things; that a cause is basically true, morally right, or useful. The reasonings that are used to support these themes of "truth", "duty", and "interest" must be exclusive from each other.

Let us suppose, observes Blair, that a speaker is trying to persuade an audience of the necessity of loving his neighbor. He uses three arguments which point out in order, definite reasons why the specific purpose is sound. First, a kind spirit towards our fellow man produces an "inner satisfaction". Secondly, the example of Christ's life has established a precedent, which we are morally obligated to follow. Thirdly, a benevolent attitude will

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.
secure us the good will of others.

Although these arguments, in themselves, are good they are not properly arranged. The first and third main ideas are drawn from such topics as "interest, internal peace, and external advantages." The second, however, is based entirely upon duty. The author concludes that since these principles represent different aspects of human nature, the arguments employed should be "separate and distinct." 44

(2) Arguments, whenever possible, should be arranged in an order of climax. 45 If a speaker has a good, but simple cause, and is confident that he can prove it easily, then it is advisable for him to begin with the weakest arguments and gradually progress to the strongest.

Many audiences, however, are hostile towards the speaker and the subject. In such cases, the most convincing argument should be considered first. After the distrust has been removed, the listeners will be less critical of that which is to follow.

Blair accepts Cicero's belief that, in most cases, when arranging a group of arguments, all of which are essential to the development of a subject, those which are least conclusive should be placed in the middle. 46

44 Ibid., p. 366.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid. Note: Cicero in De Oratore states that "if any (arguments) are but of moderate strength . . ., they may be thrown into the main body and into the midst of the group" Book II, LXXVII.
(3) "When our arguments are strong and satisfactory, the
more they are distinguished and treated apart from each
other, the better." Amplification of strong ideas usually
impresses the listener. But when the arguments are mere
suppositions they may be "thrown" together in such a manner
that each receives mutual assistance from the other members
of the group.

(4) Arguments should not be unduly long, nor should they
be excessive in number. There is a temptation on the part
of some speakers to amplify certain points beyond reasonable
limits. After an argument has been adequately proved they
tend to bring in other evidence which is superfluous. This
redundant treatment inevitably fatigues the audience.

There is a danger also of having too many arguments.
It is much more effective, says Blair, to have a small, well
chosen group of leading ideas. Only then, can the hearers
comprehend the full meaning of the message. For it is an
inherent fact of nature that the greater the number of items
discussed, the more difficult they are to remember.

The Pathetic Part

Blair defines passion as "that state of the mind in
which it is agitated, and fired by some object it has in

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., p. 387.
view. A speaker may convince an audience of the truth of his proposition, and through a rational approach to the topic may sometimes produce action. But only that man who feels the warmth of passion can be truly eloquent.

Passion, when sufficiently strong, but at the same time properly controlled, enables the orator to increase his effectiveness. Moved by an inspiration from within, he is able to conceive the subject in its highest designs. By transferring these sentiments to his auditors, he persuades.

With this thought in mind, the author explains why English sermons as a whole are lacking in strength and vigor:

Many printed sermons we have, full of good sense, and of sound divinity and morality; but the eloquence to be found in them, the power of persuasion, of interesting and engaging the heart, which is, or ought to be, the great object of the pulpit, is far from bearing a suitable proportion to the excellence of the matter. There are few arts...farther from perfection, than that of preaching is among us...an English sermon, instead of being a persuasive animated oration, seldom rises beyond the strain of correct and dry reasoning.

It is not enough, therefore, to convince or instruct the mind. True eloquence goes one step further. The passions of the heart are stirred by the animated appeal of the pathetic orator.

49 Ibid., Lecture XXV, p. 363.
50 Ibid., Lecture XXVI, p. 281.
Blair did not agree with Aristotle's opinion that a knowledge of the passions is sufficient to render a speaker pathetic. Since this power, like genius, comes from nature, all that rhetorical rules can do is to "direct it . . . into its proper channel . . . ."^52

Although pathos is a gift from nature, it is, thought Blair, an improvable faculty. He, therefore, gives seven directions for using the emotional form of proof.

The first consideration is that the subject must be of such a nature that will allow the pathetic. If the subject fulfills this requirement, the writer should then determine what part of the discourse is the most appropriate for employing it. Sound judgment reveals that some topics are not sufficiently important to warrant vehemence. Other themes demand a calm, rational treatment. If a speaker attempts to arouse the emotions of the audience while discussing a subject, which is by its nature opposed to passion, then he is exposing himself to ridicule.

Assuming that the cause is suitable, the next

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^51 Ibid., Lecture XXXII, p. 358. Note: In Book II of his Rhetoric, Aristotle discusses the following emotions: anger, mildness, friendship, hatred, fear, boldness, shame, shamelessness, kindness, unkindness, pity, indignation, envy, emulation, and contempt. A thorough knowledge of these emotions should enable the speaker to be pathetic. (Lane Cooper, The Rhetoric of Aristotle, New York: D. Appleton Century Company, 1932, 2.2-117).

^52 Ibid., p. 359.
question is when should the appeal be made. Blair asserts that any attempt to move the heart before the mind is destined to fail. The listener should be shown that he is justified in "entering with warmth into the cause." 53

Most writers agree that the peroration or conclusion is the best place for the excitation of the passions. In most cases, says Blair, this assumption is true because the effect is always greater when the pathetic is preceded by sound argument.

As a second rule the author advises against the practice of setting aside a particular portion of the address for exciting the emotions. It would be unwise, indeed, to tell the hearers in advance that "you are about to be pathetic.... The indirect method of making an impression is likely to be more successful." 54

Thirdly, it is necessary that the orator realize "that there is a great difference between showing the hearers that they ought to be moved, and actually moving them." 55 Rational arguments, giving reasons why it is incumbent on the audience to feel passion are only a means to an end. They do not, in themselves, arouse emotion.

Whenever concrete examples or illustrations are substituted for abstractions, the appeal is more intense. To

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
... set before me the distress suffered by the person for whom he would interest me; then, and not till then, my heart begins to be touched, my gratitude or my passion begins to flow. The foundation, therefore, of all successful execution in the way of pathetic oratory is, to paint the object of that passion which we wish to raise, in the most natural and striking manner; to describe it with such circumstances as are likely to awaken it in the minds of others.56

The fourth essential requisite is that the orator be moved himself. Few men have the ability to display an emotion which they do not feel. Any attempt to move the auditors under such circumstances, therefore, is contrary to the law of nature.

The speaker who reveals by his mode of expression, his looks, his gestures, and his voice that he is experiencing the sensation of love, or fear, or anger instills in those who hear him a desire to undergo the same reaction. It is clear that one who hopes to persuade must cultivate a feeling of sensibility. For the sublime of oratory, "requires those strong sensibilities of mind, and that high power of expression, which are given to few."57

As a fifth requirement, the language should be simple. This does not preclude the employment of vivid figures. On the contrary, the use of any terms which are conducive to increased intensity is recommended. The de-

56 Ibid., p. 360.
57 Ibid., Lecture XXVII, p. 289.
sired purpose is best achieved by expressing our thoughts in an animated, simple style, devoid of all appearances of "ornament or finery." 58

In the sixth place, the speaker should endeavor to refrain from introducing extraneous or superfluous matter in the pathetic part of a discourse. Any unnecessary digression, serves to cool the ardor of passion. When comparisons are used, for example, the force of the emotional drives is momentarily relieved by the interruption. The same condition results, when a line of reasoning is extended too far. When the aim, therefore, is to make an appeal to the basic motives, the orator should "avoid interweaving anything of a foreign nature . . . ." 59

The last rule is concerned with the length of the appeal. Because of the nature of the pathetic, it should never be prolonged. Since a high state of emotional intensity is not lasting, one should know how to make the necessary transition from the stronger to the milder tone.

This can best be accomplished by descending gradually in such a manner that the sentiment will continue. All that changes is the method of presentation; the thought moves on. Blair concludes his discussion with the following word of advice: "Above all things, beware of straining passion too

58 Ibid., Lecture XXXII, p. 361.
59 Ibid.
Percussion or Conclusion

Blair did not discuss at length, rules governing the conclusion or percussion; in fact, he devoted less than one page to this portion of a speech. The conclusion, he asserts, may be in the form of a summation or an emotional appeal. In those addresses which have as their purpose to inform or to convince, it is appropriate to sum up the leading arguments. If, however, the aim of the discourse is to persuade, pathetic proof is probably a better form of percussion. Whatever type is used, this end should be kept in mind, that the point upon which you wish to rest your case should come last. 61

A popular method of concluding a sermon is to draw inferences from the material that has been developed. The minister must be careful not to deduce any thoughts which are inconsonant with the sentiment of the message as a whole. Sometimes the deductions may be just and to the point, but if they introduce a line of reasoning which was not previously considered, the listener is apt to be diverted from those thoughts which had hitherto held his attention.

Another important consideration in preparing a con-

60 Ibid., p. 362.
61 Ibid., p. 364.
clusion is accurate timing. When a speech abruptly ends or lingers on until an anti-climax is reached, the audience is either surprised or disappointed.

The main function of the conclusion is to cause the listeners to leave the public assembly, the court room, or the church with a proper attitude towards the subject. The degree to which this purpose is achieved, is the criterion by which the effect of a peroration can be determined.

IV. CONCLUSION

The three types of eloquence: that of the public assembly; of the bar; and of the pulpit, are designed to please, to convince, or to persuade.

Demonstrative and deliberative speaking are forms of public assembly eloquence. Their purpose is to please and to persuade respectively. The chief interest of the lawyer at the bar is to convince the judge; while preachers, on the other hand, should always strive to persuade the members of the audience to live a virtuous life.

The prospective orator, thought Blair, cannot hope to succeed in his profession unless he possesses the necessary ethical requirements. First, he must be morally good and secondly, he should have adequate training. He who earnestly desires to resemble the ideal recommended by Quintilian, must be sincere and modest, and, in addition, have a heart capable of being aroused by warm and generous sentiments.
It is not enough, however, to be virtuous. The speaker should be thoroughly trained in his own profession and in related subjects as well. For example, a minister should add to his knowledge of church doctrines and Biblical teachings an understanding of poetical, historical, and philosophical works.

In his section on the conduct of the discourse in all its parts, Blair adheres to the classical divisions which are as follows: introduction; state and division of subject; narration or explication; argumentative part; pathetic part; peroration or conclusion.

Since the aims of the introduction are to gain the favor of the hearers, to arouse their attention, and to prepare them for persuasive appeals which come later, this part of the speech should stem from the theme, should have correct expression, should be properly proportioned to the length of the discourse, and whenever possible, should have an air of novelty. In presenting the exordium, the speaker rarely employs vehemence. Modesty, on most occasions, is a desirable trait, for calmness often leads to conciliation.

The points to remember in separating the subject into divisions are: (1) select the proper number of heads and arrange them logically; (2) each part should be exclusive from the others; and (3) the terms should be expressed in a concise manner. Blair also emphasizes the necessity of precision of style in the narration or
explication.

The argumentative part of the discourse includes an analysis of invention, the methods of reasoning, and the choice and arrangement of the arguments. Since invention is closely allied with genius and can, therefore, receive only limited help from rhetorical rules, the author dismisses this important subject after a brief discussion.

Of the two types of reasoning, the analytic and the synthetic, Blair felt that the latter is more appropriate for popular eloquence. It is more pleasing to the audience to work from the general to the specific rather than from the specific to the general. This pleasure is due, in part, to the increased clarity which accompanies the method of synthesis.

The choice and arrangement of the arguments are vital factors in the effectiveness of a speech. Select the ideas carefully, advises Blair, and then place them in a logical order. No arguments should be developed together which are of a separate and distinct nature. Their length should be relatively short and, in addition, they should form a climax.

Blair stressed the importance of pathos as a persuasive device. A speaker may convince the understanding through the logic of his arguments; but the heart is stirred by vehement, emotional appeals. Although the pathetic part is considered as a separate division of a discourse, this does not mean that pathos is determined prior to the de-
livery of the speech. An orator cannot set aside a particular portion of his address as a part designed to arouse the emotions. Of course, the conclusion is usually the ideal place for such an appeal because the mind has usually been convinced, and is, thus, in a receptive mood for persuasion.

The rules which the speaker must observe in using this appeal are: (1) the subject must warrant it; (2) the orator should be moved; (3) the language should be simple and concise, free from redundant matter; and, (4) it should not be too long.

Not much is said about the conclusion, except that it may take one of two forms: a summation or an emotional appeal. In some instances a speaker may use both, but, for the most part, one will suffice. If the purpose of a discourse is to inform, then the peroration should always summarize. If, however, the end goal is persuasion, it is often advisable to conclude by appealing to the heart.
CHAPTER III

EXPRESSION

In the preceding chapter we discussed the character of the orator, and the importance of solid argument and a clear method. Our next consideration pertains to the speaker's manner of expression as seen in his style and delivery.

I. STYLE

An examination of the lectures reveals that Blair was deeply interested in style. As we have previously seen, his discussions of this topic embrace fifteen lectures, ten of which are studies of rules of good style. The other five are critical analyses of representative writings of Addison and Swift. There are also numerous passages scattered throughout the work which contain additional remarks on the subject.

Blair defines style as the particular manner in which an orator expresses his thoughts through the medium of language. It is different from either words or languages, however, for a man may be accurate in choosing terms and still have defects in style.

This aspect of a composition is closely associated with the speaker's thinking. Since diction is merely a portrayal of the ideas which occupy the mind, it is difficult to draw the line that separates it from the sentiment.
Style varies according to the environment in which it finds expression. "Different countries," says Blair, "have been noted for peculiarities of style, suited to their different temper and genius."\(^1\) The Eastern nations, for example, favor animation, the Athenians, accuracy and clarity, and the Asiatics, diffuseness. In each case, the diction is consonant with the nature of the inhabitants of these areas.

After this short introduction, Blair then takes up specifically each component part of style and concludes with some general observations based on the findings of the investigation. In developing Blair's theory of style, I will follow the same method of procedure used in the lectures. That method can be shown in the following outline of Lectures—X-XIX:

I. Ferspicuity
   A. Single words and phrases
      1. Purity
      2. Propriety
      3. Precision
   B. Sentences
      1. Clearness and precision
      2. Unity

3. Strength
4. Harmony

II. Ornament
   A. Nature of Figurative Language
   B. Figures
      1. Metaphor
      2. Personification
      3. Apostrophe
      4. Comparison
      5. Antithesis
      6. Interrogation and Exclamation
   C. Directions about the use of figures

III. General Characters of Style
   A. Style, with respect to its expression
      1. The diffuse and the concise style
      2. The nervous and the feeble style
   B. Style with respect to ornament
      1. A dry style
      2. A plain style
      3. A neat style
      4. An elegant style
      5. A florid style
   C. Simplicity of Style
   D. The vehement style
   E. Directions for attaining a good style

IV. Conclusion
Perspicuity

Blair agrees with Quintilian that perspicuity is the basic quality of style. The first objective of any writer should be to make his thoughts clearly understood. "Our aim must be not to put him (the hearer) in a position to understand our argument," asserts Quintilian, "but to force him to understand it."\(^2\)

When an individual is compelled to reread passages from any composition a second or third time in order to ascertain the author's meaning, he derives, at best, a temporary pleasure from the work. Such writers, after their ideas have been comprehended, may be praised for their apparent subtlety, but are seldom read more than once by any given reader.

Blair states that no man should write on any subject which is not clear to him. Metaphysical writers often get lost in a maze of philosophical abstractions, which are usually the result of an indistinct conception of the problem. To compose with clarity, therefore, it is essential that one think accurately.

Perspicuity is not, as some are inclined to believe, a negative virtue. It is a positive merit to be able to express our thoughts in a distinct manner; for then the

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message is more intelligibly translated into meaningful symbols. We are pleased with that author "whose style flows always like a limpid stream, where we see to the very bottom."  

Persepicuity should be studied with respect to words and phrases and sentences. As our first step, let us determine the characteristics of a perspicuous word or phrase.

Words and Phrases. The three qualities of perspicuity in connection with words and phrases are "purity, propriety, and precision."  

Purity "is the use of such words, and such constructions, as belong to the idiom of the language which we speak."  

It is opposed to those expressions which are foreign imports, those which are obsolete and those which have been newly formed, but as yet, not accepted by the authorities. Blair acknowledges the fact that there are some exceptions to the rule. A poet, for example, may on occasions borrow a word from another tongue. Even then, however, the writer must be careful not to indulge excessively in this practice.

Propriety is the selection of those words and phrases.

3 Blair, op. cit., Lecture X, p. 103.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
which are most suitable to express a particular idea. Style may be pure and still not have propriety. If a construction, observes Blair, is of native origin and in common usage, but, at the same time, vulgar or inexpressive, it is not proper. Propriety requires that a word not only be pure but also the most appropriate term for conveying the exact meaning of the writer. It is evident, therefore, that although purity may exist without propriety, the converse is never true.

There are three faults which are prevalent in the choice of words: the words may not convey the intended meaning, but rather an idea which is similar; they may express the concept, but not adequately; they may go beyond the purpose desired, by expressing superfluous matter. Propriety remedies the first two faults but it is the duty of precision to correct the third. Precision, the highest quality of perspicuity, "imports retrenching all superfluities, and pruning the expression, so as to exhibit neither more nor less than an exact copy of his idea who uses it."6

To speak with precision, it is necessary for the orator to understand his subject thoroughly. There is a tendency on the part of some writers to employ verbiage in order to make their ideas clear. This effort to compensate for an insufficient understanding of the subject, usually fails.

6 ibid., p. 104.
The loose style is directly opposed to precision. Instead of presenting one object in a clear, distinct view, related ideas are introduced to such an extent that the reader first gets one impression, then another. This loose style often finds its beginning in the careless use of synonymous terms. Blair aptly illustrates this point by distinguishing between "courage" and "fortitude".

When an author tells me of his hero's courage in the day of battle, the expression is precise, and I understand it fully. But if, from the desire of multiplying words, he will needs praise his courage and fortitude; at the moment he joins these words together, my idea begins to waver. He means to express one quality more strongly; but he is, in truth, expressing two. Courage resists danger; fortitude supports pain. The occasion of exerting each of these qualities is different; and being led to think of both together, when only one of them should be in my view, my view is rendered unstable, and my conception of the object indistinct. 7

Blair realized that precision is sometimes carried too far and, as a result, the style, being devoid of all ornament, is dry and barren. This is true of the more serious writings of Swift.

What are the essential requisites for acquiring precision in style? This quality, says Blair, is dependent upon genius, which is in turn aided by diligent practice and study.

Structure of Sentences. The prime consideration with

7 Ibid., pp. 105-6. (Note: Underlined words are in italics in original).
respect to sentences is that they vary in length according to the purpose of the composition. Long sentences, for example, are not readily adaptable to oral discourse due to the difficulty of pronunciation. In written composition, long periods soon tire the reader because of the strain in holding attention.

On the other hand if the sentences are too short, the trend of thought is often broken and the memory is burdened unduly by trying to respond to the numerous objects which are presented to it in succession.

In discussing the two types of sentence structure, Blair uses French terminology: 'style périodique' and 'style coupé.' 8 "Style périodique" is a grave, dignified form of composition in which the sentence is composed of various parts, fastened together in such a manner that the sense is not completely known until the end. A group of clauses connected by semicolons, and progressing towards a climax, give this style an oratorical tone.

"Style coupé", is a less serious and animated mode of expression. Instead of combining a number of related clauses, into a lengthy sentence, this style is characterized by a series of short, independent theorems, each expressing within itself a complete thought.

To write or speak well, states Blair, the author should be well acquainted with both forms of style; for it

8 Ibid., Lecture XI, p. 113.
is desirable to vary not only the length but also the structure of the sentence. A good composition will contain, therefore, a "proper mixture of long and short periods."\(^9\)

Following these general remarks, Blair next treats some of the particular qualities of a good sentence. They are: 1. Clearness and precision; 2. Unity; 3. Strength; 4. Harmony.\(^10\) Each of these is thoroughly examined.

Clearness and precision preclude the use of ambiguous terms or phrases. Ambiguity results from two causes: a faulty selection and a faulty arrangement of words. Since we have already considered perspicuity in connection with the choice of words or phrases, let us analyze the proper disposition of those words.

Blair sets down certain rules which he recommends to those who wish to arrange the parts of speech within a sentence in the clearest, most precise manner possible.

First, grammatical rules should be studied. Secondly, all words that are closely related should be reasonably near each other so that their intimate connection can be clearly seen.

Adverbs, interposed words or phrases in the middle of a sentence, and relative pronouns are frequently separated from that term which they modify, and thus the meaning is

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ibid., p. 114.
altered. To say, "I only am going to school," for example, does not mean the same as "I am only going to school." By rearranging the position of the adverb only, a different signification is given.

A similar condition occurs when prepositional phrases are carelessly placed in a sentence. Unless these phrases are sufficiently close to the terms which they purpose to qualify, the intended concept is ambiguous.

Probably no parts of speech are more difficult to handle than the relative pronouns, who, which, what, whose, and that. Whenever a relative word does not immediately present its antecedent, or whenever it is repeated too often, the sense is frequently obscure.

It is evident that a clear and precise style is one in which all appearances of ambiguity are gone. Both words and sentences give a precise interpretation of the author's meaning.

The second requisite of a good sentence is unity. Blair, after asserting that "there must be always some connecting principle among the parts,"11 points out four ways in which the unity can be improved.

1. Change the scene as little as possible during the course of a sentence. That which is the principle object under consideration should continue until the end.

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11 Ibid., p. 118.
fusion results when "sudden transitions from person to person" or "from subject to subject" are made.

2. One should avoid placing in a sentence a group of clauses which could be developed as separate thoughts. It is much more advisable to have three or four short sentences than to have the same ideas expressed in one that is long and drawn-out.

3. Parentheses should never occur in the middle of a period. Nothing destroys the unity more than to insert in the center portion of a sentence a lengthy clause which is only partially related to the purpose of the whole. Such a parenthetical statement is sometimes a sentence within a sentence.

4. As a last requirement for the unity of a sentence, Blair suggests that it be brought "always to a full and perfect close." Although some writers have a tendency to end abruptly, the greatest danger is to prolong the period unnecessarily. It is wise to use discretion, therefore, in choosing the proper moment to conclude.

The third quality of a correct sentence is strength. By this, Blair means:

... such a disposition of the several words and members, as shall bring out the sense to the best advantage; as shall render the impression, which the

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 122.
period is designed to make, most full and complete; and give every word, and every member, their due weight and force. The author gives seven rules which, if observed, will enable the writer to increase the strength of his sentence structure.

1. All redundant words and members should be removed. For anything that does not add to the import, is, in reality, a hindrance. You cannot be superfluous without weakening the strength of the sentence. It is a useful exercise then, asserts Blair, for every writer to examine carefully his first draft, and delete from it all pleonasm.s.

2. Care should be taken in the use of such transitional and connecting words as but, and, which, where, and whose. Some of the common errors which occur are the "splitting of particles" or the separating of a preposition from its object, the unnecessary multiplying of "demonstrative and relative particles" and the overuse of "and". Needless repetition of the conjunction "and" tends to impede the progress of the sentence. The old familiar saying, "I came, I saw, I conquered," for example, is much more effective than to insert "and" between each completed thought. This device is of special value in attaining an oratorical tone because of the rapidity of movement.

14 Ibid., Lecture XII, p. 123.
15 Ibid., pp. 124-5.
3. The "capital word or words" should be properly arranged in the sentence; that is, they should be placed in such a position as to give them "the fullest impression."  
In most cases, the important words are found in the beginning, but, at times, an inverted order is advantageous. Greek and Latin, observes Blair, are better suited for inversion than English. But wherever the "capital words" are disposed, they should "stand clear and disentangled from any other words that would clog them."

4. The members of a sentence should be arranged in a climactic order. Each succeeding thought should be more important than that which precedes it. If a sentence contains two assertions, one of which is obviously stronger than the other, the weakest should be stated first. Again, if these propositions are equal in strength, they should be arranged according to length, the shorter preceding the longer.

The reasons for this latter suggestion are two-fold: short members, coming first in order, are not only pronounced more easily but also their brevity enables the speaker or reader to recall the thought with greater facility; and this, in turn, enables him to see a closer connection between the parts.

5. It is bad practice to conclude a sentence with an

16 Ibid., p. 127.
17 Ibid., p. 128.
adverb, preposition, or "any phrase which expresses a circum-
stance only," because the "imagination cannot avoid reeling,
for a little, on the import of the word which closes the
sentence." 18

6. Too many "circumstances" should not be crowded to-
gether. Instead, it is better "to intersperse them in
different parts of the sentence, joined with the capital
words on which they depend." 19

7. When two members of a sentence are compared or con-
trasted, the language used to express each should be similar.
Blair cites as an example to illustrate this point, Pope's
comparison of Homer and Virgil.

Harmony, the fourth requisite of correct sentence
structure, finds expression in those sounds which are agree-
able to the ear. Although this quality is inferior to sense,
it contributes to the effectiveness of a sentence. Harmony
is exemplified both in the choice and in the proper word ar-
range-ment.

Words tend to be harmonious when they are composed
of a "proper intermixture of vowels and consonants . . . ." 20
The criterion for judging the agreeableness of a word is the
degree of facility in which it is pronounced. Those sounds
which are difficult to enunciate, says Blair, are likewise

18 Ibid., p. 131.
19 Ibid., p. 132.
20 Ibid., Lecture XIII, p. 135.
unpleasant to the ear.

In taking up the disposition of words, Blair draws a comparison between the sentence harmony as seen in the works of the ancient Greek and Latin declaimers and that of the modern English orators. The main distinction is that whereas the ancients assiduously studied the musical aspect of speech, the eighteenth century English almost neglected this subject entirely. The result was that the Greeks, with their numerous inflectional pitch changes and variety of tones, were better speakers. 21

Blair notes that in spite of the numerous writings on the function of melody, the ancients were not successful in establishing rules of practical value. He concludes, therefore, that the ear is more advantageous than rules, in improving this quality of style.

The music of a sentence largely depends upon the arrangement of its parts and "the close or cadence of the whole." 22 The members should be distributed in such a manner that they do not burden excessively the voice mechanism during oral production. This facility of expression is obtained by proper pauses at the end of each member; for then the breathing is made easier. Although the musical quality of the sentence is increased by these

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21 Ibid., p. 137.
22 Ibid., p. 139.
rests which are proportionally arranged, one should, in order to avoid affectation, not use too many of these equally spaced pauses.

With respect to the close of the sentence, Blair asserts that:

... when we aim at dignity or elevation, the sound should be made to grow to the last; the longest members of the period, and the fullest and most sonorous words, should be reserved to the conclusion. 23

It is never good practice to end with particles, or pronouns. Such parts of speech, when occurring at the end, are not pleasing to the ear.

Blair places a strong emphasis on the necessity of sentence variation. Short and long ones should be properly mixed. Only in this way can monotony of style be averted.

Another factor to be considered is the relation of sound to the thought. Sound should be adapted to the ideas that are being expressed. It is absurd, for example, for an orator to compose a demonstrative, and a deliberative speech in a style of the same harmony.

**Figurative language**

Figurative language not only makes our ideas clear to others, but it expresses those ideas in a strong and vivid manner. There are two types of figures: those of speech and those of thought. A figure of speech implies the use

of a word to designate something which is different from the original concept of the word. A figure of thought consists of words which retain their specific meaning but the figure results from the direction of the thought.

Blair emphasizes the fact that figures are of little value unless they are accompanied by sentiment or passion. The sole function of a trope is to dress the sentiment of the discourse so that it will be more readily accepted by the hearers. It is evident that if the substance of speech is of a superficial nature, embellishment of language will inevitably produce affectation.

Blair, reverting to his doctrine of the sublime, asserts that whenever vehement passion or pure sublimity is an integral part of a composition, little, if any, assistance is needed from figures. In such cases, the thought is sufficiently strong to stand alone. The author then shows that

The proper region of these ornaments is, where a moderate degree of elevation and passion is predominant; and there they contribute to the embellishment of discourse, only when there is a basis of solid thought and natural sentiment; when they are inserted in their proper place; and when they rise, of themselves, from the subject without being sought after.24

There are four reasons why figures add to the beauty of style. First, they provide a more available means for expressing ideas. Proper words are limited in their scope

24 Ibid., Lecture XIV, pp. 149-50.
but even the minutest details can be definitively stated by tropes. The copiousness of the language, therefore, is increased.

Secondly, figures are appropriate for those subjects which have an elevated tone, because they enhance the character of the style so that it suits the dignity of the content. To clarify this point, Blair compares figurative language with a well-dressed man. Whereas a man's stature is increased if he dresses well, so is language more graceful when the sentiment is expressed with tropes.

Thirdly, figures enable two objects to be presented to us at the same time. One is the fundamental idea of the subject, the other, a connotative idea which is used to make the thought more vivid. The mind is usually pleased on seeing contrasts and similarities of objects; "and all tropes," says Blair, "are founded upon some relation or analogy between one thing and another." 25

Probably the greatest advantage derived from the use of figures is the clarity of subject matter that results. Many ideas which would otherwise be abstract, take on an aspect of specificity. But even more beneficial is the fact that the arguments of a discourse are often more convincing when they are expressed in picturesque language. As the images become stronger, the emotions become more intense,

25 Ibid., p. 154.
thus opening the way for persuasion.

Blair concludes his general comments on the nature of figurative language by pointing out the sources from which tropes are drawn. The underlying source is the connection that objects have with each other, such as the relation that exists between cause and effect. A writer or speaker, for example, may substitute cause for effect, or conversely, effect for cause. The latter may be illustrated by using the term "grey hairs" to represent old age.\textsuperscript{26} Actually the coloring of the hair is an effect produced by the cause, old age; yet they are here expressed synonymously.

After these initial observations, Blair next considers the individual figures of speech and thought. He begins with a discussion of the metaphor, and then examines the hyperbole, personification, apostrophe, comparison, antithesis, interrogation and exclamation respectively.

**Metaphor.** The metaphor, an implied comparison between two objects which are related, is, thought Blair, the most effective figure that can be employed. Contrary to what many people believe, all figurative words cannot be classified as metaphors. Blair limits this figure to the resemblance that a particular object has to another.

There are seven rules which should be observed in

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 156.
using metaphors. In advancing these tenets Blair states that they are similar to those which apply to tropes in general.

They should, first of all, be adapted to the subject. If the sentiment of a discourse is elevated, for instance, the figure should rise to the same high level. The converse is also true. It follows that a metaphor which is appropriate for poetry is not suitable to prose. Using the same line of reasoning we see that a lawyer at the bar, whose purpose is to convince with the logic of his arguments, is not concerned with an ornate style. On the other hand, a minister attempting to persuade his audience to action, may indulge freely in a metaphorical style. Suit the words, therefore, to the meaning that is inherent in the cause.

Secondly, metaphors should only be drawn from those objects which have dignity. It is unbecoming to allude to concepts which are characterized by vulgarity or harshness. Rather than introduce ideas which are base, it is better to express your thoughts in a style devoid of all ornament. In order to free yourselves from this faulty practice, advises Blair, go to nature, for there you may find the inspiration that is needed in forming graceful figures.

Thirdly, since all metaphors are based on resemblances between objects, they should be perspicuous. Whenever the intended relationship is not clear, the metaphor is ambiguous and thus does not fulfill its purpose. This condition
often exists when a figure is derived from a scientific or technical source. At the same time, however, perspicuity may also be diminished by using "trite and common resemblances."27

In the fourth place it is undesirable to combine plain and metaphorical language when developing a sentence. Some writers in pursuing a particular thought begin a period with figurative terms and end it with words which retain their literal meaning. Unless the comparison is extended throughout the sentence, confusion results.

The fifth essential requisite is that "mixed-metaphors" should be avoided. They are usually caused by employing two metaphors to describe one object. Even such eminent writers as Shakespeare and Addison, states Blair, were, at times, negligent in this respect. Shakespeare's statement "to take arms against a sea of troubles" is a good example of a "mixed-metaphor."28 Blair gives some advice that he thinks will remedy this difficulty.

... we should try to form a picture upon them, and consider how the parts would agree, and what sort of figure the whole would present, when delineated with a pencil. By this means, we should become sensible, whether inconsistent circumstances were mixed, and a monstrous image thereby produced ... 29

27 Ibid., Lecture XV, p. 163.
28 Ibid., p. 164.
29 Ibid., p. 165.
Another error similar to that of mixing the metaphor, occurs when a group of images are assembled together to portray a certain object. Although these figures may be distinct in themselves, they produce disorder and confusion when they converge on the same object.

As a last requirement Blair asserts that the metaphor should not be pursued too far. Whenever each minute detail is developed, the figure becomes a lengthy implied comparison or as it is more commonly called, an allegory. With respect to the allegory the author observes that each of the foregoing rules applies.

Hyperbole. The hyperbole is an exaggerated statement which sometimes appears in the form of a trope and other times as a figure of thought. Because of the difficulty involved in managing the hyperbole, it should never be used too often nor prolonged to excess.

There are two types of hyperboles: those employed to describe an object; and those which stem from intense emotion. In plain description, the writer should be cautious not to indulge too freely in hyperbolic expressions. During moments of extreme passion, however, the emotional state of the individual is such that he is willing to accept even the boldest imagery.

How far we should go in using this figure is aptly expressed in the following statement: "Good sense and just taste must determine the point, beyond which, if we pass,
we become extravagant."

**Personification and Apostrophe.** Personification may be defined as that property which gives life to inanimate objects. There is a tendency on the part of human nature to reward those objects which move the heart, by giving them an imaginary animated existence. This trait, according to Blair, may have been the cause for the "multiplication of divinities in the heathen world."31

There are three degrees of personification. The least significant form is the transferring of some of the traits inherent in real beings to a lifeless object. In the expression "a raging storm," for example, the term "raging", which is a characteristic of man, is used to describe an inanimate object, the "storm". Almost every discourse will allow the use of this method of personification, because of its lack of force.

A higher degree exists when "we introduce inanimate objects acting like those that have life."32 Cicero exemplifies this point by representing the laws of Rome as having power to stretch forth their hand and place in the arms of government leaders the sword of justice.33 This is

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an effective device of persuasion, observes Blair, but if it is carried too far, it loses its strength, and is reduced to the elements of harangue.

The highest degree this figure can obtain occurs "when inanimate objects are introduced, not only as feeling and acting, but as speaking to us, or hearing and listening when we address ourselves to them." 54 This passionate appeal should never be attempted unless the mind is in an aroused and agitated state. For it is clear that when the mind is functioning normally, it could not conceive unrealistic ideas, none of which could be substantiated by reason.

These addresses to lifeless objects are appropriate for certain phases of oratory. On occasions the orator may address a virtuous quality such as truth, honesty, or justice, or he may speak directly to a town, city, or nation. But whatever the circumstance might be, he must not only make certain that the subject merits such a strong pathetic appeal, but that he has the necessary ingenuity to deliver the address. These factors are essential, says Blair, for the speaker who fails in this attempt produces laughter rather than persuasion.

There is a slight distinction between personification and apostrophe. Personification is an address to an In-

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54 Ibid., p. 176.
animate object; apostrophe "to a real person, but one who
is either absent or dead . . . ."35 Most of the rules which
are suitable to one, apply to the other. In both cases, the
figures have their foundation in passion. In spite of these
similarities the apostrophe is not as bold because it re-
quires much less imagination to assume the presence of an
absent or dead man than to conceive the possibility of life
in "insensible beings."36

Comparison and Antithesis. There are three sources
from which pleasure of the simile originates. First, human
nature is such that the mind receives pleasure upon ob-
serving similarities between different objects and contrasts
among those that are closely related to each other. Fur-
ther, pleasure results from the more vivid picture of the
central theme and also from the agreeable quality that the
newly introduced object provides.

All comparisons perform one of two functions: they
either explain or embellish. The purpose of the simile,
when used to explain, is to render a clearer conception of
the idea being described. This is accomplished by comparing
the object that is relatively unknown with one that is
familiar to the average reader, or listener. Such a simile

35 Ibid., p. 179.
36 Ibid.
could be employed in some part of almost every type subject, but should never be introduced in the midst of a strong pathetic appeal. For then it would allow the emotional drive which pathos demands.

Those comparisons which embellish lie "in the middle region, between the highly pathetic, and the very humble style."\textsuperscript{37} Although they never occur during moments of high intensity, they are not altogether unaccompanied by a stirring of the mind.

In order to use the simile with propriety, Blair gives four suggestions, all of which pertain to choosing the proper sources. To prevent triteness, they should not be derived from things which obviously resemble the object. On the other hand, to prevent obscurity, they should not be derived from things which have a remote relationship or from objects which are not known. Lastly, when developing a serious subject, it is never appropriate to draw a comparison from an object which is "low or mean."\textsuperscript{38}

The prime difference between antithesis and comparison is that antithesis, instead of being founded on the similarities, is concerned with the contrast of two objects. The specific value of this figure of thought is that whenever two things are placed in opposition with each other, both

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., Lecture XVII, p. 184.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 186.
seem stronger. White, for instance, is always brighter when it is seen in conjunction with black. 39

A balanced structure is a desirable medium of contrasting one object with another; that is, similar constructions should be used so that the thoughts will correspond. This point may be illustrated by the following statement: "He who is morally good shall be rewarded; he who is morally bad shall be punished."

Antithesis, like the simile, is dependent upon the imagination and should not, therefore, be employed to excess.

**Interrogation and Exclamation.** Interrogation and exclamation, when properly used, serve to stimulate the passion. Although a question may be asked with no other motive in view than to throw additional light on a particular line of reasoning, it is often an effective rhetorical device, possessing the power to arouse the emotions. If a speaker wishes to affirm or deny the validity of a cause, he may enhance the persuasive effect by vehemently stating his belief in the form of a question.

An exclamation, a figure denoting passion, should only be uttered when the mind is sufficiently moved by strong sensations such as anger, fear, or joy. Because of the nature of the exclamation, the speaker or writer should re-

frain from using it too frequently.

**Amplification.** Amplification, states Blair, "consists in an artful exaggeration of all the circumstances of some object or action which we want to place in a strong light, either a good or a bad one." It is a combination of several figures which are so arranged that they come together at one point. A climax order is followed; that is, each subsequent member is of greater import than that which precedes.

Although Blair recognized the fact that the figures of speech and thought which have been mentioned do not exhaust the subject, he believed that enough had been said, and thus completed his discussion of style by elaborating on its general character.

**General Characters of Style**

Blair believed that every author should possess a particular style of his own. Permeated throughout a man's works there should be a degree of homogeneity. In other words, the manner which characterizes any given production, should be present in all of a writer's compositions. Of course, the degree of resemblance varies with the nature of the discourse; but even when the subjects are remotely related, the inherent quality which is indicative of an author's

40 Ibid., p. 191.
mode of expression, should be discernible in both works.

Blair was suspicious of those writers who have no
definite pattern of style. It is evident, he thought, that
when a person does not adhere to a specific method, he is
relying upon imitation instead of ingenuity.

There are four types of style which are intimately
connected with the meaning that is to be conveyed from the
author or speaker to the reader or listener respectively.
They are denominated the concise, the diffuse, the nervous,
and the feeble. Every author may be classified, according
to his manner, into one or more of these categories. Al-
though conciseness does not imply, as the terminology seems
to indicate, a style devoid of all ornament and formed with
short sentences, it stresses economy of terms. Only those
words which are necessary to express a thought with clarity
and force, are necessary. In addition, once an idea has
been developed it does not bear repeating.

Whenever figures are employed it is for the purpose
of increasing strength rather than charm. This then is a
compact but forceful style which is opposed to redundancy.

Blair advocates the use of conciseness during ani-
mated and vivid descriptions and when passionate appeals are
made to the heart. This is due to the fact that the emotions
cannot remain aroused for a long period of time and thus,
the appearance of any superfluous matter cools the ardor.

The diffuse style is almost the exact opposite of
the concise. Thoughts are fully explained, sometimes being reiterated in several different ways for emphasis. It is further typified by lengthy sentences, numerous amplifications and ornament of all kinds. What the diffuse writer "wants in strength," observes Blair, "he proposes to supply by copiousness." 41

This copious style is better adapted to the public discourse than to a written composition. In fact, it is so essential, that no speaker can succeed in cultivating the art of eloquence who is deficient in this respect. When a speech is being delivered, it is expedient that the listeners follow the arguments with a minimum amount of effort. Since the understanding functions slowly, explication material must be as clear as possible. It is advisable, therefore, to develop logical appeals with a diffuse style. 42

Blair points out that both the concise and the diffuse styles represent effective modes of expression. As to which one should be studied by a particular writer, Blair was willing to let the inclination of that individual be the deciding factor.

The nervous and fleshy styles correspond, to some extent, to the concise and diffuse, respectively. Whether

41 Ibid., Lecture XVIII, p. 197.
42 Ibid., p. 198.
a writer is inclined towards one method or the other is
determined by the strength of his reasoning powers; for the
diction cannot be separated from the author's thinking pro-
cesses.

That person who conceives his subject well is better
able to express his thoughts in the nervous, concise style.
The diffuse writer, on the other hand, often possesses an
incomprehensive knowledge of his theme. In an effort to
offset this difficulty, he looks to figurative language for
assistance. The result is that in proportion, as the
thought diminishes and ornament increases, the style ap-
proaches feebleness.

This feeble quality is never condoned in any type of
composition. Nervousness, although desirable in varying de-
grees, according to the dignity of the subject, should never
be extended too far. When developed to excess the strength
is counteracted by harshness.

On completing the discussion of style which has its
foundation in meaning, Blair next treats the various degrees
of ornament—the dry, plain, neat, elegant, and florid—all
of which purpose to increase the beauty of the language.
Let us analyze these qualities to see what contribution each
makes to the improvement of the beauty of a composition.

The austere writer has no other end in view but to
have his ideas understood. Not only does he refrain from
employing figures, but, asserts Blair, he is incapable of
using ornament. Aristotle excelled in this form of writing, which is only suitable for instructing the readers.\textsuperscript{43}

Although the plain style does not altogether exclude ornament, that quality seldom appears. Since the author is primarily concerned with the sentiment of the discourse, he "pursues," therefore, "propriety, purity, and precision,"\textsuperscript{44} as well as perspicuity.

The neat style admits more ornament, but not of the eloquent kind. Here the emphasis is placed on the proper choice and arrangement of words rather than on vivid appeals to the imagination. All superfluous words are removed and the sentences are usually concise. The leading advantage of this method is that it is appropriate for all subjects. "A familiar letter," states Blair, "or a law paper, on the driest subject, may be written with neatness; and a sermon, or a philosophical treatise, in a neat style, will be read with pleasure."\textsuperscript{45}

The elegant writer may employ the highest degree of ornament. He has a two-fold purpose: first, to express his ideas with clarity and force; and, secondly, to please the readers or hearers by the grace and beauty of style. By combining these aims he "pleases the fancy and the ear,

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 201.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 203.
while he informs the understanding . . . ."46 In short, he possesses all of the merits, without any of the faults, that can be derived from figurative language.

The last degree of ornament is that which is seen in the florid style. This manner of expression is almost diametrically opposed to dryness. Whereas the dry style is characterized by the absence of figures of speech or thought, the florid abounds in imagery. A writer may be considered florid when he uses ornament to excess or when it is not adapted to the subject. These are defects which must be avoided if an author is to compose with beauty and strength.

From these observations, Blair deduces that either a simple or a vehement style, free from all affectation, is the language of nature.47 A writer may demonstrate simplicity and at the same time use eloquent figures. But these tropes flow from an easy and natural manner, requiring little effort on the part of the writer.

Simplicity is illustrated with maximum effect in the classical treatises, the Scriptures, and in the writings of such modern authors like Addison and Milton. Most students, upon examining these works, conclude that they "could have

46 Ibid.
written in the same way..."48 Actually, however, they are deceived by the apparent lack of complexity which this style entails. In spite of its facility of expression, a style characterized by simplicity contains an element of strength which permeates throughout the composition.

The vehement style is the language of passion. Always implying strength and never "inconsistent with simplicity," vehemence is a function of supreme eloquence which "belongs to the higher kinds of oratory..."49 It is especially adapted to those circumstances in which the orator, moved by passion, arouses the emotions of his listeners.

Blair concludes his treatment of style by listing six methods whereby a writer can gain facility in expression. These suggestions are essentially the same as those advocated by Quintilian.50

1. The subject matter should be fully understood.
2. Practice in writing is essential.
3. The style of the leading authors should be studied.
4. Be cautious when imitating a writer, avoid his faults.
5. The style should be appropriate for the subject and the audience.

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., p. 211.
50 Ibid., pp. 212-215. (Note: These points are developed at length by Quintilian in Book X, Institutio Oratoria.)
6. Style should always be subservient to thought.

II. DELIVERY

Blair begins his discussion of delivery by referring to Demosthenes' statement concerning the value of that subject. According to the reports of Cicero and Quintilian, the Greek orator, on being asked what are the three most important phases of oratory, replied that delivery ranked first, second, and third respectively. Blair sanctioned this answer and then inferred that excellence in pronunciation was one of the leading factors in the oratorical success of the ancients.

Since persuasion should always be the end of public speaking, it is essential that the speaker convey his ideas to the hearers with clarity and force. In the accomplishment of this task, delivery plays a vital role.

Now, the tone of our voice, our looks and gestures, interpret our ideas and emotions no less than words do; nay, the impression they make on others, is frequently much stronger than any that words can make.

Of course, words are necessary, in most cases, to make our thoughts and feelings understood. These words,

52 Quintilian, I, 11, 3, 6.
53 Blair, op. cit., Lecture XXXII, p. 365b.
which in themselves are merely symbols representing con-
cepts, need assistance from pronunciation in order to make
the meaning clear. It is desirable, therefore, to speak
with the proper emphasis and sincerity.

Having established the importance of delivery, Blair
next considers the two fundamental aims which every speaker,
who wishes to improve his method of delivery, ought to have.
First, he should speak so that all the listeners can under-
stand; and, secondly, in a graceful, forceful manner which
produces pleasure.54

The four requirements which are necessary for in-
telligible speech are proper volume, articulation, rate, and
pronunciation.

The volume that a speaker employs is dependent upon
both nature and art. If he has an adequate vocal mechanism
he probably possesses the potential power to render his
voice understood even in the largest assemblies. It is the
duty of art to aid in guiding this potential.

The proper pitch is an instrumental factor in ob-
taining appropriate volume. "Every man has three pitches
in his voice: the high, the middle, and the low one."55
The high is usually adapted to those circumstances where the
speaker and the listener are separated by a great distance.

54 Ibid., p. 366.
55 Ibid.
The low approaches inaudibility. The medium is that which is used in ordinary conversation.

Blair regarded public speaking as an enlarged form of conversation. There should be no essential difference, he thought, in the inflectional patterns employed in these two speaking situations. This does not mean that the strength and resonance of the voice will not vary, but it does imply that it should always be pitched in an "ordinary speaking key."

Blair gives another useful suggestion for obtaining a suitable loudness. It is advisable for the orator to select a group of listeners who are seated in the rear of the auditorium, to which he may direct his address. Thus by studying the reactions of these distant members he is able to determine how well they hear and understand what is being said.

Even more important than volume, however, is articulation. A man who, though speaking with force, slurs and omits sounds is much less distinct than a person who has a weak voice but clear enunciation.

Articulation is often governed by the rate of delivery. Speaking too rapidly is a common fault which is difficult to overcome. In this connection, Blair observes that:

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56 Ibid., p. 367.
To pronounce with a proper degree of slowness, and with a full and clear articulation, is the first thing to be studied by all who begin to speak in public; and cannot be too much recommended to them. Such a pronunciation gives weight and dignity to their discourse.\[57\]

As a fourth essential, the speaker should use those pronunciations which are endorsed by polite society. It is never appropriate to pronounce words in a manner that is characteristic of a small group or province. Many speakers, inspired by the solemnity of the occasion, strive for effect by varying the accents on certain syllables. This practice should be avoided, observes Blair, for pronunciation is a quality which cannot be altered by an individual at his own discretion.

The rules which we have discussed thus far are related to the intelligibility of our speech. This is the first requirement of good delivery. But it must be supplemented by "grace and force."\[58\] This purpose is achieved by expressing our thoughts with the proper "emphasis, pauses, tones, and gestures."\[59\]

If the speaker gives an equal emphasis to all the words that he utters, the discourse loses its strength. Not only does the monotonous quality of the voice affect the listener's attention, but also the orator's meaning.

\[57\] Ibid., pp. 367-8.
\[58\] Ibid., p. 368.
\[59\] Ibid.
It is not an easy task, asserts Blair, to use emphasis with propriety. "It is one of the greatest trials of a true and just taste; and must arise from feeling delicately ourselves, and from judging accurately of what is fittest to strike the feelings of others."60

Effective pausing likewise demands special attention. This practice serves two purposes: to emphasize a particular point; and to "mark the distinction of sense."61 In the former case a speaker may impress the importance of an idea upon his audience, by an "emphatical pause."

The main functions of the pause, however, are to render the meaning clear and assist the speaker in his breathing. Many sentences are ambiguous because of improper pausing. To hesitate in the middle of a thought, for example, breaks the continuity of the period, thus weakening the emphasis.

The third requisite of a graceful delivery is the proper tone of voice. For almost every sensation which man experiences, nature "hath adapted some peculiar tone of voice"62 to represent that sentiment. Through this medium, the speaker is able to convince his hearers that he is sincere in his expression of certain overt actions.

60 Ibid., p. 369.
61 Ibid., p. 370.
62 Ibid., p. 372.
Blair recommends the conversational manner of speaking. Those tones which are suitable for ordinary discourse are equally adaptable to the orations at the bar, the church, or the public assembly. Whenever a speaker diverts too far from this mode of expression, he either becomes affected or monotonous in his delivery.

On certain occasions, however, it is necessary to rise above the conversational norm. In some formal orations:

... the elevation of the style, and the harmony of the sentences, prompt, almost necessarily, a modulation of voice more rounded and bordering more upon music, than conversation admits. This gives rise to what is called the declaiming manner. But though this mode of pronunciation runs considerably beyond ordinary discourse, yet still it must have, for its basis, the natural tones of grave and dignified conversation.63

The use of elegant gestures is also an asset to the speaker. Gesticulations enable him to give vent to his feelings and this warmth, in turn, makes a favorable impression on the audience.

Study those looks and gestures which are common to all men, advises Blair, and then employ those which seem most natural to you. With these cursory remarks on the subject of action, he refers his readers to the eleventh book of the Institute Oratoria for a comprehensive treatment of the art.64

63 Ibid., pp. 374-75.

64 Ibid., p. 375. See I.0. 11.5.65-149.
Having discussed the rules of pronunciation, let us briefly examine some of the points which should be observed in preparing a speech for delivery. The first consideration, and one which Blair constantly stresses throughout his lectures, is to analyze the subject carefully. Unless the sense of the discourse is fully comprehended, the orator cannot emphasize the leading ideas effectively. Once he realizes the seriousness of his message, excess tension should be reduced.

Those who are beginners in the art of public speaking should prepare their speeches for oral presentation by writing them out in complete manuscript form and then committing them to memory. After a speaker has had such practice, he may rely upon notes, thus delivering his addresses extemporaneously.

Blair does not attempt to show which method is the better. The genius of the individual is the deciding factor. He does condemn, however, the English habit of reading sermons. This method, in most cases, renders the discourse dry and lifeless. Those who wish to compose a complete draft of the sermon, therefore, should commit it to memory.

III. CONCLUSION

Blair's theory of style is concerned with two points, namely, perspicuity and ornament. A perspicuous word or phrase exemplifies purity, propriety, and precision. A
periphrastic sentence is strong, harmonious, clear and precise, and has unity. Ornament consists of figures of speech and thought such as metaphor, personification, apostrophe, comparison, antithesis, interrogation, and exclamation. Each of these should be consonant with the rules of good grammar.

In discussing the general characteristics of style, Blair points out that style is first analyzed with respect to thought and then to beauty. Whether a speaker should be concise or diffuse depends upon his own genius and also the subject. Both represent acceptable mediums for oratory. Every composition, however, should have an element of the nervous style. The degree to which an author demonstrates nervousness is dependent upon his understanding of the subject. A confused writer is usually feeble.

The beauty of a composition is proportional to the quantity and the quality of the figures which it contains. A discourse which has no ornament is called dry. When figures are used to excess the style is florid. Between these two extremes we have the plain, the neat, and the elegant. The plain style is appropriate for a discourse, the purpose of which is to instruct. Elegance is a characteristic of vehement oratory. Here the bold imagery that is used increases the pathos of an address. The neat style, representing a degree of ornament midway between the dry and the florid, is appropriate for any type of speech. A
sermon written with neatness, said Blair, is pleasing to read or hear.

Blair concludes his treatment of eloquence with a lecture on delivery. Two points should be remembered in delivering an address: first, speak so that all members of the audience can hear; and, secondly, speak with the grace and force that are necessary to produce pleasure.

Good delivery is characterized by proper volume, articulation, rate, pronunciation, emphasis, pausing, tone of the voice and gestures. In developing these requisites Blair stressed the importance of a conversational mode of speaking.

Blair, in presenting his theory, did not overlook the necessity of a thorough understanding of the subject matter by the speaker. It is impossible, he thought, for a writer to choose and arrange his arguments with propriety, to have a strong introduction and conclusion, to express his thoughts with perspicuity, or to speak with grace and force, unless he first analyzes his subject.
PART II. PRACTICE

CHAPTER IV

INVENTION AND DISPOSITION

In analyzing the invention and disposition of Blair's sermons, the same method of procedure used in developing his theory will be followed. First, the general nature of the sermons will be discussed; secondly, the ethical qualifications of Blair; thirdly, the conduct of the sermon in all its parts.

1 Blair's career as a minister of the Scottish Presbyterian Church extended over a period of fifty years. In September, 1742, he was ordained in his first pastorate at Collessie in Fife, a small town with a population of less than a thousand.

Five months later he became a candidate, along with Robert Walker, for the pastorate at Canongate Church in Edinburgh. In spite of Walker's experience and popularity Blair was chosen by a vote of 118 to 36. (See John Hill, An Account of the Life and Writings of Hugh Blair, Edinburgh: F. Ballantyne and Company, 1807, p. 20).

He served in this capacity for the next eleven years. Then he accepted a position at Lady Yester's Church.

Blair's rise to an eminence in his profession was rapid. In June, 1757, he received a Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of St. Andrews, and in the following year was appointed minister to the High Church of St. Giles, the leading parish in Edinburgh.

From 1758 to 1796 he occupied the pulpit at St. Giles, during which time "the most learned audience" of Scotland, "were the weekly judges of his pulpit eloquence." (See Hill, p. 34). This group of "learned" men who frequently heard Blair, included such well-known writers as Kames and Boswell, both of whom praised, and, at times, condemned their friend's preaching.

Blair continued as active pastor of this church until his wife's death in February, 1795. One year later, at the age of 78, he preached his last sermon.
I. NATURE OF THE SERMONS

Blair must have realized that the ordinary "church-goer" becomes easily discouraged if a discourse is prolix. At any rate, he was seldom guilty of prolonging his sermons unnecessarily.

Upon examining forty sermons, I found that the average length of each was about 28 pages, with 185 words to the page. This gives a total of 4600 words to each sermon. If we allow 125 words per minute as the average rate of speed for oral presentation, we find that the sermons could have been delivered in about 37 minutes. This brevity, according to most observers, is one of the chief merits of the sermons.

There is also a unanimity of opinion among critics concerning the religious nature of Blair's discourses. The most frequent charge is that they do not have the evangelical zeal or spiritual unction, which is necessary to arouse the passions of men and give durability to the work. As a result, the sermons, lacking strong religious appeals and seldom dealing with serious theological problems, closely resemble moral essays.

To establish the validity of this assumption, let us glance at the titles of a group of typical sermons.

2. "On Gentleness."
5. "On the Duties of the Young."
6. "On the Importance of Order in Conduct."
8. "On Candour."
9. "On Sensibility."
10. "On the Improvement of Time."
11. "On Fortitude."
12. "On Envy."
13. "On Idleness."
15. "On Moderation."
16. "On Devotion."
18. "On Our Ignorance of Good and Evil in This Life."

That these subjects are suitable to the average person cannot be denied. Certainly most people wish to develop such attitudes as "gentleness", "patience", and "candour", and at the same time avoid all indications of "envy", or "idleness." But topics of this nature are not limited to the church. In fact, they would be equally adaptable to a high school or university classroom or some other educational function, the purpose of which is to form the moral character of an individual.

Judging from these observations, we may conclude that Blair was primarily interested in showing the members of his
congregation, without offending their feelings, how they could better meet the problems of this life. To possess the virtues which have been outlined is conducive to harmonic relationship with our friends and associates. This may be illustrated by the following excerpt drawn from the conclusion of the sermon, "On the Influence of Religion Upon Prosperity":

Let your moderation in pleasure, your command of passion, and your steady regard to the great duties of life, show that you possess a mind worthy of your fortune. . . . Establish your character on the basis of esteem; not on the flattery of dependents, on the praise of sycophants, but on the respect of the wise and good.2

The sermons contain little, if any, reference to the vital religious issues which were paramount in Blair's day. While Whitefield, Wesley, and many of the Scottish divines, were preaching the doctrines of original sin and eternal punishment, Blair was carefully avoiding such controversial matters.

There are two reasons for this approach: first, the attitudes of Blair's listeners and secondly, those of the minister himself. Chambers observed that the choice and development of religious themes was governed largely by the particular audience.

A certain order of the clergy, towards the end of the 18th century, seemed to find it necessary, in order

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2 Hugh Blair, Sermons (Dublin: Printed for William Hallhead, 1779), pp. 82-83.
to prevent an absolute revolt of the higher orders from the standards of religion, to accommodate themselves to the prevailing taste, and only administer moral discourse, with an insinuated modicum of real piety, where their proper purpose unquestionably is to maintain spiritual grace in the breasts of the people, by all the means which the gospel has placed within their reach. Thus, as Blair preached to the most refined congregation in Scotland, he could hardly have failed to fall into this prevalent fashion.\(^5\)

A more important factor, instrumental in determining Blair's choice of subjects, was his own liberal religious views. He freely admitted to Boswell that "he did not believe the eternity of punishment."\(^4\) At a time when the pious church leaders frowned upon such worldly amusements as card playing and the theater, Carlyle reports that he taught Blair and Robertson how to play cards and dice,\(^6\) and that Blair visited the great actress, Mrs. Siddons, in private.\(^6\)

Although the sermons, as a whole, were moral essays, tinctured with a "modicum of real piety," Blair, on special occasions deviated from this general procedure, giving his discourses a predominantly religious turn. In celebrating the "Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," for example, he chose

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6 Ibid., p. 339.
such subjects as "On the Compassion of Christ," "On the Happiness of a Future State," and "On the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as a Preparation for Death."

The tenor of the discussion thus far seems to indicate that Blair's addresses were designed to please rather than to persuade. On the contrary, however, they were, as he recommended all sermons should be, persuasive discourses. A brief survey of the messages reveals that the introductions contain clear statements of the theme; the body gives rational arguments establishing the validity of the purpose; and the conclusions are comprised of appeals to the audience for adherence to the principles which have been advanced. Thus the end result is a better life. To what extent Blair succeeded in persuading his listeners, will be considered in a later section.

II. ETHICAL QUALITIES OF BLAIR

The two ethical requirements of a public speaker are a virtuous character and sufficient knowledge and training. Let us examine these requisites in an effort to determine the ethical qualifications of Blair.

Blair's contemporaries believed that he was essentially a good man who not only preached a high standard of morals but put these virtues into practice. At no time did he deviate from these principles and, consequently, his character was "respected to the end of his regular and order-
ly life.  

Finlayson asserts that Blair's popularity as a minister was due, in part, to his sense of duty and purity of heart.

The reputation which he acquired in the discharge of his public duties was well sustained by the great respectability of his private character. Deriving from family associations a strong sense of clerical decorum, feeling on his heart deep impressions of religious and moral obligation, and guided in his intercourse with the world by the same correct and delicate taste which appeared in his writings, he was eminently distinguished through life by the prudence, purity, and dignified propriety of his conduct.  

Although possessing, to a large degree, these noble virtues, Blair had definite shortcomings which were detected even by his warmest admirers. Adam Smith observed that he was "too purged up" and Burns condemned him for his vanity and pomposity. Carlyle also recognized Blair's vanity but was careful to point out that "he was the least envious I ever knew."  

One of Blair's chief faults as a public speaker was

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his timidity. Throughout his life he refused many important positions in the church because of his reluctance to make extemporaneous speeches in public.\(^\text{12}\) Fortunately, however, this diffidence was not as pronounced in his weekly sermons.

Most critics agree that Blair's fund of knowledge and thorough training increased his personal appeal. As a minister he understood his profession. He not only was well acquainted with the tenets of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, but he also had a comprehensive insight into the teachings of the Scriptures. This latter point can be illustrated by his frequent references to Biblical passages and his clear explanations of the texts that he used as themes.

Blair supplemented his religious training with a keen understanding of human nature. Hill asserted that

Dr. Blair's superior ability as a preacher rests perhaps upon no circumstance so much as upon the knowledge that he had acquired of the human head. . . . He showed himself to be not only a correct but a delicate observer of human nature.\(^\text{13}\)

The validity of Hill's observations can be determined by glancing at some of the titles of Blair's discourses. A

\(^{12}\) Carlyle, in his Autobiography (pp. 305-306) states that he "was timid and unambitious, and withheld himself from public business of every kind," Finlayson observed that "from diffidence and perhaps from a certain degree of inaptitude for extemporary speaking, he took a less public part in the contests of the ecclesiastical politics than some of his contemporaries; and from the same causes, he never would consent to become Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland." (See Finlayson, op. cit., p. XIII.)

\(^{13}\) Hill, op. cit., pp. 134-35.
representative group, as we have previously seen, would include such sermons as: "On the Union of Piety and Morality"; "On the Influence of Religion Upon Prosperity", "On Gentleness"; "On the Disorders of Passions"; "On Devotion"; "On the Duties of the Young"; "On the Duties of and Consolations of the Aged".

Blair's selection of topics of this nature is indicative of the fact that he was aware of those problems which are vital to the average lay member. The manner in which he adapted these sermons to his listeners is further indication of his understanding of man's nature.

Blair's knowledge of liberal arts is self-evident. He incorporated in his lectures a study of the principles of ancient and modern rhetoric, poetry, drama, history, and philosophy. Judging from his "very choice collection of books at his house in Argyle Square,"14 we may infer that he read extensively on all subjects.

His achievements as a man of letters were responsible for his becoming...

...one of the distinguished literary circle which flourished at Edinburgh throughout the century. He was a member with Hume, A. Carlyle, Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, Robertson and others, of the famous Poker Club.15

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It is significant to note that Blair seldom utilized his literary knowledge in the development of his sermons. Of course, the composition, organization, and logic of his discourses were influenced to some degree, by the rhetorical and philosophical tenets of the leading classical and modern writers, but references to any specific works of literature are conspicuously missing.

III. CONDUCT OF THE SERMON IN ALL ITS PARTS

This section will include an analysis of the "conduct of the discourse in all its parts." The introduction, division, narration or explication, argumentative part, pathetic part, and conclusion, as seen in the fifteen representative sermons which comprise the first volume,16 will be considered.

Introduction

The introductions of Blair's sermons serve the purpose for which they were intended. They prepare the audience for what is to follow. The text is clearly stated, its relationship to the hearers shown, and then the main headings are announced. Through this simple but thorough process, not only is the attention of the listeners aroused, but they are provided with the information that is necessary for an

understanding of the argumentative part of the discourse.

The first and most obvious merit of the introductions is that they arise from the subject. They are not remote discussions, attached to the body of the speech, nor do they possess the power to determine the plan which is to be followed. Instead they are a subordinate, but integral part of the whole design. It is evident that they were formed only after careful meditation on the theme.

The language that is used is essentially correct. Rarely do we find obscure or redundant matter. In short, the style is plain and simple; always perspicuous, but seldom ornate.

Another important characteristic of the exordiums is that they are proportioned to the length and type of the subject. Their average length is about three pages or ten percent of the sermon. Since most of the discourses are of a similar nature, the beginnings are essentially the same.

Blair used both the explanatory and historical methods of introduction. He explained the text and, in many cases, gave the Biblical account of the events which preceded the period described by the text. In the sermon, "On the Power of Conscience," for example, he used as his scripture verse, a passage from Genesis, dealing with the story of Joseph and his brothers. He then proceeded to trace the history of Joseph's enslavement and the subsequent "guilt complex" which harassed the brothers.
The same type of approach is used in the sermon "On the Disorders of the Passions." Here the author clarifies the text by describing the sensations of anger which Haman experienced on seeing "Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate."

In each of the preceding instances the listener is pleased by the example drawn from Biblical history. Whenever this method is used, the opening remarks must, of necessity, be longer. But Blair, aware of the importance of maintaining his auditors' interest, seldom fattiged them with lengthy expository type introductions.

These points which have been outlined can be illustrated by the following typical introduction of the sermon "On Devotion." The text is taken from the tenth chapter of Acts and refers to "Cornelius, a devout man."

That religion is essential to the welfare of man, can be proved by the most convincing arguments. But these how demonstrative soever, are insufficient to support its authority over human conduct. For arguments may convince the understanding, when they cannot conquer the passions. Irresistible they seem in the calm hours of retreat; but, in the season of action, they often vanish into smoke. There are other and more powerful springs, which influence the great movements of the human frame. In order to operate with success on the active powers, the heart must be gained. Sentiment and affection must be brought to the aid of reason. It is not enough that men believe religion to be a wise and rational rule of conduct, unless they relish it as agreeable, and find it to carry its own reward. Happy is the man, who, in the conflict of desire between God and the world, can oppose, not only argument to argument, but pleasure to pleasure; who, to the external allurements of sense, can oppose the internal joys of devotion; and to the uncertain promises of a flattering world, the certain experience of that peace of God which
passeth understanding, keeping his mind and heart. — Such is the temper and spirit of a devout man. Such was the character of Cornelius, that good centurion, whose prayers and alms are said to have come up in memorial before God. Of this character I intend, through divine assistance, to discourse; and shall endeavour, I. To explain the nature of devotion; II. To justify, and recommend it; and, III. To rectify some mistakes concerning it. 17

Here the author briefly prepares the way for the presentation of the arguments. He does not digress from his theme. Every statement which is uttered is directly related to the subject of devotion. The style is simple and correct, free from all superfluities. Since the introduction is of the explanatory, rather than the historical type, it is less than the three page average which characterizes the sermons as a whole.

Although such exordiums are not striking, they cannot help but arouse the attention of the hearers, and put them in a receptive mood for the persuasive appeals, which are the essence of the discourse. In short, we may conclude that the introductions of the sermons are in accord with the rules advanced in the lectures.

Division

Blair followed the practice which he recommended in his lectures of dividing the sermon into various heads. At the end of each introduction he outlined what he planned to

17 Ibid., pp. 264-66. (Note: Underlined words are in italics in original.)
do in the discussion part of the subject, thus giving a

clear view of his purpose and method of procedure.

The partitions of the sermons are easily discernible
by the readers. Each main idea is labeled either with a
Roman numeral or such terms as "firstly", "secondly", and
"thirdly". The subdivisions are also carefully indicated.
By labeling the leading points in this succinct manner,
Blair was better able to call to the attention of his au-
dience those tenets which supported his theme.

Since these divisions will be discussed at length
under the argumentative part of the discourse, only a brief
treatment will be given here. It will suffice to say that
Blair, for the most part, observed the five rules which he
advocated in his theory. The leading ideas are exclusive
from each other; they are sufficient to cover the subject
adequately but at the same time, are not too numerous; they
are usually arranged in a logical order; and they are ex-
pressed in concise language.

These points are exemplified in the sermon, "On the
Influence of Religion on Prosperity." In this discourse,
Blair separates his subject matter into four distinct head-
ings as follows:

I. "Pietv, and gratitude to God contribute in a high
degree to enliven prosperity."

II. "Religion affords to good men peculiar security
in the enjoyment of prosperity."
III. "Religion forms good men to the most proper temper for the enjoyment of prosperity."

IV. "Religion heightens the prosperity of good men; by the prospect which it affords them of greater happiness in another world."

In speaking on the subject of "Religious Retirement", Blair makes a two-fold division. First he develops the advantages which result from such a retirement. Then he points out the subjects which should be considered during this period of our life.

A similar procedure is observed in the sermon "On Gentleness." The author begins by explaining the nature of virtue and then advises his audience to practice this virtue. As a final step, he shows how the practice can be facilitated.

In the three examples which have been cited, it is evident that Blair divided his subjects with propriety. The theme, in each instance, is adequately developed and the ideas are clearly presented.

Explication

We have previously seen that the explication of a text in a sermon corresponds to narration at the bar. As a rule this explanatory process is a function of the introduction. At times, however, it occurs in the initial stages of the discussion. The latter method is illustrated in the discourse "On Our Ignorance of Good and Evil in this Life."
Blair effectively developed this part of the sermon. By employing related verses of scripture, comparisons or antithetical statements, historical analogies, and arguments from cause to effect or from effect to cause, he vividly described the importance of the text and showed its relationship to the audience.

The sermon, "On the Influence of Religion Upon Adversity" contains a typical example of Blair's method of clarifying the text. He uses as his central theme the fifth verse of the twenty-seventh chapter of Psalms which states: "In the time of trouble, he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

After the text has been stated and a related scripture verse introduced, Blair emphasizes the importance of the text by asserting that all attempts by man to meet the problem of adversity, have failed. Only God can supply the necessary strength to cope with adverse circumstances.

To substantiate this belief, Blair refers to those arts which man has employed in an effort to prepare himself for the hardships of life. Some men have depended upon wisdom; others upon power; and others upon riches. But wisdom, power and wealth are useless within themselves.

While the wisdom of the world is thus occupied, religion has been no less attentive to the same important object. It informs us in the text, of a pavilion which God erects to shelter his servants in the time of trouble, of a secret place in his tabernacle into which
he brings them, of a rock on which he sets them up; and elsewhere he tells us, of a shield and a buckler which he spreads before them, to cover them from the terror by night, and the arrow that flieth by day... The defence which religion provides, is altogether of an internal kind. It is the heart, not the outward state, which it possesses to guard. When the time of trouble comes, as come it must to all, it places good men under the pavilion of the Almighty, by affording them that security and peace which arise from the belief of divine protection. It brings them into the secret of his tabernacle, by opening to them sources of consolation which are hidden from others. By that strength of mind with which it endows them, it sets them up upon a rock, against which the tempest may violently beat, but which it cannot shake.

Again, in his discourse "On Our Ignorance of Good and Evil in this Life," Blair fully explains his text—"Who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" (Eccles. VI. 12)—, as a first step in the body of the speech.

The history of man, asserts the author, demonstrates the validity of the text. As we glance at those around us, we observe a group of aspiring leaders, who after struggling to the top of their profession, fall with sudden rapidity. Multitudes, day by day, strive to improve their station in life. But after their goal is achieved they still are not satisfied. Business men, for example, yearn for rest, while those who are inactive desire action. Yet when both obtain that which they had sought, they often are disappointed.

18 Ibid., "On the Influence of Religion Upon Adversity," pp. 27-28. (Note: Underlined words are in italics in original.)
Thus, man walketh in a vain show [italics in the original]. He is incapable of determining what pleasure certain objects will bring. Anticipation frequently proves greater than possession. "Both good and evil," therefore, "are beheld at a distance, through a perspective which deceives." 19

From these references, it is apparent that Blair adhered to the rhetorical principles advanced in his lectures with respect to the explication of the text. By using numerous Biblical passages, illustrations from history, similar and contrasting examples, and logical arguments, he succeeded in placing the text in as strong a view as possible.

Reasoning or Arguments

Invention. Many statements, interspersed throughout the lectures, emphasize the importance of invention. Not only is the strength of a speaker's reasoning governed by his inventive ability, but also the manner of expression. It is impossible for him to present his thoughts effectively unless he has first meditated seriously on the subject. In this meditation, the speaker should rely as much as possible upon his own ideas. When he has emptied this reservoir of knowledge, then he might look to others for guidance. These are the conclusions which Blair reached concerning

invention. Let us see how closely he observed this theory in forming his sermons.

Blair was not a careless writer. Judging from his own comments and those of his contemporaries, he labored assiduously on every sermon which he preached. Kames, for years, expressed the fear that Blair's popularity would suffer a sudden decline unless he discontinued the practice of making every discourse equally strong.20 While touring the Hebrides, Dr. Johnson was informed by a Mr. Watson that Blair "has taken a week to compose a sermon."21

We may infer from these observations that Blair meditated upon his subjects at length before attempting to compose them. But even more convincing than this indirect evidence is the quality of the material, as seen in his sermons, which his invention supplied. This point will be illustrated in the succeeding section, the disposition and conduct of the arguments.

Although Blair was opposed to the ancient system of drawing arguments from the "Loci Communes," he believed that all arguments are designed to prove at least one of the three themes: "truth", "duty", and "interest." Thus, in meditating upon a subject, the author relies upon his

21 James Boswell, Tour to the Hebrides (Humphrey, Milford, Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 201.
creative ability to supply the evidence which will establish the validity, moral quality, and usefulness of the theme.

In the sermon, "On Devotion," Blair shows that his specific purpose is true, morally right, and useful. This fact may be illustrated by pointing out a few of the arguments which he uses.

I. "True devotion is rational and well founded" (truth).

II. "Devotion is the lively exercise of those affections which we owe to the Supreme Being" (duty).

III. "Influence of devotion on the happiness of life" (usefulness).

The arguments, as a whole, are also constructed in such a manner that they show the listener the advantages of the theme with respect to God, to others, and to self. In the discourse, "On the Duties of the Young," for example, Blair advises young people to be pious in their relationship with God; to revere their parents and obey their superiors; and to be true to themselves.

The same advice is given to those who retire from active religious life. They will be better men if they worship God, think of the world, and consider their own character. Again in the sermon "On Gentleness," Blair recommends to his hearers that they consider their moral obligations to God, to their fellow men, and to themselves.

The substance of Blair's speeches, therefore, is
built around the themes of "truth", "duty", and "interest". These themes, in turn, are focused so that the listeners will understand their responsibilities to God, their relation to others, and their own attributes.

Blair's inventive ability, as seen in his sermons, may be summed up in the following observation of John Foster, appearing in the 1815 issue of the *Athenaeum Magazine*:

With respect to the general power of thinking displayed in these sermons, we apprehend that discerning readers are coming fast toward an uniformity of opinion. They will all cheerfully agree that the author carries good sense along with him wherever he goes; that he keeps his subjects distinct; that he never wanders from the one in hand; that he presents concisely very many important lessons of sound morality; and that in doing this he displays an uncommon knowledge of the more obvious qualities of human nature.22

**Methods of Reasoning.** Blair employed the deductive mode of reasoning in his sermons. Beginning with a general principle, he then assembled arguments in sufficient numbers to render the theory tenable. There is no suspense on the part of the audience. At the outset of the sermon, Blair informed them of his purpose and method of achieving that purpose. He advanced a theorem and then, through a deductive process, attempted to prove the proposition.

In the first sermon of the first volume, for instance, Blair sets forth as a principle to be proved, that piety

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and morality should be united. To establish the validity of this assumption he argued: "That alms without prayers, or prayers without alms, morality without devotion, or devotion without morality, are extremely defective." He then concludes the discussion by showing the "happy effects of their mutual union." 23

Choice and Arrangement of Arguments. The task of supplying arguments is a function of nature. Choosing the most convincing arguments from this supply and arranging them with propriety is a function of art. Since Blair's primary purpose was to persuade, he usually began his sermons by establishing a need for a change in the conduct of the audience. He then advocated a specific course of action to satisfy that need. The chosen arguments, therefore, were arranged in such a manner as to place the theme of the discourse in the strongest view.

In discussing "Religious Retirement," Blair vividly described the advantages of such retirement and then recommended subjects which should be considered during this period of meditation. In pointing out the "Duties of the Young," he likewise indicated the necessity of thinking seriously about character building at an early age. This was followed by a suggested list of virtues which should

contribute to the moral development of youth.

The sermon "On the Union of Piety and Morality" contains a similar approach. First the inadequacy of alms without prayers, morality without devotion and vice versa are clearly demonstrated. The combining of these virtues is offered as a solution to the problem of true worship.

Each of the foregoing cases illustrates the logical pattern that characterizes the disposition of the arguments in the sermons. Blair's method of presenting a basic thought as an initial step in his reasoning process and then employing additional ideas, each of which is built upon the preceding one, is further shown in the discussion, "On the Power of Conscience." Although the arguments are not necessarily arranged in a sequence, progressing from the weaker to the stronger, they are placed in an order of climax. The leading ideas are expressed as follows:

I. "A sense of right and wrong in conduct, or of moral good and evil, belongs to the human nature."

II. "It produces an apprehension of merited punishment, when we have committed evil."

III. "Although the inward sentiment be stifled during the season of prosperity, yet, in adversity, it will revive."

IV. "When it revives, it determines us to consider every distress which we suffer."

The average number of main ideas in the sermons ranges from three to four. In addition these arguments are
frequently supported by various subdivisions. It would appear from this numerical count that the total of six divisions, including sub-heads, which Blair recommended as a maximum amount for any discourse, was usually exceeded in the sermons. This rule he seldom violated, however, since not all of the leading ideas were separated into parts. Some discourses, for instance, have four central arguments, none of which are subdivided.

The arguments were not only appropriate in number but also in length. Blair did not treat a point beyond the need for understanding and conviction. The fact that the sermons covered about twenty-eight pages and contained six partitions or less is conclusive evidence that the ideas were not, on the whole, unduly long.

It is evident that Blair used good sense and judgment in choosing and arranging the arguments of his sermons. From the material which invention supplied he selected what was most conducive to persuasion. In arranging the arguments he often placed them in a climactic order, separated the strong ideas from each other, and did not extend them too far. He also avoided bringing divergent thoughts together under the same heading. In short, he closely followed his theoretical principles concerning the argumentative part of a discourse.

Pathetic Part

Thus far we have seen that the sermons are logical
discussions, appealing to the understanding of the listeners. The arguments are well chosen and arranged in the proper sequence. Nothing extraneous or redundant is introduced; but, rather, every statement contributes to the unity of the whole. In spite of these merits, however, the discourses were deficient in strong persuasive appeals.

Although Blair condemned the majority of English sermons because they lacked the necessary animation to produce persuasion, he was, in most cases, guilty of the same charge. He presented his thoughts in a placid manner, seldom bursting forth in a bolder strain. He

... wished to temper the glow of passion with the coolness of reason, and to give such scope only to the imagination of his audience, as would leave the exercise of their judgment unimpaired.24

Blair recommended pathos as a vital instrument of persuasion. For only through arousing the emotions of his hearers, can an orator demonstrate true eloquence. Yet he rarely utilized this dynamic appeal. He seemed content to convince his audience of the validity of his arguments. But in failing to go beyond this aim, he was deficient in what he stated was the underlying purpose of a sermon: to stir the hearts of men and women, inspiring them to live a virtuous life.

A writer for the Edinburgh Review justly asserted that Blair

generally leaves his readers pleased with his judgment, and his just observations on human conduct, without ever rising so high as to touch the great passions, or kindle any enthusiasm in favour of virtue. 26

It should be remembered that these conclusions are based upon the sermons as a whole. There are, of course, individual cases in which the author effectively employed the pathetic appeal. In the sermon, "On the Influence of Religion Upon Prosperity," he vividly portrayed the dangers which confront the man who rejects God.

They say unto God, depart from us. - - - What an impious voice! Could we have believed it possible, that worldly pleasures should so far intoxicate any human heart? Wretched and infatuated man! Have you ever examined on what your confidence rests? - - - You have said in your heart, You shall never be moved; you fancy yourselves placed on a mountain which standeth strong, Awake from those flattering dreams, and behold how every thing totters around you! You stand on the edge of a precipice; and the ground is sliding way below your feet . . . . Ten thousand contingencies ever float on the current of life, the smallest of which if it meet your frail bark in the passing, is sufficient to dash it in pieces . . . . The Almighty touches with his rod that edifice of dust, on which you stand, and boast of your strength; and, at that instant, it crumbles to nothing. 26

Again in the discourse "On the Progress of Vice" he admonished the wicked:

Tremble then at the view of the gulph which is opening before thee. Look with horror at the precipice, on the brink of which thou standest; and if yet a moment be left for retreat, think how thou mayest


26 Blair, op. cit., "On the Influence of Religion Upon Prosperity," p. 73-82. (Note: Underlined words are in italics in the original).
escape, and be saved.  

These pathetic appeals, emphasizing the element of fear, are expressed in forceful language, elevated to the level of sublimity. Here the author is apparently moved as he describes the ultimate fate of the transgressors of God's laws, in a manner reminiscent of the "fire and brimstone" oratory of Jonathan Edwards.

A different type of pathos is present in the sermon, "On the Death of Christ." In this discourse, Blair attempts to move his listeners to compassion by depicting the suffering of Christ, prior to the crucifixion.

In derision they (the enemies of Christ) addressed him as a King. They clothed him with purple robes; they crowned him with a crown of thorns; they put a reed into his hand; and, with insulting mockery, bowed the knee before him.  

After painting this picture, Blair suddenly cries out against the tormentors, ridiculing their folly. "Blind and impious men!" How unaware they were that the Scripture was being fulfilled. At the very moment when Christ seemed powerless in the hands of his adversaries, God was preparing a high place in the kingdom for his victorious Son.

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29 Ibid., pp. 155-37.
From these examples it is apparent that Blair was capable of employing emotional proof. Whenever he utilized this requisite of persuasion, he usually followed the rules which he outlined in his theory. These appeals only occur in the subjects which warrant it. They are also presented in simple language, free from superfluous material and are seldom pursued at length.

The fact remains, however, that Blair, for the most part, was not a pathetic orator. The few cases of exalted animation which have been discussed are exceptions to the general tenor of the sermons. The majority of discourses are of a predominantly intellectual nature, possessing little, if any, dynamic appeals for action.

**Peroration or Conclusion**

The conclusions, like the introductions, of the sermons are relatively short. Sometimes, as in the discourse "On the Influence of Religion Upon Prosperity" and "On Devotion," the peroration covers less than one page. This brevity was enhanced by the fact that the author refrained from introducing material in the conclusion which had not been discussed in the body of the speech.

Blair often prefaced his closing remarks by drawing inferences from the line of reasoning advanced in the argumentative part of the discourse. This was usually followed by an appeal, advising the auditors to put these Christian principles into practice. The plea, however, was rarely
of a pathetic nature. It was in the form of an exhortation, designed, of course, to instill in the audience a desire to improve their religious stature. But the mildness of the appeal limited the lasting effect of the message.

These points may be illustrated by examining the conclusion of the sermon "On Devotion."

To conclude, let us remove from devotion, all those mistakes, to which the corruptions of men, or their ignorance and prejudices, have given rise. With us let it be the worship of God, in spirit and in truth [italics in the original]; the elevation of the soul towards him, in simplicity and love. Let us pursue it as the principle of virtuous conduct, and of inward peace. By frequent and serious meditation on the great objects of religion, let us lay ourselves open to its influence. By means of the institutions of the Gospel, let us cherish its impressions. And, above all, let us pray to God, that he may establish its power in our heart. For here, if anywhere, his assistance is requisite. The spirit of devotion is his gift. From his inspiration it proceeds, towards him it tends; and in his presence hereafter, it shall attain its full perfection.30

Blair frequently concluded his sermons with an appropriate quotation from the Bible. In showing the "Influence of Religion Upon Prosperity" he stated that

On the whole, let this be our conclusion, That both in prosperity and in adversity, religion is the safest guide of human life. Conducted by its light, we reap the pleasures, and at the same time escape the dangers, of a prosperous state. Sheltered under its protection, we stand the shock of adversity with most intrepidity, and suffer least from the violence of the storm. He that desireth life, and loveth many days that he may see good, let him keep his tongue from evil, and his lips from guile. Let him depart from evil, and do good. Let him seek peace with God, and pursue it. Then, in

30 Ibid., pp. 304-5.
his adversity, God shall hide him in his pavilion. In his prosperity, he shall flourish like a tree planted by the rivers of water. The ungodly are hot so; but are like the grass, which the wind driveth away. 31

Such conclusions, though seldom pathetic, were probably sufficient to cause the audience to leave the church with a favorable attitude towards the subject and the speaker.

IV. CONCLUSION

Three observations can be made from our study of the general nature of Blair's sermons. First, they were characterized by brevity; secondly, they were concerned with problems of morality; thirdly, they were designed to persuade.

Blair, unlike many of his contemporaries, practised brevity. While the typical sermon of Eighteenth Century English and Scottish divines was an hour or more in length, Blair seldom exceeded forty minutes in presenting his messages. Thus he was careful to avoid the danger of tiring his listeners with long, drawn-out discussions.

Blair, prompted by the liberal attitudes of both his audience and himself, constructed his sermons around principles of morality, rather than the more serious aspects of religion. In spite of the lack of religious fervor,

31 Ibid., pp. 83-4. (Note: Underlined words are in italics in original.)
however, the sermons purposed to persuade the listeners to improve their moral standards.

With respect to the ethical requirements of the speaker, Blair, for the most part, adhered to those suggestions which he recommended in his lectures. Contemporary writers concurred in the belief that he was a man of dignity, probity, and sincerity and that he felt morally obligated to his parishioners. Although his vanity was a generally accepted fact, he did not envy his fellow man.

On one point, however, Blair was deficient. He had asserted in his lectures that modesty, though desirable, should never lead to timidity; yet his diffidence prompted him to refuse important offices in the church. Unlike the ideal orator that he advocated, Blair feared those occasions which necessitated impromptu speaking.

It is evident that Blair was sufficiently well-trained in the subjects dealing with and those related to the art of preaching. As he stood before his congregation, he stood as a man of authority. To the members of his audience he was not only a minister of the gospel but a literary scholar.

The specific parts of the sermons are, in most cases, to be commended. Blair succeeded in introducing his subjects in an interesting and convincing manner, in dividing them into appropriate headings, and in explaining the doctrine of the text. Further, he supported his theme with
solid argument and a clear method.

The pathetic part of the sermons, however, is wanting in strength. While it is true that Blair, whenever he desired, could use pathos with effect, he failed to utilize this form of appeal sufficiently. It appears that he went too far in ridding most of his sermons of all signs of evangelical zeal. As a result, they lack the degree of emotional intensity which, Blair suggested in his theory, is necessary to produce lasting persuasion.
CHAPTER V

EXPRESSION

Blair, in developing his sermons, paid particular attention to expression. Although sound argument and perspicuous method are essential requisites, they are not enough, in themselves, to render a discourse convincing. They must be supplemented by a graceful style and a forceful delivery. The degree of effectiveness which Blair achieved in expressing his ideas will be determined in this chapter.

I. STYLE

Blair, in composing his sermons, gave particular attention to style. Although this phase of a discourse is inferior to the sentiment, it is a factor which reflects upon the speaker's thinking ability, and should, therefore, be improved as much as possible. This improvement can only be obtained by studying the works of leading authors, by practice in writing, by meditation on the subject to be developed, and by examining the style of your own productions until the proper corrections have been made.

Blair attempted to follow each of these requisites. His Lectures On Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, his dissertation on the "Ossian" poems and his other critical essays are sufficient proof that he was a scholar who improved his status in the field of literature by constant exercise in
writing. The timeliness of the introductions and the sound reasoning displayed in the argumentative part of the sermons offer convincing evidence that he sedulously studied his subject before composing.

Blair was especially concerned with the task of correcting his "rough drafts." He was reluctant to deliver or publish any discourse which had not been carefully polished. We have already noted that he often spent more than a week in preparing a sermon and that James criticised him for composing every message with the same meticulous care. In a letter, apparently written to Strahan the publisher, dated October 29, 1798, Blair pointed out that the sermons, which later appeared in the first volume, exemplify his best style.

I have myself at present in view a small publication in which it would give me pleasure that you were concerned, though it be of that kind on which I am afraid you will put no great value, being no other than a Volume of Sermons. All I can say for it is that I have employed more time & pains on them than I believe is commonly bestowed on publications of that nature. As Sermons announced by The Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh may probably draw some Criticism I have given all the attention that was in my power both to the Composition & the Style, and they have undergone the careful review of several of the best Judges here who would not wish my reputation to be endangered by them.

These references clearly show that Blair took the subject of style seriously. He not only emphasised its

1 E. M. Schmitz, "Dr. Johnson and Blair's Sermons," Modern Language Notes, LX, (1945), p. 239.
importance in his theoretical teachings but endeavored to produce the best possible style in his sermons. To determine the effect of his diction, let us analyze his "best possible style" as seen in the discourses in the first volume.

In developing this topic, the same method used in presenting his theory will be observed. First, perspicuity of words and phrases and sentences will be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of ornament and the general characters of style.

**Perspicuity**

*Words and Phrases.* By perspicuity, Blair meant expressing our thoughts in such a manner that every reader or listener can understand us. If a word or sentence is not easily discernible, then it lacks necessary clarity. As we have seen, the three qualities of perspicuity with respect to single words and phrases are "purity", "propriety and precision." Purity implies the use of those words which stem from the native tongue and are recognized as good usage by the authorities. Propriety goes one step further. Since it is not sufficient merely to employ commonly accepted constructions which are free from foreign influence, the writer must choose those terms which will most efficiently convey his intended meaning. But the language may be pure and proper and still not be precise. The good speaker avoids saying either more or less than is needed to impart his ideas. Any word or phrase which does not add to the
meaning of the concept is superfluous and should, therefore, be pruned.

Most critics agree that Blair excelled in the use of perspicuous words and phrases. Foster, who was inclined to condemn the style of the sermons as a whole, admitted that the words were properly chosen.\(^2\) Dr. E. Williams criticized the artificial and elaborate quality which he thought characterized the discourses, but praised the "perspicuity of arrangement and expression."\(^3\) Hawley states that Blair uses a very well selected vocabulary--composed of words that are perspicuous and common to every day speech. He does occasionally employ words that are a little difficult, but even these are introduced with care.\(^4\)

These criticisms aptly describe the perspicuous nature of the words and phrases which Blair used. Seldom do we find in the sermons, constructions which are not pure, proper, nor precise. Any person with an average educational background is capable of grasping the author's meaning; for the words used to express the thoughts are usually simple and concrete.

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Of course, Blair, at times, employed terminology which was a little above the common norm. When, for instance, he says: "sequestration from the affairs of men;" or "maze of inextricable difficulties;" or "recluse and sequestered persons;" or "precipitate education;" or "enigmatical rites," he is using more difficult expressions than those which typify the sermons in general. But even here they are carefully introduced terms which give an accurate picture of the speaker's intentions.

Sentences. One of the requisites of a perspicuous sentence is that it vary in length and in kind according to the nature of the composition. An oral discourse, for example, should not be composed of long sentences because of the difficulty in pronunciation. At the same time, however, too many short sentences break the trend of thought.

The two types of sentence structure, "style périodique" and "style coupé" should both appear in a given discourse. By properly mixing those sentences which consist of numerous parts arranged in a climactic order, with those that are short, independent periods, the writer increases the effectiveness of his style.

That Blair efficiently used both types of sentences in his speeches can be seen by the following statistical data compiled from his sermon "On the Union of Piety and
Morality."

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In order to make the foregoing analysis more specific we may break down the statistics as follows:

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Although the length of the sentences varies from four to eighty-five words, the median is twenty. In fact,

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An examination of the sermons in the first volume, the seventh edition printed in 1779, reveals that the above statistical data are typical.
seventy-four, or over one-half of the sentences are composed of twenty words or less; whereas, only fifteen had more than forty words. Thus Blair, living in an age when most writers were prone to express their ideas in lengthy periods, obtained the brevity necessary for good oral style.

The four requisites of a good sentence are clearness and precision, unity, strength, and harmony. Many words which are clear and precise when analyzed in isolation become ambiguous when they are improperly arranged within a sentence. Perspicuous language, therefore, means more than a proper choice of words and phrases. It also signifies an appropriate disposition of the various members of a period.

For the most part, the style of the sermons exemplifies clarity and precision, both in words and in sentences. Blair, observing the grammatical rules, endeavored to place adverbs, relative pronouns, and prepositional phrases, sufficiently close to the objects which they modify. His success in carrying out these aims has, in most cases, rendered the content of the discourses free from ambiguity.

Although the sentences are usually perspicuous, they are, according to some critics, often "stiff and artificial."6 Numerous constructions which are acceptable as

6 Both Foster and Dr. K. Williams criticize the stiff, artificial quality of the language. (See Foster, op. cit., p. 190, and Allibone, op. cit., p. 201.)
material to be read, are too stilted and formal for oral presentation. To illustrate this point, let us examine the following statements which appear in the sermons:

But old age shall receive him into a quiet retreat, where, if lively sensations fail, gentle pleasures remain to soothe him.

Separated from them, prosperity, how fair soever it may seem to the world, is insipid, may frequently noxious to the possessor.

Ten thousand contingencies ever float on the current of life, the smallest of which, if it meet your frail bark in the passing, is sufficient to dash it in pieces.

Gentleness therefore, or, as it is very properly termed, humanity, is what man, as such, in every station, owes to man.

Our blessed Saviour himself, though of all who ever lived on earth he needed least the assistance of religious retreat, yet, by his frequent practice, has done it signal honor. Often were the garden, the mountain, and the silence of the night, sought by him, for intercourse with heaven.

He who, unacquainted with the devout affections, sets himself to keep the Divine commandments, will advance in obedience with a slow and languid pace; like one who, carrying a heavy burden, toils to mount the hill.

Most observers agree that the sentences have a high degree of unity. Whatever scene is described in the beginning seldom changes as the period progresses. Thus Blair avoided the confusion which results from assigning a different time, place, and action to each member of the sentence.

Unlike many writers of his era, he refrained from bringing together in one sentence a series of clauses which possess sufficient strength in themselves to stand alone. Those parts which could be developed as separate thoughts
are usually treated independently, thus giving a more unified impression.

The unity of the sentences is further strengthened by the omission of parenthetical statements and by the practice of closing the periods at the opportune moment. The thought is rarely brought to an abrupt end, nor is it unduly prolonged.

The sentences, possessing the necessary unity, directly support the specific purpose. Every period contributes to the development of the theme. But, while they are strong, independent theorems when viewed alone, they are of little assistance to each other when assembled in a group. The paragraphs, therefore, often composed of a group of remotely related sentences, frequently lack unity. In this connection, one critic makes the following observation:

... The sentences appear often like a series of little independent propositions, each satisfied with its own distinct meaning, and capable of being placed in a different part of the brain, without injury to any mutual connexion, or ultimate purpose of the thoughts. The ideas relate to the subject generally, without specifically relating to one another. They all, if we may so speak, gravitate to one centre, but have no mutual attraction among themselves. The mind must often dismiss entirely the idea in one sentence, in order to proceed to that in the next; instead of feeling that the second, though distinct, yet necessarily retains the first still in mind, and partly derives its force from it; and that they both contribute, in connexion with several more sentences, to form a grand complex scheme of thought, each of them producing a far greater effect, as a part of the combination, than it would have done as a little thought standing alone."

A typical example of this form of composition can be found in the sermon, "On the Duties of the Young."

Industry is not only the instrument of improvement, but the foundation of pleasure. Nothing is so opposite to the true enjoyment of life, as the relaxed and feeble state of an indolent mind. He who is a stranger to industry, may possess, but he cannot enjoy. For it is labour only which gives the relish to pleasure. It is the appointed vehicle of every good to man. It is the indispensable condition of our possessing a sound mind, in a sound body . . . .

Here the author is endeavoring to explain the relationship that exists between industry and pleasure. After stating that industry is the foundation of pleasure, he fails to develop this point, but chooses rather to restate it in several different ways. As a result, we have a series of independent propositions, all of which generally support the subject without strengthening each other.

This uncombined type of composition is also present in the discourse, "On the Mixture of Joy and Fear in Religion."

The world is like a wheel incessantly revolving, on which human things alternately rise and fall. What is past of our life, has been a chequered scene. On its remaining periods, uncertainty and darkness rest. Futurity is an unknown region, into which no man can look forward without awe, because he cannot tell what forms of danger or trial may meet him there. This we know well, that in every period of our life, the path of happiness shall be found steep and arduous; but swift and easy, the descent to ruin. What, with much exertion of care and vigilance, we had built up, one unwary action may, in an evil hour, overthrow. The

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props of human confidence are, in general, insecure. The sphere of human pleasures is narrow. . . . 9

We are forced to conclude from these examples that the sentences have unity. But in making every period equally strong, Blair has sacrificed, to some extent, the necessary unity that is requisite for a good paragraph. The sentences, instead of combining to form a climax at the end of the paragraph, are climaxes within themselves. It is difficult, therefore, to differentiate between the stronger and the weaker statements, since each receives almost the same emphasis.

The seven rules, recommended by Blair, for obtaining strength in a sentence are: (1) remove redundant words and members; (2) careful use of such transitional words as "and", "but", etc.; (3) avoid concluding sentences with an adverb; (4) avoid crowding too many "circumstances" together; (5) place members in a climax order; (6) use similar language when contrasting or comparing two members; (7) and, arrange capital words with propriety.10

With few exceptions the sentences of the sermons fulfill the foregoing requirements. Blair, averse to superfluities, usually succeeded in pruning unnecessary words from his sentences. Of course, his literary style, at

9 Ibid., pp. 450-51.

times, gave the language an appearance of redundancy. But the fault here lies in the arrangement, not in the selection of terms. In most cases, those words and phrases which are employed are essential to the thought.

As we have seen, the periods are relatively short. Since Blair, therefore, avoided crowding too many members together, he had little difficulty in properly using conjunctions. Whenever these connecting words appear, the relationship between the parts is clearly shown.

Blair further increased the strength of his sentences by placing the parts in an order of climax. If a period contained two or more members, for example, he endeavored to begin with the weakest and progress to the strongest. If, however, the divisions were equally important, then the shortest preceded the longest. Placing such emphasis on the conclusion of a sentence, he refrained from closing the thought with insignificant words. Thus adverbs seldom occur at the end of a period.

Blair likewise observed the sixth essential for producing strength in sentences; that is, using similar language when comparing or contrasting two members. This balanced structure is illustrated as follows:

Heaven is the region of gentleness and friendship;
Hell of fierceness and animosity.

The ingratitude of a friend stings him this hour;
and the pride of a superior wounds him the next.

Again, in comparing the man of the world with the child of
God, Blair points out that

The one performs his duty, only because it is com-
mmanded; the other, because he loves it. The one is
inclined to do no more than necessity requires; the
other seeks to exceed. The one looks for his reward
in somewhat besides religion; the other, finds it in
religion itself ....

From this discussion it is apparent that Blair ad-
hered to the first six rules concerning the strength of a
period. With respect to the seventh, however, he has been
freely criticized. That he arranged the capital words with
some degree of clarity, is an accepted fact. The key word
is usually disposed so that it makes a suitable impression.
But the author is inclined to overuse the periodic sentence
structure and the inverted form. Let us glance at a few of
the inverted and periodic sentences which occur throughout
the sermons.

Great has been the corruption of the world in every
age.

Unjust are our complaints, of the promiscuous dis-
tribution made by Providence, of its favours among men.

Impelled by desire, forward they rush with inconsiderate ardour.

Endowed with capacities which extend far beyond his
present sphere; fitted by his rational nature for
running the race of immortality, he is stopped short in
the very entrance of his course.

Unskilled in the art of extracting happiness from
the objects around us, our ingenuity solely appears in
converting them into misery.

Confident in the opinions which they adopt, and in
the measures which they pursue, they seem as if they

understood Solomon to say . . .

Impatient of his confinement within this tabernacle of dust, languishing for the happy day of his translation to those glorious regions which were displayed to his sight, he would sojourn on earth as a melancholy exile.

Strangers to all the temperate satisfactions of a good and a pure mind; strangers to every pleasure except what was seasoned by vice or vanity, their adversity is to the last degree discomfited.

Conducted by its light, we reap the pleasures and at the same time escape the dangers, of a prosperous state. Sheltered under its protection, we stand the shock of adversity with most intrepidity, and suffer least from the violence of the storm.

In each of the examples that has been cited the capital words are distinct; but, in striving for a varied style, Blair has employed the periodic sentence to excess. As a result the language is often too literary for good oral expression.

The harmony of the sentences is consistent with the principles advanced in the lectures. By choosing those words which contain a proper "intermixture of vowels and consonants" and which, at the same time, could be produced with facility, Blair attempted to use as much as possible only those sounds which are pleasing to the ear.

The members are also distributed in such a manner that they do not unduly burden the voice mechanism during oral production. Pauses designated by commas and semicolons, occur in sufficient numbers to give the voice that rest which is essential to the harmonious quality of the sentence.
Blair, in addition, carefully avoided closing his sentences with insignificant words such as particles, relative pronouns, and adverbs. He sought, instead, to complete his periods with sonorous words. For they alone are appropriate for dignified and elevated oratory.

He further improved the harmony of his sentences by varying his style and relating the sound to the thought.

Ornament

Blair stated in his lectures that passionate, sublime orations do not require ornament. Conversely, a logical discourse designed primarily to inform the understanding needs little assistance from imagery. Since the sermons, however, were neither too elevated nor too didactic, and since they were established upon a "basis of solid thought and natural sentiment," Blair evidently felt justified in embellishing the style. Figurative language, therefore, plays an important part in the development of the sermons.

Blair was especially adept in using the various forms of imagery. He undoubtedly pleased his audience as he portrayed vivid and picturesque scenes in simple, familiar language. Consider, for example, the imagery present in the following statement drawn from the sermon, "On Our Ignorance of Good and Evil": "We everyday behold man climbing, by painful steps, to that dangerous height, which, in the end, renders their fall more severe, and their ruin
more conspicuous."12 Here the author has combined three
types of imagery in one sentence. We "behold men (visual)
climbing (motor), by painful steps (tactile)."

The discourse, "On the Death of Christ," probably
more than any other sermon, abounds in ornament. In de-
picting the crucifixion of Christ Blair graphically de-
scribes the events of that hour,

The world, which the Almighty created for himself,
seemed to have become a temple of idols. Even to
vices and passions, altars were raised; and what was
entitled Religion, was in effect a discipline of im-
purity. In the midst of this universal darkness, Satan
had erected his throne; and the learned and
polished, as well as the savage nations, bowed down
before him. But at the hour when Christ appeared on
the cross, the signal of his defeat was given. His
kingdom suddenly departed from him; the reign of
Idolatry passed away; He was behold to fall like
lightning from heaven [italics in the original]; in
that hour, the foundation of every Pagan temple shook.
The statue of every false God tottered on its base.
The Priest fled from his falling shrine; and the
Heathen oracles became dumb for ever.13

This paragraph, elevated above ordinary descriptions,
derives power from a high degree of ornament. It contains
the metaphor, the simile, and numerous statements which
appeal to our visual senses. In short, Blair is observing
the rules which he recommended concerning figurative lan-
guage. For the figures which appear are properly adapted
to the tone of the subject, thereby increasing the clarity

12 Ibid., pp. 207-08.
13 Ibid., p. 133.
of the theme and adding to the beauty of style.

From these comments on Blair's use of ornament in general let us proceed to analyze the figures of speech and thought. The metaphor, hyperbole, personification, apostrophe, comparison, antithesis, interrogation and exclamation will be considered in order.

**Metaphor.** The metaphor which, in Blair's opinion, is limited to the resemblance of one object to another, is frequently used in the sermons. In most cases this figure, as seen in the sermons, is in harmony with the rules advanced in the lectures. These rules, which have been developed in Part One, are as follows: (1) adapt the figure to the subject; (2) figure should only be drawn from dignified objects; (3) resemblances should be perspicuous; (4) avoid combining plain and metaphorical language in one sentence; (5) avoid "mixed-metaphors"; (6) do not assemble a group of images together to portray a particular object; and, (7) do not extend metaphors too far.14

Blair, possessing good sense and judgment in developing his themes, was careful to adapt the figures to the subject. Since it was his purpose to speak in a language that corresponded to the sentiment of the discourse, the metaphor is consonant with the thought that is being expressed. In other words, the figure is elevated or lowered

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to suit the sentiment.

The objects which Blair uses as a source from which to draw his figures usually have dignity. Hill states that these "figures . . . are seen at once to have a foundation in nature . . . ."\textsuperscript{15} When Blair says, for example, that "Solitude is the hallowed ground which religion hath, in every age, chosen for her own,"\textsuperscript{16} or when he says that "Religion is the spring of consolation,"\textsuperscript{17} he is writing as one who is inspired to some degree by nature.

Throughout his writings Blair was conscious of the value of a perspicuous style. In striving to show resemblances, therefore, between two objects, he made certain that the relationship was clear. Although he thoroughly understood and enjoyed reading the scientific teachings of his day, he did not allude to these technical sources.

The author also stated in his theory that "trite and common resemblances" may diminish perspicuity. With respect to this point, Foster is critical of Blair. The figures, asserts Foster, "are, for the most part, singularly trite."\textsuperscript{18} After making this condemnation, he then goes


\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, "On Devotion," p. 304.

\textsuperscript{18} Foster, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 193.
on to show that Blair, in spite of his use of trite expressions, is free from plagiarism.

Although the critic cites no examples to prove his assertion, he may have been thinking of such metaphorical statements as the following:

Anxiety is the poison of human life. It is the parent of many sins, and of more miseries.

This earth is the land of shadows.

Youth is the season of warm and generous emotions.

It requires little imagination to assume that these resemblances may have been expressed by previous writers. But, while they may lack in novelty, we cannot concur in the belief that they rise no higher than trite commonplace. The fault of trite resemblances, said Blair, is that they do not present a clear picture. If we judge the above figures by this criterion, we must conclude that they are acceptable metaphors. For the least discerning reader or listener could understand the implied comparison that exists between such objects as "anxiety . . . the poison of human life . . . the parent of many sins;" "earth . . . the land of shadows;" and, "youth . . . the season of warm and generous emotions."

Blair's ability to point out relationships in a succinct manner is further illustrated in his statement defining history. This subject "is a mirror which holds up mankind to their own views." 19

The author likewise refrains from combining plain and metaphorical language in developing a sentence. But even more significant is the fact that one of the severest critics of the sermons’ style readily admits that “the consistency of the figures, whether common or unusual, is in general accurately preserved.”

There are few, if any, cases in which a “mixed-metaphor” occurs.

The figures are also free from the confusion which results by bringing too many images together to converge upon one object; and, in addition, “rarely is anyone of them pushed too far.” Once the resemblance has been clearly shown, Blair is content to pursue the comparison no further.

Hyperbole. The hyperbole, thought Blair, should be used with caution. Because of its nature, it is seldom appropriate when the tenor of the discourse is not elevated above an ordinary plane. Pathetic oratory alone allows it; but even here it should not be used to excess. Since the sermons, therefore, lacked vehemence, and since Blair adhered to the tenets of “good sense and just taste,” he avoided exaggerated expressions.

**Figures of Thought: Personification.** Blair used

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20 Foster, op. cit., p. 123.

21 Hill, op. cit., p. 134.
the three types of personification in varying degrees. Since the mildest form of this figure is adaptable to any discourse, it frequently appears in the sermons. Thus on one occasion the author warns his audience that: "The time is now come, when this great seducer (the world) should mislead you no more." By placing the "world" in opposition with the "great seducer," Blair has transferred a trait inherent in man—the power of seducing—to a lifeless object.

The sermons also contain numerous statements in which inanimate objects are introduced so that they possess essentially the same qualities that characterize a living being. Aged wisdom, for instance, is represented by Blair as a quality that "can check the most forward, cozen the most profligate, and strike with awe the most giddy and unthinking." These two forms of personification require little imagination on part of the audience. The listener, with a minimum amount of difficulty, can visualize such traits existing in lifeless objects. Therefore, both types may be employed in most compositions.

With respect to the third form, however, the situation is entirely different. For a speaker should never address an inanimate object unless he and his listeners are

23 ibid.
experiencing strong emotional feelings. Such an attempt would inevitably produce laughter, without the proper atmosphere. This explains the author's infrequent use of this rhetorical device.

It should be noted that when this type of personification occurs in the sermons, it harmoniously fits into the context of the discourse. After vividly, though not passionately, describing the virtues of devotion, Blair then turns for a moment and speaks directly to that essential part of Christian living:

To thee, O Devotion! we owe the highest improvement of our nature, and much of the enjoyment of our life. Thou art the support of our virtue, and the rest of our souls, in this turbulent world. Thou comest to the thoughts. Thou calmest the passions. Thou exaltest the heart. Thy communications, and thine only, are imparted to the low, no less than to the high; to the poor, as well as to the rich. In thy presence, worldly distinctions cease; and under thy influence, worldly sorrows are forgotten. Thou art the balm of the wounded mind. Thy sanctuary is ever open to the miserable; inaccessible only to the unrighteous and impure. Thou beginnest on earth, the taper of heaven. In thee the hosts of angels and blessed spirits eternally rejoice."24

The reader and listener are gradually prepared for this speech. It is preceded by a picturesque description of the beauties of devotion. Although Blair does not reach the level of sublimity, he renders dignity to his message. He is somewhat more pathetic in his address to evil "Pleasure;" in the sermon "On the Duties of the Young":

These, 0 sinful Pleasure! are thy trophies. It is thus that, co-operating with the foe of God and man, thou degradest human honour, and blastest the opening prospects of human felicity.25

Again in the discourse "On the Power of Conscience," after establishing the appropriate emotional mood by quoting a pathetic passage of scripture, he vehemently declaims: "Adversity! how blunt are all the arrows of thy quiver, in comparison with those of guilt!"26

The three foregoing references are the only examples that can be found in the first volume of sermons illustrating the highest degree of personification. Thus Blair, following his own recommendations, sparingly used this form of emotional appeal.

The rules which apply to personification are equally applicable to the apostrophe. Although it requires less ingenuity and power of imagination to speak to an absent or a dead person as if he were present, the orator must propitiously choose the proper time to indulge in such a practice. It is essential that the emotions, both of the speaker and the listeners, be stirred.

Blair, in discussing the "Disorders of the Passions," points out that Haman was a victim of his passionate desires. Here is a man who occupied a high place in life,

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25 Ibid., p. 333.

26 Ibid., p. 391.
yet the advantages which accompanied his position of power were to no avail so long as he saw "Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate." 27

After depicting the unnecessary woes of this ancient ruler, Blair asserts:

... What was it, O Haman! to thee, though Mordecai had continued to sit there, and neglected to do thee homage? Would the banquet have been on that account the less magnificent, thy palace less splendid, or thy retinue less numerous? Could the disrespect of an obscure stranger dishonour the favourite of a mighty King? In the midst of a thousand submissive courtiers, was one sullen countenance an object worthy of drawing thy notice, or of troubling thy repose? 28

In delivering this apostrophe Blair was aware of his theoretical teachings. He knew the exact moment in which to divert his address from the audience to the absent ruler. The thought and the style are both developed with propriety. But, because of the difficulty involved in using this passionate type of figure, Blair is reluctant to employ it in the sermons. In fact, the above passage is the only apostrophe to be found in the fifteen sermons under consideration.

Comparisons. The two purposes of a comparison, according to Blair, are to explain and to embellish. As in the case of the metaphor, both types of similes should be

27 Esther V. 13.
28 Blair, Sermons, p. 191.
derived from familiar objects. But the relationships, while familiar, ought not be too obvious. The writer should strive, therefore, to use that source which is neither trite nor remote.

The explanatory comparison, designed to clarify a particular concept, is especially adaptable to an informative speech. Its primary aim is to aid in presenting an idea in familiar terms. The embellishing simile, on the other hand, is designed not only to instruct but to beautify the language as well. It can be effectively introduced in that part of the discourse which is of medium intensity.

Blair was convinced that people like to see the resemblance that one object has to another. As a result the sermons contain numerous comparisons. He was particularly adept in explaining an idea through the use of a simile. In emphasizing the task which confronts us in preparing ourselves for the future world, he states that: "We are as incompetent judges of the measures necessary to be pursued for this end, as children are, of the proper conduct to be held in their education."29 Thus by comparing an adult's knowledge of the immortal life with that of a child's faulty conception of educational values, Blair has placed his thought in a stronger view.

Again, in the sermon "On Gentleness," the author

points out the nature of his theme by stating that gentleness is a tangible virtue which everyone can enjoy. Since it is not removed from our grasp it is often more desirable than those higher endowments of the mind which "are like some of the distant stars, whose beneficial influence reaches not to us." 30

The following examples give additional proof of Blair's ability to use comparative structures in a familiar vein:

It is as natural for old age to be frail, as for the corn to bend under the ripened ear, or for the autumnal leave to change its hue.

The world is like a wheel incessantly revolving, on which human things alternately rise and fall.

What distresses that occur in the calm life of virtue, can be compared to those tortures, which remorse of conscience inflicts on the wicked. 31

At times when the sentiment of the discourse was elevated, though not pathetic, Blair introduced comparisons which embellished the style. The statement which precedes the personification of "Devotion," for instance, abounds in vivid imagery.

The pleasures of sense resemble a foaming torrent, which, after a disorderly course speedily runs out, and leaves an empty and offensive channel, but the pleasures of devotion resemble the equable current of a pure river, which enlivens the fields through which

30 Ibid., pp. 162-63.

it passes, and diffuses verdure and fertility along its banks. 32

This type of comparison is likewise illustrated in a passage from the discourse "On the Disorders of the Passions."

Those high powers of conscience and reason, that capacity for happiness, that ardour of enterprise, that glow of affection, which often break through the gloom of human vanity and guilt, are like the scattered columns, the broken arches, and defaced sculptures of some fallen temple, whose ancient splendour appears amidst its ruins. 33

It is evident, therefore, that Blair closely followed his rhetorical doctrine concerning the proper use of comparisons. Although the similes are drawn from familiar sources they are seldom trite. The sentence structure of these figures may be criticized, to some degree, for being too literary, but the resemblances, nevertheless, render the thought clear and, in many instances, they beautify the style.

Interrogation and Exclamation. Blair effectively used both interrogation and exclamation. The questions that are employed in the sermons have two functions: to increase the clarity of the subject and to arouse the emotions of the audience. In many instances, the author asks a series of leading questions at the outset of his speech and then proceeds to answer them in the argumentative part of the discourse. On other occasions, while expounding

32 Ibid., p. 291.
33 Ibid., pp. 195-96.
a particular argument, he makes queries concerning that point and then attempts to give an answer immediately.

Sometimes the questions are of a general nature; that is, they may apply to the group as a whole. But often they are addressed to the individual. In the sermon, "On Religious Retirement," for example, the author, after showing the advantages of being alone with God, appeals to his listeners to examine their own hearts. This examination is brought about by searching our own minds to find the answers to ten vital questions which Blair presents.34

Not all of the interrogatory statements that appear in the sermons were introduced for the primary purpose of providing additional information. Blair often adds to the strength of his message by asking questions, the answers of which are obvious. To illustrate this point, let us consider the following passage from the discourse "On the Ignorance of Good and Evil in This Life":

What shadow can be more vain than the life of the greatest part of mankind? Of all that eager and bustling crowd which we behold on the earth, how few discover the path of true happiness? How few can we find, whose activity has not been misemployed, and whose course terminates not in confessions of disappointments? Is this the state, are these the habits, to which a rational spirit, with all its high hopes, and great capacities, is to be limited forever?35

34 Ibid., pp. 259-60.
It is evident that the author was not interested in throwing additional light on his theme. He was not seeking an answer to these questions; but rather was making assertions that are even more forceful than similar statements expressed in declarative form.

Since exclaimations should only be uttered during moments of intense feeling, they occur less frequently than interrogations. While the sermons are somewhat lacking in passionate appeals, however, we find numerous exclamatory statements interspersed throughout the various discourses.

In the discussion, "On the Disorders of the Passions," Blair went so far as to express his main ideas with exclamatory statements.

I. How miserable is vice, when one guilty passion creates so much torment! II. How unavailing is prosperity, when, in the height of it, a single disappointment can destroy the relish of all its pleasures! III. How weak is human nature, which, in the absence of real, is thus prone to form to itself imaginary woes!

Of course, this is an exception to the rule. But it does demonstrate Blair's desire to employ this part of speech whenever possible. The extent to which it is used depends upon the degree of pathos present in the speech. Thus, in the sermons, "On the Disorders of the Passions," and "On the Death of Christ," eleven exclamations may be found in each, while in the moral discourse dealing with

36 Ibid., p. 177.
the "Union of Piety and Morality" only one is used.

Before concluding the discussion on style, two factors which undoubtedly had a tremendous influence on the popularity of the sermons, should be considered. They are the frequent occurrence of epigrams, and the skillful handling of Biblical references.

Blair evidently devoted much time and energy in developing such epigrammatic remarks as the following:

Pleases are all pleasures in which the heart has no part.

He who lives always in public cannot live to his own soul.

The tear of repentance brings its own relief.

Dissimulation in youth is the fore-runner of perfidy in old age.

Flattery gains the ear of power.

Always to rejoice is to be a fool. Always to tremble is to be a slave.

But, as pleasing as these ingenious sayings might be, they are superseded by the author's ability to blend appropriate verses of scripture into the sermons. A writer for the Edinburgh Review states that one of the leading merits of Blair's work is the "happy application of scriptural quotations."37

Every sermon contains not only references to the text but to many other passages of scripture as well. When

Blair wishes to illustrate a point, says Hawley,

... He never introduces anything from secular literature. All his literary quotations and references are from sacred literature. This he does use, however, with great care and effectiveness and in great quantities. 38

These Biblical verses are especially pleasing; for in them can be found the elements of good style. They contain metaphors, similes, and other figurative expressions, along with questions and exclamations, all of which are appropriately adapted to the theme of the sermon.

General Character of Blair's Style

Blair stated in his lectures that every writer should have a particular style of his own. Whenever we read the works of an author, therefore, we should be able to detect in those writings a definite pattern of style. If this is lacking, we may conclude that the writer is inconsistent, thus exposing himself to the charge that he is nothing more than an imitator.

That Blair's writings are characterized by a homogeneity of expression is an opinion held by most observers. Throughout a given sermon there is a form of diction present which corresponds to that of the other sermons. The style of Blair, then, is not a changeable quality that varies with each succeeding production, but rather it is a constant quality, which, while varying in degree, is essentially the

same in kind.

The four types of style with respect to thought discussed in Part One, were the concise, diffuse, nervous, and feeble. Both the concise and the diffuse, according to Blair, are appropriate for oral discourses. The choice of one or the other depends upon the genius of the speaker. An examination of the sermons reveals that the author used both types, with considerably more emphasis on the concise.

The discourses are concise in that they are developed with relatively short sentences, the ideas are seldom repeated, and amplifications are rarely used. On the other hand, the author was inclined towards ornament. One critic, after praising the language of the sermons, added that "we wish the latter (the language) had been less metaphorical." 59

In spite of his desire to use figures, Blair never depended upon them as a substitute for strength. In fact, he employed ornament for the purpose of exemplifying that quality. But he did not stop here. Since he was interested in supplementing strength with an element of charm, he went, at times, beyond the scope of a concise writer.

In discussing the nervous and feeble styles, Blair was thinking of the writer's ability to understand his subject well. If a man is capable of conceiving his theme in the minutest details, he is in a position to compose in a

manner indicative of the nervous, concise style. Feebleness usually results when an author attempts to cover up his lack of understanding by copiousness of expression.

As we have already seen, Blair fully comprehended his subjects. Good sense abounds in every sermon, both in the sentiment and the language. While the style of the sermons was, in most cases, nervous and concise, Blair could, at times, indulge in diffuseness. It should be remembered, however, that the style, in being diffuse, was never feeble.

The various degrees of ornament, outlined in the lectures, are the dry, plain, neat, elegant, and florid. Although the style of the sermons has been praised and condemned for its elegance and floridity, Blair in reality catered to the neat style; that is, one which places more emphasis on the choice and arrangement of words than on vehement appeals to the imagination. Any sermon written in this style, thought Blair, gives pleasure to the reader or listener.

In some sermons the diction approached elegance, such as is found in certain passages in the discourse "On the Death of Christ" and "On the Disorders of the Passions." On other occasions, Blair, striving for imagery, sometimes


41 Allibone, op. cit., p. 801.
used ornament to excess. But in the majority of cases, he was content to express his thoughts with neatness and simplicity.

The "simplicity of the Author's style,"42 said a critic in the Monthly Review, should not be overlooked. In Blair's opinion, one of the best examples of simplicity is the language of the Bible. That being true, if we judge Blair by his own standards, we are forced to admit that this quality is ever present in the sermons, for these messages are "richly tinged with scriptural language."43

II. DELIVERY

Blair's contemporaries agreed that his delivery was inferior to the content of his discourses. "The high elegance of the Sermons," observes Hill, "was often not so apparent when they were delivered by the author, as when they were read by others."44 When the Earl of Mansfield, a forceful speaker, read the discourses to the Royal Family at St. James, "their intrinsic merit never appeared to greater advantage . . . ."45

Somerville, who often heard Blair preach, believed

44 Hill, op. cit., p. 190.
that his oral presentation was not equal to the content of
the message. "It was stiff, formal, and not altogether free
from affectation." Somerville then asserts, "I may here
notice that the sermons of Dr. Blair appear to me occasion-
ally liable to censure from overstraining." Hill also
recognized this air of formality which characterized Blair's
delivery. "In his manner there was a stiffness which e-
clipsed their (the sermons) beauties, and to which strangers
could not be reconciled." Blair was further handicapped in that he did not
possess a resonant voice. In addition, he seldom employed
elegant gestures; and his pronunciation was, at times,
defective. Finlayson remarks that

... his delivery, though distinct, serious, and
impressive, was not remarkably distinguished by that
magic charm of voice and action which captivates the
senses and imagination.

Bowell "was disgusted with the Doctor's . . . burring pro-
nunciation, and crawling manner with the Lothian tone."

In his Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Sectsmen,

46 Thomas Somerville, My Own Life and Times (Edin-
burgh; Edmonston and Douglas, 1811), pp. 87-93.

47 Hill, op. cit.

48 James Finlayson, "A Short Account of the Life and
Character of the Author," prefixed to Sermons by Hugh Blair

49 James Boswell, Private Papers of James Boswell
from Maishide Castle (Privately Printed, 1883), Vol. XIII,
p. 170.
Chambers aptly summarizes the nature of Blair’s delivery.

In truth, the elocution of Dr. Blair, though accompanied by a dignified and impressive manner, was not fit to be compared with his powers of composition. His voice was deformed by a peculiarity which I knew not how to express by any other term than one almost too homely for modern composition, a burr (italics in the original). He also wanted all that charm which is to be derived from gesticulation, and, upon the whole, might be characterized as a somewhat formal preacher. 50

In spite of these shortcomings Blair often impressed his listeners with his manner of delivery. Boswell wrote in his diary that

The old countess (Lady Leven) told me that when Dr. Hugh Blair was a probationer, she heard him preach and was struck with him; and upon going home told her Lord, who was confined to the house, that she had heard a young man of superior abilities, and though their own parish had been supplied the year before, My Lord might get him another settlement. By Lord wished to hear him. She applied to one of his acquaintance, and got him to preach in the family. My Lord was so much pleased with him that he got him a presentation to Collessy, the next parish to his own. 51

The last sermon which Blair preached was delivered in May, 1796, at the request of the “Society . . . for the Benefit of the Sons of the Clergy for the Established Church in Scotland.” The primary purpose of the message was to raise money for this organization. The degree of success which Blair achieved on this occasion is described by Hill.

... from the admiration with which the sermon


was heard, the funds of the Society derived unexampled benefit. The collection made immediately after it, surpassed what had been ever known; and different sets of hearers vied with each other in the extent of their benevolence. One gentleman in particular, showed involuntarily, that his taste in composition is as high as in the other elegant arts. When leaving the Church he told one of the Elders that not being aware of the effect of Dr. Blair's eloquence, he found he had less money in his pocket than he was disposed to give. Upon going home he sent a donation extremely honourable to his own feelings, and to the talents of the preacher, by whom he had been so powerfully roused.\textsuperscript{52} The testimonies of Boswell and Kames, to which we have previously referred, clearly show that Blair assiduously prepared his sermons for delivery. Although there are few, if any, comments referring to the particular method of presentation practised by Blair, it seems evident that he either read his sermons or committed them to memory. It is improbable that he spoke extemporaneously to his weekly congregations. For even his closest friends, Finlayson and Carlyle, admitted that his reluctance to make extemporaneous speeches was the underlying reason for his refusal to accept the important position of "Moderator of the General Assembly."\textsuperscript{53}

III. CONCLUSION

From our analysis of the style of the sermons with

\textsuperscript{52} Hill, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 167-68.

respect to perspicuity, we may observe that: (1) Blair selected and arranged his words with propriety; (2) he overused the periodic sentence; and (3) he tended to give his sentences equal emphasis, thereby weakening the unity of the paragraph.

In spite of this tendency to use a form of sentence structure that is somewhat stilted for public address, Blair expressed his thoughts in a perspicuous manner. Since he seldom, if ever, used ambiguous words or phrases, the meaning is always clear.

Blair likewise knew how to use ornament. The metaphors, comparisons, personifications, apostrophes, and other figures of speech and thought, are used in accordance with the rules set forth in the theory. Although some critics have justly observed that the figures sometimes appear too often, they are always adapted to the subject.

The nervous, concise nature of Blair's style as a whole enabled the audience to grasp the sentiment of the discourse. The neatness displayed added to the beauty of the composition. But Blair was not limited to these types. Whenever the occasion demanded it, he effectively relied upon a degree of diffuseness which was more elegant than feeble.

The one term which best describes the general characteristics of the style is simplicity. The sermons possess strength but are seldom, if ever, vehement. Since
the cool, logical thinking Blair was not inclined to stir his audience with vivid, passionate appeals, the language does not rise to the level of sublimity which typifies vehement oratory. In short, the style of Blair lies midway between the dry and the florid. The sermons have more ornament than ordinary discourses designed to inform the understanding; but have less than pathetic orations, designed to arouse the emotions.

Blair's delivery, according to the testimony of his contemporaries, did not compare favorably with the content of his messages. His manner was stiff and formal, unaided by the use of elegant gestures. In addition, his voice lacked resonance and his pronunciation was characterized by a "peculiar burr."

Notwithstanding these difficulties, Blair's method of delivery was often effective. For he frequently persuaded his immediate audience to follow a particular course of action—an action to which they often were not previously disposed.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Evaluation of Blair's Rhetorical Theory

One of the first truths that impresses us on reading Blair's lectures is the close resemblance of their teachings to the ancient rhetorical principles of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. That Blair possessed a comprehensive knowledge of the classical doctrines of rhetoric is apparent in his discussions on eloquence, style, poetry, history, tragedy, and comedy. Since this study is limited to a treatment of eloquence, which, of course, includes style, let us consider the influence of the ancients on Blair's principal theories.

Blair draws upon Quintilian more than any other writer. His influence can be seen in the discussions on ethical appeal, the conduct of the discourse in all its parts, style, and delivery.

Blair adhered to the "good-man" theory expressed in the *Institutio Oratoria*. Like Quintilian, he firmly believed that an aspiring orator must be virtuous in order to achieve success in his profession. When such moral qualities as sincerity, modesty, and generous sentiments are supplemented by thorough training in all liberal arts subjects, then, and only then, is the speaker capable of exerting a lasting effect on the audience.
When Blair comes to the various parts of a discourse, he makes few original contributions concerning the types of introduction, division, narration, argument, pathos, and conclusion to be used. He is content, in most instances, to restate the rules of the classical rhetoricians. At times, however, he mustered sufficient courage to condemn certain practices which were condemned by the ancients. It is unwise, he thought, to use exordiums drawn from commonplaces, rather than from the subject. To avoid an appearance of artificiality the writer must concentrate on his theme before developing an introduction.

Again he criticized the doctrine of "Locoi Communes" by pointing out that it had little effect on the improvement of invention. In asserting that the inventive ability of a speaker is closely related to genius, and, therefore, cannot be materially affected by rhetorical rules, Blair's reasoning is sound. But he erred in not extending this point to its proper limits. His analysis of invention, when compared to the emphasis placed upon that quality by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, leaves much to be desired. He evidently felt justified in giving this subject a brief treatment on the grounds that rules cannot supply a deficiency in invention.

The lectures which have received the most praise are those concerned with style. Here, again, the author is indebted to Quintilian. Throughout the fifteen lectures
dealing directly with style, we find numerous references to Books VII, VIII, and IX of *Institutio Oratoria*. Using Quintilian’s statement—"Our aim must be not to put him (the hearer) in a position to understand our argument, but to force him to understand it"—as his underlying theme, Blair stresses the importance of writing in a perspicuous manner. In developing the subject of ornament he is likewise guided by the classical tenets.

Blair recognized the relationship that exists between style and thought. Perspicuity, he reasoned, is intimately connected with a speaker’s thinking. Unless an author understands his subject well, he cannot write with clarity and force. Such a position is in keeping with Quintilian’s advice that "I would have the orator, while careful in his choice of words, be even more concerned about his subject matter."2

The lecture on delivery also shows classical influence. This is especially true in the discussion on gestures. In enumerating the rules which govern the use of gestures, Blair advises his readers to go to Quintilian; for that writer virtually exhausted this subject.

Although Blair based his theory on ancient doctrines, he was aware of modern taste. Thus he adapted the teachings

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1 I.C. 8.2.24.
2 I.C. 8.Pr.20.
of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian to suit Eighteenth Century English thought. This is illustrated by the fact that he was one of the first modern writers to think of rhetoric as a form of criticism. The lectures are composed of a series of critical precepts concerning the arts of writing and speech. This emphasis on criticism has prompted some recent writers to study Blair as a critic rather than a rhetorician. Saintsbury sanctions Blair's approach by asserting that he "is to be very particularly commended for accepting to the full the important truth that "Rhetoric" in modern times really means "criticism" . . . ."\(^3\)

The Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, while "steeped" in the classical tradition, are also influenced to some degree by modern rhetorical writings. Prior to the appearance of Blair's work, other writers had considered the subject of taste and its component parts, sublimity, and beauty. Blair, therefore, in expounding his theory of taste, acknowledged his debt to Gerard, Kames, and Hume.

In discussing language and style, he frequently refers to Kames' Elements of Criticism, Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, and Dr. Adam Smith's unpublished notes on rhetoric. Each of these works, according to Blair, contain significant contributions to Eighteenth Century Style.

But it is with respect to delivery that Blair owes most to his contemporaries. He prefaced his treatment of this subject by admitting that much of his material is taken from the writings of Thomas Sheridan. Although not original, this discussion is valuable in that the author emphasizes the necessity of speaking in a conversational manner. This is especially significant when we consider that Blair lived in an age in which bombastic oratory was in vogue.

Another factor which renders these lectures interesting was Blair's ability to incorporate into his study the psychological and philosophical teachings which were popular in the last half of the Eighteenth Century. His intimate association with Hume, James, and the leading advocates of the Scottish School of Philosophy, could not help but influence all of his writings. In fact, these critics frequently examined his manuscripts, and offered suggestions for their improvement.

One of the leading contributions that Blair made to rhetorical theory was his discussion on the "Elocution of the Pulpit." Few men have been better qualified to develop rules for pulpit oratory. As a prominent minister in the Scottish Presbyterian Church he knew and understood the problems that confront a preacher in delivering a sermon. Since this portion of Blair's theory, therefore, is the result of an empirical study covering a period of many years, it is, in many respects, still valuable today.
As a final consideration of the value of the book, we should not overlook its practical nature. Blair, a literary scholar of repute, was practical-minded enough to realize that abstract statements, lacking concrete evidence, are, at best, dry and uninteresting. Consequently, whenever he makes an important observation, he substantiates it with a specific example. The lectures, therefore, contain excellent references to passages drawn from the works of the leading ancient and modern writers.

From the foregoing observations it is clear that the Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, for the most part, is not an original work. Many writers have condemned Blair for his lack of originality. This criticism, while basically true, does not take into consideration the purpose of the book. It should be remembered that Blair made no pretense of originality. He was interested, not in producing new, untried theories of rhetoric, but in restating ancient rhetorical principles in a succinct, pleasing manner. In fulfilling this aim, he derived assistance from the leading works produced in Eighteenth Century Scotland.

Significance of Blair as a Preacher

To evaluate Blair's effectiveness as a preacher, it is necessary to ascertain the influence his sermons had on the following groups: (1) the members of his congregation; (2) the masses who read but did not hear them; (3) the Scottish Presbyterian Church; (4) future generations. What-
ever conclusions are reached in this section will be based on the evidence which has been presented in this study.

Blair's rapid rise in his profession was partially due to the favorable reaction which he received from his primary audience. Those individuals who comprised his weekly congregation were faithful in their attendance. Boswell, for example, recorded in his diary, that he heard Blair preach for many weeks in succession. Of course, numerous persons went to church because it was the customary thing to do. But the majority who heard Blair liked his message, and thus were only too willing to return.

What influence did Blair have upon his parishioners? Kames was so pleased that he called his friend the leading preacher in Scotland. Boswell often praised the sermons not only for their taste and style, but for their practical value. He frequently described how he went home from a Sunday service and endeavored to apply the truths of Blair's message to his own personality. On those occasions, when the purpose of Blair's sermon was to raise money, states Hill, the results were usually gratifying.

Such testimony from qualified observers is convincing proof that Blair's ministry produced results. He rarely failed in achieving his aims. Persuasion, the ultimate goal of every sermon, is evident in each of his discourses. This persuasion, however, is of a limited nature.

Blair did not attempt to radically change his
parishioners' thinking. Since his listeners were often the leading intellectuals of Scottish society and since many of them possessed a skeptical mind, he probably would not have succeeded in changing their opinions if he had desired. Instead, he chose a more practical course. He built his sermons around those ethical principles which are readily accepted as theoretical truths, but principles about which the average person is negligent in applying to his own daily life. By setting up easily attainable goals his task of persuading the hearers to live a more virtuous life was greatly facilitated.

As a minister Blair exerted almost as much influence on his secondary audience as on his congregation. For, within a short period of time after the sermons were published, they were widely read by all classes of people. Members of polite society, who had little interest in the more serious aspects of religion, such as studying the Bible and attending church with regularity, freely discussed the contents of the sermons.

Johnson, on reading the first discourse, told Strahan, the publisher, that if all the sermons were like this, the volume should be published. Later the same writer expressed a desire for Blair to leave his church and join the Church of England. Finlayson, Hill, and Carlyle, relate numerous instances describing the effect of the sermons on those who read them for the first time. This is especially true of
the King, who on hearing them read, demonstrated his appro-
bation by granting Blair a pension.

Blair's preaching was likewise a significant factor in the formulation of the doctrines of the Scottish Presby-
terian Church. In the middle of the Eighteenth Century, the evangelicals and the moderates, within the church, struggled for supremacy. The ministry of Blair championed the cause of the moderates, thus giving that faction the impetus necessary for success.

Blair's influence in this controversy was enhanced by his literary attainments. As a Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh, and as the author of the most popular sermons produced in Britain in the last half of the Eighteenth Century, he more than com-
penated for his inability to speak extemporaneously at public gatherings.

Through the sermons, he succeeded in rendering other denominations more tolerant toward the teachings of the Scottish Presbyterian Church. In fact, there was little difference between the moderate members of this denomina-
tion and the followers of the Anglican movement. By writing in a manner that would appeal to most groups, Blair became one of the first Scottish preachers to gain fame as a sermon writer.

It is evident, therefore, that much of Blair's popularity and influence as a preacher was the result of
two factors: (1) he chose topics of universal interest and
developed them in such a way that no one could take of-

cense; (2) the style in which the sermons were written,
represents the prevailing taste of his era.

To be a lasting work of art, however, a sermon needs
more than these qualities. There must be a depth of
thought sufficient to stir the minds of future generations.
There is a unanimity of opinion among 19th and 20th century
critics that the sermons lack this essential requisite. The
thought, while sound and just, seldom contains that reli-
gious emotion that prompts men to forsake the world and
turn to God. With the advent of a new period, therefore,
the popularity of the sermons declined. Today, they are
seldom, if ever, read, except by the students of literature.

The chief contribution of the sermons to modern
times is their historical value. They clearly show what
the Scottish men of letters in Blair's period wanted to hear.
They are examples of a preacher's attempt to keep alive in
the hearts of skeptically-minded men, their moral obligation
to God, to others, and to themselves.

Relation Between Theory and Practice

Our final consideration is the relationship between
the theory and the practice of Blair. In determining this
relationship, five factors will be analyzed: aims of a
discourse; ethical appeal; conduct of the discourse in all
its parts; style; and delivery.
In the lecture on pulpit eloquence Blair emphasized the necessity of making all sermons persuasive discourses. The preacher, he thought, has but one end in view when he rises to speak. That purpose is to instill in the members of his congregation a desire to be morally good. Most sermons which Blair preached, were consonant with this principle. For he attempted to adapt the truths of his message to the listeners in such a manner that they would endeavor to raise their moral standards.

Blair was equally consistent in employing ethical appeal. Although he possessed a degree of vanity which sometimes irked his closest friends, he was essentially a good man, living up to the moral qualities recommended in the lectures. Those who were intimately associated with him testified to his dignity, sincerity, and generous sentiments. These traits are also seen in the development of the sermons.

Blair did, however, deviate from one moral principle outlined in his rhetorical theory. Modesty, he had taught, is a favorable quality which usually creates rapport between the speaker and his audience. But when that modesty is extended too far it takes on the appearance of timidity; and this, is seldom conducive to persuasion. While this timidity was not too apparent in the weekly sermons, it was sufficient to prevent Blair from taking an active part as a speaker in public assemblies. Whether Blair's inability
to make impromptu speeches was the cause or the result of this timorous attitude, is a moot question.

Again, Blair possessed the knowledge which he believed is essential to every orator's success. Few men were better prepared to preach the gospel. His understanding of church doctrines and Biblical truths enabled him to develop sound religious theories. This knowledge of his own profession was combined with a knowledge of related subjects. Thus Blair's ethical appeal was strengthened by both his virtuous qualities and educational training.

The rules which the author advanced concerning the conduct of the discourse in all its parts are, in most cases, observed in the sermons. The introductions adequately conciliate the good-will of the hearers, arouse their attention, and prepare them for the persuasive appeals which are to follow. In addition, the exordiums logically stem from the theme of the discourse, and are, consequently, adapted to suit the arguments.

In stating and dividing the subject, Blair again is consistent with his teachings. The partitions, always sufficient in number to the subject, are exclusive from each other; that is, they do not overlap. Further, they are expressed in a succinct manner.

Blair's forte probably was in explicating the text. Before the arguments of any discourse are presented, each aspect of the text is developed. By analyzing the chosen
scripture verse in isolated form, in context and with respect to other Biblical passages, the author gave to his listeners a clear, concise understanding of his specific purpose.

Blair likewise chose and arranged his arguments in accordance with the rules set forth in his theory. He selected those ideas which were most likely to convince and then arranged them in a logical order. The discussion part of the sermons exemplifies the following points: (1) although the arguments are not too numerous, they adequately develop the subject; (2) the strong points are separated and distinguished from the weaker ones; (3) whenever possible, the ideas are arranged in a climax order; (4) the style is perspicuous.

In considering the pathos inherent in the sermons, the consistency between Blair's theory and practice is no longer present. While it is true that he, at times, used the bold, pathetic form of personification and the apostrophe with effect, the discourses on the whole are devoid of vehemence. This lack of pathos is even more significant when we reflect that the author had stressed its importance in his lectures.

To a large extent Blair committed the same error for which he had criticized his English colleagues. His discourses, like those of his contemporaries, abound in good sense and judgment, but rarely contain passages that arouse
the heart. Seldom do we find appeals sufficiently pathetic to lift the reader or listener to a sublime plane. Yet this is what oratory, designed to persuade, should tend to do.

The function of the peroration or conclusion, advised Blair, is to summarize the main arguments and/or stir the emotions. When we analyze the conclusions of the sermons, however, we are impressed by the fact that strong pathetic appeals are conspicuously missing.

Although Blair did not, as he had suggested, utilize this form of appeal, his practice can be defended. As we have previously seen, his congregation was comprised, for the most part, of the elite members of Scottish society. As educational and social leaders, these parishioners responded more readily to logical than to emotional appeals. They accepted what their understanding could comprehend. Beyond this point, they were not willing to go.

Another vital factor responsible for this approach was the agnostic tendencies which characterized the thinking of 18th-century Scotsmen. This condition was so prevalent that the church, in many communities, lost its influence. Men who at one time even regarded Deism as a transgression of God's laws, now openly confessed their disbelief in the existence of a Divine Being. Blair, however, succeeded in directing their interest toward the church by discussing those topics which they wanted to hear. Of course, the fact that he was a staunch proponent of the moderate school
of thought also influenced his choice of moral, rather than deeply religious subjects. Since the sermons, therefore, were similar to lectures on morality, the speaker had little opportunity to use vivid appeals.

In many respects the style of the sermons is in harmony with the rules expressed in Blair's theory. The two points around which the style was developed are perspicuity and ornament. Most critics agree that perspicuous style is one of the leading virtues of the sermons. The words have purity, precision, and propriety; and, in most cases, the sentences are clear, displaying unity, strength, and harmony. In short, the words and sentences are seldom ambiguous or trite.

The chief fault pertaining to style is the author's failure, at times, to compose his sermons in a manner appropriate for oral presentation. While the words, phrases, and sentences are perspicuous and relatively easy to pronounce, they are often arranged so as to give a stilted appearance. For example, the periodic sentence occurs too often. In addition, the natural order of the sentence is frequently reversed so that the object precedes the subject. Both of these forms are correct enough, but they are used to excess throughout the sermons, thus, at times, rendering it difficult for the listener to follow the trend of thought.

Previously we noted that the sentences have unity. This unity, however, does not extend to the paragraph. The
sentences, while expressing complete thoughts in themselves, frequently do not blend together to form a unified paragraph. Each period states a particular idea that is directly related to the theme but often does not aid in developing the other sentences in the same group.

The ornament of the sermons, on the other hand, is consistent with Blair's teachings. There are few, if any, instances in which the practice is at variance with the theory. Figures of speech and thought are used with propriety. The metaphors and similes, drawn from dignified subjects, not only add to the clarity of the idea being explained, but to the beauty of the composition. Personifications, apostrophes, exclamations, and interrogations are introduced whenever the tenor of the discussion allows it.

At times figurative language may be used too freely, but, on the whole, Blair exemplifies the neat style, a form of diction midway between the dry and the florid. With respect to ornament, therefore, the author's practice is consonant with his theory.

As a final step in this comparative analysis, let us examine Blair's delivery. If we can accept the testimony of those who heard him preach, we must conclude that his delivery did not adhere to the requirements outlined in the lectures. In fact, the oral presentation was often inferior to the content of the message. The sermons, for example, sometimes produced a greater effect when they were read by
more talented speakers.

What was the nature of Blair's manner of delivery? According to Boswell, he had a peculiar "burr" in his pronunciation. Others stated that he lacked force and resonance. In spite of these difficulties, however, Blair influenced his primary audience. Contemporary writers explain this fact by pointing out his eloquent pulpit mannerisms. Thus, as Blair stood before his listeners, his dignity and sincerity were sufficient to offset, to a large degree, his faulty pronunciation and lack of force.

We may conclude that Blair endeavored to put his theoretical principles into practice. While it is true he did not always succeed in this attempt, the similarities between his theory and practice are much greater than the differences.
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