THE RHETORICAL THEORY OF JOSEPH FORT NEWTON

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

In 1924 The Christian Century conducted a survey to find the twenty-five most influential and representative living Protestant preachers in the United States. Writing in The American Pulpit, Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of The Christian Century, states that ballots were sent to approximately 90,000 ministers in all parts of the country. Included were "fundamentalists, modernists, conservatives, liberals--Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Disciples, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Unitarians, Universalists and many of the lesser bodies."¹ Each minister was asked to name the ten preachers whom he regarded as the most influential in the entire range of the American church--"the men of deepest and most prophetic vision, the men of outstanding pulpit power, the men whose messages, in his estimation, most vitally interpret the mind of Christ, the pulpiteers whose thinking most deeply and potently influences the thinking of the church and the course of events in the life of the nation."² When the poll closed


²Ibid.
on December 15, 1924, the number of ballots which had been returned was 21,843. After that date additional ballots came in, bringing the total to almost 25,000, but without changing the result. A total of 1,162 names were voted for. On December 25, The Christian Century announced the names of the twenty-five men who had received the largest number of votes. No announcement was made of the relative standing of the preachers on the list. Joseph Fort Newton was one of the twenty-five.

In American Preachers of Today (1933), Edgar DeWitt Jones gives further indication of Newton's prominence as a preacher. Says Jones: "I am inclined to believe that through twenty years Dr. Newton has been a more prolific producer of high-class sermons than any other preacher of the period."

Harry Emerson Fosdick also speaks highly of Newton's preaching. In his autobiography, Fosdick says of Newton: "... when he was in New York, I used to go to hear him when I had a free Sunday, for he was to me the most satisfying preacher in the city then."

While Newton was better known as a preacher than as a homiletician, he received a measure of recognition as a homiletician. Edgar

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3 Ibid.

4 "21,843 Choose 25," The Christian Century, XLI (December 25, 1924), 1673.


DeWitt Jones calls him a recognized authority on the art of preaching.\(^7\) An indication of Newton's ability as a preacher or homiletician, or both, can be seen in the fact that he was invited to give the Yale Lectures on Preaching. In his autobiography (1946), Newton says that he was approached in 1917 about giving the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale; but he says that it would have been impossible for him to have returned from his pastorate in London during wartime to do so.\(^8\) In a letter of September 21, 1935 to Newton, Halford E. Luccock, of the Department of Homiletics, Yale University, refers to Newton's influence as a homiletician. Luccock says:

> If I were to tell you how much I have owed to you in my attempts to teach, you would think I am growing maudlin in my old age! I start the men off every year with your *New Preaching*. There is nothing I know which so demonstrates the truth that preaching is not a trade, a bit of carpentry, but an affair of the heart, the soul's greatest adventure and experience.\(^9\)

Newton devoted much time to analyzing and appraising preachers and their homiletic art.\(^10\) His first book (1909) was a biography of a preacher, David Swing.\(^11\) In 1914 he published a book about two

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preachers, John Wesley and John Woolman. In 1923 he wrote *Some Living Masters of the Pulpit*.

Newton also did editorial work related to preachers and preaching. He edited four volumes of *Best Sermons* (1924, 1925, 1926, 1927). In these books, Newton wrote introductions about preaching and biographical sketches of the preachers whose sermons appear in the publications. In 1932 he edited a symposium on preaching entitled *If I Had Only One Sermon to Prepare*. The book contains an introduction and a conclusion by Newton.

Newton's published diaries, *Preaching in London* and *Preaching in New York*, and his autobiography, *River of Years*, contain references to his own preaching, that of others, and to preaching itself.

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References to preaching also appear in Newton's sermons. Further, Newton published articles about preaching and wrote a full-length book on the subject in 1930 entitled The New Preaching.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate and appraise Newton's homiletical theory (that branch of rhetorical theory which deals with preaching), as it appears in his writings on homiletics, as it appears in his writings about the preaching of other ministers, and as it is reflected in his own preaching. The thesis of the dissertation is that Newton contributed a significant body of rhetorical thought in regard to preaching and that his rhetorical theory was influenced by his education, his theology, his preaching, and his times.

Review of the Literature

A number of articles have been written about Newton. In 1915 H. L. Haywood wrote an article about him for Unity magazine. It


Sections of books also have been written about Newton. In his Adventures in the Minds of Men, Lynn Harold Hough, in 1927, compared Newton with Harry Emerson Fosdick. In 1933 Edgar DeWitt Jones described Newton's career and preaching in American Preachers of Today. Newton's life and preaching also are discussed in the 1971 publication 20 Centuries of Great Preaching, compiled by Clyde E. Fant, Jr. and William M. Pinson, Jr.

In a Ph. D. dissertation done at the State University of Iowa in 1940 entitled "An Analysis of the Trends in American Homiletic Theory Since 1860," Elton Abernathy places Newton among those ministers who held to a new conception of homiletics. In his dissertation, Abernathy concludes that American homiletic theory in the preceding eight decades had pursued two divergent paths—the classical with its stress on the sermon as the product of a man divinely inspired to interpret to his congregation the Bible and the church, to the end that salvation might result; and a new conception which looked upon the sermon as an attempt on the part of the preacher to interpret the social and ethical problems of the listeners in the light of Christian principles, general social uplift of the community being the primary aim of preaching, with


30Jones, American Preachers of Today, pp. 240-47.

materials being drawn from any available source. Abernathy points out that Newton and other ministers had largely discarded the emphasis on ministerial authority, as they had rejected the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, placing the emphasis on a social approach to men's problems.

At The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1967, Daniel Ray Zoeller did a Master of Theology thesis entitled "The Ecumenical Emphasis in the Preaching of Joseph Fort Newton." Zoeller states that the purpose of the thesis is to analyze critically the preaching of Newton, particularly his ecumenical emphasis. In his thesis, Zoeller concludes that Newton saw his primary role in the ministry as a preacher, that the purpose of his preaching was to persuade and to communicate a sense of the presence of God, and that the mystic experience or "immediate religion" was the unifying principle in Newton's life and preaching. Zoeller also concludes that throughout his life, Newton refused to see doctrinal differences as significant, believing that the major points were all that mattered and that on these the Christian communions did not differ. Common loyalty to Christ, Zoeller further

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33 Ibid., p. 187.

concludes, was the main ground of Newton's plea for unity.35

From a search of Knowler's "Index of Graduate Research in Speech"; Dissertation Abstracts; and Recent Homiletical Thought: A Bibliography,36 I found that only one dissertation has been done on Newton. It was completed in 1975 at Boston University by Billy Jim Leonard and is entitled "Joseph Fort Newton: Minister and Mystic."

About the time of my prospectus session in 1974, I received a telephone call from Mr. Leonard, who had learned of my interest in Newton from a research source which we had contacted. I told him that I would be dealing primarily with Newton's homiletical theory in my dissertation. Accordingly, he did not deal with that area of Newton's thought and ministry. Leonard's dissertation is concerned with Newton's career and thought, specifically as it exemplifies and relates to mysticism in the American church during the first half of the twentieth century. There was no extensive attempt in his dissertation to analyze the methodology of Newton's sermon preparation and presentation.37

In his dissertation, Leonard concludes that Newton's thought was shaped by his commitment to the mystical approach to religion. He

35Ibid., pp. 126, 128.


also concludes that the mysticism of Newton's thought provides a key to understanding his appreciation for Freemasonry, since, states Leonard, Newton found in its mystical rites and nonsectarian spirit the basis for the spiritual union which he sought. Leonard further concludes that Newton's mysticism was unique because he sought to express it within the context of a variety of traditions, believing that this was the basis of real religious faith and fellowship, beyond doctrinal affirmations.  

With regard, then, to the general writing and scholarly research which has been done on Newton, his thought, and his ministry, we can conclude that no extensive investigation and appraisal of his homiletical, or rhetorical, theory has been done to the present time.

Justification for This Study

Much of the best rhetorical theory in the past has come from men like the Roman orator Cicero who had learned in practical affairs what works and what does not.  An investigation and appraisal of Newton's rhetorical theory is needed, then, partially for this reason: for more than half a century Newton was involved in fulfilling the responsibilities of a preacher and pastor, responsibilities which included a vast amount of public, small group, and interpersonal

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38Tbid., pp. 388, 391, 399-400.

communication. In the introduction to a book of sermons entitled God and the Golden Rule, Newton says: "Three of the sermons in this book served as articles in the Atlantic Monthly, and three in the Christian Century; the rest were born of a busy ministry in the midst of human need and yearning—all seeking to lead and lift men and women into a higher air of faith for today and of clearer hope for the morrow." 40 Thus, Newton understood the importance of responding to a rhetorical situation, and he was aware of the need for doing so at times with only a limited amount of time to prepare in a specific way for the response. Rhetorical theory based on the kinds of experiences which Newton had can provide valuable guidance for other communicators. Writing in 1933 of a conversation he had with Newton, Edgar DeWitt Jones quotes Newton as saying, "For sixteen years I published a sermon every week, and often two . . . ." 41 Yet Newton did not consider himself in any special way qualified to discuss preaching, but perhaps his words as follows from his book The New Preaching point up general qualifications which may surpass specialized study alone: "My qualifications for discussing such a theme are few indeed; none, in fact, save a love of preaching, an abiding faith in its efficacy, and a desire to awaken a new sense of the worth and wonder of our preacher-craft." 42 We can profit by an examination of the rhetorical theory of


41 Jones, American Preachers of Today, p. 244.

42 Newton, The New Preaching, pp. 11-12.
a man who writes about preaching with such qualifications.

Since Newton was not only a widely experienced practitioner of rhetoric and a student of rhetorical theory, but also an analyzer and appraiser of other preachers, he fits into that group of men spoken of by Gordon F. Hostettler: "... rhetorical theory has been derived, for the most part, by men who have observed speakers in courtrooms, legislative halls, pulpits, political rallies, and comparable situations and who have then, after contemplative analysis, attempted to catalogue methods and techniques which differentiate effective from ineffective performances."\(^43\) We have, therefore, an additional reason for examining Newton's rhetorical theory.

A further justification for this study of Newton is the fact that dissertations on rhetoricians can benefit rhetorical scholars. Hostettler writes: "Critical analyses of speakers of other times and the history of rhetorical theory itself are instructive to the modern rhetorician."\(^44\) We have profited from the study of such giants of rhetorical theory as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, George Campbell, and Kenneth Burke. Can we not profit, though perhaps to a slighter degree, from the study of less prominent rhetoricians, particularly those like Newton, who were experienced speakers, able scholars, and master writers?


\(^{44}\)Ibid.
The history of rhetorical thought is a part of the history of ideas; the history of ideas is a part of the history of man, and as the historian H. W. C. Davis says: "Our common humanity is best studied in the most eminent examples that it has produced of every type of human excellence."\(^{45}\) This same idea is found in a statement by Edwin Black in *Rhetorical Criticism*. Black writes: "Criticism is a discipline that, through the investigation and appraisal of the activities and products of men, seeks as its end the understanding of man himself."\(^{46}\) By investigating and appraising the rhetorical theory of Joseph Fort Newton, therefore, this dissertation contributes in a small way to the understanding of man.

Finally, inasmuch as the study of rhetorical theory assists us in the understanding of man, it can contribute to the improvement of today's communication. Samuel L. Becker writes: "It is appropriate that we be concerned with the needs of our time and the conception or conceptions of rhetoric which will be 'good' for serving those needs."\(^{47}\) Edward P. J. Corbett says: "... I would suggest that in our quest for a relevant rhetoric for the modern age we take a first-hand look at the classical rhetoricians, see which of their doctrines


still have something pertinent and valuable to say about the arts of discourse, and discover which of those doctrines are the underpinnings of modern rhetorical theory."\(^{48}\) Probably we can agree with both Becker and Corbett. We are concerned with meeting the needs of today; and in order to do so, we can look not only to the rhetorical scholars of today, but also to the classical rhetoricians. Further, we can look to a writer like Newton, whose rhetorical theory reflects the principles of classical rhetoric. Communicators and rhetorical scholars can profit much from a study of the rhetoric of Joseph Fort Newton. Theoretical, practical, and pedagogical implications for communication today, particularly in the area of preaching, can be found in Newton's rhetoric.

Method and Presentation of the Study

The procedure followed in this study of Newton was:

1. To determine what Newton's rhetorical theory was.

2. To analyze Newton's rhetorical theory from the perspective of well-known rhetoricians (ancient, eighteenth-century British, and modern), and from the perspective of contemporary rhetorical, homiletical, and communication scholars. Of the rhetoricians, I have looked primarily to Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Hugh Blair, George Campbell, Richard Whately, James A. Winans, I. A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, and Richard M. Weaver. The contemporary rhetorical,


3. To determine to what extent Newton's rhetorical thought was influenced by his education, his theology, his preaching, and his times.

4. To evaluate Newton's preaching on the basis of the well-known standards for the appraisal of communication—the truth standard, the ethical standard, the artistic standard, and the effects standard.

5. To determine to what extent Newton exemplified his rhetorical theory in his own preaching.

In the last section of this chapter, definitions basic to the scope of the dissertation are presented. Beginning with Chapter II, the investigation and appraisal of Newton's rhetorical theory is presented as follows:

Since rhetorical theory is affected by the writer of the theory and by the times in which he lives, it is essential to view the life
and the times of Newton. This is the subject of Chapter II.

In Chapter III, a chronological and descriptive account of Newton's preaching career provides data for assessing his preaching experience as a qualification for writing about rhetoric. These data also serve as a basis for an evaluation of Newton's preaching in Chapter IV. The evaluation helps us to determine if Newton can be considered successful, first, in regard to the truth, ethical, artistic, and effects standards of communication, and, second, in regard to conforming to his own rhetorical theory.

Chapters V, VI, and VII provide a detailed analysis of Newton's rhetorical theory from the perspective of the canons of classical rhetoric— invention (Chapter V), organization (Chapter VI), and style and delivery (Chapter VII).

The final chapter of the dissertation, Chapter VIII, is a review of the life, the preaching, and the rhetorical theory of Newton. It also presents theoretical, practical, and pedagogical implications of Newton's rhetoric for today's communication, especially in the area of preaching.

The following questions are addressed in the dissertation:

1. What, if anything, is unique in Newton's rhetorical theory?

2. What were the strengths and weaknesses of Newton as a person in relationship to his preaching?

3. What were the strengths and weaknesses of Newton's preaching and rhetoric?

4. Did Newton's rhetoric reflect the sociological emphasis found in other rhetorics of the period?
5. How much of Newton's rhetorical theory is applicable to the preaching situations of today?

Sources for the Study

The principal source which was used to determine Newton's rhetorical thought was his book *The New Preaching*. Other sources used for ascertaining his rhetoric were articles he published on preaching; his analyses of the preaching of other ministers, particularly those in his book *Some Living Masters of the Pulpit*; the material he wrote in the books of sermons he edited--*Best Sermons*, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927; the sections he wrote in his edited work *If I Had Only One Sermon to Prepare*; his published diaries, *Preaching in London* and *Preaching in New York*; his autobiography, *River of Years*; and sermons by Newton selected from various periods of his ministry.

Information about Newton's life and preaching career was obtained from general sources; from his published diaries; from his autobiography; from newspapers--*The Dixon* (Illinois) *Daily Sun*, *the Dixon* (Illinois) *Evening Telegraph*, *The Cedar Rapids* (Iowa) *Gazette*, *The Times* (London), *The New York Times*, *The Evening Bulletin* (Philadelphia), and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*; from church publications, especially *The Universalist Leader*, *The Christian Century*, and *The Churchman*; from Newton's private papers (correspondence, letters from readers of his newspaper column "Everyday Religion," notebooks, articles, and sermon manuscripts) in the Joseph Fort Newton File at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; from interviews with individuals who were members of his congregation when he pastored in Cedar
Rapids, Iowa; and from an interview with Newton's daughter, Mrs. Jose-
phine Morris, and her husband, Richard T. Morris.

Other sources used in the dissertation were reviews of Newton's books; and works on rhetoric, homiletics, communication, and history. Newton's Masonic writings were not considered to be important to the dissertation.

Definitions

Rhetoric—the study of the use of verbal and nonverbal means to persuade people in particular situations, especially public situations, in regard to attitudes, beliefs, or actions.

Homiletics—"the adaptation of rhetoric to the particular ends and demands of Christian preaching."49

Rhetorical situation—"a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence."50

Other definitions are given at appropriate places in the dis-
sertation.


CHAPTER II

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON AND HIS TIMES

The history of man includes the history of his ideas, and the
history of his ideas includes the history of his rhetorical thought.
Rhetoric is generated by men who live in a segment of time. When we
know men and their times, we can better understand and analyze their
rhetoric. And, conversely, as we know rhetoric better, we know men
better.

"Absorbed in the present, striving for the future, the past and
those who with it depart count for too little."¹ These words by Joseph
Fort Newton are found in the preface of his first book, which is a
biography of David Swing, a minister whom Newton greatly admired. His-
torian H. W. C. Davis would agree with Newton, for he says that our
common humanity is best studied in the most eminent examples that it
has produced of every type of human excellence.² That Newton was an
eminent preacher and an able homiletician is discussed in Chapter I.
Knowing this man and his times will help us to understand and analyze

¹Joseph Fort Newton, David Swing, Poet-Preacher (Chicago:

²As quoted in Marie Hochmuth Nichols, Rhetoric and Criticism
18.

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his rhetorical theory. Knowing Newton's rhetoric will contribute to our general knowledge of rhetoric. And knowing his rhetoric will help us to understand man a little more.

To describe and evaluate the historical and personal inputs which influenced and shaped the life and rhetoric of Newton is the purpose of this chapter. It is necessary, therefore, to look at his family heritage and his educational experiences. It is also necessary to examine some of his special interests. The first centers more accurately in a lack of interest—a lack of interest in formal theological studies. Then there were three positive interests which were prominent in Newton's life: his interest in ecumenism, or his disdain for sectarianism; his interest in the inner spiritual life of man, or what he labeled mysticism; and his interest in British-American relations.

Since the culture of a particular historical period affects the rhetorical theory of that period, there will be included in this chapter a survey of the times in which Newton lived and a look at how the times affected his rhetorical theory.

Family Heritage and Early Years

Lee Newton, the father of Joseph Fort Newton, was a soldier in the Southern army during the Civil War. After the war Lee Newton became a teacher and a Baptist preacher. As head of a school in Denton County, Texas, he employed Miss Sue Green Battle as his associate.

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\(^3\)Douglas Ehninger, "On Systems of Rhetoric," Philosophy and Rhetoric, I (Summer, 1968), 137.
Their friendship developed into romance, and they were married in 1868. Sometime later they moved to Decatur, Texas. To this couple Joseph Fort Newton was born on July 21, 1876. For some reason, never known to Joseph Fort, his father had given up the Baptist ministry before moving to Decatur, and had entered the practice of law.⁴

Newton's father died when Joseph Fort was six years old. In his autobiography Joseph Fort Newton says that a happy memory of his father was hearing him deliver an address at a meeting in a church. As Newton remembered it, the meeting was not a worship service, but a meeting held to discuss some subject or project of importance—more like a debate than a discussion. "While the topic of the hour was beyond my grasp," states Newton, "I can see my father as he spoke, his slender figure, his fine face, his gestures, and I can almost hear the sound of his voice."⁵

At the funeral of Newton's father, the minister read the words of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life," and "Let not your heart be troubled." Newton says in his autobiography that he could never forget the power of those words. He explains: "It was as if a great, gentle Hand, stronger than the hand of man and more tender than the hand of any woman, had been put forth from the Unseen to caress and heal my spirit—from that day to this I have loved Jesus beyond the

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⁵Ibid., pp. 24-25.
power of words to tell!"\textsuperscript{6}

After the death of Lee Newton, Mrs. Newton and her two sons, Joseph Fort and William Newton (born when Joseph was five), went to Slidell to live with William Burton, the boys' uncle. Burton built a schoolhouse, adjoining his home, and again Mrs. Newton was a teacher; she taught Burton's children and the two Newtons.\textsuperscript{7}

The church in Slidell (a Baptist church) was the center of the community. Newton recalls that in spite of its theology of threats and thunder, it was a place of fellowship and prayer—a plain white meeting house, innocent of adornment, not even an organ.\textsuperscript{8} Newton states that the pastor was a man whose life was sweet with certainties and rich in wisdom, but some of his doctrinal sermons made Newton's soul writhe, even as a child. Newton elaborates:

How strange, after a sermon on a blazing, eternal hell, to hear the neighbors talk and tell stories, or bring each other up to date on gossip. To me it was horrible—either they did not believe what the preacher said, or they lacked the imagination to realize what it meant. The idea of God back of it all was intolerable . . . .

Yet, at other times, our pastor had flashes of real insight, and some of his sermons remain in my memory to this day.\textsuperscript{9}

The next town in which Newton, his mother, and his brother lived was Chico, where Mrs. Newton again was a teacher. In Chico, Newton began to develop a special interest in newspapers, an interest

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ibid., p. 25.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Ibid., pp. 28-29.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
which would last throughout his life. There was only one newspaper in the county. It was a weekly and reported local events, mainly. Newton says that the big world was remote and unknown--foreign affairs might have transpired on some other planet; Russia was a Big Bear; England a Lion whose tail was to be twisted; China a land to which the United States sent missionaries.\textsuperscript{10} Newton desired to know something of the world; therefore he subscribed to the weekly edition of the Louisville Courier-Journal, and read the editorials of Henry Watterson, whom he calls the last voice of the old South, but forward-looking. Newton also subscribed to the Atlanta Constitution "to read," he says, "the editorials of Henry Grady, the thrilling voice of the new South; also the humorous skits of M. Quad, Sarge Pluckett, and the Uncle Remus stories by Joel Chandler Harris."\textsuperscript{11} In this manner Newton kept in touch with the world and some of its gifted minds. He complains that the church papers were deadly dull--the religious mind being preoccupied with debates about dogmas or petty feuds within the church, issues which did not greatly interest him.\textsuperscript{12}

While living in Chico, Newton's mother remarried. She married a Baptist minister named W. B. Long, "a man of some ability," writes Newton, "but hard to live with at times, as we were to find out."\textsuperscript{13} The family moved to Hardy, Texas. Newton's stepfather had a circuit of

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 31.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 39.
country and village churches, to which he ministered. "I heard many of his sermons," says Newton, "but do not remember a single one--his preaching was chiefly doctrinal, and I detested the doctrines he preached."\(^{14}\)

For a brief time Newton lived with two of his uncles in Greenville, Texas, where they edited a daily newspaper. Newton learned to set type, and, as he says, "There I got printer's ink in my blood--like yeast in dough, once there, always there; nothing can take it out."\(^{15}\)

In Hardy, Newton attended his first Episcopal church service (he was to spend the last twenty-five years of his ministry in the Episcopal Church). A rector from Gainesville, Texas conducted the service and preached what Newton considered to be a thoughtful and winsome sermon.\(^{16}\) The Episcopal minister wore a black, clerical gown. It was the first time Newton had seen a gown worn in a pulpit. Since there were no Prayer Books, the rector read the office of Evening Prayer. After the service a number of people objected to praying out of a book, but Newton could not see the point, since, according to him, the prayers were so stately and noble in style and thought, in contrast to the meandering, extemporaneous prayers, full of stereotyped phrases, to which they had been accustomed. Newton also reasoned that since they read the lessons out of a book, and sang praises out of a hymn-book, why not read great prayers which have been used by millions of

\(^{14}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 40.\)

\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{16}\text{Ibid.}\)
people? Newton himself sent for a Prayer Book, and he says that it became a friend and aider of his spirit.\textsuperscript{17}

In his autobiography Newton states that he had never desired nor dreamed of being anything other than a minister.\textsuperscript{18} He says, however, that he was in a quandary about entering the ministry of the Baptist Church, feeling that he had no right to accept service in a church whose theology he did not believe. At one time he thought of becoming a Methodist minister, but he put the idea aside, not only because it would have wounded his mother deeply, but also because it would have outraged his family, who had been Baptists for generations. While Newton's beliefs are discussed in detail in Chapter IV, it is pertinent here to give some of the reasons for his feelings at this point in his life regarding the Baptist Church. Newton declares: "It was not the religion of my fathers which I rejected, far from it, but a theology which was intolerable, not only particular doctrines, but its basic idea of God, implied or assumed."\textsuperscript{19} For Newton, the idea that man needs a good Jesus to save him from a mad, if not a bad, God was unthinkable, as was the intimation that Jesus did something which made it possible for God to forgive man. Also, for Newton the belief in an eternal hell was abhorrent. For him it meant the worship of a defeated God. He felt that the idea that the tiny will of man, stubborn as it often is, can forever resist the wise strategy and persuasion of the

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 40-41.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 46.
loving will of God, was absurd.\textsuperscript{20}

Newton states that his revolt against the teaching of his church was complete, basic, and tragic, and might have been violent but for the wise counsel of his mother. He quotes her as saying: "My son, listen only to Jesus. Accept what He says about God, what He shows God to be in His life, nothing else, nothing less; test everything by Him—forget the rest."\textsuperscript{21}

Newton's mother had regular periods of devotion and a definite method. She would go to her room, read a passage from the Bible, sing a stanza from a hymn, and offer her prayer audibly.\textsuperscript{22} Sometimes Newton listened in on her worship, when she did not know it. Once, during his quandary about entering the ministry of the Baptist Church, he heard his mother call his name in prayer, lifting his life before God, detaining it there, and invoking His guidance and blessing upon him. Says Newton: "It moved me beyond the power of words to tell."\textsuperscript{23}

In summary, certain experiences and influences in Newton's early life stand out, probably in the following order in terms of importance: (1) the religious and educational influence of his mother; (2) regular attendance at church services—particularly Baptist—which developed in him appreciation for religious ideals but also misgivings about certain doctrines which were incompatible with his nature and his

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 47.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 48.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 49.
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
intellect; (3) memories of his father—an instance of hearing him deliver a speech, and the occasion of the funeral of his father when Joseph Fort was six years old, at which time he experienced an unusual sense of comfort from certain words of Jesus, as read by the minister; (4) early contacts with journalism, both as a subscriber to a Louisville and an Atlanta newspaper and as a worker in his uncles' newspaper printing shop; and (5) his favorable contact with the Episcopal Church.

Education

Newton's formal education was significant in his development, as we shall see in the first part of this section of the chapter; but as significant, if not more so, was his informal or in-service education, as we shall note in the second part of this section on Newton's education. Newton's ministry covered more than half a century, and that his education continued beyond his days in classrooms into and throughout his ministry will be readily observable in part two; but, first, let us look at his formal training.

Formal Education. Under this heading I shall discuss Newton's formal classroom training and some co-curricular experiences which came to him indirectly through schools or were the result of his being in a particular school situation.

Newton's mother was his principal teacher during his early education. Newton says of his mother as a teacher: "Mother was a born teacher, the best teacher—for me—that ever lived, having more patience, resource, and strategy than anyone I have known; I owe my
education largely to her."\textsuperscript{24} Newton's mother read Latin and Greek easily, and she had great knowledge of English literature. Newton indicates that to his mother, primarily, he owed his love of great literature, which to him was a great inspiration and comfort. In his mother's teaching of literature, she never made it a grinding at grammar, never a preoccupation with the verse structure of a poet, or the story architecture of a novelist, but always she was concerned with the wonder of genius, the growth of character, the artistry—not merely the artifice—in the style of a writer.\textsuperscript{25}

Newton says that his mother knew her Bible, as she knew no other book. She lived with it, loved its idiom, its inspiration, and the artlessness of its art. Her use of the Bible, according to Newton, was both a culture and a consecration.\textsuperscript{26}

When Newton lived in Hardy, Texas, he went to a school, as he says, "almost for the first time." He refers to his teachers as Professor Otis and later two charming young men, Ben Gafford and Charles Wrenn.\textsuperscript{27}

Of considerable significance in the education of Newton was his experience in White Mound, Texas, with Jenkin Roberts, head of the village school. Newton did not attend his school because he was still continuing his studies with his mother, but he joined a debating

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 26.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., pp. 26, 38.
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., p. 40.
society, which Roberts had organized. Newton explains that at each meeting they selected a subject to be discussed at the next meeting, but they did not know on which side they were to speak until the time for the debate arrived. They had to think out a speech on both sides of the subject. No one was permitted to use notes, except when statistics were employed, and even that was discouraged. "At first our speeches were clumsy, awkward, and half articulate," says Newton, "but finally we found our tongues, learned to think on our feet, using all our wits in rebuttal; which was what our leader had in mind." Newton calls this experience in the debating society one of the best bits of training he ever had. He says it helped him to overcome shyness, to order his thought, and to speak to the point. A particular statement by Roberts seemed to influence Newton greatly. Newton explains:

Knowing that I had thoughts of entering the ministry, Jenkin Roberts made an epigram which stuck in my memory: "If a preacher cannot remember his own sermon long enough to preach it, nobody will remember it long after he does preach it." The epigram appeared, many years later, in a series of lectures given to the College of Preachers in Washington, entitled The New Preaching. It got under the skin of some of the brethren, who, with fear and trembling, laid aside their manuscripts and learned to speak to their people eye to eye, soul to soul.30

28 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
29 Ibid., p. 46.
30 Ibid.
In 1895, \(^{31}\) Newton, having already pastored the Baptist Church of Rose Hill, Texas, \(^{32}\) began his two years of attendance of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His seminary days were significant in the development of his ideas regarding preaching and theology. John A. Broadus, so long president and an orator and a scholar, had just died. Newton never saw him, but his book, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, which Newton calls a classic in homiletics, was a textbook. Dr. E. C. Dargan was Professor of Preaching. Newton calls him a master of the art. \(^{33}\) He adds:

A tiny man, he seemed to catch fire when he preached, and if he quoted poetry, one could not tell where the poetry ended and his prose began. A sermon, he insisted, is a work of art, or should be, as truly as a lyric or an epic. Its purpose is to convince the mind--less by argument than by insight--to fire the heart, and to move the will; it must have an object as well as a subject. \(^{34}\)

In Dargan's statement of the purpose of a sermon--as quoted by Newton--to convince the mind, to fire the heart, and to move the will, we see the influence of the eighteenth-century British rhetorician George Campbell, who says that the purpose of any speech is to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to

\(^{31}\) *In River of Years*, his autobiography, Newton says "1894" (p. 54). This is apparently an error. In his dissertation, "Joseph Fort Newton: Minister and Mystic" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1975), Billy Jim Leonard points out that the records of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary show that Newton attended there during the school terms of 1895-1896 and 1896-1897 (pp. 44-45).

\(^{32}\) Newton, *River of Years*, p. 50.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 55.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 57.
influence the will.\textsuperscript{35}

The president of the seminary, William H. Whitsitt, taught
church history and philosophy, to which courses in mysticism and psy-
chology were attached. The following complaint by Newton is signif-
icant in understanding developments in his thinking after his seminary
days:

Why mysticism--the word does not matter, but the reality does--
without which the head of religion is cold and its hands limp--
was shunted off into a sideshow, I was never able to understand.
In after years I studied deeply the masters of the inner life,
seeking their method of the "inward doing of good," their tech-
nique of being "in Christ," which was a key-phrase with St. Paul;
but in this adventure my seminary gave me no aid at all.\textsuperscript{36}

Newton also complains that psychology was crowded into a corner, adding
that Freud, Jung, Adler and others were beginning their work, exploring
the abysmal depths of personality, but news of their findings did not
reach his seminary.\textsuperscript{37}

Dr. F. H. Kerfoot taught theology at the seminary. Newton says
that he diligently mastered the definitions and distinctions of his-
toric theology, in the familiar pattern of Calvinism, stating that to
him "that theology was as dead as the dodo and as dull as ditch water."
Newton adds:

Robert Browning, with his insight as swift as zigzag lightning,
meant more to me than Jonathan Edwards, with his "Sinners in
the Hands of an Angry God." Indeed, the poets have always

\textsuperscript{35}James L. Golden and Edward P. J. Corbett, eds., \textit{The Rhetoric
of Blair, Campbell, and Whately} (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston,

\textsuperscript{36}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Ibid.}
taught me more and better theology than the theologians.\textsuperscript{38} Newton's position with regard to formal theological studies is examined in detail in a separate section of this chapter.\textsuperscript{39}

An important experience in Newton's development as a preacher and a homilectician came as a result of a remark in class one day by Dr. Kerfort. The teacher casually advised the class not to read the sermons of Frederick W. Robertson until their theology was fixed. Newton declares that Dr. Kerfort's remark was bad psychology, because he for one did not want his theology fixed, petrified, and hermetically sealed. When the class was over, Newton went to the library to get the sermons of Robertson. He says that some of his sermons, like "The Loneliness of Jesus," are among the greatest in the language. Newton calls Robertson a master of simple lucid English, a vital mind, a soul alive to the deepest issues of life and faith, who had known the agony of doubt and the triumph of faith. "It was impossible for Robertson to be commonplace," says Newton, "and his sermon structure was perfect."\textsuperscript{40}

Later Newton read Stopford Brooke's edited work of Robertson's Life, Letters and Addresses, learning that Robertson was a frail man of many moods, a member of an old Army family in England, but, disappointed that his commission did not come soon enough, entered the service of the church. He held a private service in a chapel and solemnly buried the soldier in him, all except his courage, vowing never to

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 57.

\textsuperscript{39}See pp. 49-53.

\textsuperscript{40}Newton, River of Years, p. 58.
allow his pulpit to become a coward's castle.41 Newton comments: "How anyone could regard Frederick Robertson as dangerous to the theology of anyone, remains a mystery to me."42

Newton concludes his reference to his initial introduction to Robertson with these additional remarks:

Later I preached in Holy Trinity, in Brighton, where he exercised his brief ministry and left a tradition of haunting goodness. Also, reading his popular lectures on great poets, given to workingmen, put an idea into my mind, which became a policy of my ministry, using the mid-week service of the church to interpret great literature. Thus, in a left-handed way, my teacher rendered me a very great service.43

Another significant experience for Newton occurred while he was attending seminary. He had the opportunity to hear D. L. Moody, who passed through Louisville and preached at the Fourth Presbyterian Church. That Moody's message and delivery greatly affected Newton is clear from his account of this experience. He recalls:

Always I had wanted to see and hear him, and by going early I got a seat in the gallery. The church was packed, there was hardly room for Moody to stand. . . . he talked directly, as if a business man were laying down a proposition . . . . He told his religious experience as artlessly as a little child; men wept. I have seldom been more stirred in my life.44

Newton further recalls that the words of Bossuet were in his mind as he listened to Moody: "Speak to me only of necessary truths."45 That

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
45 As quoted in Ibid., p. 61.
which Newton observed in Moody—content which centered around a few key ideas and directness in delivery—became characteristic of Newton's own preaching and homiletical theory.\footnote{46}

Also contributing to Newton's education while he was in Louisville was his experience as a reporter of religious news for the Louisville Courier-Journal. Newton had the opportunity to meet the editor, Henry Watterson, whom he describes as an extraordinary personality; a man of authentic genius, who had that spurt of spirit which makes a champion. Among his references to Watterson is the following:

He asked me if I intended to enter journalism. No, I told him, having put my hand to the plow as a minister, I intended to plow a straight furrow to the end. He said that a training in journalism would stand me in good stead. It would show me how to state things simply and directly; a minister, he added, is often content to get ideas out of his own mind, but a journalist must get them into other minds.\footnote{47}

That Newton's training in journalism did stand him in good stead and affected his writing and speaking style is discussed in Chapter III.\footnote{48}

While at the seminary Newton came across two books in the library by James Freeman Clarke, Ten Great Religions and Events and Epochs in Religious History, which opened for him a fascinating field of study. He later read many other books on the great religions, trying to grasp the central idea in each one, and its method of spiritual culture. He says that the result of these studies was a sense of the

\footnote{46}{See Chapter IV, pp. 240-43; Chapter V, pp. 259-62; and Chapter VII, pp. 338-45.}

\footnote{47}{Newton, River of Years, p. 69.}

\footnote{48}{See Chapter III, pp. 168-69, 177, and 183-85.}
Spirit of God moving within all the multi-colored forms of religion, making his life an adventure in discovering the unity of the spiritual life of the race. The deep effect of these studies on Newton can be seen in the following statements by him:

Thereafter, I was ready and eager to sit at the feet of any saint or sage who had any truth to tell. . . . Such studies, if they made me impatient with religion as then organized, if not actually unfit for it, at least made me a member of the Church of the Spirit--a fellow pilgrim with all the seekers and finders of God.

After his seminary days, on his way back to Texas, Newton picked up in a secondhand bookshop in St. Louis two volumes which he says had an enduring influence upon his inner life. One volume was Some Fruits of Solitude, to which was added More Fruits of Solitude, by William Penn: epigrams jotted down in his old age, summing up his spiritual insight and practical wisdom. Says Newton: "There was something of the Eternal in the man; he was not bound by the times in which he lived, but still moves among men, turning their hearts to the wisdom of love." This book stimulated in Newton a lifelong interest in Penn, whom he regards as one of the greatest of men.

The other book, which Newton found in the used bookstore in St. Louis, was The Practice of the Presence of God, by Nicholas Herman. Why this book was such an influence on Newton he explains in the

49 Newton, River of Years, p. 73.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 76.
52 Ibid.
following words:

Herman was of humble life and untrained; he had been a footman, a soldier, and was admitted as a lay member in a community of the Carmelites in Paris, in 1666. He became known as "Brother Lawrence," because he attained to a high degree of spiritual culture, albeit he was only a cook and a dishwasher. He died at eighty, and his friends brought together four conversations and fifteen of his letters and made what proved to be a spiritual classic. Devoted to lowly service, he hated the work he had to do. Yet he learned a secret, almost too simple to be found out—how to think of himself, his work, his friends as always in the presence of God. He practiced that secret, day and night, until it became the habit of his life. At last it freed him from drudgery, from hurry, worry, weariness and fear; work and prayer became alike. . . .

Here lay my deepest need, and that was why the little book did so much for me, helping me to form new habits of the heart. It is not enough to go to church on Sunday, or to pray each day, just as it is not enough to eat one meal a week. One must have some method, some day-by-day habit of making spiritual truth true within us, and a definite spiritual objective—else one lives at random. . . . At least "Brother Lawrence" taught me how to be a victor over life, not a victim of it.53

Following a pastorate in Paris, Texas and an associate pastorate in St. Louis, Missouri, where he came under the influence of the writings of a man who influenced his theology about God and life after death considerably—Emanuel Swedenborg, Newton went to New England because he felt the need to take further courses of study.54 While he did not enroll officially at Harvard University,55 he apparently attended lecture sessions there and came under the influence of William James and Josiah Royce. His experience in New England was a

53Ibid., pp. 76-78.

54Ibid., pp. 78, 82, 91-92.

55Leonard, "Joseph Fort Newton: Minister and Mystic," p. 84.
combination of studies, preaching, and sight-seeing. For a brief period of time, Newton was on the staff of Everyday Church in Boston.  

Newton tells of meeting Frank B. Sanborn in Concord. He also refers to a conversation with Edward Everett Hale, whom he describes as being infinitely kind to a young man who sought his counsel. He tells of attending the New Old South Church, where he heard George Gordon, of whom Newton says: "He became my friend until his death, and my debt to him is great."  

Newton says that the men he met in New England and talked with, or rather listened to, united the two most precious things in life: the spiritual quality and the vital mind. He declares that no one who met William James can ever forget him. He says further that James' vivid, thrusting, picturesque style was as unpredictable as the man himself. "Both spirited and spiritual," says Newton, "he opened windows and let in fresh air." For Newton, nothing in life is quite like the touch upon us of great minds when they are needed; they unlock doors hitherto closed, and release within us thoughts and dreams of which we were hardly aware; they help us to find the rest of ourselves.  

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56 Newton, River of Years, pp. 92-96.  
57 Ibid., pp. 93-94.  
58 Ibid., p. 94.  
59 Ibid., p. 96.  
60 Ibid.  
61 Ibid.
In summary, Newton secured much of his early formal education under his mother, who was a teacher; but he also studied under other teachers at a school in Hardy, Texas. A valuable bit of training came to him through his participation in a debating society in White Mound, Texas.

Newton's education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was significant because of his exposure there to such subjects as church history, homiletics, and formal theology, although the latter affected him negatively. Also important, while he was attending the seminary, was his introduction to the sermons of Frederick W. Robertson. Newton liked the content, the structure, and the style of Robertson's sermons.

During the time Newton was attending the seminary, he had the opportunity to hear D. L. Moody preach. This was a significant experience for Newton. He was impressed with Moody's emphasis on the basic matters of religion; he also was impressed with Moody's directness in the delivery of his sermon. Another important experience for Newton during his seminary days was the opportunity to work as a reporter of religious news for a local newspaper. In this position he secured valuable training which not only opened doors of service for him in his later life, but also favorably affected his preaching and writing style.

Certain books, such as James Freeman Clarke's Ten Great Reli-
gions and Nicholas Herman's The Practice of the Presence of God, which Newton came across in the seminary library or while traveling from seminary, influenced his thinking greatly. Newton also was impressed
by the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, writings he was introduced to
while he was an associate pastor in St. Louis.

During his days in New England, Newton came under the influence
of men like William James, Frank B. Sanborn, and George Gordon.

Great books, great teachers, and other great personalities
affected Newton profoundly. His formal education was classical in its
focus on areas of knowledge like literature, language, and philosophy.
As a student he seemed most interested in that which related to basic
human experiences and the fundamental ideas of an area of knowledge.
These penchants would show themselves again and again throughout his
life. During his long career his scholarship and service centered
largely in propagating basic truths and addressing himself to the fun-
damental needs of people.

Informal Education. Newton's education continued throughout
his life. He was a diligent student of books, people, and events. His
experiences were diverse and extensive. He was a very knowledgeable
person, and a great portion of his knowledge came from his informal or
in-service education. Let us now look at some especially significant
aspects of that education.

After his days in New England, Newton became pastor of the Peo-
ple's Church in Dixon, Illinois. He calls his years in Dixon student
years.62 He read widely in English and American literature and con-
tinued his study of philosophy. He reviewed religious books for the
Chicago Record-Herald. The man that fascinated Newton most in those

62Ibid., p. 105.
days was David Swing, whose sermons he had discovered in his seminary years.63 He decided to write a biography of Swing. To get the background of his life, Newton went to Clermont County, Ohio, where Swing was born and to Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, where he had been a student and later Professor of Greek. "To get into the hinterlands of the life of a man is endlessly interesting," says Newton; "one sees the influences and events which shaped him."64 Newton's studies of Swing required him to go through the Chicago newspapers from 1866 to 1894 (Swing had pastored a Presbyterian church and Central Church in Chicago65). Going through these newspapers was an unforgettable experience for Newton. He says that he saw how events, big and sensational at the time, dwindle as time passes.66 From his study of Swing, Newton concluded that he had genius, poise, culture, sympathy, insight, humor, common sense, and above all religion as lofty as the love of God and as ample as the needs of man. Swing's faith in our race and his optimism for its future stirred Newton greatly. He says: "The study of his life put something into me, something beyond the power of words to tell."67

Newton's next pastorate was in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where his informal education continued. On Tuesday evenings he gave literary

63 Ibid., pp. 105-06.
64 Ibid., p. 106.
65 Ibid., p. 107.
66 Ibid., p. 106.
67 Ibid., p. 108.
talks at his church under the general title, "Christ in Modern Literature." The talks were included in a monthly publication of his sermons. The University of Iowa, located at Iowa City, only a few miles away, took note of what was going on and asked Newton to give the literary talks as a popular Lectureship in English. This service, which Newton greatly enjoyed, brought him in touch not only with members of the faculty, but also with hundreds of the students.68

Another significant educational experience for Newton in Cedar Rapids grew out of his connection with the Minister's Association. The ritual for joining the Association was to read the Confessions of St. Augustine with Dr. Edward Burkhalter, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, whom Newton calls the dean of the clergy of the city.69 Of this experience with Dr. Burkhalter, Newton says:

Reading Augustine together was a joy, but we did not stop with that book—we went through all the writings of the early Church Fathers, the formative period of Christian theology. His knowledge of that period was complete; his enthusiasm for its great personalities was infectious. ... Those studies did more for me than my whole seminary course had done—far more.70

Also of importance in Newton's education was the beginning, while he was in Cedar Rapids, of his study of Abraham Lincoln. It came about as a result of a visit by Frank B. Sanborn in 1908 to the University of Iowa to deliver some lectures on American history. Mrs. Theodore Parker had left to Sanborn all the manuscripts and papers of her

68 Ibid., p. 112.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., p. 113.
husband. In going through Parker's papers, Sanborn came upon a correspondence between William H. Herndon, the law partner of Lincoln, and Theodore Parker, from 1854 to 1860. Sanborn saw at once the value of the letters, only two or three of which had been used in the Parker biography, "and by some chance," says Newton, "he brought the letters with him on his visit to the University, using a few excerpts from them in one of his lectures."\textsuperscript{71} One day, unexpectedly, Sanborn turned the Herndon-Parker letters over to Newton, saying, "See what you can do with this material; I am too old to handle it properly."\textsuperscript{72}

Using for basic material the letters which Sanborn gave him, Newton published his \textit{Lincoln and Herndon} in 1910. He did not intend for the book to be a detailed biography of either Lincoln or Herndon, but a story of their personal and political friendship in thinking through the problem of slavery. Newton's study for the book took him over Lincoln country, from Springfield, Illinois, to Indiana and into Kentucky. Newton talked with men who had been friends of Lincoln. For three days he listened to Henry B. Rankin who for four years had studied in the Lincoln-Herndon law office. Newton spent a week with Jesse W. Weik, who had collaborated with Herndon in writing a biography of Lincoln. Weik had nearly all of the original material collected by Herndon, and he allowed Newton to go through it, including all the notes and letters of Herndon.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., p. 115.
\textsuperscript{72}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73}Ibid., pp. 116-21.
That the study of Lincoln, begun in 1908 and continued throughout his life, contributed to Newton's education and affected him deeply can be seen from his words as follows:

My long, intimate contact with his spirit . . . has been the profoundest experience of my life, second only to my study and brooding over the life of Jesus. . . . Knowing Lincoln has given me a sense of the majesty of noble human living, a glimpse of the meaning of life itself, of what lies hidden in the souls of the high and humble alike; a great faith in my race and in my country.74

Another educational experience which affected Newton greatly was his study of the lives of the saints and the mystics. He was interested in their discipline, their technique, and their vision. In these studies he found teachers in Dean Inge, Evelyn Underhill, Baron von Hügel, Rufus Jones, and Arthur Edward Waite.75 Newton also went to the saints and the mystics themselves. He writes: "Saints are of many sorts, I learned; they belong to all sects and to none." He adds: "They include Peter, John, Paul, Augustine, Francis, Bernard, but also Tauler, Boehme, Eckhart, Philip Neri, John of the Cross, Bunyan, Wesley, Molinos, Ruysbroeck, Spinoza, Emerson, Lincoln, and not least John Woolman, and others too many to name, some indeed who preferred to remain anonymous."76 Newton declares that the saints were masters of the art of prayer and of those inner techniques which bring spiritual energy into day by day life. Of his study of the lives of the saints and the mystics, Newton says:

74 Ibid., pp. 116-21.
75 Ibid., p. 122.
76 Ibid., pp. 122-23.
Later I tried, stammeringly, to set forth my findings in this radiant field of research in a tiny book called *What Have the Saints to Teach Us?* which, next to my *Life of Swing* . . . I love best of my earlier writings. With which ought to be joined another tiny book, *Wesley and Woolman*, which, studying first Wesley, then Woolman, and then the two together, shows how practical the mystics were, and how their lives gave birth to social movements of great import, long before the "social gospel" was preached and debated among us. 77

Newton's studies and explorations of "the Land of the Spirit, of which the mystics and saints were citizens," formed the background of his first book of religious essays, *The Eternal Christ*. The essays had been read, in synopsis, to the Pastors' Union of Cedar Rapids, in answer to questions propounded by Dr. Burkhalter. 78

A lifelong student, Newton learned much from his associations with people. He learned from other ministers, from political figures, and from ordinary people. During his lifetime Newton met and knew many important leaders and scholars. For example, when he was pastoring the City Temple in London, he attended meetings of the London Society for the Study of Religion. It had a limited membership, which included the Dean of St. Paul's and the Minister of the City Temple. Chesterton, Shaw, Montefiore, and Baron von Hügel were among other members. Newton says that "the soul of the Society" was von Hügel, who was a Catholic layman and philosopher. In his autobiography Newton states that von Hügel was the greatest spiritual thinker and personality it was ever his joy to meet. 79

77 Ibid., p. 124.
78 Ibid., p. 125.
79 Ibid., p. 169.
In London, Newton heard four Prime Ministers speak in the Old Guildhall—Herbert Asquith, Lloyd George, Bonar Law, and Ramsay MacDonald. He says that Asquith spoke in calm and weighty words, in a style as lucid as sunlight and as colorless. He describes George's speaking as picturesque and persuasive, with little literary quality. Newton says that Law was a quiet, matter-of-fact, business-man orator. He states that MacDonald was earnest and eloquent, "in the manner of a lay preacher, as indeed he was, only more polished in phrase." 80

Newton heard Woodrow Wilson speak in London. He describes Wilson as "slim, neat, graceful." He says that he spoke with the magic of phrase of which he was master. 81

On three occasions Newton heard Winston Churchill speak. He says that he met Churchill often in the days when he was regarded as too unpredictable, if not explosive, "too much like his father," to be entrusted with power. 82

Newton knew five Lord Mayors of London during the time he lived there and on subsequent visits. All of the Lord Mayors he knew were Free Churchmen, and the Mayor often came to the City Temple between state occasions. He would sit with Newton in the pulpit and would read the first lesson. 83

80 Ibid., p. 175.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., p. 176.
83 Ibid., p. 186.
While he was pastoring in New York City, Newton was invited to have tea with Rabindranath Tagore, who was visiting there. Newton recalls that Yeats, the Irish poet, seeking someone with whom to compare Tagore had gone back to Thomas à Kempis, but Newton says he would add a touch of Walt Whitman, and perhaps a touch of Francis of Assisi. "My feeling, as we parted," says Newton, "was that I had met one of the greatest lovers of God I had ever known."\textsuperscript{84}

Newton heard and had conversation with Elihu Root,\textsuperscript{85} and he had conversation with Carl Sandburg.\textsuperscript{86} When Newton's daughter graduated from Vassar College, Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Governor of New York, gave the address. Newton says it was one of the most charming addresses he ever had the joy of listening to. He states that Roosevelt talked simply, lucidly, in a friendly, fatherly manner, with that golden voice which millions were later to hear all over the world.\textsuperscript{87}

Perhaps the most important educational experience of a prolonged nature for Newton in his later years was that of conducting for more than eleven years (October 17, 1932 to January 8, 1944) a daily feature in the American press called, depending on the newspaper, "Everyday Living" or "Everyday Religion."\textsuperscript{88} The syndicated column appeared in twenty-five newspapers, including the Philadelphia

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., p. 215.
\textsuperscript{85}Ibid., pp. 217-18.
\textsuperscript{86}Ibid., pp. 218-19.
\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., p. 255.
\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., pp. 299-301.
Inquirer, the Detroit Free Press, and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.\(^89\) This work is discussed in more detail in Chapter III,\(^90\) but a brief reference to it is included here because of its educational value for Newton.

When he was invited to write these feature articles, Newton agreed to do so if the editors would criticize them freely. In response to his request, they covered with red and blue markings his dozen or more initial essays of about five hundred words in length. The editors did not add words; they substracted words. Newton says that they reduced the articles to a clipped simplicity, almost austere, without the waste of a word. Newton declares that from these editors he learned a lesson, one which he wished he had learned years before—"to put things so anybody can understand, and then everybody can understand."\(^91\)

In addition to its educational benefit with respect to his writing, this feature publication experience taught Newton much about people. During the time his column was published, he received some 90,000 letters from his readers.\(^92\) In these letters they expressed appreciation for what he had written, but they also told him where they thought he was wrong and why. Further, from his readers Newton learned that their greatest obsession was fear. Next to fear, readers

\(^{89}\)"Clerical Columnist," \textit{Time}, February 7, 1944, p. 38.

\(^{90}\)See Chapter III, pp. 168-69, 183-85.

\(^{91}\)Newton, \textit{River of Years}, p. 300.

\(^{92}\)"Clerical Columnist," \textit{Time}, p. 38.
complained of loneliness. Another widespread feeling was that of boredom. Still another large group of readers complained of being victims of some unkindness. Summing up the benefits to him of his readers' responses, Newton says: "If I had known years ago what I have learned from my readers, my ministry would have been different—whether better or worse I do not know, but more simple, more intimate, more direct, more full of pity." Newton states that no experience in his life was more instructive, more revealing than writing the daily column for newspapers.

In summary, Newton's informal or in-service education contributed greatly to his development as a person and as a minister. He devoted much time and interest to the research and study for his books on David Swing, Lincoln and Herndon, the saints, John Wesley and John Woolman, and Christ. His literary talks in church services, as well as his lectures on literature at the University of Iowa, reflected study and knowledge in an area of learning that he enjoyed very much and that greatly influenced his thinking.

Also, Newton's associations with prominent people such as Baron von Hügel, Lord Mayors of London, and Rabindranath Tagore broadened his knowledge and influenced his thinking. Finally, his experience of writing a daily newspaper column for over eleven years taught him much about simplicity and precision in the use of language, and from his

93Newton, River of Years, p. 299.
readers' letters he learned a great deal about the problems which are common to many people.

Newton benefited from both his formal and his informal education. His interest in learning was immense; his studies were intensive and varied. Four institutions conferred honorary doctorates on Newton--Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Tufts College, Medford, Massachusetts; Temple University, Philadelphia; and Hobart College, Geneva, New York.95 A Philadelphia newspaper editor called Newton "a very learned man."96 He well deserves that reference.

Lack of Interest in Formal Theological Studies

As Newton looked back on his seminary days, he admitted an unpayable debt to his teachers, more, perhaps, to the men themselves, he says, than to what they taught him. But the things which did the most for his development and stayed with him longest, he declares, were the books that he read outside the field of theology--except the Bampton Lectures of Canon W. H. Fremantle, on The World as the Subject of Redemption, which impressed him indelibly and influenced his thinking for years, he says, because Fremantle talked in terms of salvation, not salvage.97

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95 Newton, River of Years, p. 239.


97 Newton, River of Years, p. 64.
While Newton was in seminary, his uncle, Dr. J. M. Fort, sent him a book which he read with deep interest: *The History of the Warfare Between Science and Theology*, by Andrew D. White, President of Cornell University. Newton says that the book told the sad story of the opposition of theology to all the advances of science—"always an unseeing, often an unscrupulous, opposition,"98 Newton declares. Such reading, plus the fact that he found little in formal theology which interested him, influenced his attitude regarding theological studies.

That which fed his soul, as he puts it, was poetry, fiction, drama, essays, and biography. For example, he refers in appreciation to George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and to the poetry of Walt Whitman, of whom he says: "All through the years Whitman has been a source of strength and inward sustaining; he has helped me to believe in America as I believe in God, helped me to keep its great Dream alive in my heart."99 Newton's high regard for Ralph Waldo Emerson is indicated by the following words from his autobiography:

> He helped me to see life and believe in it, to fear God and not be afraid of Him; the world seemed to move in a new orbit. Years have come and gone, but that day I became acquainted with him is fresh and vivid in my memory, and his spell has lost none of its power.100

Readings from Emerson, Whitman, George Eliot, and others, saved Newton, he declares, from the dull dronings of theology, its dogmas mere echoes of older echoes. In Newton's thinking, theology, by

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rights, ought to be the most entrancing of subjects, for it has to do with God, who alone is permanently interesting. For Newton, however, theology speaks in drab prose, its style as heavy-footed as a procession of elephants, with seldom a flash of insight and beauty. "Never have I read a book of theology," says Newton, "which was also a work of art; not one!" 101

While Newton disliked the style of books on theology, his lack of interest in them was due primarily, perhaps, to his disagreement with much of their content. Admitting that many of the propositions of theology are majestic, he nevertheless feels that some of them are preposterous, because behind them, as he sees it, is a wrong idea of God, and if we are wrong about God, he declares, we cannot be right about much else that matters. 102

With respect to his own theology, Newton says in his autobiography that he never attempted to make a system of theology. He feels that any system, no matter how magnificent, must of necessity leave out as much as it takes in. For him it would be like trying to shut up summer in a garden or winter in a woodshed. "Still," says Newton, "the insights of faith need to be set forth in an order of ideas, however inadequate." 103 For Newton, what counts is not the many things we try to make ourselves believe, but the few profound things we cannot

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101 Ibid., p. 68.
102 Ibid., p. 224.
103 Ibid.
disbelieve and remain men—or only truncated men.\textsuperscript{104}

In the introduction to his sermon "What Everybody Believes," Newton says: "What we need is not faith in more things but more faith in a few things which make us men."\textsuperscript{105} In this sermon, in response to the question "What does everybody believe?" Newton lists five beliefs, namely: (1) All men believe in God; (2) Everybody believes in moral values; (3) Everybody believes in prayer; (4) Everybody believes in Jesus; and (5) All men believe in immortality. Of these basic beliefs Newton says: "Here is the vital essence and stuff of which life and religion are made, the pearl of great price, the truth about the truth."\textsuperscript{106}

In summary, Newton's lack of interest in formal theological studies can be attributed to the following:

1. His strong interest in basic beliefs, beliefs which are a part of theology, but which are often eclipsed by disproportionate attention to minor beliefs;

2. His disagreement with some of the propositions of theology, particularly some of the beliefs to which he was exposed in his youth\textsuperscript{107} and at seminary;\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., pp. 224-25.

\textsuperscript{105}Joseph Fort Newton, "What Everybody Believes," \textit{The Christian Century}, XLI (December 18, 1924), 1625.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., p. 1627.


\textsuperscript{108}See pp. 31-32.
3. His distaste for the lack of art which he feels is reflected in books of theology;

4. His feeling that formal theology has been in error in its opposition to the advance of science; and

5. His faith in the truths which are found in literature, as well as his appreciation for the art with which these truths are presented.

Having considered Newton's lack of interest in formal theological studies, let us turn to a consideration of one of his very strong interests—ecumenism.

**Interest in Ecumenism**

In belief and practice Newton was ecumenical and anti-sectarian. Let us look at the influences which contributed to his development in these directions.

Part of Newton's boyhood was spent in Chico, Texas, where, he says, there were several churches—too many for the town. He writes that it was his first contact with Protestant sectarianism, and he states that even as a boy he saw its absurdity. He complains that it magnified little differences and overlooked great agreements. The people worked together and played together, but when they went to worship, each went his own way, not knowing, not caring, apparently, about the faith of others.\(^{109}\)

\(^{109}\)Newton, *River of Years*, p. 31.
In Chico, Newton attended the Baptist Church, but the minister did not impress him at all. Newton writes that his pastor had a grudge against the Catholic Church, a phobia. He denounced it as the Scarlet Woman of the Book of Revelation and everything he could lay his tongue to. Since there was only one Catholic family in the town, the pastor's attack did not seem fair to Newton. Further, he did not think the minister knew what he was talking about. "Nor did I," confesses Newton, but one day he read a reference in the Louisville Courier-Journal, which said that Cardinal Gibbons lived in Baltimore. Newton wrote him a letter, telling him the awful things he had heard his pastor say about his church, and that he wanted to know the truth. In due time a letter came to Newton from Cardinal Gibbons, written with his own hand, commending Newton's attitude as wise. Gibbons said that one may not accept the teachings of the Roman Church, but one ought to try to understand it at its best, rather than accept a garbled and distorted version of it. To that end, Gibbons added, he was sending Newton a copy of his book The Faith of Our Fathers, which arrived later. Newton read the book and kept it for many years.\textsuperscript{110}

After Newton entered the ministry of the Baptist Church and had pastored two churches, he experienced a crisis regarding continuation in the Baptist denomination.\textsuperscript{111} He says in his autobiography that his dilemma may be taken as a profile of the period. He adds: "Such limited cooperation of churches as we know in our day was unknown in those

\textsuperscript{110}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{111}See Chapter III, pp. 102-03.
days; each sect might have been built on a separate planet."\(^{112}\) He recalls that his effort to build bridges between churches failed, and that being shut up as the servant of one sect, running on in the same old ruts, became increasingly difficult. He felt that something had to be done, if only to save his ministry from frustration and futility. At this time he left the church of his fathers to seek a wider, freer fellowship, as well as a more untrammeled ministry, and a new phase of his life began.\(^ {113}\) He became associate pastor of the Non-Sectarian Church of St. Louis. Next, he pastored a Universalist church in Dixon, Illinois. He then pastored a Universalist church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Next, he became pastor of the City Temple, a Free Church (Congregational) in London. Then he pastored the Universalist Church of the Divine Paternity in New York City. Finally, as an Episcopal minister, he pastored three churches of the Episcopal denomination in Philadelphia. Details of these changes for Newton are given in Chapter III, but with regard to his ecumenical belief and practice, let us here notice some of his reasoning.

"Deliberately and of set purpose I have gone from church to church," says Newton, "from room to room in my Father's house, leaving doors open behind me, even when they were slammed in anger."\(^ {114}\) He declares that he did not make these changes casually, but with the profound conviction that there is one church of Christ which includes all

\(^{112}\) Newton, *River of Years*, p. 81.

\(^{113}\) *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

our sects, or there is no church of Christ at all—but a huddle of
groups which in their blindness crucify Christ anew by their petti-
lessness. 115

When Newton entered the ministry of the Episcopal Church in
1925, he issued an extensive statement about his action. In this
statement he says that the church of Christ may wear many names, but
its faith is one, and finally it will be one in fellowship, drawn
together by creative desire, if not driven together by the sheer neces-
sity of facing the forces of destruction in our day which, if they have
their way, will end in materialism and futility. Then he adds a prac-
tical consideration: "Each man should labor where he can do his best
work in behalf of our common Christian enterprise; and I look forward
to happy and fruitful service in a great and gracious fellowship." 116

As early as 1916 Newton expressed strong opposition to sectar-
ianism and strong approval of ecumenism. In his sermon "The Eternal
Tents," preached at the City Temple in July, 1916, he says:

Divided into parties, and subdivided into sects . . . our
churches furnish a melancholy example of the lack of common
sense. So far as our differences are real and fundamental
they must and should exist . . . . But when they are only
reminiscences of old debates long since dead, and persist
by virtue of sectarian prejudice or pride, they can show no
reason for being; the less so when the things which we have
in common are not only more profound, but more precious,
than the things which divide. 117

115 Ibid., pp. 158-59.

116 As quoted in "Dr. Newton and the New Field of Work," The
Universalist Leader, XXVII (September 26, 1925), 12.

117 Joseph Fort Newton, "The Eternal Tents," in An Ambassador
In 1930 Newton went to London at the invitation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, of which he was still considered a member, to preach the sermon on the anniversary of the Colonial Missionary Society. In 1918 he had preached the anniversary sermon before the same society, but at that time he spoke as a Free Churchman. In 1930, having entered the Episcopal Church meanwhile, he spoke in a dual capacity. His sermon was entitled "The Crisis of Christ," one passage of which was quoted and discussed all over England, according to Newton. He regards the paragraph as one of the focus-points of his entire ministry, since his habit, he maintains, was always to practice Christian unity as well as to preach it. The entire paragraph follows:

For half a thousand years on this Blessed Island the Body of Christ has been torn by a profound schism, the story of which we know, and the tragedy of which has been carried to the far ends of the earth even in its missionary labors! Let me humbly bear my witness in the pulpit of the City Temple, speaking both as a Free Churchman and as an Anglican, knowing both sides from the inside, and treasuring the precious thing which each seeks to conserve. Before God and this company of my brethren, I testify that in my own heart they are not divided, but are as the two hemispheres of one Christian world, and what God has joined together we must not forever keep asunder! Let us treasure both traditions and reckon them equally holy, equally vital, equally precious; but let us keep in our hearts the warning words of the Lord Jesus how He said: "Ye do make the will of God of no effect by your traditions!"

On the last page of his autobiography, which was published in 1946, Newton states that slowly the church is moving away from the sectarianism which he denied from the first, and fought all his life, toward "the Coming Great Church," in whose fellowship man will walk in the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of

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118 Newton, River of Years, p. 251.
peace, and in righteousness of life. 119

In 1948 Newton published a book entitled _The One Great Church_. In this work he says that surely a person is nearsighted who does not see that however separate our religious communions may seem to be on the surface, in the heights and depths they are essentially one. 120 The following words from the book sum up his position on sectarianism and ecumenism:

... it is one thing to talk about Christian unity—not reunion—not uniformity; it is another thing to be led by the insight that the Christian Church is not a huddle of sects, but one great Communion, and actually to live in that fellowship and act accordingly. Sectarianism, from this angle, becomes a sacrilege, if not a blasphemy against the sacrament of fellowship. Anyway, I have lived to see sectarian walls, mountain-high in my youth, so breached as to allow a tourist elephant to pass through, with baggage. The one Great Church is at our door; it is how we think in our hearts and act in our lives whether we live in it or not—I live in no other church. 121

In summary, Newton's position on sectarianism and ecumenism can be accounted for in part by his exposure in his youth to extreme sectarian attitudes and his personal antipathy to those attitudes. His position can be accounted for in part by his personal frustration in the Baptist Church, the denomination in which he was reared and in which he began his ministry. His position can be accounted for in part by his tendency to gloss over important doctrinal differences between churches, but also to be considered in looking at his views on these

119Ibid., p. 374.


121Ibid., pp. 95-96.
subjects is the fact that his position was based on his understanding of the teachings of Christianity and his understanding of the role of the church in society. His own movement from church to church seemed to be based on sincere feelings about the insignificance of denominational categories, as well as practical considerations regarding fitting into the place which at the time seemed best in terms of opportunity for Christian service. While some people would consider Newton's position naive or too idealistic, he was, in the words of his daughter, Mrs. Josephine Morris, "truly interdenominational in his outlook."  

The position of Newton on sectarianism and ecumenism, vulnerable though it may be, reflects the desire expressed by Christ in His prayer for His disciples: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."  

Interest in Mysticism

Another of Newton's great interests was the inner spiritual life of man. Much of his writing has to do with subjects related to this interest. Many of his ideas on man's inner spiritual life came from his study of the lives of the saints and the mystics. One of his early books was What Have the Saints to Teach Us? (1914) His 1948 Life


Victorious is a revised edition of that work. For Newton, the value to us of the lives of the saints is that they show us the path to victory, for, according to Newton, we are helped in this world less by what men say, however eloquent they may be, than by the footsteps of those who passed before us through difficulties like our own. Further, with the saints love of God was ever the central principle and passion of religion. "They placed it first, and deduced all else from it," says Newton; "and therein they were true to the ultimate realities—for the modern tendency to give priority to the love of man, while it may be excellent ethics, is not the mighty gospel which inspires heroic and joyous self-sacrifice for the lowly and the unlovely." In Newton's thinking, the secret of saintliness or mysticism is withdrawal from dependence on things lower than the soul, the giving of ourselves utterly to God, and the dedication of our lives to the needs of others—and, at bottom, these three are one, according to Newton.

A mystic, or a saint, for Newton, is a person who, under God, participates here and now in real and eternal life, in the fullest, deepest sense which is possible to man, sharing in everyday life the divine strength and applying it in all that belongs to the service of God and men. Also, mysticism is the heart of religion, without whose everbeating life the hands of religion, which do the work, and the mind

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125 Ibid., p. 69.
126 Ibid., p. 40.
of religion, which studies and thinks, fall dead.\textsuperscript{127}

Newton believes that the difference between religious men today and those of former times is that in the older saints religion was a spontaneous, creative power, whereas with us it is for the most part imitative and secondary.\textsuperscript{128} For those who would follow the example of the older saints, Newton suggests five steps which must be experienced. First, there must be an awakening; second, a purgation; and third, an illumination. Then would follow step four—the dark night of the soul. Step five is union, or complete oneness with God and His will for our lives.\textsuperscript{129} Newton frankly states that not all of the methods of the older saints can be used by us. At the same time he believes that even their extremes teach us more than is to be learned from the lore of the world.\textsuperscript{130}

Recalling a study he made of "illicit religion" in New York City, Newton in his autobiography says that each of the "cults" he studied betrayed some lack on the part of organized religion—chiefly its neglect of mysticism—and the penalty was exaggeration, or degradation.\textsuperscript{131} "The tragedy of our time," writes Newton, "is the schism between the head and the heart, the divorce of science and mysticism; the failure to see that the inner life is a realm of law where order is

\textsuperscript{127} Ib\textit{id.}, pp. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{128} Ib\textit{id.}, pp. 31-32.
\textsuperscript{129} Ib\textit{id.}, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{130} Ib\textit{id.}, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{131} Newton, \textit{River of Years}, p. 213.
the trophy of obedience."\textsuperscript{132} Complaining that the church seems to be able to deal only with the intelligent, the prosperous, and the healthy, Newton states that with the sick of body and soul, it is helpless. He then poses three questions:

1. Has our religion nothing to say to physical beings who have a bodily life to live?

2. Has the church no help for the subnormal, the distressed, the over-burdened, and those whose minds seem scattered by the dizzy whirl of city life?

3. Has it no art of healing, no technique of inner realization?

Implying that the church should be able to respond affirmatively to these questions, Newton cautions that before the church attacks the new cults, it ought to study how far its own failure to minister to human need has brought them into being.\textsuperscript{133}

Near the end of his autobiography, Newton states that due to many causes, no doubt, but untraceable, he found in his riper years the highest faith, the clearest wisdom, the sum of the duty and discipline of life, and the ideal of its dedication, in the words of Jesus, "Follow me." He says that after all, he is not asked to understand Jesus, but to follow and obey Him. He adds:

\begin{quote}
Ever the mystic quest goes on. Ever the reason toils to fathom and estimate the wonder of "the human life of God." But life becomes simpler, more practical, more serene, at once easier and harder, more complex in its demands and more compelling in its persuasions, when I hear Him say, "Learn of Me; take My yoke, and ye shall find rest unto your soul."
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
... Here is a way of unity and loyalty open to the wise and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{132}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid.
the simple alike, plain enough for the first steps of a little child and profound enough for the last meditations of old age.\(^{134}\)

In 1932 Newton warned that outside the church a slow, leveling, glacial scientific secularism was sweeping many people away, imperceptibly, not merely from Christianity, but from any religious view of the world. He declared that no vague humanism, but only a mighty renewal of the spiritual life, invoking a Pentecost of power, could check the drift and avert disintegration.\(^{135}\)

As we saw in the preceding section of this chapter, Newton was greatly interested in ecumenism, "but church unity is not enough,"\(^{136}\) he says in *Where Are We in Religion?* For Newton, unless and until there is a profound spiritual renewal--creative, prophetic, practical, compassionate--such unity might be not a unity of the church, but of the churchyard.\(^{137}\)

One of Newton's key concerns, then, was the development of our inner spiritual life--what he chose to call mysticism. Newton believes that in this development we can learn from the example of the saints of history. We cannot use all of their methods, he says, but we can imitate the saints in their effort to love God supremely, in their practice of purging their lives of those habits and attitudes

\(^{134}\)Ibid., p. 367.

\(^{135}\)Joseph Fort Newton, ed., *If I Had Only One Sermon to Prepare* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932), pp. 5-6.


\(^{137}\)Ibid.
incongruous with godliness, and in their practice of dedicating themselves to serving God and humanity wholeheartedly. The following sentence epitomizes Newton's views on the development of our spiritual life: "Most people want religion, that is, they want its consolations without its commitments, its delights without its disciplines; but they cannot have one without the other."\textsuperscript{138}

Having considered two of Newton's special religious interests—ecumenism and mysticism—let us now turn our attention to an interest of his which was more secular in nature: his special concern about a good relationship between the United States and England.

Interest in British-American Relations

In 1894 Newton read an article by Andrew Carnegie entitled "Look Ahead" in the \textit{North American Review}. Carnegie proposed a complete federal union of Great Britain and the United States, and a common citizenship; or, failing of that, a defensive alliance, or at least a pooling of naval forces. The suggestion was seconded by Sir George Clarke of England, in a later issue. Finally, Captain Mahan, of the United States Navy, an authority on sea power in history, reviewed the subject.\textsuperscript{139}

These articles impressed Newton profoundly, and it became a conviction of his that some such project would have to be adopted, sooner or later. "The two bases of our one civilization, as I

\textsuperscript{138}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, p. 77.

\textsuperscript{139}Ibid., p. 60.
interpreted it," writes Newton, "were, and are, the Holy Scriptures and the Common Law, the Bible and Blackstone."\textsuperscript{140} It was Newton's belief that having so much in common, the lands of the Common Law had a common obligation to keep the peace and security of the world.\textsuperscript{141}

In his autobiography Newton says that for thirty years he went to and fro between America and England, advocating closer fellowship, understanding, and cooperation. "In America my plea was received with a polite silence," he says, "in England with an amused tolerance." He states further:

It takes a major operation to get an idea into the human mind. If the suggestion of Andrew Carnegie and Captain Mahan had been adopted in 1894, two world wars might have been averted. Yet I have lived to hear a British Prime Minister propose a common citizenship for Americans and Britons in an address at Harvard University . . . .\textsuperscript{142}

Newton made his first trip to England in 1916; he preached during the month of July as guest minister at the City Temple in London. His first sermon, "An Ambassador," contains valuable insights into his strong interest in British-American relations. For example, he said:

... if we are to keep the light of civilization aglow upon the earth, much less make its influence grow and prevail, there must be the closest sympathy and understanding between the two great nations having one language, one tradition, one religion, and one supreme interest and ideal. Next to the tragedy of world-war now proceeding, if not the last and worst calamity that could befall humanity, would be an estrangement between England and the American Republic. Because this is so, every visitor from one land to the other ought to be one more tie, however tiny and frail, binding into more enduring union

\textsuperscript{140}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{141}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{142}\textit{Ibid.}
those whom God has joined together, the more so at a time when so many sinister influences are busy in behalf of bitterness and division. Hence my brief ministry here in the name of Him who is the sovereign citizen of the world, the solitary hope of mankind, the kinsman of all races and the saviour of each soul, the Leader and Redeemer "in whom all things hold together." 143

When Newton was enroute from Iowa in 1917 to become the pastor of the City Temple, he preached on May 6 at the Church of the Divine Paternity in New York. According to The New York Times, Newton "brought tears to the eyes of many of his hearers through the emotion with which he accepted the gift of a great American flag which he pledged himself to entwine with the British flag behind his new pulpit." 144 It is of interest to note that The New York Times in its report on May 28, 1917 of the beginning of Newton's pastorate at the City Temple on May 27 states that the pulpit was draped with an American flag, sent from the Church of the Divine Paternity in New York, intertwined with the Union Jack. Among Newton's words on that significant day in his ministry were these:

Your country and my country are trying to keep the good ship the earth from being torpedoed and sunk in brutality. If Columbia has been slow to emerge from her policy of isolation, she is the more clear-sighted and determined today. Today two mighty people whose hearts, aims, and ideals are now for the first time in history one, and who are one in arms, are fighting together that liberty, justice, and mercy may not vanish from the earth. 145

In a further reference to this service, The New York Times says:


"Before the closing voluntary the congregation sang, 'America,' this being the first time it was ever heard in an English church." 146

In August, 1917 Newton went for a journey along the western front, as a guest of the British Government. Then he went to Paris; from there he came to the United States on a speaking trip and to take his family to England. They had not gone with him when he first went to London to pastor, because of war conditions and the settling of his and their affairs. 147

Newton says that he had never seen such an America before. He writes:

Everywhere one heard the sound of marching, marching, and I, who had just seen what they were marching into, watched it all with an infinite ache in my heart. It was an awe-inspiring America, new in its unity, its power, and its vision of duty. 148

Newton spoke at the City Auditorium in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on August 30, 1917. The following words from The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette of August 31, 1917 give his views on the war and provide insight into his manner of speaking on such an occasion:

"I think it is in keeping with the justice of God that the war shall not stop until the Germans have been pushed across the Rhine and that the infernal government at Berlin has had a taste of the bitter woes it has wreaked upon the people of Belgium and northern France," said Dr. Newton. And the audience applauded long and vigorously. In his address the speaker paid tribute to the Englishman and said when we know him better

146 Ibid.

147 Newton, River of Years, pp. 162-63.

148 Ibid., p. 162.
we will like him better.

... "Why this awful war? Why this waste of treasure? Why must the war go on? Why is the United States now in the war? Why, why, why?"

"Because we will no longer allow a set of unscrupulous criminals in Berlin to dictate the laws of the world. Because we are fighting against a military autocracy and a fiendishness unbelievable. Because we are fighting for the perpetuation of liberty and justice upon the earth. Because we are fighting for the sanctity of the home—and there never more would be any sanctity of the home anywhere upon the earth should Germany win the war." 149

Newton resumed his ministry at the City Temple in November, 1917. 150 In January, 1918 he was involved in a disagreement with British policy regarding liquor. In this encounter Newton stood for his convictions, although in doing so he was in conflict with the government of a country for which he had great respect.

The Times of January 7, 1918 reports that Newton said the following words at the City Temple:

Our cause is righteous, but we are not. We are fighting for justice, but we are not just. Our conscience indicts and convicts us before God and our social order confirms the indictment. One item will be enough to tell what I mean. On the very day when we were once more warned of threatened starvation, it was decreed that the output of brewery supplies might be increased 20 per cent. That is, when we are on the verge of hunger, food is turned into rum to drug our brains. When I see American boys staggering in the streets, drunk, I hate London. In America, even in those places where liquor is sold, it is a criminal offence to sell it to anyone wearing the uniform of the Army or Navy. But in London it is not so. Here every opportunity is offered, every trap set to debauch our boys on their way to and from the Front. How long will

149 "Big Sum Realized by Newton Lecture for the Red Cross," The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette, August 31, 1917, p. 15.

150 "Dr. Fort Newton's Return," The Times (London), October 26, 1917, p. 3.
America send foodstuffs to England, only to have it used to make liquor to ruin her boys? It is not fair. It is not cricket. Are we to understand that England thinks more of her breweries than she does of her Allies? I wonder if it is really so? Forgive me if I seem unkind. I do not mean to be so. But I speak for many millions of people, and should like to make you feel as keenly about this matter as we do.\textsuperscript{151}

On January 8 \textit{The Times} replied to Newton. The reply includes these words:

The picture which he drew of "American boys staggering in the streets, drunk" is said \textsuperscript{\textit{in American circles}} to be wholly unwarranted. . . .

In regard to drinking generally in London the known facts are most satisfactory. The total number of cases of conviction during the Christmas and New Year season show a decline of 69 per cent as compared with the figures for 1915. Over the whole of Great Britain a reduction of well over 70 per cent has been obtained by the regulations of the drink traffic which have been in force since 1915.\textsuperscript{152}

\textit{The Times} of January 9 gives Newton's response. "Facts are hard nuts to crack," says Newton, "and my picture was not taken from police records, but \textsuperscript{\textit{from}} what I have seen with my own eyes." With regard to the claim of \textit{The Times} that drinking convictions had declined, Newton counters: "If the facts are as indicated . . . why an increase in the output of brewery supplies?" He adds: "Why not cut these supplies in two, as has been done in the matter of meat?"\textsuperscript{153}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{151}\textit{The Sale of Liquor to Soldiers,} \textit{The Times} (London), January 7; 1918, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{152}\textit{American Troops in London,} \textit{The Times} (London), January 8, 1918, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{153}\textit{American Troops in London,} \textit{The Times} (London), January 9, 1918, p. 3.
\end{itemize}
In stinging rebuttal, The Times of January 10, over the signature "Scrutator," says of Newton:

In endeavouring to escape from a grossly misleading statement on Sunday he now makes a suggestion which reveals complete ignorance of the present position of the whole question. . . . He is apparently not aware that cutting in two has been done in the matter of alcohol and has not been done in the matter of meat. . . . When so drastic a curtailment has been patriotically accepted without disturbance of any kind, is it too much to ask that before making statements which give a totally false impression of the position in this country, and misrepresent the spirit of ready sacrifice and self-denial shown by all classes, advocates of a false and inapplicable panacea will acquaint themselves with a few of the main facts of the subject on which they are so ready with reproof and criticism? 154

In my research I found no response by Newton to the above words; however, on the same day they were published (Thursday, January 10), he included in his sermon to his noon congregation at the City Temple the following comments about the liquor question, as reported by The Times on January 11:

The first thing I want to say is to help you to understand the American point of view. We hold that if the Government has a right to conscript a man, take his time, his strength, his very life if need be, in behalf of a great cause, it has the right to conscript his conduct and keep him fit to do that work. (Cheers.) . . . On this side, of course, we cannot enforce such a regulation, and I make the request that you will help us to do so. . . .

The second thing is that those who write to me telling me that I am in this way prejudicing the cooperation of these two countries in the war waste their time. If that is being done—which I think it is—I am not the one who is guilty of it. The food-hogging of the British breweries is helping to do it. (Cheers.) When the increase of output of brewery supplies was permitted, that fact was published in America . . . . It filled our people with amazement. Why? They

know the food situation in America as perhaps you do not. I have before me a report of the Food Commissioner of the United States, in which he tells us that every grain of wheat which could be spared from the crop of 1917 has already been sent to England and France.

The third thing is that a member of the Government has asked me if I do not think that, in spite of everything, progress has been made in England. Indeed, Yes! The condition is better, 40 per cent better, I venture to say, than two years ago. For all this I am grateful. And it is because we are making progress—that is my point—that it seems such a pity to take a back track and increase the output of brewery supplies. 155

As a final reference to Newton's condemnation of the increase in brewery supplies, it is interesting to note that at the public recognition service for Newton as pastor of the City Temple, his predecessor, the Reverend R. J. Campbell, said that Newton had already begun to speak with a prophet's voice, and shown himself utterly fearless in rebuking wrong. He had not closed his eyes to England's national sins for fear of offending her national susceptibilities, he continued. What he had said about English habits of drunkenness and vice was unhappily only too true, Campbell said. And to make things even, perhaps, Campbell added, Dr. Clifford (who presided) and the new Bishop of Hereford (Dean Hensley Henson) might one day feel it laid upon their conscience to offer a few home truths to New York and Chicago. 156

In his acknowledgement of the welcome given to him, Newton said that if his predecessor, Mr. Campbell, or any other English clergyman,


156 "National Shortcomings," The Times (London), January 18, 1918, p. 3.
stood in New York or Chicago, he hoped he would do the citizens the kindness and courtesy and brotherly service to rebuke their national sins unmistakably; for if England and the United States were one people now, they were certainly one in their sins as in other things.\textsuperscript{157}

With respect to the allowable increase in the output of brewery supplies, it is significant to note that the British Government revoked the permission.\textsuperscript{158} Perhaps Newton's opposition had some influence. Normally Newton did not involve himself in such social or political issues. The only other instance of this type of involvement to my knowledge occurred while he was a pastor in Dixon, Illinois. The issues on that occasion were liquor and political corruption. Details of Newton's involvement are given in Chapter III of the dissertation.\textsuperscript{159}

In 1918 Newton took his family back to the United States for the duration. Shortly after his return to England, he was asked to speak to a group devoted to Anglo-American friendship, but he did not mention the subject, he says, except casually, because he felt that to do so was useless, since, in his view, all were utterly convinced already. Newton reports that all of them felt that the war was nearing its end, and they dreaded a tragic reaction driving England and America farther apart than ever. Newton states that not much idealism was left

\textsuperscript{157}\textit{Ibid.}


\textsuperscript{159}See Chapter III, pp. 106-09.
after the long struggle, and even that was worn thin. Further, there were rumors of friction between the American soldiers and the Tommies. Newton concluded that little groups could do little. "What we needed was a great gesture of friendship," he says, "and I did not know how it could be made."\textsuperscript{160}

As has been indicated already, Newton's interest in improving British-American relations was not without its problems. He complains that the anti-American feeling in England dogged all his days at the City Temple. He says that this feeling took many forms—envy, fear, sheer hatred, supercilious superiority, irritating condescension, unbelievable pettiness, and nagging nastiness. Newton states that before the United States went into the war, the anti-American feeling was almost unbearable; after the United States entered the war, everything was pleasant. He says that ten days after the Armistice his mail was unreadable. He reports that even leading Free Church ministers indulged in the anti-American feeling. Younger ministers were not affected by it, nor the City Temple congregation, according to Newton. "But the press of London deserves to be castigated without mercy—with some exceptions,"\textsuperscript{161} Newton adds.

In 1919 Newton returned to the United States to pastor the Church of the Divine Paternity in New York. On January 12, 1920 he wrote in his diary that from the time of his return until then, he had done little else but speak in behalf of fraternity between

\textsuperscript{160}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{161}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 149.
English-speaking peoples but seemed to be talking against the wind. He was running into all kinds of snags--Irish snags, Japanese snags, naval snags--and he did not get very far. "Debt on one side, suspicion on the other, joined with lack of knowledge on both sides, make hard sailing," he wrote.

On November 24, 1920 Newton wrote in his diary about a farewell luncheon he attended in honor of a group of British visitors. He said that like all such meetings since the war, it was a bore. He added:

What struck me was the endless flow of mealy-mouthed flattery, so sickening to honest minds on both sides of the sea. Everybody seemed afraid that somebody would say something to the point. . . . Why so much oily hypocrisy in our Anglo-American friendship, if it is real? Friends who cannot be frank are not real friends, in spite of all their tiresome talk about the things they have in common.\textsuperscript{163}

In a footnote to this entry in his diary, Newton stated that his own conviction, as a result of sad experience, was that the best service to Anglo-American friendship was to let it alone. He reasoned: "If it is written in the Book of the Will of God it will grow--as, indeed, it is growing--and a nobler necessity than a fear of invasion or a desire for an Alliance will dictate a higher friendship."\textsuperscript{164}

Twenty-one years later (1941), Newton went to England as a guest of the Ministry of Information. He spoke in such places as the Abbey, St. Paul's, St. Martin's in the Fields, City Road Chapel, and


\textsuperscript{163}Ibid., pp. 83-84.

\textsuperscript{164}Ibid., p. 85.
Central Baptist Church. He spoke also in discussion groups, including two Bomber Commands of the Royal Air Force. As he went to and fro over England, he discovered a new England, he says, new, especially in its attitude toward the United States. He found a desire, for the first time, to know America and its people. There was absolutely none of the nagging, irritating anti-American feeling he had known during World War I. He states that he did what he had never expected to do—he conducted two Institutes in American History. One of them was for a group of Workingmen's Educational Associations. They had been reading the *Life of Lincoln* by Lord Charnwood, and knowing that Newton was interested in Lincoln, they asked him to speak to them.\(^{165}\) For Newton, therefore, this trip to England was a positive experience in his long-lived interest in British-American relations. It was an appropriate climax to an interest which began in 1894\(^{166}\) and continued thereafter.

In summary, Newton's keen interest in British-American relations stemmed from: (1) his awareness of the commitment of the citizens of both the United States and England to the importance in their lives of the Scriptures and the Common Law; and (2) his direct contact with Britishers over a period of thirty years.

Newton sought to improve British-American relations through speeches to both Americans and Britishers, and, on at least one occasion, by expressing opposition to a British policy which he felt was unwise for various reasons, one of which was the damage he thought the

\(^{165}\)Newton, *River of Years*, pp. 276-77.

\(^{166}\)See p. 64.
policy would do to the relationship between the United States and England. Further, Newton sought to improve relations through visits to England; for example, the one in 1941 when he promoted better understanding between the countries through such means as his Institutes in American History.

Newton's feelings as an American for England are aptly summed up in the following words: "I have seen the soul of England—quiet, heroic, incredibly courageous, unconquerably cheery, its valor brightest when the day is darkest—and to the end of my days I shall walk more reverently because of that vision."167

Thus far in this chapter, we have looked at the family heritage and early years of Newton, his education, his lack of interest in formal theological studies, and his interest in ecumenism, mysticism, and British-American relations. Let us turn now to a consideration of the times in which he lived and to a consideration of how the times affected his rhetorical theory. First, let us look at his times.

His Times—1876-1950

Three tremendous events occurred during Newton's lifetime: World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. These events affected Newton greatly, primarily because of his direct contact with them. During World War I he pastored a London church and experienced a total of twenty-eight air raids,168 as well as other horrors of the

167 Newton, Preaching in New York, pp. 15-16.
168 Newton, River of Years, p. 160.
war, such as a trip to the battle front. He also preached to soldiers in army camps during this war.\textsuperscript{169}

During the Great Depression Newton and Dr. John H. Mockridge co-pastored St. James' Episcopal Church in Philadelphia; this church was affected by the hardships of the times. Newton says that spiritually their work was a triumph, but financially it was precarious, if not impossible. Their only salvation lay in forming a union with another Episcopal church. This plan contributed in part to Newton's resignation as co-rector.\textsuperscript{170} Thus, he personally experienced consequences of the state of the times.

It was during the Great Depression and during part of World War II that Newton wrote his newspaper column, "Everyday Religion."\textsuperscript{171} As he puts it, he was in the business of cheering people up during the most trying of times.\textsuperscript{172}

Let us now consider these great events in some detail with respect to their effect on Newton. The year 1914, for Newton, divides modern history into before and after.\textsuperscript{173} In vivid language Newton describes the world situation, as he saw it begin to unfold in that year: "The human world cracked, and the cleavage continued to widen,

\textsuperscript{169}Ibid., p. 162.

\textsuperscript{170}Ibid., pp. 256-59; "Two Philadelphia Churches Join," The Churchman, CXLIX (July 1, 1935), 27.

\textsuperscript{171}In some newspapers the column was called "Everyday Living." See pp. 46-47.

\textsuperscript{172}Newton, River of Years, p. 303.

\textsuperscript{173}Ibid., p. 134.
and, after an interval of Armistice, came economic collapse, world-
wide and devastating; then the second edition of the same war, total
war, led by megalomaniacs, seeking to establish the foulest and most
obscene tyranny which ever crawled across the earth, monsters trying to
drag the race down to a sub-human level; disaster following fast and
following faster.\textsuperscript{174} He calls this time "the most ghastly period in
history."\textsuperscript{175}

With specific reference to World War I, Newton says in his
autobiography: "Again and again, as this record proceeds, I shall be
trying to tell what that awful ordeal did to my soul, and to my fellow
souls, with little hope of being able to do so."\textsuperscript{176}

After World War I, Newton returned to the United States to pas-
tor in New York. In spite of his cathedral-like church, work he loved,
and many friends, he was unhappy. The long-lived storm of great
events, the awful war—the fact that it could and had transpired—the
frightful scenes which haunted his memory, the seeming futility of it
all, depressed him. He says that such a tragedy tells terribly upon
the inner life. He adds: "My faith in God was not shaken—not for an
instant—but the human scene was appalling, in its apathy, inertia, and
blurred cynicism."\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., p. 207.
Newton declares that he was preaching in chaos. He says that all about him was hissing hatred, race against race, raucous and rasping. "The churches ran along in old grooves deep enough to be graves," says Newton, "each edgy about its infallibility, sensitive about its sovereignty, senseless in its sectarianism."\textsuperscript{178} Worse than this condition of the churches, according to Newton, was an incredible emptiness of soul, a spiritual vacuum, in which people were trying to live, gasping for breath—a hollowness of spirit, as if, obsessed by day-by-dayness, inner values had been forgotten or lost.\textsuperscript{179}

In his discussion of his newspaper column, "Everyday Religion," which ran from 1932 to 1944, Newton asks his readers to consider the period covered by his talks in the press. He says it would be hard to pick out a decade more troubled, more tormented, more terrifying. The feature began in the depths of the Great Depression. For Newton, no one who remembers that time can ever forget those dismal days. He declares that the Depression was spiritual as well as economic. He explains: "Men who wanted to work, and knew how to work, began to feel that they were 'unwanted,' not needed—there was no place for them, especially if they were over forty—and these facts did things to men which words were not made to tell."\textsuperscript{180}

Shortly after the Depression, World War II had its beginnings. Newton says that a monster of iniquity appeared, whose cunning was only

\textsuperscript{178}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{179}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{180}Ibid., p. 302.
matched by his cruelty, and the world was ablaze. Newton states that at a time when faith was dim, when the direst predictions of the pessimists seemed justified, and the hearts of men and women were haunted by a sense of futility and frustration, he was trying through his newspaper column to give his readers a faith and a philosophy of life—not a philosophy in the technical sense, but rather a "life-wisdom" long tried and trustworthy.\[181\]

In my view, the strongest statement by Newton in regard to the two world wars through which he lived is the following one from his autobiography: "Two world wars in one lifetime are more than enough; rather than go through another I should prefer to stand against a stone wall and be shot at dawn."\[182\]

Thus far in this section of the chapter, we have looked at the effect on Newton of three great events: World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. With respect to the times, in general, Newton has much to say in his writings about the whirl of events and people's preoccupation with external things. He believes that this state of affairs affects the spiritual attitudes of men. He feels that the spirit of brooding meditation, of deep and still thinking, of humility and inward wisdom, is nearly lost, not merely for lack of time to practice it, but from lack of disposition. Instead, in Newton's thinking, we have a tedious egoism, a "science-save-us-cult," a curious faith that organization can substitute for inspiration, a dearth of that rich

\[181\] Ibid., p. 303.

\[182\] Ibid., p. 236.
inwardness which was so consecrating in past days. 183 "In such an atmosphere my ministry has been exercised, in the face of odds beyond reckoning," says Newton, "but I have tried to keep faith with the truth that makes all other truth true; and my hope is unshaken." 184

Newton's look into the future is significant because it reveals his character and thinking and because it is intrinsically valuable. First, he looked at the times just ahead of him. He saw the immediate religious future as dismal in a weary, hungry, devastated and frightened world. Referring to what Emerson called "sleeping periods of the soul," Newton says in his autobiography (1946) that such a period seemed to be upon the world then, as it had been throughout his entire ministry. Amplifying this observation, he says:

Often in the past a single, God-illumined, love-anointed soul has led a spiritual advance and resurrection. Francis did it in the Thirteenth Century . . . . Wesley did it in his day. But no spiritual world-figure has walked the earth in my lifetime, except Gandhi in India . . . . 185

As Newton looked out over the world in 1946, he saw it foggy, misty, the smoke of battle not lifted. "While many things have been blasted to bits, certain old truths abide, and some new facts become visible--new mountain peaks for our guidance," 186 Newton declares. These new facts, in Newton's thinking, include the following:

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183 Ibid., p. 270.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid., pp. 269–70.
186 Ibid., p. 370.
1. The recuperative power of humanity, its resilience after disaster, is astonishing; again and again whole nations have been laid waste, only to be rebuilt.

2. For the first time, it is now possible to produce enough food to feed the whole race, so that no one need go hungry, except for his own indolence, or the greed of his fellows.

3. Today even the man in the street realizes, to a degree never before known, that the race is one family living in one world, and that the safety and hope of all depend upon the security, liberties and intelligent goodwill and cooperation of each nation, each race, and each man.

4. By the same token, the spiritual life of the race is one, perhaps it is one thing—"the life of God in the soul of man," taking many forms and expressions.

5. Everybody must have justice, or society will go to pieces.

6. The solidarity of the English-speaking races is vital to the advance of civilization.

7. For our own peace and for the peace of the world, Russia and the United States must come to a clearer understanding and a more intelligent cooperation.

8. The task of the future requires the eradication of the sceptic and cynical attitude toward an unprecedented social and moral order. 187

Indicating his optimism, his hope, and his theology, Newton, in the last section of his autobiography, says:

The morning of the world is young, and man is only a step or two on his march to the City of God. Man must not be judged by his past; he exists to surpass himself. . . . As he has discovered new potencies in nature, new elements, new distances, so in the realm of spiritual reality he will unlock new depths and order his life by a diviner law. Soon or late he will live in a frontierless and unfortified world, ruled by moral intelligence, scientific skill and practical good will. The Christian era lies ahead of us!

187 Ibid., pp. 370-72.
Some of the new age, if only its beginning, I shall see with my earthly eyes; new explorations not only into the basic forces of the universe, but into human relationships—new feats of social engineering, unimaginable victories over diseases of the body and of the spirit; perhaps over hatred, intolerance, and exclusiveness.188

In summary, the times in which Newton lived, preached, and wrote were filled with great events and great developments. In 1961 Henry Steele Commager said that never before in a mere quarter century had the world seen so many revolutionary developments in society, politics, science, and technology. Commager stated, too, that during that same time civilization survived the most perilous threat since the invasion of the Roman Empire by the barbarians fifteen hundred years ago.189 Like Newton in 1946, Commager, in 1961, was optimistic about the future of the world. Commager felt that the war gave mankind a new lease on life. He felt that such developments as the opportunity for the first time for the great majority of the earth's inhabitants to throw off their centuries-old burden of poverty, hunger, disease, and ignorance; the harnessing of nuclear power; the breakthrough into outer space; the development of electronics; and the progress toward racial equality would contribute to a brighter future for the world's inhabitants. Commager cautioned, however, that we must not delude ourselves into thinking that these advances are complete, absolute, or final. In his thinking, with great power goes great responsibility. Further, it

188 Ibid., p. 374.

is incumbent upon the United States to take the lead in creating a world of material well-being, enlightenment, peace, and justice. "Never before has the future depended so much on the intellectual and moral decisions of men," Commager wrote. Newton, on the other hand, was of the opinion that it is inevitable that men eventually will live in a world ruled by moral intelligence, scientific skill, and practical good will. Commager tended toward a more qualified view of the future, believing that man's fate rests heavily on the conscience of mankind.\textsuperscript{191}

The future will reveal, of course, if Newton's theory of inevitable progress is valid. That scientific progress has been made since his day is readily observable; that progress in human relations has been made is open to question, when we consider such realities as Watergate, the widespread use of illegal drugs, and racial strife. But it is easy to lose sight of the valuable lessons, improved legislation, et cetera, which come to society as a result of such undesirable situations. When we look back over a record of events, we may tend to say that the evil has predominated over the good, but always during those times the forces of good have gone steadfastly forward.

That Newton lived in momentous days is obvious; that the times affected him can be seen from even a casual study of his life; and that he was concerned about his times and sought to influence them for good is, I trust, sufficiently substantiated at various points in this

\textsuperscript{190}Ibid., p. 288.

\textsuperscript{191}Ibid.
dissertation.

Since Newton was so deeply involved with his times, it is important to a study of his rhetoric to look next at the ways in which the times affected his rhetorical theory.

How the Times Affected His Rhetorical Theory

Rhetorical theory does not arise in a vacuum. It develops out of culture and tends to affect culture. The twentieth-century rhetorical scholar Douglas Ehninger identifies three crucial eras in the development of Western rhetorical thought—the classical period, the late eighteenth-century period, and the period extending from the early 1930's to the present time. The rhetoric of each of these periods arose out of cultural problems or needs.

With the development of democratic institutions in the city states of Sicily and Greece, speechmaking found new avenues of expression and gained in importance until it came to be regarded as an art form as well as a social instrument. The concern of the times was: how can proficiency in speechmaking be taught? Out of these needs arose classical rhetorical theory, whose central concern and principal contribution were the development of the syntax of the speech act; therefore, classical rhetoric may be called "grammatical."

The rhetoric of the late eighteenth century may be called "psychological," because it was greatly concerned with the relation between the communicative act and the mind of the listener or reader. Whereas

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the classical rhetoricians had built a subject-centered rhetoric, the
eighteenth-century theorists built an audience-centered rhetoric. They
classified speeches in terms of the effect the speaker sought to pro-
duce upon the listener—to enlighten the understanding, to please the
imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will.

Modern rhetoric may be called "social" or "sociological." It has arisen out of a felt need and is shaped by the cultural milieu in
which rhetoric today finds itself. As Ehninger says, "From the per-
sonal to the national and international levels tensions and breakdowns
in human relations now, as never before, may result not only in malad-
justed personalities or in misunderstanding among individuals, but in
depressions, wars, and the suicide of the race itself." 193 Under such
circumstances it is natural that rhetorical theory should be concerned
with the part it can play in promoting human understanding and in
improving the processes by which man communicates with man. In the
words of I. A. Richards, twentieth-century rhetorician, rhetoric
"should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies." 194 A logical
outgrowth of concern about human understanding is concern with the role
of language as it may impair or facilitate understanding. "The whole
business of rhetoric comes down to comparisons between the meanings of
words," 195 says Richards.

193 Ibid., p. 137.
195 Ibid., p. 37.
While Newton is concerned with aspects of the rhetoric of the classical or "grammatical" period, and of the eighteenth-century or "psychological" period, he is perhaps most concerned about the social aspects of preaching and could therefore be called a modern rhetorician. He is greatly concerned, for example, that preaching aid or foster corporate worship. Also, he is keenly interested in the preacher's identification with his audience. He is greatly concerned that preaching lead individuals into an improved relationship with other individuals, and he is highly interested in the effective use of language in proclaiming the gospel message. In the following pages of this section of the chapter, I shall discuss five specific ways in which the times affected Newton's rhetorical theory.

First, Newton's rhetoric was affected by what he called the modern mind. What the modern mind is and what accounts for it from Newton's perspective is discussed in detail in Chapter VI, but at this point in the dissertation, let us notice in particular Newton's awareness of a new type of mind which was emerging in his day and his concern about communicating the gospel to the new mind. In looking at the mind of his day, Newton lists some questions which he says many people were asking:

1. How can we think scientifically and live spiritually, uniting the eternal values of the spirit with the new knowledge of the world and its laws?

2. Why do men think so differently from their fathers, as if they lived in a new world?

196 See Chapter VI, pp. 307-09.
3. What has made so much of the thinking of other times inadequate, not refuted but forgotten, like a dim memory of some other state of existence.\textsuperscript{197}

"What has happened?" Newton asks. He answers:

Just what has happened in all other ages, only more so, because of the amazing advance of thought and knowledge. Everything has changed; a world-view is passing away, and the inner attitude of man is altered: \ldots The eternal realities remain, but they are seen in a new light and from a new point of view.\textsuperscript{198}

Thus, for Newton, there is a contemporary mind which is decidedly different from the mind of the preceding generation or any other prior generation. Rhetoric must take this fact into consideration.

Second, Newton's rhetoric was concerned with an authentic presentation of the gospel and a suitable method for communicating it to the modern mind. From Newton's perspective, the failure of the church to reform the wicked, to hold the attention of the young, to win the respect of the lover of science, to attract the man in the street, is evident. "Yet, instead of being hardened against the influence and appeal of religion, a vast host are seeking it, yearning for it," observes Newton, "ready to receive it when it is made real; willing to listen on their knees to anyone who has a soul-convincing truth, or who knows a way of living that makes life an inspiration and not an incubus."\textsuperscript{199}


\textsuperscript{198}Ibid., p. 66.

\textsuperscript{199}Ibid., pp. 69-70.
With respect to the best method of preaching to the modern mind, Newton places great emphasis on the inductive method. His stress on induction is discussed in detail in Chapter VI.²⁰⁰ His main rationale for advocating this method is his conviction that the whole spirit and method of thought in our day is inductive, and if we are to win the men of today to the truths of faith, we must use the method by which they find truth in other fields.²⁰¹

Third, Newton's rhetoric reflected the times in its concern with using appropriate language. He was interested in a language which would be immediately comprehended by the listener or reader. He discouraged the use of words which had lost much of their meaning, even though they were very meaningful in a previous day.

Fourth, Newton's rhetoric reflected his concern with proclaiming essentials. This concern was perhaps in part a reaction against the many denominational squabbles of his day. He preached, for example, during the heyday of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920's. Newton felt that congregations needed sermons on basic religious truths. He felt that many minor matters could be, and should be, omitted from sermons.

Fifth, Newton's rhetoric reflected the times in its concern that preaching contribute to corporate worship. That is, preaching for Newton is not an end in itself in a church service, but an aspect of the total impact a church service should have on an attendant. Hence

²⁰⁰See Chapter VI, pp. 320-23.

²⁰¹Newton, The New Preaching, p. 139.
we see in Newton's rhetorical theory a social or sociological emphasis, which is the main emphasis of modern rhetorical thought.

In the five ways discussed above, we see the effect of the times on Newton's rhetoric. The very title of his chief rhetorical work, The New Preaching, indicates an effort on his part to find a rhetorical theory which would be relevant to the times in which he lived. With characteristic optimism Newton states in this book that today is a great day for the preacher, if he believes his religion, knows his age, loves it, lives in it, thinks in the rhythm of its deeper movements, speaks its dialect, and feels the pathos of its quest and the thrill of its adventure. Contrasting the preaching of the past with current preaching, he says that the preaching of the past was noble, stately, rich in beauty and power, in myriad keys and tones eloquent for God; but the new preaching is more simple, direct, human, dipped and dyed in the color of life, more artless in its eloquence, more intimate in its appeal; but it proclaims the same gospel.202

Summary

In this chapter we have looked at Newton's family heritage and early years, his education, his lack of interest in formal theological studies, and his interest in ecumenism, mysticism, and British-American relations. We have also looked at his times and how his times affected his rhetorical theory. The information provided in this chapter should help us to understand Newton better as a man and should

202Ibid., p. 147.
prepare us for a look at his preaching career, the subject of the next chapter. Further, knowing now some of the details about his family heritage and early years, his education, his special interests, his times, and how the times affected his rhetorical theory, we shall be able in Chapters V, VI, and VII to more fairly and more accurately evaluate his rhetoric.

In looking back at the content of this chapter on Newton and his times, the following seem to be the most significant points:

1. Newton's mother was a strong religious and educational influence in his life.
2. Newton's habit of church attendance and interest in church doctrines began very early in his life.
3. Newton's early education was classical in nature; that is, it focused on subjects such as literature and language.
4. Newton received some valuable training in debate in his youth.
5. Newton's attendance at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was important to the development of his ideas on theology and preaching.
6. Newton's early work in journalism provided training and experience that would be valuable to him in his later life.
7. Newton's trip to New England was significant because he came under the influence of men like William James and because he made contacts with men like Frank B. Sanborn and George Gordon.
8. Newton's education continued throughout his life; it included studies of David Swing, Augustine, Abraham Lincoln, the saints and the mystics, and Christ; it included knowledge gained from associations with important people and from the experience of conducting a syndicated newspaper column.

9. Newton was not interested in formal theological studies; he disagreed with various points in books of theology; he did not like the style of the writing in theology books; he liked the theology which he secured from literature; he was primarily interested in basic religious truths.

10. Newton was strongly interested in ecumenism and strongly opposed to sectarianism; his own movement from church to church seemed to be based on sincere feelings about the insignificance of denominational barriers.

11. Newton believed that mysticism is the heart of religion; he defined mysticism as participation here and now in real and eternal life, in the fullest, deepest sense which is possible to man, sharing in everyday life the divine strength and applying it in all that belongs to the service of God and man.

12. Newton's keen interest in British-American relations stemmed from his awareness of the role of the Scriptures and the Common Law in both countries, and his direct contact with Britishers over a period of thirty years; through speeches, visits, and other means he sought to promote
good relations between the United States and England.

13. Newton was profoundly affected by three great events which occurred during his lifetime: World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II; these events affected him primarily because of his direct contact with them—pastoring a London church during World War I, experiencing financial problems in his church during the Depression and writing his newspaper column on "Everyday Religion" during that time and on into the time of World War II.

14. Newton was optimistic about the future of the world; he believed that the Christian era was in the future; he believed that progress for man is inevitable.

15. Newton's rhetorical theory was affected by the times in five specific ways: (1) its concern with relating to the modern mind; (2) its concern with an appropriate method for communicating the gospel to the modern mind; (3) its concern with using appropriate language in preaching; (4) its concern with proclaiming essentials, basic truths, rather than the minor details which often have occupied too important a place in preaching; and (5) its concern that preaching contribute to corporate worship—a social or sociological emphasis.

In Chapter III we shall follow Newton's steps from his ordination as a minister through each of his pastorates to his last pastorate in Philadelphia.
CHAPTER III

THE PREACHING CAREER OF JOSEPH FORT NEWTON

Introduction

The ministry of Joseph Fort Newton spanned more than half a century. Born on July 21, 1876,¹ he was ordained on April 20, 1895,² three months before his nineteenth birthday; he preached his first sermon as an ordained minister the next day,³ and he preached his last sermon two days before his death at seventy-three.⁴ Newton pastored churches in small cities and in large cities--over half of his ministry was spent in London, New York, and Philadelphia.⁵

In this chapter we follow Newton's steps from his first pastorate in Texas to his last pastorate in Philadelphia. This information


³Newton, River of Years, p. 50.


⁵"Newton, Joseph Fort," The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 1953, XXXVIII, 70.
will be useful in assessing Newton's preaching experience as a qualification for writing about rhetoric. The information also will give us a basis for determining in Chapter IV the extent to which Newton exemplified his rhetorical theory in his rhetorical practice. Further, the information will provide a basis for the evaluation in Chapter IV of Newton's preaching with respect to the well-known rhetorical standards for the appraisal of communication: the truth standard, the ethical standard, the artistic standard, and the effects standard.  

Before beginning a detailed look at Newton in his successive pastorates, let us note some general references to his distinguished career as a minister. For example, on February 15, 1950, following Newton's death on January 24, 7 Guy Emery Shipler, editor of The Churchman, said of Newton: "No American clergyman has done more than did Joseph Fort Newton to inspire his fellowman with the message of the love of God."  

Shipler declared that anyone of the millions of people who heard Newton's sermons; read his autobiography, his syndicated "Everyday Living," or numerous other writings knew that the theme of the limitless love of God was the center from which all his thought and activity stemmed. According to Shipler, this theme accounted for Newton's ideal of fellowship among all sorts of people and for his


impatience with denominational and theological barriers.\textsuperscript{9}

One of the early expressions of appreciation for Newton's preaching was by H. L. Haywood in Unity in 1915. Indicative of Haywood's high regard for the preaching of Newton are the following excerpts from his article "Joseph Fort Newton":

The printed sermons of the Christian faith in their higher ranges, beginning with Augustine, Chrysostom and the earliest geniuses and extending to the days of Swing, Brooks and Newman, reaching the high water mark, perhaps, in Robertson of Brighton, constitute on the whole one of the richest and finest possessions of the human race; but in all that shining procession there are none, the writer believes, to surpass those of Dr. Newton. For beauty of diction, wealth of thought, fullness of material, depth of insight and religious passion, they are almost incomparable.

To a present day student the most striking quality of his preaching probably is the successful manner in which he interprets the great historic insights of the Church to modern minds and modern doubts. There is never any evasion or pretense. . . .

What is the secret of such preaching? . . .

For one thing, we may say, he has boundless confidence in the pulpit and its function, believing it is deserving of all a man can bring to it, gladly holding with Emerson that it, with the Sabbath, is the greatest gift of Christianity to civilization; not ashamed to say, as in a recent lecture, "In the pulpit is my life."\textsuperscript{10}

In the concluding part of his article on Newton, Haywood says that he is a scholar of rare power and erudition, a writer of eloquent charm, an orator worthy of the traditions of the South that gave him birth, a thinker with an unusually penetrative insight, and a man of

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.

personal lovableness.\textsuperscript{11}

On January 28, 1950 The Evening Bulletin of Philadelphia published the following words about Newton by Howard S. Anders, a medical doctor:

He was a most eminent beacon light in contemporary religions and civic history; indeed, he blended unconsciously in himself many of the salient characteristics of an Augustine, a Thomas à Kempis, a Phillips Brooks and a Conwell.

He was a great preacher and writer of uplifting and comforting pithy sermons.\textsuperscript{12}

Let us now look in some detail at the ministry of Newton from the time of his ordination through the time of his last pastorate.

Ordination, First Sermon, and First Pastorate--Rose Hill, Texas

Newton was ordained as a Baptist minister in White Mound, Texas. The ordination service was held in the Methodist Church, the largest church in the town. Newton states that the church was crowded. J. K. P. Williams, a noted debater, preached the sermon, taking for his text the words of the Apostle Paul, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Newton reports that Williams talked of the "treasure," which to him was a body of doctrine to be kept from pollution. Newton was thinking of the "vessel," he says, wondering whether anyone was

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 154.}

worthy of so high a calling as the ministry. After a few routine ques-
tions, Newton knelt, and the brethren laid their hands upon him, set-
ting him apart to preach the gospel. Then a charge was given to him to
be diligent as a student of the Word and faithful in his service for
Christ and the church. Newton's stepfather, W. B. Long, pronounced the
benediction, and the service was ended.13

Newton's first sermon as an ordained minister was preached in
the Baptist Church in White Mound. In his autobiography Newton says
that a goodly number assembled to hear his sermon, even some Method-
ists. He adds: "I remember still how frightened I was; making a
speech was one thing, but preaching was something else."14 He took his
text from the anthem with which the eighth chapter of Romans closes:
"I am persuaded . . . that nothing in all creation, shall be able to
separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Newton says in his autobiography that he did not recall the details of
the sermon, but he states that the theme had been the keynote of all
his ministry--the love of God.15

Newton's first pastorate was at Rose Hill, Texas, a town only a
few miles from his home. There was no church building; the services
were held in the schoolhouse, twice a month, alternating with the Meth-
odists. "But 'the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans,'" writes
Newton; "the two groups might have lived on different planets." Newton

13Newton, River of Years, pp. 39, 44-46, and 49-50.
14Ibid., p. 50.
15Ibid.
continues: "Just the same, I began to build bridges and break down barriers." He says that many of the Methodist young people attended his services and that he was happy to have them.16

Recalling additional details of his days at Rose Hill, Newton writes that somehow he got a gig and a beautiful brown pony, Selim, and went to and fro to his appointments. He usually went to Rose Hill on a Friday as the guest of one of the church families. He says that they were dear people, friendly, hospitable, infinitely kind to a boy-preacher.17

Newton states that his ministry at Rose Hill was a success. He conducted revival services, and many young people came into the church. He reports that in a clear pool of water he baptized twenty-five persons in one day.18

In concluding his remarks about his first pastorate, Newton, in his autobiography, says that since those days he has had a deep sympathy for the congregations of rural and village churches who serve as punching bags on which young men learn to preach. "Yet there is no other way to learn to preach but by preaching," declares Newton, "and I still marvel at the patient kindness of the people."19

16Ibid., pp. 50-51.
17Ibid., p. 51.
18Ibid., p. 52.
19Ibid., p. 53.
Newton pastored at Rose Hill for about one year. Then he went to Louisville, Kentucky, to attend The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Associate Chaplain at an Indiana Penitentiary

For more than a year during his seminary days, Newton was associate chaplain of a prison across the Ohio River in Indiana. He says that the experience gave him a permanent interest in the problems of crime and its literature. In talking with the men in their cells, Newton never found a "guilty" man; all had been "framed," or the judge was "unjust," or someone had a grudge against them—"yet they had committed the most atrocious crimes," Newton says. "What struck me," he continues, "was that they had the mentality of boys of ten, or less, and no moral sense at all." They talked of how a man was "rubbed out" or "bumped off"—"as one might talk of a fly pulped on a windowpane," declares Newton. In his view, the prisoners were devoid of emotion; they were not immoral but amoral. For Newton, reading their case histories was a heartbreaking task. He learned of the homes in which the men had grown up. He read of severe poverty, and often he read of the cruelty of parents. Newton writes: "Here were men for whom truth, beauty and goodness did not exist."

21 Newton, River of Years, p. 53; and see Chapter II, p. 30.
22 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
Since all of the prisoners were required to attend the chapel services, Newton was always assured of a congregation; but on a note of futility, he says: "I am sure that my preaching to prisoners did little good, if any."23 Ordinarily optimistic about the prospects of results in preaching, Newton apparently found this prison situation almost hopeless in terms of doing any good through preaching.

Second Pastorate--Paris, Texas

After his seminary training, Newton accepted the pastorate of the First Baptist Church of Paris, Texas. He served this church as pastor for about one year.24 During the time that he was pastoring the church, the pulpit of the First Christian Church in Paris became vacant. Since Newton had friends and relatives in both congregations, the suggestion was made that he be called to the vacant pulpit and that the two churches be put together, using the new Baptist church building and selling the wooden structure of the First Christian Church. "At first the proposal was received with enthusiasm," writes Newton, "but they could not agree on what the name of the united church should be!" The idea of the merger was dropped. "Here were folk of sincere intentions, friends, neighbors, some of them kinsmen, who could not worship together," Newton complains. He says that this experience in Paris was his first contact with the concrete fact of sectarianism. "It left me

23Ibid.
profundely depressed," writes Newton; "I was butting against a stone wall."

While he was in Paris, Texas, Newton experienced great frustration regarding denominationalism and his own place as a minister. "The Church called me with many voices, and every voice a memory and a command," he says; "but it looked as if the church--spelled with a small "c"--broken and in disarray, were standing in the way of the real Church, the fellowship of the seekers and finders of God." Newton says that he was at home in every sect and was able to speak the dialect of each, because his solitary concern was what they held in common. "To me," explains Newton, "the Church of Christ included all our churches, and more than we had dared to dream--not a huddle of sects, but a gulf-stream of the Love of God flowing in the life of man." He says that when he spoke of these things, people only stared; nobody was stirred or took heed. "Instead, I was deemed a heretic," reports Newton, "yet never for a day did I lose that deep, divine orthodoxy of the heart underlying all our differences."

On his way to Kentucky during the Christmas season, 1899, to visit the girl who would soon be his wife, Newton stopped off in St. Louis to see Dr. R. C. Cave, the founder and minister of the Non-Sectarian Church of that city. "An old Virginian gentleman, he received me with great kindness," says Newton, "and for hours we talked

25Newton, River of Years, p. 79.

26Ibid., p. 80.

27Ibid., p. 81.
man to man, heart to heart, he telling me why he had broken away from the Church of the Disciples, I pouring out my heart to one who knew and understood."28 On his way back home from Kentucky, Newton saw Dr. Cave again, and he asked Newton to become associated with him in the work of his church. Newton accepted his invitation. "Soon after the first of the year, to the bewilderment of my mother," says Newton, "I left my native state and the Church of the people of my fathers."29 During the next phase of his life, Newton would be "an independent."30

Associate Pastor in St. Louis

Newton says that the Non-Sectarian Church of St. Louis was a friendly church, a shrine of simple faith and good fellowship. According to Newton, it was positive both in its message and in its methods. "No creed, no rite was made a test of fellowship, but the desire to know God and to follow Jesus,"31 says Newton. About half of the congregation was made up of people who had been alienated from the other churches or only nominally attached to them, because, in Newton's view, their churches made little things big and big things little. The other half of the congregation had never belonged to any church.

Newton found his new position as an independent very satisfying, as is evident from these words:

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All my life I had heard the churches arguing about how Jesus came into the world and how he went out of it, while overlooking what He did and what He taught us to do in the world. No words can tell my relief—release!—from minor issues of faith to explore its great ideas and employ its great adventures.\textsuperscript{32}

Working with Dr. R. C. Cave was a rewarding experience for Newton. Dr. Cave doubtlessly influenced Newton considerably in regard to various ministerial responsibilities, including the responsibility of preaching. Newton says that Dr. Cave was a man of rare personal and intellectual charm. Further, according to Newton, he had that absorbent magnetism which made one want to watch everything he did and hear every word he uttered. Newton gives the following details about Dr. Cave's preaching:

He was never sensational, he never dealt with topics of the day. In nowise pietistic, he was a man with Christ in his very blood, whose sole aim was to make the Master and His laws and principles real and vivid to his fellow souls. There was no fluffy oratory, no flowery emptiness, but deep feeling held in restraint. His sermons were carefully and closely woven, by a process of "mental composition," as he called it, while he paced his study floor. Not memorized, but so fixed in his mind that he spoke directly, without a note, in clear, concise, simple style, as soul to soul. He never debated issues of theology, never lashed out at other churches, but set forth the life of Jesus, His spirit, His teaching for everyday living, His office as Savior of man from himself, from brute fact and dark fatality.\textsuperscript{33}

In many respects, this description of Dr. Cave's preaching could be applied to Newton's own preaching.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., pp. 83-84.

\textsuperscript{34}See pp. 113-15, 117-18, and 128-30; and Chapter IV, pp. 240-43.
With reference to the effects of Dr. Cave's preaching, Newton says that it attracted thoughtful, soul-hungry men, influenced influential people, and built a strong church, free in its faith, fraternal in its fellowship, and fruitful in its work.\(^{35}\)

During the time that Newton was associate pastor in St. Louis, he was married to Virginia Mai Deatherage of Sanders, Kentucky. The ceremony was performed in Louisville, Kentucky, on June 14, 1900. The couple made their home in a family hotel in St. Louis.\(^{36}\)

Although Newton was enjoying his work with Dr. Cave at the Non-Sectarian Church in St. Louis, he began to see his need to take additional courses of study. Further, he desired to make new contacts and explore new fields. "Besides," says Newton, "I wanted a church of my own, as every young man does."\(^{37}\)

When Newton's wife was called to her home in Kentucky because of illness in her family, Newton went to New England for a brief period of time. His days there are discussed in Chapter II, under the heading "Education."\(^{38}\)

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\(^{35}\)Newton, River of Years, p. 84.

\(^{36}\)Ibid., pp. 71-72, 90. The Newtons had two children: Joseph Emerson (now deceased), who graduated from Harvard, taught English at the University of Pittsburgh, and worked in the American Foreign Service; and Mrs. Josephine Morris, a graduate of Vassar, who lives in Philadelphia. Ibid., pp. 101-02; and Interview with Mrs. Josephine Morris, daughter of Joseph Fort Newton.

\(^{37}\)Ibid., p. 92.

\(^{38}\)See Chapter II, pp. 36-37.
Third Pastorate--Dixon, Illinois

In March, 1901, Newton went to Dixon, Illinois, to pastor the Universalist Church, which became known under his leadership as the People's Church.

Two young men, owners and editors of The Dixon Daily Sun, opened their pages to Newton, publishing an ample synopsis of his Sunday sermon on the following Monday.

Soon after going to Dixon, Newton began a series of Sunday evening talks on "Great Men and Great Books," which attracted large crowds. He continued this feature throughout his ministry at Dixon and for years thereafter.

According to Newton, the People's Church of Dixon was free in its fellowship, requiring no rite, no confession of dogma; its creed, in fact, being the Lord's Prayer. Of his work in Dixon, Newton says: "It was an experiment which I had wanted for years to make, and the initial results were most encouraging, but there was opposition."

39 In his autobiography Newton says "1903" (River of Years, p. 97), but this is apparently an error, since the Dixon Evening Telegraph of March 4, 1901 indicates that Newton arrived in Dixon in March, 1901, as cited by Leonard, "Joseph Fort Newton: Minister and Mystic," p. 100.

40 Ibid., pp. 101-03.

41 Newton, River of Years, p. 97.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., p. 98.
The opposition to which Newton refers came from what he calls "a rotten political gang," which, he says, had a stranglehold on the county and town. Newton states that almost all of the members of the City Council were saloonkeepers or their henchmen. "Such a state of affairs was a disgrace," says Newton. "It effectively muffled the churches," he continues, "who avoided the issue by laying all emphasis on personal decision in religion, ignoring any social obligation and action; all churches, that is, except mine."45

The liquor traffic in Dixon was having a difficult time, according to Newton, because of the local option law, whereby each community could vote itself "wet" or "dry" as it liked. He states that the liquor men had the jitters, not knowing when or where they would be hit. If one county went "dry," the adjoining county would go "wet," and the seesaw went on for years. "Being neither a radical nor a political reformer," says Newton, "my interest was in bringing the situation out into the light, which made the political machine nervous and my church suspect."46

In one of his sermons, Newton discussed the question, "What is the matter with Dixon?" giving his diagnosis and asking the people to write him their version. "The results were most revealing," says Newton; "no end of letters came, one saying that Dixon was 'a city without a soul.'" Newton states that another letter told vividly how the "nice people" were hooked up with the saloon gang, while the politicians

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
played both ends against the middle, and how the "middle class," as the
writer called it, were neutral, merchants in particular, lest they lose
a nickel in trade.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 98-99.}

In another sermon Newton summed up the contents of the letters
written to him. He says that the sermon did not add to the comfort of
the gang in power, and they vowed to discredit him and, if possible, to
destroy his church. "It was feared that I was building a political
machine," writes Newton, "whereas the only machine I had was an Oliver
typewriter, and I knew how to use it to turn on the light."\footnote{Ibid., p. 99.}

While pastoring in Dixon, Newton served as chairman of the steering
committee of a Law and Order League. The committee secured a detective
from Peoria, Illinois, to gather evidence of violations of the law.
About this time, according to Newton, a new minister came to the First
Methodist Church, Dr. C. C. Maclain, who joined the Law and Order
League, bringing the Baptist minister with him. Dr. Maclain learned
from the mother of one of his church families that her sons--minors--
had been sold liquor in one of the saloons. The Law and Order League
presented the case to the City Council; Newton acted as prosecutor. He
recalls:

The boys gave their testimony . . . . Some of the members of
the Council yelled at the boys, as though they were the
offenders, which gave me a chance to say some things in words
of one syllable, in phrases that cut like whips of fire of
how the city had been sold down the river to the brewing com-
panies. The gang was stunned, baffled, confounded; they got
some of their thugs to "beat up" Dr. Maclain, but he was not
hurt badly—in fact it made him more intent on doing the job.\textsuperscript{49}

In the meantime, the detective had made his report to the committee, with abundant evidence of violations of the law. The committee knew that it would be futile to present the evidence to the prosecuting attorney, since he was a leader of the political gang; however, as a formality, they called on him and told him what had happened. Newton says that the prosecuting attorney almost threw them out of his office. But he spread the news that they had employed a detective. The result was astonishing, according to Newton. He says that it almost depopulated the town of its men. "Many men," he reports, "never suspected of doing anything illegal, had business elsewhere for an indefinite period."\textsuperscript{50} Newton states that at the next election the whole gang was swept away like cobwebs. He further states that the mayor tried to beat him to a pulp, but was too angry to know what he was doing. Newton says that he caught the mayor by the arms and held him. "Thus ended my first and last adventure\textsuperscript{51} of this kind," declares Newton, "but when things are rotten something has to be done."\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., p. 101.

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51}Later, while pastoring in London, Newton was involved in a conflict with British authorities regarding the sale of liquor to American troops stationed in England, but that conflict did not include physical contact, as did the "adventure" in Dixon. See Chapter II, pp. 68-72.

\textsuperscript{52}Newton, River of Years, p. 101.
I come now to a discussion of another significant experience for Newton while he was in Dixon. This experience centers around the 1905 Billy Sunday revival campaign in Dixon. In his autobiography Newton says:

Who did it I never knew for certain, but it was arranged to invite Billy Sunday, the evangelist, to conduct one of his campaigns in Dixon. . . . A temporary tabernacle was erected, with its "sawdust trail," and after a hippodrome publicity and build-up, Sunday came, amid much excitement. Almost all the churches--except mine and St. Luke's Episcopal Church--were in the campaign, cooperating for once at least.\(^3\)

The Billy Sunday campaign began in Dixon on Thursday night, February 16, 1905.\(^4\) On the following Sunday, Newton preached at his church on "The Revival We Need." The Dixon Daily Sun of February 21, 1905 gives a detailed report on Newton's sermon. As an example of the kind of revival that he desired for Dixon, Newton, in this sermon, referred to a revival which at the time was occurring in Brooklyn and Boston. He described it as follows:

. . . it is not an old time hysterical revival. Here it is linked with culture and refinement; for, truly, one does not have to abandon refinement to be religious. It feeds the mind; it warms the heart; it fills the heart with holy purposes. There is no effort to drag men into the church, no wild, emotional frenzy. It asks men to think quietly, deeply, of the life of the soul; to consider the finer things of life, and make them real. Its message abounds in literary and historical allusions, but it is ever direct, moral and spiritual. It appeals not to fear, but to love--love infinite, tender, redeeming. And men are moved to

\(^{3}\)Ibid., p. 99.

nobler thinking and living.\textsuperscript{55}

Later in this sermon Newton commented on the Billy Sunday campaign in Dixon. He said:

So far I have said nothing about the revival now going on in our city. We certainly hope that it will do great good. If it can encourage any men to take hold of the Divine hand that is so near them, if it can beget in any a hunger for righteousness, and teach sorrowful or sinful eyes to see, in the life of Jesus, the majestic meanings of life, it will be a blessing. We trust it may be a Pentecost to many weary hearts.\textsuperscript{56}

Then Newton gave his position and that of the People's Church with respect to the Billy Sunday effort in Dixon. Newton stated:

As for ourselves, we like best the quiet, unhasting, unceasing training of souls in the ways of the spirit. We know how easy it is for turgid emotions to take the place of righteousness, justice and love. In our view Christianity is the most refined of all gospels, and we do not wish to abandon refinement in teaching it. To us it is the idealization of all life. It is not the suppression, but the consecration of all duties and delights. It includes all culture. We know that in man there is a dramatic instinct--God gave it to him--so we have the theater; a passion for rhythm and melody, so we have music and the dance; a love of beauty, so we have art; a desire for truth, so we have scholarship--these things are not evil, except when we make them evil. It is our idea that a religion that can not take all these high and fine things and use them, hallow them, is a failure. We wish to live simple, natural, wholesome, Christian lives, and that we are trying to do.

To be sure, this little Stone Church will be the target of much ridicule. Its pulpit will be the butt of much slang and slur. We regret this, regret that it is done in the name of the gentle, refined Christ. But it does not harm us, nor disturb us in the least. This church stands, and will stand, for the religion of culture, and the culture of religion; for morality; for an upward-looking faith; for an

\textsuperscript{55}J. F. Newton, "The Revival We Need," \textit{The Dixon Daily Sun}, February 21, 1905, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid.
eternal hope. It flies the flag of the Nazarene. To its altar it invites men of all faiths, and men of no faith, that all may meet in the spirit of Him whom all men love. It seeks to lead and lift all to the higher human life. 57

On March 5, 1905, Newton spoke at his church on "The Spirit of the Sunday Meetings." The Dixon Daily Sun of March 6 gives a full report of the message. The following excerpts from it indicate how Newton responded to what was an important rhetorical situation for him. Further, they suggest much about Newton's theory of preaching. Newton said:

It is time, I think, that some word be said as to the spirit of the revival now going on in our midst, and of its obvious influence on the life of the city. Such a word ought to be spoken, not in a mood of carping criticism, but calmly and without bias; plainly, so that none may miss its import; and in a kindly tone, as befits a theme so vital. Coveting the best gifts, I shall try to speak this needed word. 58

Newton wanted it understood that he was not criticizing Sunday's theology, but some aspects of the spirit of his revival campaign. He explained:

. . . if the meeting were being conducted by a man like D. L. Moody, not one word, except a word of hearty praise, would be uttered by me. . . . His speech was ever simple and direct, but it was refined, gentle, winning. . . . He told men of their sins, but in doing so he did not soil the minds of the young. Nor did he leave a trail of bitterness behind him as he went his way. I wish--most devoutly wish--that I could say all this and more of the man in our midst.

But I cannot say it. . . . I speak the mind of many of our citizens--good men and true--when I give it as my firm belief that the meeting, as now conducted, is doing as much

57 Ibid.

58 J. F. Newton, "Spirit of Sunday Meetings," The Dixon Daily Sun, March 6, 1905, p. 4.
harm as it can ever do good.

... To array the poor against the rich, as if human nature were not much the same whether it wear rags or robes; to fling satire at society, as if, so far from being a sin, it were not the duty of every man to wear as good clothes as he is able to wear, and to move in refined circles; to make sport of culture, and thus make the ignorant not only at ease but proud of his ignorance—is all this the mission of the pulpit? ... Is is the part of the pulpit to undo what the schools are trying so hard to do?

But if this were all, we could endure it. It is a sad fact that nobody, not even the sceptic, succeeds in cheapening, if not blaspheming, the whole idea of religion so thoroughly as men of this type. No man has a right to belittle the pulpit by using unseemly language. I have no mock modesty. I do not ask for a petty primness. Straightforward speech we admire. The talk of the street we can endure. But the slang and jargon of the gutter has no place in the Christian pulpit. No one can give any reason—no, nor any excuse—for this. Are not the resources of our beautiful language rich enough for a man to say all that needs to be said? Why should the pulpit set the example in debasing our language? 59

As can be seen from the above quotations, Sunday's use of language disturbed Newton greatly. "Shame! Shame! Shame! Oh the pity of it all," Newton said, "that our boys should learn profanity from a pulpit!" Then he explained his charge in these words:

Profanity is profanity. It is the useless use of sacred names—awful names—and the flippant use of holy things. The man who wears the cloth has no more right to be profane than the man of the street. There are certain proprieties of speech which no man should violate. 60

Anticipating the argument that the use of language which he was condemning was needed to get people to attend the evangelistic services, Newton countered:

59 ibid.

60 ibid.
Then it is for this they come. Shame! Are we to use the holy moment of prayer—that ineffable dialogue with God—for a display of slang and satire? It is better not to reach the people at all, if this is what we are to give them. Is the pulpit to become the vendor of irreverence? The sad thing is that this is not necessary. Moody did not do that. Torrey does not use such language. And yet these men reached more people—and people of all classes—than this man will ever win.  

But Sunday's worst offense, from Newton's viewpoint, centered in the fact that children sat on the front seats and listened to things, which, in Newton's thinking, no child should hear. Newton felt that the sins of men and women can be discussed and ought to be discussed, but he also felt that there is a time and place for this. He continued:

Why pollute the minds of the young while doing it. The evangelist does not mean to do this, of course. I attribute to him no bad motive. But this is what he does, and that fact looks at us with ugly eyes. He is unwise, sadly unwise.  

In the conclusion of his message on "The Spirit of the Sunday Meetings," Newton sounded a personal note with respect to himself and the meetings and also with regard to his own ministry in Dixon. He said he regretted that the things he had said had to be said. He stated that his motive in saying them would be defamed. "All that I have said will be turned off with some joke, a slangy tirade," said Newton; "but the men of this city will not turn it aside." Newton stated that he had lived in the city four years; he declared that he had come there not to break down, but to build up. "And that is still
my plan and aim," he added. Then he became very personal in his remarks. He said:

My life is known to all; it stands for what it is worth. It is not perfect. Many things in it I wish were not there. But I have tried to do my best. . . .

I came here to build a church—a church human and humane. Not a society of sceptics, but a church of Christ—a church where the men of all faiths, and of no faith, may meet in a common desire to know what is true and to do what is right; a People's church, a friend of all things true and good and beautiful. I have been the friend of law, order and righteousness. I have stood, and do stand, for that intellectual culture without which manhood is rudimentary, and that spiritual life without which the intellect is the slave of passion. I appeal to the men of this city—and especially to the young men—to help me make this church. For it ought to be plain to all now that such a church is needed. And I am sure you will help me—you are helping me.63

The Dixon Daily Sun of March 17, 1905 announced that immediately following the Sunday revival there would be a series of meetings in the People's Church. "This plan is suggested by many who wish to know what the liberal church really does teach," the newspaper stated. It added that the faith of liberal Christians had been held up as a denial of all the great truths of Christianity, as false and foolish, as degrading and dangerous. Further, such denunciation had awakened interest in their faith. The newspaper said that Newton would preach each evening for several days, not to reply to any one else, but to set forth the ideas of liberal Christianity.64

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63 Ibid.

64 "Newton Is to Follow Sunday," The Dixon Daily Sun, March 17, 1905, p. 4.
On March 19, 1905, the Sunday preceding the beginning on Tues-
of his special services, Newton spoke at his church on "Gospel of Fear
or Love?" Among his words were the following: "In the midst of the
flurry and frenzy of the hour, when every art and spell is used to
sweep men off their feet, and not a few are wild with fear, let me ask
you to be calm, to think quietly, and to act soberly." He said that an
hysterical mood is not one in which to decide the issues of life. He
continued:

Let it be said again that I do not impugn the sincerity
of the evangelist. I do not enter the realm of motive. I
have said, and do now repeat, that I am sure he errs by his
rudeness of language, his sensationalism, his playing to the
galleries. . . .

I regret that he deems it a service to God to impugn the
faith and worth of all who do not use his form of words. To
say that our faith is a lie, is to say that deliberately and
of set purpose we are trying to deceive and injure our fel-
lowmen; that we are insincere; and that we are making every
effort to hurt rather than to help men. That is going too
far.65

Billy Sunday's revival in Dixon closed on March 20, 1905.66
Newton's special services at his church began the next night. On March
22 The Dixon Daily Sun reported that the sincere young pastor was never
more earnest than he was that night. The newspaper stated that New-
ton's hearers were deeply moved by his eloquent words. It reported
that at the conclusion of the service, ten names were added to the
growing membership of the church. "The service was entirely free from

65J. F. Newton, "Gospel of Fear or Love?" The Dixon Daily Sun,
March 20, 1905, p. 5.

all emotionalism,"\(^{67}\) said the newspaper.

On this opening night Newton said that it was in no mood of debate that the services were being held. "My one and only aim is to help men in their quest for the good and the true," he declared, "and I know not how better to do this than to set forth the truths of liberal Christianity as they are--in the hope that they will find a home in good and honest hearts." He added: "I wish to tell what I feel is true, and to tell it in a spirit of love."\(^{68}\)

The special services at the People's Church closed on March 30.

On March 31 \textit{The Dixon Daily Sun} reported:

Nine names were added to the roll of the People's church at the close of the special services last night. This makes a total of fifty-five names added during the progress of the meetings. Besides adding to the membership of the church the meetings have been a source of great benefit and inspiration to the worshippers there.\(^{69}\)

In summing up Newton's conflict with Billy Sunday in Dixon, I would like to emphasize the point that besides their theological differences, their pulpit methods differed greatly. In an article in \textit{The Dixon Daily Sun} about Billy Sunday on March 9, 1905, Newton said:

He would make it appear that I am on one side and the Bible on the other. No, no; my idea of what the Bible means is on one side and his idea on the other. That is all.

\(^{67}\) "Services Open at People's Church," \textit{The Dixon Daily Sun}, March 22, 1905, p. 4.

\(^{68}\) \textit{Ibid}.

\(^{69}\) "Meetings End at People's Church," \textit{The Dixon Daily Sun}, March 31, 1905, p. 4.
The evangelist must let us make this slight distinction, for we decline to believe that he is infallible. 70

In this same article, Newton said that he regretted Sunday's methods. He continued:

Not that I wish to be a critic. Nor do I wish to belittle him. I am sure that a man of his gifts could draw just as large audiences, hold them, and do much more good without such tactics. As it is, he attracts many, but he alienates more. And this, surely, is unfortunate. 71

Forty-one years after the Sunday campaign in Dixon, Newton, having referred to it in his autobiography, stated that such campaigns do no end of injury to a community, leaving it a burnt-over forest. "After a furnace of fanaticism only clinkered religion remains. The 'follow-up' was disappointing," 72 Newton added.

Newton pastored in Dixon until 1908. He left because he received a call from the Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, which he accepted, he says, "reluctantly and with regret, remembering our friends in Dixon." 73

On August 30, 1908 Newton preached his farewell sermon at the People's Church of Dixon. The Dixon Evening Telegraph reports "a large attendance." The newspaper says further that Newton stated that he would have to apologize for one thing, that he never canvassed to secure members for his church, and furthermore he never would, but


71Ibid.

72Newton, River of Years, p. 100.

73Ibid., p. 108.
that he believed in teaching the philosophy and truths as taught by the great teachers and philosophers and that was what he had endeavored to do in his church. In appreciation of Newton and his work in Dixon, the newspaper said: "By the removal of Mr. Newton our city loses one of the most scholarly and one of the best versed in literature in our midst and he has made a host of friends while here and has built his church up from a score until today it has one of the largest memberships in the city." 74

In Dixon, in summary, as we saw in Chapter II, Newton continued to develop as a student. He read literature and philosophy, and he read religious books. 75 While in Dixon, he also developed as a writer. 76 Further, in Dixon, Newton began his practice of speaking in his church on great books and great authors. In Dixon, Newton was involved in the affairs of the community in two special ways: his opposition to corrupt politics and the liquor traffic, and his opposition to the Billy Sunday revival campaign. Finally, in Dixon, Newton was a successful preacher and pastor. Significant gains in the membership of his church attest to this.


75 See Chapter II, p. 39.

76 See Chapter II, pp. 39-40; see also pp. 106-08 of the present chapter.
Fourth Pastorate--Cedar Rapids, Iowa

"To this day," says Newton in his autobiography, "though I have wandered afar to London, and great cities in our own land, Cedar Rapids still seems more like home to me than any place on earth."77 He states that there he made such friends as one makes only once in a lifetime. "There I found myself," he continues, "and struck my stride--as preacher, as writer, and in various and sundry activities for the common good and the culture of the best life."78

Newton began his ministry at the Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids in September, 1908.79 He says that life began anew for him in Cedar Rapids. The city, in his view, had grown beyond the awkwardness of a town cut up into cliques, into the unity of a city with a community consciousness. It had grown beyond antagonism or even tolerance, he felt, into cooperation and fellowship. Newton states that the people wanted every institution in their city--a college, a church, a business--to be the best in the state; and they were ready and eager to help make it so.80

Recalling Newton's conflict with Billy Sunday in Dixon, Illinois, it is of interest to note that in December, 1908, an invitation came to Newton's church in Cedar Rapids to participate in arranging

77Newton, River of Years, p. 109.

78Ibid.

79Gertrude James, History of the Peoples Church, 1869-1959 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Peoples Church, 1959), p. 19.

80Newton, River of Years, p. 109.
for the appearance in Cedar Rapids of Billy Sunday late in 1909, as reported by Gertrude James in *History of the Peoples Church* (a more recent name for the church Newton pastored). James says: "It was unanimously agreed not to participate in the revival." Newton makes no reference to this invitation in his autobiography.

That Newton's ministry in Cedar Rapids got off to a very good start is indicated by the following words from *The Cedar Rapids Gazette* of January 4, 1909:

At the Universalist church yesterday morning Reverend Joseph Newton preached a New Year's sermon to a large and most delighted audience.

Mr. Newton has been in Cedar Rapids only a few weeks, but he is filling his church at every service, and his mid-week lectures are proving the intellectual treat of the season. People who are desirous of learning more about the great authors of the world should avail themselves of the opportunity to hear Mr. Newton in these most pleasant and profitable lectures.

That Mr. Newton is also a close student of world affairs is also evidenced by his careful and extremely interesting resume of the important happenings in all countries in 1908 yesterday morning; and his cheerful optimism, his belief that more good than evil will always be seen by the man who is looking forward and upward; his theory that birds and flowers and glorious sunsets are created to add pleasure to human life; that the theater is a growing influence for good rather than evil; that "the faults of our brothers ought to be written on the sands, their virtues upon the tablets of love and memory"; his delightful and eloquent style of expression, all tend to make his sermons an inspiration, an intellectual uplift.82

81 James, *History of the Peoples Church*, p. 21.

Traditionally, ministers had been hired for a period of one year at the Universalist Church in Cedar Rapids, but at the annual meeting in 1909, the following resolution was adopted with regard to the action of the Board in hiring Newton for two years:

That the work in this church of Reverend Joseph Newton has been of the highest quality and has given universal satisfaction. He brought to this work rare native ability of thought and oratory, to which has been added the genuine polish of ripe scholarship. His sermons have been gems of love and hope and his lectures have not only charmed his hearers but have awakened a new and lasting literary activity in this community. He has actively mingled in the civic affairs of this city and has become a powerful influence for general uplift and progress in this community. We hereby endorse the action of the Board. We pledge them our earnest and active support in the performance of our part of this contract and harmoniously unite in the hope and confidence that the work of the coming year under his leadership and direction will result in a high water mark of success and progress for this church in years of pleasure and profit to the members and in the ultimate and common good of all.83

Under Newton's leadership the Constitution of the church was revised. The revision was approved at the annual meeting of 1910.84 The name of the church was to be The First Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. For convenience and in public prints it would use the name Liberal Christian Church.85

In his autobiography Newton says of his church in Iowa: "I changed it from top to bottom, put it upon a new basis, and named it Liberal Christian Church--it was better known, later, in the city and

83James, History of the Peoples Church, p. 21.
84Ibid.
85Ibid., pp. 21-22.
state, as 'The Little Brick Church.'"86

In Unity, H. L. Haywood tells us that prior to Newton's going to Cedar Rapids, the little band of Universalists there were in despair. He says that in spite of heroic efforts and self-sacrifices, their organization was falling in ruins, and many were counseling surrender to the forces of decay. According to Haywood, the most approved remedies for church paralysis had been applied, but without success. He continues:

The community seemed as indifferent to Universalism as if it had been already buried and out of sight. Even the church building itself was crumbling beneath the elements and stood as a mute but eloquent symbol of the fate that had befallen the little group worshiping beneath its roof. Could there be anywhere a new St. Francis capable of rebuilding a church so broken? There was. . . .

This was Joseph Fort Newton of Dixon, Illinois, and his transmutation of a lost cause into one of the most influential churches in the Middle West is as romantic as any story in the church's long romantic history.87

Haywood indicates that Newton felt that "the movement's failure under the name 'Universalist' would prove a needless handicap if the name should be continued."88

In his autobiography Newton gives his rationale for the use of the word liberal in the name of his Cedar Rapids church. He says that to him liberal meant that a man was free to be a Christian, or to try for that goal, not that he held his Christianity loosely or lightly,

86Newton, River of Years, p. 109.
88Ibid.
still less as a denial of the faith of other men. To him a liberal was one who had the same charity toward the past as toward the present and was as willing to listen to St. Bernard as Bernard Shaw. In Newton's thinking, if the liberal pulpit ignored certain dogmas about Christ, it was because it wanted Christ Himself brought nearer to men.  

"The Aim" of Newton's church in Cedar Rapids, according to the Constitution, was
to cultivate Freedom, Friendship and Fraternity in religion in behalf of all that makes for private nobility and public welfare. Believing that unity of spirit is better than uniformity of theology, we welcome to our fellowship everyone who is seeking truth and righteousness, whatever his faith or opinion may be, leaving each one free to think and act for himself. No creed or ritual is a requisite of membership, but simply a desire to help forward the cause of spiritual culture and higher life.

"The Aim" of the church was printed on the membership cards. Allegiance of the church was to the Universalist Brotherhood of the United States and affiliation was with the Iowa Universalist Convention, but the church reserved the right to cooperate with any Brotherhood with which it found work and fellowship congenial.

According to Newton, the basis of the fellowship of the Liberal Christian Church was extremely simple: "In the spirit of Jesus we unite for the worship of God and the service of man." He says further: "That was all; and that was enough. No creed, no rite was made

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89Newton, River of Years, p. 109.
90James, History of the Peoples Church, p. 22.
91Ibid.
a test of fellowship; the Lord's Prayer was its central focus of faith, comprehensive in its consecration."^92

Newton says that people were discouraged from joining the Liberal Christian Church unless they had been inactive in church life or wanted to face a wider and more challenging fellowship. "As our undertaking did not conflict with any other church, it was not antagonized," writes Newton, "but was welcomed in behalf of spiritual faith, freedom and fellowship."^93

Haywood reports that for more than a year after Newton's going to Cedar Rapids, little progress was made in the church. He says that the floating group of migratory worshipers made its inevitable appearance, attracted by the novelty of a new voice, and then, the novelty worn away, made its inevitable disappearance. "But the splendid band of Spartan souls who backed the movement grew in confidence as they began to get the real measure of their new leader," Haywood continues, "and after a few more months of holding on were rewarded by the turning of the tide."^94

Newton says that strong men gathered about him in Cedar Rapids, men strategic in the city and the state. He declares that the church grew in power and became one of the most influential congregations in the state, out of all proportion to its numbers. "Young folk came too," he says, "many of them with dreams in their hearts—like

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^92Newton, River of Years, p. 110.

^93Ibid., pp. 110-11.

William L. Shirer, who 'played hooky' to attend a church where, he
tells me, he got the inspiration to be a writer." 95

Of special significance to the ministry of Newton in Cedar
Rapids, and very important in his call to London's City Temple, 96 was
the publication of his sermons in newspapers, then in pamphlets, and
finally in books. Newton explains how this printed ministry began:

... my friend, Luther Brewer—a good Lutheran, but
interested in "The Little Brick Church"—asked me to allow
him to publish my sermons in the Cedar Rapids Republican,
of which he was owner. It was so agreed, and the sermon
preached one Sunday appeared in the next Sunday edition of
the Republican, which covered the whole eastern end of the
state. He kept the type until the end of the month, then
put the sermons into pamphlets, which he sent to any and all
who asked for them... at the end of the year he bound
them into books... The literary talks were also pub-
lished and included in the monthly pamphlets. Somebody, I
never learned who it was precisely, sent copies of the pam-
phlets to The Christian World Pulpit, in London, and my ser-
mons began to appear first monthly, then more often, in that
old and widely read journal. 97

An indication of Newton's success as a speaker and writer at
this time in his life can be seen in an article in The Cedar Rapids
Evening Gazette of May 15, 1912. Under the heading "Cedar Rapids a
City of Active, Prosperous Churches," the newspaper says:

The Liberal Christian church (Universalist) ... con-
sists of a very homelike little brick structure built about
thirty-five years ago by a struggling congregation. ... 

Its congregation is ministered to by the Reverend Joseph
Fort Newton, who speaks every Sunday morning at 11 o'clock
and during the months of October, November, December

95 Newton, River of Years, p. 111.

96 See pp. 130-32.

97 Newton, River of Years, pp. 111-12.
January, February and March speaks Tuesday evenings on some literary subject, usually discussing the lives, writings, and religion of some literary character of this or some other country. This year the entire course with the exception of the discourses delivered during the Lenten season, was devoted to the study of Shakespeare, his life, writings and plays and the religious trend of his work.

These sermons and lectures are very largely attended and are read in the papers by many people within and without the city, to whom they come as a great boon.

This congregation has been small in numbers until the pastorate of Mr. Newton began some four years ago, since which time it has been the best attended church in the city, by both men and women.

Mr. Newton's sermons are regularly published in the papers and are also circulated in pamphlet form and may be had by anyone upon application. This little church, sans creed, sans theology, is destined to become one of the large, as it is now one of the influential, religious bodies of the city.98

As was mentioned in Chapter II,99 the University of Iowa asked Newton to give his literary talks as a popular Lectureship in English. This service Newton greatly enjoyed. It brought him into contact with members of the faculty and hundreds of students. Further, he "served as a kind of unofficial chaplain of the University, talking with students over their problems of faith and life, officiating at no end of weddings."100

Through his printed sermons and lectures, and through his lectures at the University of Iowa, Newton extended his influence beyond


100Newton, River of Years, p. 112.
his Cedar Rapids' pastorate, remaining at the same time popular with
his congregation and other people in Cedar Rapids.

Cyrenus Cole, who was a United States Congressman from Iowa,
writes of Newton in his I Remember I Remember. Speaking of E. R.
Burkhalter and Newton as his friends, Cole says:

Dr. Burkhalter was pastor emeritus of the First Presbyterian
Church in which he had preached for forty years. . . .

Dr. Newton was the pastor of the People's Church, which
he himself had reared on the crumbling foundations of Uni-
tarian and Universalist organizations. It was a church
without a creed expressed in words. Unlike as Dr. Burk-
halter and Dr. Newton were in their creeds, they lived
together like David and Jonathan. Together they read St.
Augustine.101 When I heard them talk about the saints, I
must confess, I could hardly understand them. Both were men
of superlative literary minds. . . .

Dr. Newton's little brick church stood wrapped in wood-
bine. It was always packed full, whether it was for a Sun-
day morning sermon, or a Wednesday evening lec-
ture. He was the constant toast of the town. He coined for
Cedar Rapids the phrase, "a city with a soul," hardly real-
izing he had brought some of that soul with him.102

In June, 1974 I talked with a number of people who attended
Newton's church when he pastored in Cedar Rapids. Mrs. Lumir Vandra-
cek, who was a member of the Board of Trustees of Newton's church,
told me in a telephone conversation on June 28, that as a person, New-
ton was somewhat reserved and that as a pastor, he did not visit his
members very much. She said he was a sincere preacher, one who had a
forceful voice and who felt his message and was "carried away" with

101See Chapter II, p. 41.
102Cyrenus Cole, I Remember I Remember (Iowa City, Iowa: The
its presentation. She said he could pack the church to the door. 103

On June 29 I interviewed Miss Hazel Brown, who attended the Liberal Christian Church when Newton was the pastor. She said that she looked forward to going to church. She stated that Newton was a great student, a man of the people, and a minister who stirred his listeners. 104

Mrs. George Wilhelms, a member of Newton's Cedar Rapids congregation, told me in an interview on June 29, that Newton had the ability to satisfy the religious needs and wants of various people. She stated that he was a real minister, that he was not bookish but down to earth. She said his preaching was personal and genuine, his voice musical and pleasing. She said that Newton was able to get above the sectarianism of the times. 105

A. G. Thurman, who attended Newton's church, told me in an interview on June 30, that Newton was a man of convictions, that he was a little strong in his ideas, but that he got along well with most people. Mr. Thurman stated that his wife enjoyed Newton's literary talks. 106

103 Interview (telephone) with Mrs. Lumir Vandracek, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, June 28, 1974.

104 Interview with Miss Hazel Brown, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, June 29, 1974.

105 Interview with Mrs. George Wilhelms, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, June 29, 1974.

106 Interview with A. G. Thurman, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, June 30, 1974.
The general impression which I obtained about Newton from these interviews in Cedar Rapids was that he was a highly respected minister. He was appreciated as a pastor and highly regarded as a preacher.

I come now to a discussion of the circumstances which led to Newton's departure from Cedar Rapids in 1917 to become pastor of the City Temple in London. In 1915 R. J. Campbell resigned as minister of the City Temple. A short while afterward, Newton received a letter from the editor of The Christian Commonwealth, the City Temple paper, asking permission to publish his sermons, taken from the pamphlets issued by Luther Brewer. Newton agreed, thinking that the editor meant to use them as a kind of stopgap until a new minister had been chosen. Then, a little later, Newton had intimations from many sources that the City Temple was thinking of calling him to be its minister. "Frankly, I was not only astonished," says Newton, "but frightened--such a possibility had never entered my mind." ¹⁰⁷ He continues:

Furthermore, I was against it, since it would mean giving up "The Little Brick Church," my lectureship in the university, as well as The Builder [a Masonic journal], which I was editing--in short, pulling up the very roots of my life and moving four thousand miles away to another country in the midst of a world war. The suggestion was preposterous; I did not think that I was able to undertake such a ministry, and I did not want to cut my life in two. In due time my fears were fulfilled, and a cablegram from the Board of Deacons asked me to spend a month preaching in the City Temple. Since it was only for a month I accepted . . . . ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Newton, River of Years, p. 136.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
Newton preached in the City Temple during July, 1916. He states that the City Temple was "packed and jammed" during this time. Current Opinion says:

... the church was looking for a new minister. Among others, Dr. Newton was invited to preach. His advent aroused enthusiasm. The size of the congregations astonished everybody.

During the last week of Newton's month at the City Temple, there was a church meeting, and the Board of Deacons nominated Dr. John Henry Jowett, an Englishman, at that time pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, to be the new minister of the City Temple. "An amendment was offered," says Newton, "substituting my name instead, and the amendment was carried overwhelmingly—to my utter amazement, when I heard the news a few minutes later." Newton states that the deacons did not take their defeat gracefully. Instead, they called a meeting of the Board and asked Newton to attend the meeting. Mr. Chapman, the senior deacon, told Newton that if he accepted the invitation of the church to be its minister, the Board of Deacons would resign in a body. In reply, Newton asked the Board to do nothing until he had made his decision, after he returned home.

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110Newton, River of Years, p. 139.


112Newton, River of Years, p. 140.

113Ibid.
In Cedar Rapids, Newton found his friends "exquisitely kind and strangely silent." He says that after thinking the matter over, "remembering the mess at the City Temple," he wrote declining the invitation, arguing that the minister of the City Temple ought to be a Britisher. The invitation was repeated with emphasis. In response to the second invitation, Newton wrote a letter so qualified that it seemed to him that it could not be interpreted as an acceptance. "Yet something made me add a postscript—the fact that all signs indicated that our country would be drawn into the war," Newton says, "in which case an American in the City Temple pulpit, standing at the crossroads of the centuries, could do an important work." His postscript was that if they could not find anyone else to do what needed to be done at the City Temple, he would try to do his best. "Only the postscript, I learned later, was read to the church," writes Newton, "and I picked up my paper one morning and discovered that I had accepted—the die was cast."\[114\]

In January, 1917 the Board of Trustees of the Liberal Christian Church met to consider how long Newton could stay on in Cedar Rapids, to consider a successor, and to adopt the following resolutions:

Seldom is a congregation called upon to make so heartbreaking a sacrifice as we are making in the surrender of our beloved minister, Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, who leaves us to enter a wider field with greater opportunities for service.

\[\text{\[114\] Ibid., pp. 142-43.}\]
The ideals of freedom and friendship in religion which he has so ably taught have grown very dear to us and will always be enshrined in our hearts. We shall ever be grateful for the years of noble ministry which we have been granted.

We pray that his work in the City Temple will be fruitful and that multitudes of heart-hungry, aspiring, wistful men and women will be given comfort, the assurance and the inspiration which it has been our privilege to receive.115

Newton preached his farewell sermon in Cedar Rapids on April 29, 1917. On April 30 Henry McClintock stated in The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette that because of the numerous farewells that had been given for Newton since his decision to accept the City Temple call, it was appropriate that his final service should be no more than a simple preaching of his creed to his followers in the city. McClintock said that there were hundreds of these present--the hundreds whom Newton had recruited from every sect represented in the city during his pastorate--"and there were hundreds of others, who, while not of his belief," McClintock continued, "thronged the Little Brick Church because of their admiration for Cedar Rapids' foremost character."116 McClintock declared that no greater mark of the effectiveness of Newton's preaching of religious thought had been shown than the sight of Dr. E. R. Burkhalter, pastor emeritus of the First Presbyterian Church, occupying the pulpit seat with his nearest religious companion. In his prayer at the farewell service, Dr. Burkhalter said:

115James, History of the Peoples Church, p. 25.

Thou hast shown us Thyself through him, O Father. What right have we to detain Thy servant? Forgive us now for we detain him no longer; we see him go with increased affection and an increased sense of possession.

Is it necessary for us to commend him to Thee? But it is with joy and a perfect confidence that we commend our brother to Thee. Be with him; speak through him.\textsuperscript{117}

It seems appropriate to give now excerpts from Newton's own account of what was apparently the most personal, emotional, and difficult of all the farewells of his long ministry. He says that his last service as minister of The Little Brick Church was very trying, both for preacher and people. He states that eight years before this service he had come to Cedar Rapids, unknown. He declares that he had worked quietly, without sensationalism and without sectarianism. Newton says that in his sermons, he had told the story of his heart—his faith, his hope; in his lectures, he had shared his findings as a student of literature; he had touched all kinds of groups, toiling in behalf of the common good. Newton adds: "The response was extraordinary; the church, if loosely organized, was a real fellowship—if I tried to name my friends in the church, in other churches, and outside of all churches, it would look like the City Directory."\textsuperscript{118} He says that his friends had forgiven his mistakes and had given him encouragement. Then Newton reflects in particular about his relationship as a pastor to his congregation. He says:

There is something infinite in all partings, and I knew that I was looking into faces many of which I would never

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{117}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{118}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, p. 144.
see again on earth. The older people regarded the pastor and his wife as son and daughter; others, nearer our own age, a great company, had been chums and pals. All my people were my personal friends—I loved each one, I had walked with many through deep, dark places.\textsuperscript{119}

Writing of his farewell sermon at Cedar Rapids, Newton says that it was impossible for him to speak personally, because his sermon would have been punctuated with sobs. His subject was "The Angel of a New Day." He says that the sermon was an attempt to forecast the changing vision of religious ideals in tangled, turbulent, stupendous days. "At the end," writes Newton, "two lines from an old hymn flashed into my mind—nay, they were sent of God to meet my need—and became the benediction to a ministry to which I look back with gladness and gratitude:

'O spread Thy sheltering wings around,  
Till all our wanderings cease. Amen.'\textsuperscript{120}

Newton's Cedar Rapids ministry, in summary, was successful in the following ways: his preaching was very effective; his church experienced significant growth; and his popularity as a writer, lecturer, and citizen reached a high peak. Additional references to his ministry in Cedar Rapids are provided in Chapter IV in connection with the evaluation of Newton's preaching.\textsuperscript{121} At the present point in the dissertation, it is perhaps fitting to note the following words written in 1925 by one of Newton's successors at the Cedar Rapids church,

\textsuperscript{119}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{120}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{121}\textit{See Chapter IV, pp. 219-20, 223, and 245-48.}
Dr. W. W. W. Argow:

It is utterly impossible for anyone to describe the inimitable ministry of Mr. Newton. This is one of the open volumes in the history of Cedar Rapids and of Iowa, of which every citizen knows more than anyone can write.122

Fifth Pastorate--London

"To pass, within a period of eight years, from the ministry of a Universalist missionary church of twenty members in a Western American city to the leading Nonconformist pulpit of England seems something like a marvel,"123 says Current Opinion in an article about Newton's move from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to London. The periodical states further that the incident may be said to illustrate the fact that surpassing merit, in the ministry as in other callings, is rare and is quickly recognized when manifested.124

The following words from The Christian Work and Evangelist indicate the type of challenge that Newton faced in his new pastorate:

The City Temple possesses a splendid tradition. Its very name is reminiscent of great preaching. The winsome, spiritual Binney, the massive leonine Parker, the mystical, magnetic Campbell, have all ministered here. And now--Dr. Newton. To a very large extent, he is an unknown quantity. But one thing is certain: City Temple people know something about preaching. They have been listening for years past to some of the best the world can offer, and Dr. Newton's call is on the strength of his occupancy of their pulpit during the summer months [month of July] of last year. A big task faces the American preacher, a great if onerous opportunity

122 James, History of the Peoples Church, p. 25.


124 Ibid.
for service lies before him.\textsuperscript{125}

Newton preached his first sermon as minister of the City Temple on May 27, 1917.\textsuperscript{126} He says that no one may ever hope to receive a warmer welcome than was accorded him upon his return to the City Temple as its minister. He adds that such a welcome was needed, since something like panic seized him; perhaps, he says, because he did not realize the burden he was asked to bear until he arrived at the City Temple. In the following words, Newton provides some interesting details about his experience on the day he spoke for the first time as the City Temple pastor:

Putting on the pulpit gown of Joseph Parker was enough to make a young man nervous, but I made the mistake of looking through the peep-hole which he had cut in the vestry door the better to see the size of his congregation. The Temple was packed .... It was terrifying. Facing the vestry floor in my distress, I thought of all the naughty things the English people were wont to say about American speakers—how we talk through the nose, and the like; albeit I had a Southern voice. My sermon, and almost my wits, began to leave me. There was a vase of flowers on the vestry desk, and in the midst of my agony, as I bent over it to enjoy the fragrance, I saw a dainty envelope tucked down in it. Lifting it out, I saw that it was addressed to me, and opening it, this was what I read:

\begin{center}
Welcome! God bless you. We have not come to criticize, but to pray for you and with you.--The City Temple Church.\textsuperscript{127}
\end{center}

Newton states that at once his nervousness was forgotten; and he declares that if that day at the City Temple was a victory, it was

\textsuperscript{125}As quoted in \textit{Ibid.}


\textsuperscript{127}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, pp. 149-50.
due, not to himself, but to those who knew that he was a stranger in a strange land, and whose goodwill made him feel at home in a Temple made melodious by the richness of its memories and the challenge of its opportunities.128

Newton says that the spirit of reverence which pervades an English church service is beautiful, in contrast with the too free and informal air of American worship. "The sense of awe, of quiet, of yearning prayer, so wistfully poignant in those days," Newton reports, "made an atmosphere most favorable to insight and inspiration."129 But there were special problems connected with preaching in London during World War I. For example, Newton recalls in his autobiography that one was apt to be flirting with death any hour. He says that a preacher began his sermon not knowing whether he would be able to finish it. "At the City Temple," he writes, "an officer sent a note to me in the pulpit when the enemy planes reached the coast, which gave me time to dismiss the congregation and give a chance to go to the shelters."130

In Chapter XI of this dissertation, I discuss the effect that World War I had on Newton himself.131 To provide an idea of the type of situation in which Newton lived and preached while pastoring in London, it is appropriate to refer in the present chapter to one of

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128 Ibid.

129 Ibid., p. 151.

130 Ibid., p. 161.

131 See Chapter II, pp. 77-78.
the many air raids Newton lived through. In his autobiography he says that the air raid of July 6, 1917 remained fixed in his mind. He states that it was a complete surprise and that the havoc was terrible. He writes that many people were killed; many were maimed. He continues:

The sickening scenes haunted me—a cordon of police about the door of a shattered home, where two were killed and a little girl had her leg blown off. Calm good-nature prevailed. Officials were courteous and firm. Everybody was kind, helpful, practical. As long as I live I shall have from this experience a new sense of unity and fusion of purpose, an awareness of our common humanity, which drew us all together in a trustful and direct comradeship.\textsuperscript{132}

In August, 1917 Newton went for a journey along the western front, as a guest of the British Government. Then he went to Paris. From Paris, he came to the United States on a speaking trip and to take his family with him to London. Details on these travels are given in Chapter II in the discussion of Newton's interest in British-American relations.\textsuperscript{133}

When Newton returned to London in October, 1917,\textsuperscript{134} he found on his desk at the City Temple an invitation to attend a private breakfast to be given to a group of Free Church ministers by the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street. Newton says it was the most extraordinary function he ever attended, as much for its guests as for its host. The following description by Newton of the event exemplifies

\textsuperscript{132}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, p. 161.

\textsuperscript{133}See Chapter II, pp. 67-68.

\textsuperscript{134}"Dr. Fort Newton's Return," \textit{The Times} (London), October 26, 1917, p. 3.
his ability to analyze a speaker and a speaking situation:

Mr. Lloyd George spoke to us for more than an hour, and we saw him at close quarters in the intimacy of self-revelation most disarming. What a way he had of saying, by the lifting of an eyebrow, by the shrug of the shoulders, by a gesture in a pause, volumes more than his words told. He felt that the Free Church brethren were estranged, and he wished to explain matters and set himself right.

His address was very adroit, but one felt a suggestion of cunning even in his candor, despite a winning smile. He talked like a man in a cage, telling how he was unable to do many things he would like to do. As he spoke, one realized the enormous difficulties of a man in his place—the pull and tug of diverse interests, his incredible burdens, and the vast issues with which he had to deal. . . . Behind him hung a full-length painting of Pitt, and I thought of the two together, each leading his country in an hour of crisis. I thought him worthy of such company—though hardly in the Gladstone tradition—a man of ideas rather than principles, but lacking something of the fascination of Disraeli. Such men are half charlatan and half prophet, and the Prime Minister did not escape that estimate.135

During the time of his pastorate in London, Newton preached to various groups of soldiers. "It was no easy job," he says, "preaching to soldiers, as I did in rest-camps—the Canadian Camp at Whitley and the American Camp near Winchester, and along the front, often with Studdert-Kennedy, the greatest preacher to soldiers in the first World War."136 Newton states that the difference in preaching to men who had not seen the war and those who had been in it for a year or two, was very great. "One could tell the difference blindfolded," he adds. Then he relates the following incident in his ministry to soldiers:

Never can I forget an evening at Camp Whitley, the eager, earnest, upstanding men, bronzed by war and weather. Only

135 Newton, River of Years, pp. 163-64.
136 Ibid., p. 173.
now and then did one know the thrill of digging under or breaking through the wall of adamant in which men sheltered that shy and lonely thing they dare not lose.\textsuperscript{137}

One day when Newton arrived at the City Temple, the Verger told him there was an American minister in the church—sitting in the pulpit. Up the pulpit steps Newton climbed, and for the first time met Harry Emerson Fosdick. He had been preaching to the American soldiers in France. Of this visit with Fosdick, Newton says:

We talked of the old Temple and the voices it had heard, and the agony of the war and its crucifixion of Christian ideals. What days to read the Bible, we agreed. Itself a book of battles, its simple, flaming words found new exposition in the awful exegesis of events. . . . He promised to preach for me at the next Thursday noonday service; it was a notable sermon . . . . Later he entered upon a ministry, spiritually influential to a vast degree, and every honor awarded him added to my happiness.\textsuperscript{138}

In August, 1918 Newton took his family back to the United States for the duration.\textsuperscript{139} He returned to England in October.\textsuperscript{140}

The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. Under that date, Newton wrote in his diary these words:

At an early hour a vast host gathered at the gates of Buckingham Palace, singing the national anthem. The King and Queen appeared on the balcony—the applause was like the sound of many waters.

St. Paul's was crowded by noon, the Abbey jammed, the City Temple packed. It melted the heart to hear them sing, "Our God, our help in ages past"; there was an echo of a sob

\textsuperscript{137}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138}Ibid., pp. 176-77.
\textsuperscript{139}Ibid., p. 184.
\textsuperscript{140}"News in Brief," The Times (London), October 26, 1918, p. 3.
in their song. All knew that the secret of our joy was
locked in the cold young hearts that slept in Flanders, and
on the gray solitudes of the sea. . . .

The rush of events had been so rapid that men were
dazed. At first, peace seemed less real than war. From
prayer the city turned again to play; no wonder after the
long strain, the bitter sorrow. There was little hatred,
only pity and hope and joy . . . .141

According to Newton, in his autobiography, no sooner had the
Armistice been signed than there followed, not simply a rebound, but a
collapse, which no one who lived through it, he says, can ever forget.
He reports that swiftly, tragically, the high mood of sacrifice
yielded to a ruthless selfishness. He says that the solidarity won by
the war was lost, as well as most of the idealism which had stood the
terror and stress of it. Further, according to Newton, the moral
demobilization was terrifying; the disillusionment was appalling. He
adds that such chaos offered free play to every vile and slimy influ-
ence, making the earth an auditorium for every hoarse and angry voice
that could make itself heard. "It was a time of social irritation,
political reaction, spiritual fatigue," he states, "almost more trying
than the war itself, the only joy being that the killing of the boys
had stopped."142

When Woodrow Wilson visited England in December, 1918, Newton
said from his pulpit:

His coming is most extraordinary. It has no precedent, so
far as I know, but he is a man who does not care very much
for precedents, except to make them. It is a happy overture

141 Newton, River of Years, pp. 189-90.
142 Ibid.
that he comes just now, if only to undo the work of those
who have been so busy trying to sow suspicion between Brit-
ain and America. . . . He comes to the peoples, to join
them in a spirit of comradeship, sincerity, frankness,
straightforwardness, open-heartedness, to see if we cannot
arrange the things of this world so that our disputes can be
settled without sending our boys out to shoot one another.143

In his autobiography Newton declares that he had never seen anything
like the way in which Wilson captured the English people. He says
that for a brief time, Wilson's marvelous personality, his unaffected
simplicity of eloquence, and his charm seemed to change the climate of
the country.144

The critical nature of the times just after World War I and
personal considerations seemed to combine to influence Newton to begin
thinking about leaving his pastorate in London. He writes: "It was
beginning to be plain that my work at the City Temple was done,
although my people did not agree—they wanted me to live the rest of
my life in London."145 He says that was impossible. He gives two
reasons: first, his children were becoming utterly English in voice,
manner and spirit, which was all to the good, he felt, but they were
also utterly American, which meant, in his thinking, that they would
not be happy in either country; and, second, he was homesick, ill at
ease about America, he says, because it had resigned from the human

143"Britain and America," The Times (London), December 23,
1918, p. 10.

144Newton, River of Years, p. 193.

145Ibid., p. 198.
race, leaving the world to stew in its own juice.\textsuperscript{146}

On September 25, 1919 The Times of London reported that it had been rumored that Newton was likely soon to resign as pastor of the City Temple. The Times stated that a private church meeting of the congregation would be held "next Monday," when Newton was expected to announce his intentions. "He has lately been suffering from insomnia,"\textsuperscript{147} the newspaper said.

On November 11, 1919 The Times stated that Newton had accepted the pastorate of the Church of the Divine Paternity in New York, and would shortly leave England. The Times reported that in his farewell sermon at the City Temple the previous night, Newton said he would carry with him to America an immense and unutterable admiration for the English people in a time of great tragedy, adding that the peace of the world largely depended on the English-speaking people, who were responsible for the world's future safety and stability.\textsuperscript{148}

In regard to his life in London, Newton states: "I can truly say that while I did not want to go there in the first place, and would not have gone at all except for the war, I do not regret that I did go."\textsuperscript{149} Nor did he regret leaving. Of his last Sunday at the City Temple as pastor, he writes:

\textsuperscript{146}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{147}"Dr. Newton and the City Temple," The Times (London), September 25, 1919, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{148}"Dr. Fort Newton's Farewell," The Times (London), November 11, 1919, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{149}Newton, River of Years, p. 198.
My last Sunday at the City Temple lives in my mind vividly, especially the evening service, always the largest service in an English church. In the morning the Temple was packed, in the evening it was jammed, people sitting in the pulpit stairs, and even in the pulpit itself. My text was from the Book of Revelation, "These things saith the Amen"—the Amen of God to the aspiration of man, the Amen of man to the will of God; seeking to make vivid the vision that sees through the shadows and affirms, not that all is well, nor yet that all is ill, but that all shall be well when "God hath made the pile complete." 150

Newton declares in his autobiography that as long as he lived, he would carry in his heart the faces of his dear English friends and especially the love and loyalty of the people of the City Temple. 151

Like his ministry in Cedar Rapids, Newton's ministry in London was characterized by success as a preacher. Newton filled his church in Cedar Rapids, but there the building would hold only several hundred people. In London, he filled his church, but it could accommodate several thousand. 152 In Cedar Rapids, in addition to attracting large crowds on Sunday, Newton also attracted good crowds to his Tuesday evening service. In London, as well as having large crowds on Sunday, he also had good attendance at his Thursday noon service. 153

As in Cedar Rapids, so in London, Newton was involved in activities outside his church. For example, while pastoring in Cedar Rapids, he spent time lecturing on literature at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. During his London pastorate, his outside

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150 Ibid., p. 199.
151 Ibid., p. 200.
152 See p. 172.
153 Newton, River of Years, p. 199.
activities included preaching to soldiers and speaking to various
groups in behalf of British-American relations.154

Additional references to Newton's London pastorate are given
in Chapter IV in connection with the evaluation of Newton's preach-
ing;155 and in Chapter II under the heading "Interest in British-
American Relations."156

While Newton's pastorate in London was relatively brief (about
two and a half years), it was very important in making Newton one of
the prominent preachers of the times. Also, pastoring in London gave
him a unique opportunity to foster good relations between the United
States and England during one of the most crucial times in history.
Further, ministering in London placed Newton in a setting to observe
firsthand the ravages of war, and this experience deepened both his
sympathy and his concern for those who are victims of these ravages.

Sixth Pastorate--New York

Newton began his ministry as pastor of the Church of the
Divine Paternity, New York, on the first Sunday of December, 1919.157
On January 25, 1920 a Recognition Service for Newton as the new minis-
ter was held. He describes the service as an hour of fraternal

155 See Chapter IV, p. 246.
156 See Chapter II, pp. 66-73.
157 Joseph Fort Newton, Preaching in New York (New York:
courtesy and Christian good will.  

In Preaching in New York, published in 1924, Newton says that his church was an old church, as oldness is counted in the New World. In the following words from that book, Newton gives some of the history of the church and describes the building itself:

... like other churches, it has journeyed uptown with the years, from Pearl Street, opposite City Hall Place, to Seventy-Sixth Street, overlooking Central Park. Organized in 1838, it has had three ministers in the last seventy years, a record highly honorable alike to pulpit and pew. In 1852 its edifice stood on Broadway, near Spring Street, and there Thackeray delivered his lectures on the English Humorists. On Broadway, and later on Fifth Avenue, its pulpit was glorified by the genius of Edwin Chapin, whose eloquence made it a forum of liberty in the anti-slavery agitation, a shrine of patriotism during the Civil War, and an altar of faith until his death in 1880. Eaton and Hall each added a dimension to its history and its power.

The church today, built in cathedral style with a Magdalen College tower, is rich in memorials, and its chancel is one of the loveliest in America. ... A carved oak pulpit and an exquisite Tiffany communion altar stand between stately candelabra ... To the right, an American flag hangs from a staff cut from a rail off the old Lincoln farm.  

In New York, Newton found himself preaching to a procession, he says, since, as he puts it, "as many pass through the church during the year as enter it." Newton points out that in New York, neighborhoods shift rapidly, baffling the shrewdest forecast; and a church finds itself a lonely island in an alien sea. "The tempo of the city is terrific," says Newton; "home ties give way to hotels and apartment

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158 Ibid., p. 34.
159 Ibid., pp. 34-35.
160 Newton, River of Years, p. 227.
houses—poor substitutes—making the tie between the church and the home tenuous."\(^{161}\)

Newton reports that at one time a group of churches in his part of the city made a canvass of their neighborhood, "and when we could get into the apartment houses—without being arrested—we found no end of people," writes Newton, "who either had their church-letters in the trunks, or had left them in their home towns."\(^{162}\) He adds that these people begged the canvassers not to report them to the churches of their own faith in New York.\(^{163}\)

Referring to another type of problem in doing religious work in New York, Newton says that one day he made eleven calls and found only one man at home, and he had a broken leg and could not get away. "All the while," he continues, "vacations lengthened and the church year was shortened, and parish life became more difficult—some of my Official Board did not live on Manhattan Island."\(^{164}\) Newton states that the glitter of the city fascinated him, but says that its rush and hurry wore his nerves to a frazzle. In the following words he expresses concern for the future of city churches:

What will be the fate of our city churches—except those that stand on old foundations, like the Dutch churches—is hard to know. No ordinary methods of work apply, yet the need of spiritual fellowship in the crowded loneliness of

\(^{161}\)Ibid., p. 228.
\(^{162}\)Ibid.
\(^{163}\)Ibid.
\(^{164}\)Ibid.
city life is appalling. 165

Newton says that some New York customs tried him, especially
the funerals at night, "as if in our reck-and-neck race for the nickel
we did not have time to pay respect to our dead," he states. "No won-
der Jesus wept over a city," Newton reasons, "knowing its brutality,
its black wickedness, its nameless possibilities, and its aching
pathos!" 166

During the time that Newton pastored in New York, he often
spoke at other churches, at special occasions, and at colleges and
universities. For example, on June 11, 1922 he delivered the bacca-
laureate address at the University of Virginia. His message that day
was entitled "Salvation by Education." It was published in The Chris-
tian Century on July 6. 167 In this address he looked back to World
War I and declared that the fact which had been burned into the mind
of the world was that the struggle for power, with its mean passions
and its monstrous illusions, must give place to the struggle for
light, with its wide fellowship and its consecrating enthusiasm.
"Otherwise," Newton reasoned, "the struggle for power will end in uni-
versal revolution, which, in turn, will be only another form of the
same struggle for power. Either we must learn or perish." 168 Newton

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid., p. 229.

167 Joseph Fort Newton, "Salvation by Education," The Christian
Century, XXXIX (July 6, 1922), 842-45.

168 Ibid., p. 842.
began the last paragraph of this message with a rhetorical question, "What can we do for the world while we live?" In response, he said:

Happy is the man, who, in high or humble lot, lives to serve the best; with the results of his life time will content him. Though he may have learned to spell only here a word and there a line of that mystical, prophetic book, the lexicon of which lies in eternity, he will have least to regret, and nothing to fear, when he comes to the final examination, if he has been true to the highest within himself, and has kept undefiled and undefeated the truths that make us men.169

While Newton was pastoring in New York, he spoke at Harvard University, Princeton University, Cornell University, Vassar College, the University of Iowa, and the Chicago Sunday Evening Club in Orchestra Hall. He says he went to "all sorts of places to preach or speak."170 It was during his New York pastorate that Newton was selected as one of the twenty-five most influential and representative living Protestant preachers in the United States.171

Indicative of Newton's response to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in religion so prominent in the 1920's are his words in the following report from The New York Times on a sermon he preached at his church on February 1, 1925:

Theological controversy has become a public scandal. This was the view of the Reverend Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, preaching yesterday in the Church of the Divine Paternity (Universalist) . . . . His sermon dealt with the next step in religion, which, he said, must carry it beyond dogma and creed and into a fellowship in the practical service of

169Ibid., p. 845.

170Newton, River of Years, p. 232.

171For details of this selection, see Chapter I, pp. 1-2; and Charles Clayton Morrison, ed., The American Pulpit (Chicago: The Christian Century Press, 1925), pp. 6-10.
humanity.

"The religion of today," he said, "is a religion of deed, not of dogma. For the moment we seem deadlocked between an archaic fundamentalism and an arid, negative modernism. They are equally impotent to deal with the problem of human redemption in its tragic and gigantic modern setting. It is a new sectarianism—a little better than the old, because it has to do with larger issues, but a sectarianism just the same . . . .

"Either we must go forward to a greater Christianity, or a generation of virile and educated youth will be forced out of religion altogether by the tide of materialism now flowing. If our religion does not make us tolerant of differing intellectual concepts, it is a failure." 172

In this same sermon, Newton said that the recent theological wrangling seemed not only idle, but sinful, alongside the acute sense of injustice—social, industrial, racial—which festered in the very souls of people of all ranks, rich and poor, high and low. He declared that religion, if it means anything at all, must mean justice, toleration, fellowship, goodwill, service to the common good—in short, the realization of God and the practice of brotherhood. 173

In a sermon at his church on the following Sunday, Newton said that the Bible, for many, instead of being a book of vision and light, was just a crossword puzzle. It had become a mystery, not a revelation—a thing not clear and shining, but cloudy and to be argued about. He said that religion was a bewildering crossword puzzle, because the right word had not been found. "But the time is not far away," he predicted, "when the Church will demand of men only what


173 Ibid.
Jesus asked of them, namely, love of God and love of man—such love as He showed supremely in His life." 174 At that time the church would substitute Amo for Credo—I love for I believe—emphasizing practice rather than profession. In this sermon Newton also stated that there is one great, all-solving word for the mystery of life and the universe—God. Further, for Newton, there is one all-revealing word for the reality of God, and that is Christ. "The Word was made flesh," he said, "taking steps by our side to show us the way and teach us the truth; and without Him life is a hopeless, criss-cross, terrifying puzzle, for which we have no clue." 175

In the chapter of his autobiography which deals with his New York pastorate, Newton tells about a meeting of a group of journalists in New York. He says that it was at the time when the fundamentalist-modernist debate was at its height. Newton was asked to attend the meeting. The question "What is the matter with the Church?" came up. The suggestion was given that the mind of the church must be deeply divided in its thought about God. When the question "In what terms does the Church think of God?" followed, no one could say. Newton was appointed a committee of one to find out. "The result," writes Newton, "was a remarkable symposium—as I can truly say, since I did not write it, but only edited it—called My Idea of God." 176 Catholic, Jewish,

175 Ibid.
176 Newton, River of Years, p. 217.
Protestant, modernist, fundamentalist, Quaker, Ethical Culturist, Christian Scientist—all kinds of thinkers were asked to write in regard to the terms in which they thought of God. In December, 1925, Woman's Home Companion began publication of the series. In introducing the articles, the editor of the magazine said:

At no time in recent years has interest in religious beliefs been so keen as it is now. Fathers and mothers reared in conservative faith find themselves bewildered by the liberal thought of their sons and daughters. The conflict between denominations and between different factions within a single denomination presents further confusion.

It seemed to the Editor . . . that in all this controversy at least one great truth could be agreed upon: belief in God. And that a statement from a universally respected group of religious leaders would not only be reassuring to those of conservative opinion but would also make for wider tolerance of ideals and beliefs among different sects.

In his foreword to the series, Newton pointed out the wide variety of insight, thought, and expression in the papers, "and yet," he said, "there is a real unity in variety, making for toleration, and a community of faith." In his typical, ecumenical fashion, Newton added: "If they broaden our minds and deepen our confidence in the reality in which every writer believes and each interprets in his own manner, they will have done what they were sincerely meant to do."

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177 Ibid.

178 By this time Newton had moved from his New York pastorate to the position of special preacher at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Overbrook (a suburb of Philadelphia), Pennsylvania. See p. 160.


180 Ibid.
(The series was published in book form by Little, Brown, and Company in 1927.)

While pastoring in New York, Newton expressed himself on patriotic themes as well as on religious themes, as had been his practice in his previous ministry. During the commemoration of Washington's birthday in 1925, for example, Newton said in his church that the founding of the American Republic, with Washington as its first President, was one of the three great spiritual events in history (the Advent of Christ and the Reformation being the other two, in his view). In its union of individual initiative and communal responsibility, and in its basis on liberty under law, the American Republic, for Newton, was the greatest experiment in human fraternity in the story of mankind. On this occasion Newton stated that three things threatened the peace of America—racial rancor, religious bigotry, and a disintegrating spirit of lawlessness and materialism. Calling brotherhood the very genius of America, Newton said that Jerusalem was the city of faith, Athens the city of law, London the city of liberty, and New York was the city of fraternity. "Here God has brought world-end peoples together to learn the secret of living together," Newton reasoned.

On April 20, 1925 The New York Times reported that members of many patriotic societies paraded the previous afternoon, then joined

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with two thousand other persons in the Cathedral of St. John the
Divine in patriotic and religious exercises to honor the founders of
the American nation and specifically to celebrate the anniversary of
the Battle of Lexington. At this Cathedral gathering, Newton reviewed
the historic events in the founding of our country. At the time,
along with his pastorate, he was chaplain of the Empire State Chapter
of the Sons of the American Revolution. In his address Newton said
that America is not an accident nor a mere experiment to test an
abstract theory of state. "It is at once a dream of man and an act of
God," he said, "carving a new figure in the pantheon of history and
opening a new avenue in the human advance." 183 In Newton's view on
this occasion, there is room in America for all things except hatred,
bigotry, and inhumanity. 184

In his autobiographical account of his New York ministry, New-
ton says that the stress and strain of the city began to affect his
health. He states that he was also doing too many things. Besides
his pastoral duties, he was editing The Master Mason, an eighty page
monthly, editing the annual book of Best Sermons, and speaking in many
different places. 185

One of Newton's speaking trips outside the city was very sig-
nificant to his future. During the time that he was giving a series

183 "Thousands Honor Nation's Founders," The New York Times,
April 20, 1925, p. 4.

184 Ibid.

185 Newton, River of Years, p. 232.
of Lenten talks in the foyer of the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, Thomas J. Garland, the Episcopal bishop of Pennsylvania, invited him to enter the Episcopal Church—"a thing I had never considered,"\textsuperscript{186} says Newton. The two men had been friends for years; both were Masons.\textsuperscript{187}

In his autobiography Newton recalls his conversation with Bishop Garland. Newton writes:

"More than once," he reminded me, "you have said that there is only one Church of Christ on earth, and that it takes all of our churches to make that Church. If that is so—and I fully agree—then the Episcopal Church is at least a part of the Church of Christ. I deplore the fragmentariness of the Church as much as you do. You belong to us—we know your record, we have read your books; and I will smooth the road."

"Really, my dear friend, I had never thought of such a thing, although in England I saw the Church at its best; its men were very kind to me—they were gentlemen."\textsuperscript{188}

After this conversation regarding his becoming an Episcopalian, Newton had other conversations with Bishop Garland on the subject. He decided to enter the Episcopal Church. On September 13, 1925 the Department of Publicity of the Diocese of Pennsylvania issued an extensive report on Newton's joining the Episcopal Church. The report said that Newton was a noted author, and that he was regarded as one of the most intellectual and brilliant preachers in the American pulpit. The report stated further that Newton had received the

\textsuperscript{186}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{187}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{188}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 232-33.
rite of confirmation at the hands of Bishop Garland in Old Christ Church, Philadelphia, on July 8. Also announced in the report was Newton's acceptance of a call to the rectorship of the Protestant Episcopal Memorial Church of St. Paul in Overbrook, a suburb of Philadelphia. The September 13 report explained that official announcement of the call and of Newton's acceptance was made to the congregation of St. Paul's at the morning service that day, and that at the same time formal announcement was made to the congregation of the Church of the Divine Paternity in New York.\textsuperscript{189}

Included in the report of the Diocese of Pennsylvania was a statement of Newton's reasons for entering the Episcopal Church. Newton said:

Since I learned to know the Episcopal Church in the blazing days of war, something deep in me has responded to its sweet and tempered ways. Its atmosphere of reverence, its ordered and stately worship, its tradition of historic continuity linking today with ages agone, its use of those symbols which enshrine the faith of the past and the hope of the future, its wide and wise tolerance, its old and lovely liturgy, like a stairway, worn by many feet, whereon men climb to God, and still more, the organized mysticism of its service and sacraments—all these things of beauty and grace move me profoundly.

But more vital still, if possible, is the central strategic position which the Episcopal Church holds in the confused religious situation of our time. It is the roomiest church in Christendom, in that it accepts the basic facts of the Christian faith as symbols of transcendent truths, which each may interpret as his insight and experience explores their depth and wonder. Midway between an arid liberalism and an acrid literalism, it keeps its wise course, conserving the eternal values of faith while seeking to read the word of God revealed in the tumult of our time. If its

\textsuperscript{189}As quoted in "Dr. Newton and the New Field of Work," \textit{The Universalist Leader}, XXVIII (September 26, 1925), 11.
spirit and attitude were better understood it would be at once the haven and the home of many vexed minds torn between loyalty to the old faith and the new truths.190

The New York Times of September 14 quotes Newton as saying: "I am not changing my theology by making this change. It was not difficult for me to accept the historic episcopate."191

In the report released by the Diocese of Pennsylvania, Bishop Garland explained that Newton had been invited to become a special preacher at the Memorial Church of St. Paul in the autumn, and that when all the canonical steps had been taken for admission into the Episcopal ministry, Newton would become rector of the parish. Garland said that the diocese, and the congregation of St. Paul's, were to be congratulated on securing such a deeply spiritual leader, a man of sound faith, and of profound learning.192

The Universalist Leader of September 19 congratulated the Episcopal Church and Newton upon the beginning of a relationship which it believed would be notable and successful for both. Expressing regret at no longer having Newton actively at work in the Universalist Church, the periodical said that times had changed and these movements across denominational lines had become mere steps instead of the long journeys of a few years before. The Universalist Leader added:

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190Ibid., p. 12.


192As quoted in "Dr. Newton and the New Field of Work," The Universalist Leader, p. 12.
... Dr. Newton will take to this new work powers that are coming to full maturity and a deep experience. He is a delightful man personally, a true Christian, a great and useful preacher. Our best wishes go with him. The work to which he goes is our work and the service our service. 193

Not all of the responses to Newton's change to the Episcopal Church were as warm as the one above from The Universalist Leader. Newton says that he "was denounced roundly, oddly enough most furiously by alleged 'liberal' sects, who called" him "a 'lost leader,' and other endearing names." 194 Newton states, however, that letters came to him from great Christian leaders and not a few laymen saying that both Bishop Garland and he had done a wise and beautiful thing. 195

Under the heading "Dr. Newton's Change of Allegiance," The Congregationalist commented as follows on Newton's reference to the Episcopal Church as the roomiest church in Christendom:

We trust we shall not offend either the good Doctor, or our beloved and respected friends in the Episcopal communion, if we suggest that its roominess has a very narrow and zealously guarded portal. We are not complaining, but are simply stating the fact. Had the Episcopal communion actually been as roomy as Dr. Newton suggests many of us would still be within its portals. 196

The Christian Register, the journal of the Free Churches, said of Newton's change of churches:

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193 "Dr. Joseph Fort Newton," The Universalist Leader, XXVIII (September 19, 1925), 4.

194 Newton, River of Years, p. 234.

195 Ibid.

196 "Dr. Newton's Change of Allegiance," The Congregationalist, as quoted in The Universalist Leader, XXVIII (October 3, 1925), 21.
For Dr. Newton we entertain a kindly feeling, but we do like a man who stands somewhere. He has always been literary, irect, and inclusive in his spiritual hospitality, and on that account it has been possible for him to find acceptance in churches of all varieties of religious beliefs. Nobody in orthodoxy ever held his Universalism against him, for example, because he never held it seriously himself. There is a poetic and gentle accent in his speech, and never emphatic pronouncement of a position which would separate him from any kind of believer.

Void of offense, at home in the sentiments of evangelical pietism, and confident there is nothing so important in religion as mellifluous good feeling, Dr. Newton accepts the full letter of the Apostles' Creed, the Thirty-nine Articles, including Apostolic Succession, and all the House of Bishops to see that he obeys. He calls it "a roomy church." It may be large, but it has walls. Let him fare forth to freedom and he will learn how high they are.197

According to The New York Times of September 17, 1925, Newton had dated his resignation as pastor of the Church of the Divine Paternity from September 1, having desired immediate release. But a clause in the bylaws of the church said that a pastor, wishing to resign, must give three months' notice. A committee representing the Board of Trustees of the church agreed to a compromise—the last of October. The New York Times said that Newton would preach his last sermon as pastor of the Church of the Divine Paternity on the last Sunday in October, and would begin his duties as special preacher at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Overbrook the first Sunday in November.198 Newton makes no reference in his autobiography to his last service at his New York pastorate.

197"A Roomy Church?" The Christian Register, CIV (September 24, 1925), 930.

In summary, four general observations are pertinent with respect to Newton's time in New York. First, he continued to be very popular as a preacher. He preached at colleges and universities, at other churches, and at various kinds of special gatherings. Second, he continued to be active as a writer. In addition to writing articles for periodicals, and doing editorial work, he published the following books: *The Religious Basis of a Better World Order* (1920); *Preaching in London* (1922); *Some Living Masters of the Pulpit* (1923); *The Men's House* (Masonic papers and addresses) (1923); and *Preaching in New York* (1924). Third, Newton's pastoral work in New York was frustrating, because of the difficulty of the times just after World War I,199 because of the rush and complexity of city life, and perhaps because of his own "spiritual restlessness," as is indicated by the editor of *The Congregationalist*, who visited Newton in New York and sensed "an uneasiness in his pastoral relationship due entirely," the editor thought, "to this spiritual experience, and not in any way to external conditions and relationships, which were very happy."200 Fourth, Newton's change to the Episcopal Church was significant. The change was publicized extensively. Reactions included praise, toleration, and condemnation. In any event, Newton's change to the Episcopal Church was apparently for him a change that was needed. He loved

199See Chapter II, pp. 78-79.

the Episcopal Church\textsuperscript{201} and devoted the last twenty-five years of his life to ministering in that denomination.

Seventh Pastorate--Memorial Church of St. Paul,
Overbrook (Philadelphia)

From 1925 until his death in 1950, with the exception of a short period of time,\textsuperscript{202} Newton was an Episcopal pastor in Philadelphia. His first pastorate was in the suburb of Overbrook. He says that his people were all about him, that there were swarms of young folk, and that the church had not only a Church School, but a Junior Church, into which young people were confirmed from the School. The Junior Church had its own Vestry, wardens, and service. At 9:45 on Sundays, Newton preached to the Junior Church. He says that he took them through the life of Jesus and the life of the Apostle Paul, giving them a consecutive knowledge of the Bible; "quite unlike the hit and miss, hop, skip and jump method of the Sunday School lessons,"\textsuperscript{203} he states.

In addition to his pastoral duties, Newton, while at Overbrook, edited or wrote eleven books.\textsuperscript{204} Further, during his pastorate there, he was active as a speaker at other places. For example, he spoke in

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\textsuperscript{201}Interview with Mrs. Josephine Morris, daughter of Joseph Fort Newton.

\textsuperscript{202}November, 1935 to April, 1938. See pp. 175-78.

\textsuperscript{203}Newton, River of Years, p. 238.

\textsuperscript{204}Ibid., p. 239.
New York on January 14, 1926, to a meeting of the Association of American Colleges. On February 12, 1926 Newton spoke on Abraham Lincoln to the Union League in Philadelphia. He preached in St. Thomas's Episcopal Church in New York on May 2, 1926. On June 12, 1926 he gave the commencement address at Haverford College in Haverford, Pennsylvania. Newton spoke at the baccalaureate service at the University of Iowa in Iowa City on June 3, 1928.

On August 5, 1928 Newton spoke in Charlottesville, Virginia, at a vesper service, which opened the Institute of Public Affairs. He said that the crux of all our social problems is to get religion and economics into right relations. His interest in such matters is shown in the following additional words which he spoke on that occasion:

Just now, it is said, not for the last time, that we must not mix religion and politics, and there is truth in the saying, though much depends on who says it, why they say it, and in what tone of voice.

There is sharp truth in the saying that we ought not to mix religion and politics in so far as it means that the Church should be a place of worship and not a weapon of warfare. To win a temporary gain at the cost of permanent injury is a bad bargain. Efforts are always afoot--sincere and high minded--but misguided, seeking either to use the State to enforce the moral precepts of the Church or else to

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use the Church to coerce the State.

Already we have gone further in both directions than it is wise or safe to go, putting in jeopardy the rights of the minority as well as the rightful influence and work of the Church. 210

In June, 1929 Newton presented four addresses on "Sermon Patterns" to the College of Preachers in Washington, 211 "a unique College associated with the Cathedral--not a Seminary," says Newton, "but a place where men who have been in the service, and do not feel that they are doing their best work, can return and refresh, if not remake, their preaching." 212 Newton says that he repeated these lectures at various divinity schools of different churches. The lectures were published in book form under the title, The New Preaching. 213 This was Newton's principal contribution on homiletics, and it is referred to extensively in Chapters V, VI, and VII of this dissertation.

That Newton was successful in his pastoral work at Overbrook is indicated by the following report from The Churchman of December 21, 1929:

St. Paul's Memorial Church, Overbrook, Pennsylvania, has become one of the most firmly organized parishes in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. Having the largest quota in the diocese, $12,000, it has been complimented by Bishop Garland for paying its obligations to the general church in full. Very recently it celebrated its thirtieth anniversary and


212 Newton, River of Years, pp. 226-27.

213 Ibid.
raised $30,000 for that purpose. The parish house has been enlarged to make room for the growing church school. The Reverend Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, rector of the parish, is given full credit for bringing the parish to its present high standard.214

Although Newton was successful as a pastor in Overbrook, he was soon to change churches again. A group of men from the Vestry of St. James' Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, invited Newton to become co-rector of their church, along with Dr. John Mockridge, the present rector. "As I had begun to feel that my parish at Overbrook was too easy," says Newton, "lacking challenge, after thinking the matter over, as I was to be Minister of Preaching, so to put it, and could go on with my writing and editing, I accepted."215 On April 27, 1930 he announced his resignation as rector of the Memorial Church of St. Paul in Overbrook to accept, as of November 1, the co-rectorship of St. James' Church in Philadelphia.216 The New York Times, in its announcement of Newton's move to St. James' Church, said that the creation of two co-rectorships was another step in the transformation of St. James, one of the oldest and most exclusive parishes in Philadelphia, into a city church. The newspaper stated further that Dr. Mockridge would be charged more particularly with pastoral duties, while upon Dr. Newton would fall the preaching, but the two clergymen would have equal


215Newton, River of Years, p. 250.

authority and standing in the parish. 217

In 1930, then, after five years at Overbrook, Newton ended his seventh pastorate—his first as an Episcopal minister. He describes his church at Overbrook as a "lovely" and "gracious" parish. 218 The church property is located on an attractive corner in Overbrook. In looking over the Parish Register for the time that Newton was pastor, I found a long list of baptisms, confirmations, and weddings, at which Newton had officiated.

At Overbrook, in summary, Newton was an effective pastor and preacher. There, as in other pastorates, he took time to write. Also, he found time to speak and to preach in many other places. Let us follow him now to St. James' Church, which was located at Twenty-second and Walnut Streets, in the heart of Philadelphia. 219

Eighth Pastorate—St. James' Church,

Philadelphia

In The Churchman for November 15, 1930, Eleanor R. Howes reports that Newton began his ministry at St. James' Church on Sunday morning, November 2. Howes says that Newton departed from an old custom of the church of having no sermon with the Holy Communion service. Newton delivered a short devotional meditation, "appropriate for the day," says Howes. She points out that a special service was held on

217Tbid.

218Newton, River of Years, p. 253.

219Tbid., pp. 250, 256.
Sunday evening for several hundred Episcopal students of the University of Pennsylvania, who, with their chaplain, the Reverend John R. Hart, Jr., had been invited to attend St. James on Newton's first Sunday. Howes states that Newton would preach every Sunday, both in the morning and evening, and after Advent Sunday, would also deliver an address at the noon service each Wednesday.  

Newton says that there was no lack of challenge in the situation at St. James' Church. "The office of co-rector," states Newton, "if not canonical, was efficient, and it ought not to be unusual for two Christian ministers, with equal authority, to work together without friction, much less feud; Dr. Mockridge and I did it under great difficulties, not of our own making."  

The plan at St. James was to have every type of service—"High, Low, formal and informal, and all the rest," Newton says. But there was financial difficulty. Migration of people to the suburbs affected attendance. Reduced attendance meant reduced income. Nevertheless, the project got off to a good start. Then came the Great Depression. Additionally, a group of people, each of whom had given one to two thousand dollars to the church each year, died one after another, in a short period of time. The church was in desperate circumstances,  

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221. Newton, River of Years, p. 256.
222. Ibid.
financially. I shall discuss this situation further in connection with Newton's resignation in 1935.

It was while Newton was co-rector of St. James' Church that he began his daily newspaper feature, "Everyday Religion." The first feature was published on October 17, 1932. The Churchman for April 15, 1933 reviewed Newton's project under the heading "Dr. Newton Addresses 10,500,000 Weekly." The author of the article, Guy Emery Shipler, stated that Newton's feature gave him the greatest pulpit of his generation. Shipler said that managing editors of daily newspapers had agreed that the time was ripe for a distinctly religious feature in the daily press. He explained that the newspapermen who were responsible for the service gave consideration to many clergymen before they finally invited Newton to undertake the task. "The reason for their decision," said Shipler, "was stated in the words, 'Dr. Newton has the human touch.'" Shipler stated further:

I asked Dr. Newton if he would define his point of view in writing these articles. He said that he had long felt that the daily press needed a religious feature and was ready for it. Then he added:

"As I understand it, religion is not a thing apart from life, but life itself at its best, taking all the forms which love and duty and work and play take. It is not one thing, but the faith, the spirit, the motive in which we do everything; a power by which to live each day through more decently, more bravely, more fruitfully, and find joy in it. Churches, rituals, creeds have their place and value; but

\[223\text{Ibid.}, p. 259.\]

\[224\text{Ibid.}, p. 301.\]

\[225\text{Guy Emery Shipler, "Dr. Newton Addresses 10,500,000 Weekly," The Churchman, CXLVII (April 15, 1933), 34.}\]
how to live is the chief thing—how to master life and find meaning in it.

"What I really want to do then, is to try to help people to learn how to live every day, which is what I mean by religion; but that is not always what they mean by it. In other words, I do not desire to preach, but to deal directly with the stuff of life as we have to do with it day by day, showing how it can be shaped into forms of power and beauty. Life is very complicated today, and many are confused by it, knowing not what to make of it. So many fall into the easy way of saying, 'Life is life. You cannot change it. What does it matter?' But it does matter, and we can change it, turning discord into music and weakness into strength, if we take hold of it with courage and confidence and high purpose." 226

Newton devotes sixty pages of his autobiography to a discussion of his newspaper features. He says that the undertaking was a kind of Everyday Church, in which the people talked back to the preacher. He states that his assignment was to write religion, not to write about it. He explains:

Jesus could write religion, or rather speak it, since He did not write. Others have been able to do it occasionally, in an hour of clear insight, in a mood dross-drained and luminous. Sometimes, but not often, I was able to approach it—in parable, in story, or in a line that was close akin to poetry. 227

I shall discuss Newton's feature further in connection with the circumstances surrounding its termination in 1944.

While Newton was co-rector of St. James' Church, he also spoke at other places. On January 11, 1931 he spoke on "The Indestructible Church" at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. 228

226 Ibid.

227 Newton, River of Years, p. 301.

228 The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
June 7, 1932 he preached the first sermon in the new chapel at Duke University; 229 his subject was "The Prophecy of Worship." 230 Newton spoke on "The Spiritual Life of Lincoln" to the Abraham Lincoln Association in the Circuit Court Room, Springfield, Illinois, on February 13, 1933. 231

In a sermon at St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, Newton, on February 19, 1933, appealed for a religion that would be as real as life, as opposed to a religion that is a mere romance. "The great tragedy of our time," Newton declared, "is our failure to transmit the gospel to the second generation." 232 He continued:

In Russia they destroy the churches by atrocity. In America we destroy them by sheer neglect. In the end the result is the same, an appalling disintegration. More than 70,000,000 persons in the United States are in no wise connected with organized religion. Whenever religion becomes less real than life itself, men give it up.

Life is very real today, and very difficult. Only a real and vital religion is equal to the demands of a generation like this. Either religion is the greatest thing in the world or it is just romance. I define religion as an experience with the whole of life that gives meaning to every part of it. 233

Newton delivered an address on Benjamin Franklin, entitled "The First Modern American," at Christ Church, Philadelphia, on

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229 "Dr. Newton Preached First Sermon in New Chapel at Duke University," The Churchman, CXLVI (July 2, 1932), 16.


231 Ibid.


233 Ibid.
January 17, 1934. The following words from the opening of that address indicate Newton's esteem for Franklin and all other great men:

In this ancient sanctuary of religion and patriotism, a shrine of faith in God and faith in our country, we are assembled in honor of the first modern American; to celebrate the birthday of the one man in our history who approached to universal genius.

It is most fitting that we do so. The heroes of a nation are to the piety of patriotism what the shining figures of the saints are to the piety of religion. They embody in fascinating and articulate form the faith, the genius, the creative spirit and prophecy of their people, and thus live on to lead the future as they inspired the past.

For a nation is not simply a business corporation; it is also a sentiment, a great historic friendship. It is not moved by abstract ideas alone, however noble; but by its attachments, its enthusiasms, and its ideals, which find incarnation in its great personalities. For, when the frenzy of conflict has died away, and the fog of false issues has been dispelled by time, it is in the character of our great men that the holiest tradition of our civilization is enshrined.234

In a sermon at St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, on February 25, 1934, Newton indicated his great admiration for Shakespeare. He said that outside of the Christian Gospels, he knew of nothing more beautiful than the plays of Shakespeare. He stated that they teach us courage, poise, and charity. "Put yourself in the school of the spirit of Shakespeare," admonished Newton, "and let him teach you the courage to face the facts of life and to keep your poise." He added: "Above all let him teach you to have a heart of charity."235


During the summer of 1934, Newton preached at the City Temple in London. The Churchman for July 15, 1934 quotes as follows from a letter received from Newton:

We had 2,500 last night and it looked like old times. Of course, when I was here it was war time, and London was full of Americans and people from the ends of the earth. If we did not have 3,000 we were disappointed. The temple is having the same trouble that our central city churches are having and its future is a problem. Religiously it is a dry time in England. No great voices are speaking and there is no stir among the dry leaves of theology. Never have I seen such dearth and deadness. My impression is that the Anglican church is dead and knows it, and that the free churches are dead and do not know it—but they are finding out. A famous theologian told me yesterday that the churches cannot go on as they are more than twenty years. The younger generation has repudiated religion as now organized and interpreted. And that is so among us, too.\(^{236}\)

As already stated,\(^{237}\) St. James' Church experienced financial distress during the time that Newton was co-rector. Their only salvation, according to Newton, was in forming a union with some other Episcopal church. A proposed union between St. James, Holy Trinity, and the Holy Apostles failed. Then a proposal was made to unite St. James with the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, itself a union of two parishes, brought about in 1898, when the exodus from the city to the suburbs had begun. Newton reports that St. James' Church and the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany went so far as to worship together for a year and that he preached for the two congregations in one.

"Then, suddenly, that plan blew up," Newton writes. "I know why," he

\(^{236}\)"A Message from Dr. Newton," The Churchman, CXLVIII (July 15, 1934), 7.

\(^{237}\)See pp. 167-68.
continues, "but it is a 'military secret,' and, I may add, to my infinite regret."238

As a substitute for a merger, the two churches agreed to an association, in which each church would maintain its separate identity, meet its own financial obligations, and manage its own parochial affairs. The Churchman for July 1, 1935 said that religious services would continue to be maintained at St. James' Church, but during the summer, and until such time as other plans might be decided upon, the two congregations would worship together on Sundays at the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany.239

Although Newton preferred the merger of the two churches, he was in agreement with the association; but coincident with the public announcement on June 16 of the association, Newton also announced his resignation to take effect November 1. He said that he was not ready at the time to make any announcement as to his plans after November 1.240

A letter in the Newton file at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania from Halford E. Luccock of the Department of Homiletics at Yale University to Newton, dated September 21, 1935, indicates that Newton had written to him about two subjects: the possibility of his teaching homiletics and the possibility of his ministering at Trinity

238Newton, River of Years, p. 258.

239"Two Philadelphia Churches Join," The Churchman, CXLIX (July 1, 1935), 27.

240Ibid.
Church in New Haven, Connecticut. With respect to the first subject, Luccock said:

I can only say without the slightest reservation that the idea of your teaching in the field of preaching gives me a real thrill, and that it immediately takes shape in my mind as the prospect of your teaching where I am. I wish that the Lord could open a place here at Yale for you. (Perhaps that may sound as though I were weak on the subject of omnipotence!) It is hard to hold to an orthodox doctrine of omnipotence in these days! There seems to be no money to expand, all the energy is expended in contracting.

On the second subject, Luccock wrote:

Your mention of Trinity Church, New Haven, has a thrill to it. I wish I knew more about the church. New Haven is too small a town for you. However, this may be said in confidence. I never knew a city in my life that was as wide open to the coming of a real preacher as New Haven is right now. Our way of life has fallen into the sere and yellow leaf. I feel this strongly: Should you feel that Trinity offered in itself an opportunity that challenged you at all, you would soon have a congregation out of all proportion to the size of the city.241

Neither of these positions developed in Newton's future, but it is significant to note them as indications of his thinking during the time shortly before November 1, 1935, the effective date of his resignation at St. James' Church.

It is safe to conclude that the financial distress of St. James' Church, plus the failure of the proposed merger between it and the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany contributed in part to Newton's resignation as co-rector in 1935.

Newton's five years at St. James' Church, Philadelphia, were significant for him in at least three ways. First, his popularity as

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a preacher continued. Writing of Newton in 1933 in his American Preachers of Today, Edgar DeWitt Jones says that he was at the zenith of his pulpit power. Second, Newton's writing took an important new direction--syndicated, religious feature articles in newspapers. Third, he witnessed firsthand the financial hardships of a city church struggling to keep pace with difficult and changing times.

Preacher-at-Large

From November, 1935 until April, 1938, Newton was not a pastor. The futile efforts to merge, and thus save, churches apparently left him somewhat discouraged, as is suggested by these words from his autobiography:

If churches of the same faith and order cannot unite for the common Christian worship and witness, why talk about Church unity at all? If church people had as much sense as they claim to have sentiment, it might be worth while. But no; churches will stand and die in their tracks rather than join with brethren of their own communion in behalf of the common good. Such stupidity was appalling to me, beyond my comprehension, and I was done with it. In the meantime, I had started a daily Feature in the American press, which was at once so successful and so interesting that I had no wish for another parish, cluttered up with quibbling ecclesiastics.

Newton states that calls for his time came from all over the land--more than he could answer. For a period of time he accepted service with the National Preaching Mission of the Federal Council of Churches. The Churchman for January 15, 1936 said that this Mission


243 Newton, River of Years, p. 259.
was a united effort to bring about a deepening of Christian faith and life throughout America. The Churchman pointed out that the Mission would be held for three months during the fall of 1936. A group of at least twelve of the most convincing interpreters of the gospel of Christendom would be assembled, who would go together to more than a score of the major cities of the nation. They would remain for four days in each city, bringing their message not only to popular mass meetings but also to a wide range of other groups and utilizing every available channel for making a pronounced impact upon the spiritual life of the community. Of his work with the National Preaching Mission, Newton says: "From Denver to Portland, Maine, we went, a glorious band of fellow pilgrims, flying much of the time from city to city, holding great meetings and, I think, doing something for America."  

During this time in his life, Newton continued to write his syndicated newspaper column. His first collection of these features in book form, Living Every Day, was published while he was a preacher-at-large.  

On May 10, 1936 Newton spoke at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in New York. On this occasion he said: "There has never been a time in the history of mankind when Jesus's words, 'Fear not,'
were needed more." He continued: "The world is in the icy grip of fear, and fear and the loneliness of human souls are the most terrible things on earth." 247

The Churchman for June 1, 1937 announced that Newton would preach during June at the Church of the Ascension in New York on the theme "Living Religion Every Day." His subjects for the four Sundays would be: "Our Right to Be Happy," "Two Vital Life-Questions," "Private Enemy No. 1," and "Three Laws of Inner Health." 248 We see, therefore, a definite trend in Newton's preaching toward such subjects as fear, happiness, peace of mind, et cetera. His newspaper work was definitely affecting his pulpit work.

Some of Newton's friends at the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany in Philadelphia told him of the plight of their church. The young rector had left, and he had left the church in a bad way. The church had been borrowing from its own funds to keep it operating. Newton says that the young rector was a Cambridge don, an able man, a real scholar, but it was his first parish and he had done the wrong thing at the right time, almost without fail. Further, he turned Communist, and spent his summers in Russia. Newton states that he might just as well have put a bomb under the church. One Lenten sermon on "The Futility of Prayer" lost him three vestrymen. Newton says that at last the young and very unwise radical left and asked to be demoted.


248"Visiting Preacher," The Churchman, CLI (June 1, 1937), 24.
from the priesthood. 249

"There was a motion before the Vestry, so I understand," writes Newton, "to close the church." 250 Newton says that he could not see a beautiful old church closed and agreed to try to see what he could do, provided they would not spend any more of their funds and would let him do it in his own way. 251 On February 28, 1938 The New York Times announced that Newton would become rector of the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany on April 1. 252

In looking back at Newton's ministry during the time that he was not a pastor (1935-1938), we can conclude that while he was very active as a writer and a preacher, he seemingly missed the day by day interaction with people in a pastoral relationship. At least, he felt that he still could contribute something as a pastor to the life of a local church.

Ninth Pastorate--Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, Philadelphia

In 1938, at the age of sixty-one, Newton began his ninth, his longest, and his final pastorate. He says that the church was soon a going concern, due to the loyalty of his friends all over the city--

249 Newton, River of Years, pp. 259-60.
250 Ibid., p. 260.
251 Ibid.
not only Episcopalians, but people of many communions, including a
group of young professional men and women. 253

The church building was in need of repair. The wooden girders
in the floor had to be replaced by steel, the roof had to be fixed,
and the whole building redecorated outside and inside. The church not
only paid for this work, but also paid back the money which it had
borrowed from itself under the former rector. "A windfall in the form
of a legacy," writes Newton, "pointed up the endowment fund after the
ravages of the Depression, and the sale of the Church Farm on West
Chester Pike added its part." 254

Newton states that in every way possible he tried to make St.
Luke and the Epiphany a church of free and tolerant faith, of friendly
spirit and homely atmosphere. His method of operation included "inti-
mate chancel talks and personal contacts." The congregation grew,
people coming from a distance; many who had been alienated from the
church, for one reason or another, returned. 255

While pastoring this church, Newton spoke in other places, as
he had done during previous pastorates. At the Cathedral of St. John
the Divine, in New York, on July 16, 1939, Newton said that no previ-
ous generation had been so afflicted with the sense of the meaning-
lessness of life. He continued:

253 Newton, River of Years, p. 262.
254 Ibid.
255 Ibid.
We are tormented by the three demons of fear, loneliness, and boredom. Because we have neglected worship, or do not know how to use it, we wonder whether life is worth while or not.

Our loneliness is not of isolation but of insulation. We are living locked-up lives, preferring to build walls rather than bridges. Nowhere is that loneliness more appalling than in the crowded solitudes of a great city. Never were human bodies so jostled; never were human souls so much alone. 256

On February 25, 1940, again in New York at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Newton said that every individual, no matter what his natural qualifications may be, must at some time endure suffering and frustration to reach the pinnacle of his success. He pointed out to his congregation that although they were seeing the most appalling eclipse of human life in a thousand years, they should not become discouraged and "give up the ship." Newton declared that the highest and finest things in life are created by those who suffer. 257

In a sermon at the Church of the Ascension, in New York, on July 14, 1940, Newton said that to know how to live is the finest of arts. He stated that the greatest way to deal with life is not to run away from it, not to try to run along with it, not even to run it, but to give it to the Lord and Giver of Life to run. 258

In 1941 Newton went to England on a preaching tour. He says that wandering through London was a desolate experience for him. "Going along Kingsway and down Holborn," he writes, "I saw the City Temple, my old church, a mass of ruins, and next to it St. Andrew's Church, a thousand years old, in the same plight."259

Newton says that the largest congregation he had in any London church on his preaching tour was at St. Martin's in the Fields. Of this experience, Newton writes:

> It was a Harvest Festival service--like our Thanksgiving Day--only in England no one day is set apart, and each parish observes any Sunday in the autumn, as best suits its purpose. . . . Vegetables and flowers were in the chancel and about the pulpit . . . . The church was packed, and I could see many old friends, my publishers, journalists, not a few friends from the City Temple. After the service I held a kind of impromptu reception on the front porch of the church; it was almost like a family reunion.260

On this preaching tour, Newton, now sixty-five, spoke seventy-eight times in two months. "I was tired to the bone,"261 he says. He states that the tensions of the trip were terrific from the nervous energy expended, to say nothing of the drain upon his sympathies at the sight of devastation of places he loved. Within a month after his return came December 7, and the country was plunged into what Newton calls "cataclysmic calamity of universal war."262 He says that again the old hurt and heartache pierced him, which he had known all through

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259 Newton, River of Years, p. 275.
260 Ibid., pp. 286-87.
261 Ibid., p. 294.
262 Ibid.
the first World War—the ghastliness of preaching the gospel of Christ
in a world at war.\textsuperscript{263}

Describing his physical condition at this time, Newton says
that somehow he stumbled through the winter, but that early in April
he had a bad crack-up, just as he was preparing to go to Iowa City to
speak at the University of Iowa and to visit Cedar Rapids the next
day. "Instead," writes Newton, "I went to the hospital, my body
ablaze, my nerves threads of fire." He says that he crawled out of
bed to take the three-hour service on Good Friday and to preach on
Easter Day, "talking of immortality, looking like a candidate for it
about to be elected."\textsuperscript{264}

Newton calls the illness just described, the first instalment
of his pay-off for having done too much in England and long before.
His physicians ordered him to stop all activities outside of his par-
ish; they even threatened to stop his daily feature in the press. His
summer preaching had to be discontinued, which had included one whole
summer for Dr. Russell Bowie at Grace Church, New York; another summer
for the United Churches of Montclair, New Jersey; a summer in Pitts-
burough where twenty churches united in a service in Carnegie Music
Hall; a summer for Bishop William T. Manning at the Cathedral of St.
John the Divine, New York; and a summer at the Church of the Ascension
in New York. "Such things I did," says Newton, "not because I had to,

\textsuperscript{263}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{264}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 294-95.
but because I loved to do them—and they were worth while."  

In February, 1943 Newton signed the third, five-year contract with the United Feature Syndicate for his daily talks in the press. There was a gentlemen's agreement that if Newton's health should fail, he could be relieved of his work with proper notice. "Unfortunately, later in the year," Newton says, "my health went to wreck, owing to a disintegration of my blood—there was an explosion, and I was laid aside." He adds: "It was a choice between my feature and my church, and to give up my church during the 'duration'—when clergymen were so scarce—would leave it in the lurch."  

Newton's feature ended on January 8, 1944. Time for February 7, 1944, under the heading "Clerical Columnist," said that for the first time in many a moon, Dr. Joseph Fort Newton did not have to get up at six o'clock on weekday mornings. Time continued:  

After eleven years the Philadelphia Episcopalian rector had given up his syndicated daily newspaper column, Everyday Religion. The flood of readers' letters that had put him to work at dawn's crack was beginning to subside.  

...Dr. Newton had high blood pressure. Doctors had given him his choice. He might run the column or his parish...but not both. He chose the parish, which he took over in 1938 just as Diocesan officials were about to close it as run-down. 

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265 Ibid., p. 295.  
266 Ibid., p. 296.  
267 Ibid., p. 301.  
Following his references to the circumstances which caused the discontinuation of his daily newspaper talk, Newton, in his autobiography, says: "It remains for me to tell the story of it, somewhat in detail, for its sheer human interest, and because it is unique, so far as I am aware."269

In introducing his discussion of his newspaper column, Newton says that he can touch only the fringes and highlights of eleven years of work. He says that his readers were really his collaborators, for they sent him stories, suggestions, parables, hints, and all sorts of material; "but best of all," he says, "they told me what was in their hearts."270

The following words from Newton give some of the principal conclusions he arrived at from his experience as a columnist:

After reading I know not how many letters—we counted thirty thousand the first four years, and then lost count—many impressions remain. One thing is plain—the human heart is everywhere the same, and love is the way to it. Human beings are very much alike, whether white or black or brown. In spite of differences, which they exaggerate and think important, they have faiths, fears, hopes, needs and dreams in common—and love and loss and longing.271

An indication of the effect on Newton of his newspaper work can be seen in these words: "My final impression is one of profound compassion for my fellow men, since each fights a hard fight against heavy odds, and all need the fellowship of man and the mercy of God,

269 Newton, River of Years, p. 296.
270 Ibid.
271 Ibid., p. 298.
or, as John Inglesant, one of my favorite novels, puts it: Only the infinite pity of God is equal to the infinite pathos of human life."\textsuperscript{272}

Although Newton's newspaper feature ended in 1944, he did a considerable amount of writing after that year. One of his most important works, his autobiography, \textit{River of Years}, was published in 1946. In an article entitled "Joseph Fort Newton," Guy Emery Shipler, editor of \textit{The Churchman}, recounts the details which gave rise to Newton's writing his autobiography. Shipler says that one day in his office, his friend Tay Bohoff, New York editor of Lippincotts, asked him whether he could suggest some clergyman who might write an interesting biography (? autobiography). Shipler suggested Newton. "It all started that simply,"\textsuperscript{273} writes Shipler.

According to Shipler, one of the strange and yet charming characteristics of Newton was his consummate shyness—a characteristic which irked Newton enormously, and which misled most people on first contact with him. Shipler adds:

\begin{quote}
How could a man who had known so many people of all sorts, who had taken part in public events with so many of the world's distinguished people, who had preached to large congregations in many parts of the world—how could a man with this experience be shy? But the friends of Dr. Newton knew that it was not a pose.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
I remember vividly the first few times he came to call at \textit{The Churchman} office. After a warm greeting he sat down—and said nothing. He continued to say nothing, except to make brief responses to the things I quickly discovered I
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{272}Ibid.

must keep saying if there was to be any conversation. But after a few visits I found, as others did, a delightful, inspiring and warm-hearted talker.

It was obvious that he had to drive himself to write an autobiography.274

In the second paragraph of his autobiography, Newton refers to his shyness. He says:

The writing of this story has been made extremely difficult by a defect—a tragic defect to me—which has tormented all my days. It is an inveterate shyness in respect to my inner life, which has never been entirely overcome; it is still a handicap. To be sure, it has stood me in good stead at times, keeping me from speaking blazing words when I was boiling inside. But, alas! it has also left me hesitant and half articulate even when sympathy wrung my heart, making me appear aloof and cold, which was as far as possible from the truth.275

Although the writing of his autobiography was a difficult task for Newton because of his shyness, the book "speedily went on the bestseller list."276 It was chosen the book of the month by the Religious Book Club.277

In a review of Newton's autobiography, Wilbur L. Caswell says that it is more than the story of the life of one of the famous preachers and writers of the Episcopal Church. "It is also a history of an entire generation in the world of religion and of life," writes Caswell, "set forth with that beauty of style and that spiritual

274Tbid.

275Newton, River of Years, p. 11.


insight of which the author is master." Caswell says that Newton gives a frank revelation of his own religious growth. He states further that Newton has no objection to telling of his success as a preacher and writer and to quoting the words of praise which he had deservedly received. Caswell says that Newton interprets wisely the religious and political trends which were evident during his eventful life.

In a book published in 1948, *The One Great Church*, Newton has a chapter called "Reviewing Reviewers." In the chapter he says that the response to his autobiography, *River of Years*, astonished him. "The reviews were most interesting," he says, "in part because I have been for most of my life a reviewer of books." Newton says that on the whole, *River of Years* fared better with the secular than with the religious press, with notable exceptions both ways. "The secular press was quick to seize the main point of the book," writes Newton, "its unsectarian spirit, its protest against petty-mindedness, its plea for a simple, direct, vital faith in one Great Church."

We come now to the details of Newton's death, which occurred on Tuesday, January 24, 1950. He had spent the day working as rector

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279 Ibid.
281 Ibid., p. 93.
of the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany. On that day he had a noon meeting with his church Vestry. During the meeting he asked that he be relieved of his pastoral duties. He wanted to go to Florida to live. The Vestry did not want to release him.

Newton was relaxing at his home in the Philadelphia suburb of Merion on Tuesday evening when he died. He had preached the preceding Sunday at his church. His daughter, Josephine, and her daughter were in the congregation.

The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, on January 28, 1950, published "Tributes to Dr. Newton." The first tribute was by the Reverend Charles H. Long, Executive Secretary of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. It is given below in its entirety:

The Episcopal Church has lost a great preacher in the passing of the Reverend Dr. Joseph Port Newton or, rather, I should say the world will become more conscious of its loss as the days come and go and Dr. Newton's voice is heard no more.

He was a prophet in the strictest sense of the word; not a rampant reformer but an exponent of the Gospel of Christ above dogma and doctrine. He was honest and sincere in meeting the issues in this age of transition, which showed so clearly in his Saturday Sermon in The Bulletin. He was tolerant of the views of men who differed with him. He yearned for the unity of Christendom and spoke for such in a

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283 Interview with Mrs. Josephine Morris, daughter of Joseph Port Newton.

284 "Dr. Joseph Port Newton, Former Cedar Rapids Pastor, Dead," The Cedar Rapids Gazette, p. 1.

285 Interview with Mrs. Josephine Morris, daughter of Joseph Port Newton.
language understood by the man on the street. We shall sorely miss him not only from the pulpit but in delightful after-dinner speeches and his interpretation of the great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln. He has joined a great company of preachers before the throne of God.  

Another tribute in The Evening Bulletin was by the Reverend Rex S. Clements, President of the Philadelphia Council of Churches and minister of the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church. Clements said that Newton was one of the great prophetic voices in American Christianity. He declared that Newton was a pulpit orator in the best and noblest sense of that term.

In another tribute, W. R. Cunningham, who was not identified, said of Newton:

Minister, essayist, philosopher, Dr. Newton displayed outstanding spirituality and a depth of thought reflecting many of those characteristics which the immortal Lincoln possessed. His writings were simple and understandable. His Saturday Sermons in The Bulletin were masterpieces of eloquence and inspiration, stimulating to frustrated souls.

This writer knew the man. His unassuming nature, his quaintness, his simplicity, his sagacity, were all the sum and substance of a truly great soul, a man of God.

On Sunday, January 29, 1950, Dr. Russell S. Boles, Newton's physician and a vestryman at the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, read a tribute to Newton at the church. Among Dr. Boles' words were the following:

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287 Rex S. Clements in Ibid.

288 W. R. Cunningham in Ibid.
Dr. Newton was not just an extraordinary man—he was a symbol—a symbol of all that was noble and precious in life. He was a man of ineffable gentleness, and in this gentleness lay an unfathomable influence which molded the lives of those he touched, a quality which made him akin to Lincoln, whom he so vastly admired. His soul was of such a transcendent nature that any attempt to portray it in words would be utterly futile. 289

Summary

As we look back on Newton's total ministry, the following characteristics emerge:

1. Each of his nine pastorates was relatively short. They averaged approximately five years each.

2. As a minister, Newton was adventurous. For example, he went to the City Temple in London during World War I as an ambassador of good will from the United States to England; also, he went to St. James' Church in Philadelphia in a unique arrangement in which he, as co-rector, had the primary responsibility for the preaching at the church.

3. Newton's ministry followed a route through various denominations—Baptist, Independent (no denomination), the Universalist Church, the Free Church (Congregational), back to the Universalist Church, and finally to the Episcopal Church.

4. Newton's ministry was characterized by an involvement in building up a church that for one reason or another was in

a struggling condition. This was the case at Dixon, Illinois; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and at the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany in Philadelphia.

5. Consistently, Newton was involved in activities and projects that were in addition to the responsibilities of his pastorate—Masonic, patriotic, lecturing, preaching, et cetera.

6. While Newton was an able administrator and a pastor who was concerned about the total welfare of his congregation, his outstanding interests and talents were preaching and its related counterpart—writing.

The long and distinguished career of Joseph Fort Newton as a preacher places him in that category of rhetoricians who write not just from their study and analysis of public speaking, but also from the vantage point of their personal experiences. Some of the best rhetorical theory has come from rhetoricians who were also actively engaged in public communication—men like Cicero, Augustine, Hugh Blair, and George Campbell. For over fifty years, Newton was a preacher. His experiences, as this chapter has shown, were varied and extensive. We can easily conclude that from the standpoint of personal experience, he was eminently qualified to write about preaching.
CHAPTER IV

AN EVALUATION OF NEWTON'S PREACHING

During his career as a minister, Joseph Fort Newton responded to thousands of rhetorical situations\(^1\) in the area of preaching. What means did he use to meet the challenge of these situations? More particularly, what content or ideas did he use? What ethical considerations characterized Newton's preaching? What artistic procedures and techniques did he use? And, did his preaching have appreciable effects? Let us look at Newton's preaching, then, against the backdrop of the well-known rhetorical standards for evaluating communication: the truth standard, the ethical standard, the artistic standard, and the effects standard. Further, let us determine to what extent Newton exemplified his rhetorical theory in his rhetorical practice.

A single measure, or standard, of speaking effectiveness is probably neither possible nor desirable.\(^2\) Preaching, like any other type of public speaking, is a complex affair; its evaluation is also complex. Some communication scholars feel that it is enough to

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\(^1\)"Rhetorical situation" is defined on p. 18 of Chapter I.

evaluate speaking on the basis of the artistic standard alone, since, in their view, it is next to impossible for a critic to know whether a speaker was in fact speaking the truth, whether he in fact was speaking out of genuine interest in the audience and from lofty motives, and whether the presence or absence of certain results can in actuality be attributed to a speaker's communication, inasmuch as other causal factors may be present. But to think of public speaking as an art form alone, is to focus too much attention on this characteristic of speeches. Art is involved in public speaking; but in most of its settings, public speaking is a means of getting something accomplished. It is basically functional, practical, interested in either immediate or long-range effects. Further, the motives of speakers, elusive as they may be for a critic to ascertain, can hardly be disregarded in assessing the quality of a speaker's performance, considered singly or in connection with his other performances. Additionally, whether a speaker's ideas can be called "truth" must concern a critic in evaluating a speaker. To put forth no effort at assessing the truthfulness of a speaker's ideas is to succumb to an attitude of indifference to truth, especially if a speaker is communicating in regard to subjects on which truth can be ascertained, at least in part.

In evaluating Newton's preaching, therefore, I shall be concerned with not just one, but with all of the following standards:

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the truth standard, the ethical standard, the artistic standard, and the effects standard. As imperfect as such an evaluation must be, it is nevertheless an attempt to view communication as it in reality is—a composite of ideas, motives, art, and concern about results. I agree with Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, who say that public speaking is effective if it achieves an end consistent with a speaker's purpose—provided that the purpose is, in turn, consistent with the dictates of responsible judgment and solicitous regard for the positive good of an enlightened society.\(^4\) To a consideration of Newton's preaching, therefore, under each of these standards, let us now proceed.

The Truth Standard

In "The Study of Speeches," Wayland M. Parrish takes the position that an evaluator of communication must assess the depth and weight of the ideas presented by the communicator. For Parrish, great speaking cannot consist of mere eloquent nothings. It must deal with great issues, not with trivial ephemera. In his view, the value of public speaking cannot be divorced from the value of the ideas with which it deals.\(^5\) In looking at Newton's preaching under the truth standard, I ask then, as Parrish would suggest: were Newton's ideas characterized by weight, by depth? did he deal with significant

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\(^4\)Thonssen and Baird, *Speech Criticism*, p. 461.

matters?

In areas like religion, politics, education, and the like, truth is sometimes hard to determine, especially when speakers look to different sources for their authority. For example, in religion, does the speaker base his ideas on the Bible? Is a particular Church his authority? Or does the speaker lean heavily on his own inner feelings, his intuition, about matters, as Newton did? It seems appropriate, therefore, to consider Newton's ideas from the vantage point of the authority he accepted. An important basis for evaluating his ideas has to be consistency, since he did not claim to go always by the Bible or a particular Church, in developing his messages.

A further consideration in assessing Newton's ideas under the truth standard, might appropriately be this: did he strive diligently to know the truth? An additional consideration centers in the following idea: while it is possible for one man to be right and all others wrong on certain issues, there is usually some safety with respect to the soundness of ideas if they are held to by at least a reasonably large number of intelligent, thinking people. We might ask, therefore: did Newton's ideas correspond, in essence, with the ideas of competent contemporaries?

Finally, since in this dissertation, I, the writer, am proposing to evaluate Newton's preaching, and since I am including the truth standard in my evaluation, I shall offer my own reaction to Newton's ideas. I would not presume to try to influence others to react in the same way; but out of a lifelong interest in religion, I shall venture to express one individual's response to Newton's ideas.
Before evaluating Newton's ideas, it is necessary to give a somewhat detailed statement of them. To present such a statement of all of his ideas would, of course, make this dissertation a multi-volume work. Below, therefore, are statements of his ideas on ten key subjects—subjects prominent in Newton's preaching and in the preaching of many other ministers, past and present.

God. In the Foreward to his edited work My Idea of God, Newton says that God is the First Truth and the Final Reality, and our thought of Him is thought in its longest reach, as experience of Him is the deepest wisdom and peace. In Newton's view, our thought of God determines what we think about ourselves and other people, what we think about life and duty and destiny—our philosophy of history and our interpretation of experience.6

In his sermon "What Everybody Believes," Newton states rather specifically his concept of God. In this message he says that all human beings have lying in their souls a seed of God, a thirst for God, a dim, dumb sense of God, a belief in God. He continues:

In the universe outside of us, in the minds inside of us, we find that kind of order which makes us believe that Another is overruling all things. It is a faith which can neither be demonstrated nor argued down. For, while God, which is the name we give both to the mystery and the meaning of life, is revealed in experience, he cannot be uttered, and in a conflict of words we may lose the unutterable God, before whom silence is wisdom and wonder becomes worship.

What is God? Some of us love the phrase of Sebastian Frank: "God is an unutterable sigh lying in the depths of the soul." He who has ears can hear that sigh of yearning

and longing breathing through the life of man, echoed in his literature and his liturgy; a pathos in his joy, a loneliness that wakes with him in the morning, a wistfulness that haunts him at eventide. It speaks in the cry of Job, "O that I knew where I might find him," and in the great authentic words of Augustine: "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee." It rises above all panics of faith; it lives under all dogmatic depressives. Many waters cannot quench it. The cycles of human history have afforded ample time for the negation of God to prove itself valid, and it has never been more impotent than today.7

For Newton, then, God's existence must be accepted by faith. God is revealed to man through experience. He is the most necessary and most precious reality in the life of man. In a sermon entitled "God," Newton says that God is not a dream, or a guess, but the meaning of the universe and the hope of humanity. To know God is to make our lives eternal. "Faith in Him," Newton continues, "is more than a creed; it is an act, an adventure, an achievement of the moral will dedicating our utmost to the highest."8

Christ. In his sermon "The Presence," Newton says that the living Christ and His continuing ministry in the lives of men created Christianity, and nothing else can keep it alive. "Not his teachings, not his works of mercy," states Newton, "but he himself is the soul of our faith--his personality its revelation, his character its

7 Joseph Fort Newton, "What Everybody Believes," The Christian Century, XL (December 18, 1924), 1625.

verification, his presence its inspiration."\(^9\) Newton believes that not to Christ's personal charm, or His social idealism, but to His victory over death and His sway over the lives of men from the Unseen, must we trace the renascence of wonder, the heroic and glad enthusiasm, the new and haunting kind of goodness which marked the morning years of the church.\(^10\)

In the same sermon Newton says that Christ is with us today as the one adequate Interpreter of an otherwise ambiguous and unintelligible universe.\(^11\) For Newton, Christ's advent marked a new era, dividing time into before and after--like the emergence of personality out of animality: not another man but another kind of man. Further, in Christ, life passed from selfishness to otherness, and love came to perfect flower, with the result that His personality has acted thereafter as an elemental, transforming energy in the life of man.\(^12\)

In a sermon entitled "My Christ," Newton gives further indications of his beliefs about Christ. "For me," he says, "Christ is not simply a Fact in time, or a Force in history, but also, and much more, a Friend--and in this sense He becomes more to me as my feet journey


\(^10\)Ibid.

\(^11\)Ibid., p. 256.

\(^12\)Ibid., p. 259.
farther inland on the isthmus of life."13 That Newton believed in the
divinity of Christ is evident from the following words from the same
sermon:

... my Christ, while deeply and tenderly human, out-
tops humanity, and has no peer among the sons of man. He is
the Divine reality, so far as we know it or need to know it.
That is why He satisfies all types and conditions of minds,
and why they find in Him a tie of fellowship; all one in
their littleness, one, also, in their joy—His grace as man-
ifold as human need is diverse. No mere mortal could thus
satisfy, much less cleanse, this "little, infinite thing—
the human soul."14

In "My Christ," Newton asserts that his only hope for the
future of the race and for the ultimate reign of purity and justice,
is in Christ. In his thinking, everything else may fail, but Christ
will not fail. For Newton, no earthly barrier can hinder Christ's
presence in the lives of men or the story of nations. He says that
Christ rolls away the great stones from all sepulchres and takes new
forms and assumes new glories as the ages go by—the same yesterday,
today, and forever. In the closing sentence of this sermon, Newton
declares that Christ's victory is as sure as the flow of the tides and
the march of the stars.15

The Bible. Newton believed that the Bible is the greatest of
all books. Writing in 1916 on "The Supremacy of the Bible" for The
Biblical World, he developed a strong case for the Bible as the one

13Joseph Fort Newton, "My Christ," in The World's Great Ser-
mons, ed. by S. E. Frost, Jr. (Garden City, New York: Halcyon House,

14Ibid.

15Ibid., p. 342.
supreme book of the world. "If we contrast the Bible with other vener-
erated writings," Newton observed, "we find that it stands alone and
apart, very unlike the Upanishads, the Zend-Avesta, and the Koran, not
only because it is so much more practical, so much less speculative,
so rich and varied in its music; but because it shows us, more clearly
than any other, the growth of man in his knowledge of God, of himself,
of good and evil, of law and love and truth." 16 From Newton's view-
point, the Bible is a Book of Life, not a mere record of intellectual
speculation about life. And as a man reads the Bible, he sees, as in
a mirror, the history of his own soul. 17

"By the testimony of ages of human living," reasoned Newton,
"the moral teachings of the Bible, and the laws of the life of the
spirit, have shown themselves to be among the things that cannot be
shaken." 18 If nations disregard them, they fall into ruin; if men
defy them, they die in the dust, Newton observed. He concluded that
the experience of humanity in its moral victory and defeat is a wit-
ness to the supremacy of the Bible, confirming alike its spiritual
vision and its system of moral values. "It is therefore that the
Bible lives," declared Newton, "not by fiat, but because it is the
Book of the Eternal Life in the midst of time, and of its influence

16 Joseph Fort Newton, "The Supremacy of the Bible," The Biblical
World, XLVII (March, 1916), 168.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p. 172.
and power there will be no end."\textsuperscript{19}

"Dr. Newton Assails Too Literal Bible" is the title of an article in \textit{The Churchman} for December 19, 1931. The article discusses a sermon that Newton preached the previous Sunday at St. James' Church in Philadelphia in observance of Universal Bible Sunday. Because this sermon by Newton indicates in some detail his attitude toward the Bible, I give the following rather extensive quotation from the article:

Admonitions not to "look upon the wine when it is red" and warnings that "strong drink is a mocker," found in the Holy Scriptures, are flatly contradicted in other sections of the same Book by specific demands to "drink no longer water" and even more definite commands to give strong drink to the poor man that he may forget his poverty, Dr. Newton pointed out. . . .

"Many seek biblical authority for prohibition," Dr. Newton said, "but any extended examination of the Bible will reveal statements on every side. The same is true of all other great social and philosophical questions."

Dr. Newton made these observations in protest of the belief in the Bible as literally inspired and as "equally true in every detail." That belief, he said, had petrified the Bible, which he described as the most complete and perfect record of man's experiences in the "light of God."

"Is it any wonder that young people will have nothing to do with the Bible, or that they have become confused by its contradictions?" he asked. "They come from churches where this impossible view of an inerrant Scripture is still taught, and they enter the universities and for the first time examine the Bible carefully, to find that their early teachings have been wrong.

"We must rise above the letter to the spirit, for the letter killeth, and it will kill the Bible just as surely as anything else. This is what is happening day after day. It is widening the gap that exists between the ordinary

\footnote{\textsuperscript{19}ibid.}
church people and the reverent study of the Bible today, which is making it an infinitely greater book than it ever was. So-called 'Bible Christians' who say that where the Bible speaks they speak and where it is silent they will be silent are following a beautiful loyalty to a great book, but there ideal is impossible. It is impossible to take the Bible literally and ever make it a consistent book. The practice of taking the Bible too literally is a great fallacy from which we have suffered ever since it was set up by Martin Luther in the Reformation.

"We must enter into the spirit and genius and power of this great Book. Without this mighty anthem, coarseness, and cheapness will become the order of the day. It is the Magna Carta of a redeemed mankind, of a humane social order, of a new world order."  

In summary, Newton had great respect for the Bible. For him, it was the greatest book in the world because it makes known to man how he should live and how he can know God, but Newton did not regard the Bible as a perfect book, one free of contradictions; and he did not regard the Bible as a book to be taken literally always.

**Salvation.** Newton did not believe in substitutionary suffering; that is, he did not believe that Christ's death was required by God as an appeasement for the sins of men. In his sermon "Reconciliation," Newton says: "Let us put out of our minds forever the idea that it is God who is angry and alienated, and who needs to be reconciled to man, as if He could not forgive until He had been placated and appeased."  

Newton did believe, however, that Jesus in His death and in His life charted the way to heaven, as he states in a message

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on "Personal Religion." But, in Newton's view, this does not mean that salvation is automatic. He says that the course for man to follow as laid down by Jesus is not secret; it is open to all, but it must be followed. The idea that when we are baptized, or confirmed, or join the church, everything is settled and our effort can cease, is not true, according to Newton. Such action is only the beginning; we must "work out" our salvation.

In his message on "Reconciliation," Newton says that our task is not to understand the Eternal Will, but to learn what it is with respect to our own lives, and do it. He continues:

Jesus, by facing the bitter worst, found the best, and if he did not lose faith we have no right to do so. Take counsel of him, trust the spirit which he evokes in your heart, and follow where it leads. Make friends with those who have walked in his way; with St. Paul, who won his victory not without agony and tears, by reason of his pride and his intrepid ambition; with the goodly company of those who, having failings like our own, mastered them by his grace. At last, slowly, the sky will become sunny overhead, and the road plain to your feet, and you will learn, what all the mystics have known, the peace, the power, the incredible joy of the surrendered life. Such is the way of reconciliation, even the way of Eternal Life.

For Newton, then, salvation comes by accepting Christ--His teachings and His example--and allowing Him to work His will in our everyday lives.

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23 Ibid., pp. 22-23.

Immortality. Newton wrote and spoke frequently of immortality. In his autobiography he says:

William James was right. Nearly always, when people speak of religion, they really mean immortality, and nothing else. No immortality, no Christianity; and, we may add, no Christianity, no immortality—at least not in the sense in which we use the word . . . . Jesus was very restrained in what He said about the conditions of the afterlife . . . . There is no future life; it is all one life. That Jesus seems to have assumed, as when He said to one of the men who died with Him, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."25

Newton attached great significance to man's belief in immortality. For Newton, if man is not immortal—if he is merely a clever animal—he has no eternal value we need to respect, no signature of God upon his fleeting life; he may be used as a mere "hand" in industry, as a tool, or as so much cannon fodder. According to Newton, if we leave God and immortality out of life, it loses its significance and sanctity, and all its music drops to a lower octave. "Nothing in my lifetime has been more appalling," says Newton, "than the dimming down of this faith in the worth and dignity and destiny of the soul of man, and the inevitable results which follow."26

As for himself, Newton had a strong belief in immortality. "Not once, even in my darkest moods," he writes, "have I imagined, much less feared, that soul is less precious than slag, or mind less valuable than mud."27 He says that Jesus abolished death, as radio


26 Ibid., p. 369.

27 Ibid.
abolishes distance; death remained a physical fact, but it was trans-
cended by the triumph of spirit. According to Newton, "one thing is
plain: without God and immortality human life is frustrated, stymied,
and ends in futility; there is a vast vacuum in the human heart—and
when man loses high religion, he easily becomes a victim of the low-
est."28

Heaven and Hell. Newton states that he could not conceive of
the conditions of life further on, any more than he could have imag-
ined the conditions of this life before he entered it.29 However, in
his sermon "The Eternal Tents," he gives an indication of his thoughts
about heaven. With reference to the words of Jesus in Luke 16:9, New-
ton says:

Strangely enough, He did not say the Eternal City, as we
would have expected Him to say in speaking of heaven. No,
it is "the eternal tents," using the emblem of unsettlement
and uncertainty as a symbol of the life beyond; uniting the
two ideas of rest and progress. . . . Is it not true that
rest without progress would be intolerable? It would not be
rest at all, but idleness. How much better is the promise
of rest without inactivity, progress without weariness?
There will indeed be no more pain, but your yearning will
not cease, nor your achievement. The truth of God is infi-
nite, and eternity is too short for its full discovery.
What a great expedition awaits each of us in that—not
another life, but that continuation of this life, when we
become dwellers with Him in the Eternal Tents.30

Newton abhorred the belief in an eternal hell. In his autobi-
ography he writes:

28 Ibid., p. 370.

29 Ibid., p. 369.

30 Joseph Fort Newton, "The Eternal Tents," in An Ambassador
Punishment in the eternal world? Yes, but in the eternal world there is neither time nor distance; "a thousand years are as a day." There is a gleam of hope in the Catholic dogma of Purgatory, but the Protestant hell surging on in omnipotent fury forever is the most frightful dogma ever promulgated in times not actually barbaric.\footnote{Newton, River of Years, p. 47.}

In an article in The Dixon Daily Sun in 1905, entitled "William Sunday: An Appreciation," Newton gives a number of specific points in regard to his thinking about the subject of hell. He says that Sunday was wrong in saying that he did not believe in hell. "I certainly do," says Newton. Then he explains:

But I do not believe that its pains are eternal, unless sin is eternal. For sin is hell, and where sin is there hell is. Sin and penalty are tied together so that none can part them. So long as men sin they must suffer. If sin is eternal, hell is eternal—not otherwise.

No one need lift the lid off a red pit to show us hell. We know what it is and have seen it. Hell is sin in the heart of man. There is much of hell upon this earth. Lust, hate, envy, impurity, all these make the heart of man a hell. Our aim should be to get hell out of men—and that is the only way to get men out of hell.

Doubtless men will suffer in the life to come. They will be punished by their sins, not for them. But I do not believe that either sin or suffering is eternal. I certainly do not believe in a literal lake of fire in which men are to burn forever. Nor do I believe the Bible, rightly interpreted, teaches any such idea.\footnote{J. F. Newton, "William Sunday: An Appreciation," The Dixon Daily Sun, March 9, 1905, p. 4.}

Newton believed that ultimately all souls will be saved. In his sermon on "The Home of the Soul," he says that no soul is outside of God. In his thinking, God forgets no one. All of the dead are in
the home of the soul; they live in God.\textsuperscript{33} From Newton's viewpoint, God does not forsake any soul, now or in eternity, no matter how low that soul falls.\textsuperscript{34}

The Church. Since I discuss Newton's views on the church in some detail in Chapter II, under the heading "Interest in Ecumenism,"\textsuperscript{35} I shall give here only a few general statements with respect to his position on the subject. Newton believed that all the seekers, finders, and servers of God are one, united in heart, however they may differ on the surface. For Newton, all of these people are trying to speak the same truth, each with his own accent and emphasis. Further, in his view, all are doing the same work—seeking to lift man out of the mire of materialism into the presence of God, and detain him there until his eyes are cleansed. Says Newton: "Out of the mists of misunderstanding and the fogs of prejudice this mighty fact is emerging, that the lovers of God and the followers of Christ are One Church."\textsuperscript{36}

The Moral Life. Newton includes the "reality of moral values" in his relatively short list of fundamental beliefs in his sermon "What Everybody Believes." Referring to Jesus' words to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world," and "Ye are the salt of the


\textsuperscript{34}Joseph Fort Newton, \textit{His Cross and Ours} (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), p. 111.

\textsuperscript{35}See Chapter II, pp. 53-59.

\textsuperscript{36}Joseph Fort Newton, "The One Great Church," \textit{The Christian Century}, LXIV (February 19, 1947), 233.
earth," Newton affirms: "Without these sensitive and believing souls, who love right and try after goodness, the whole human business rots, stinks, and falls to pieces." 37 In this same sermon Newton says that our protection against vulgarity is not prohibition, but an unveiling of the best. In his thinking, ugliness can only be defeated by beauty, as evil can only be overcome by good. Further, where there is no abiding vision of truth, beauty and goodness, people perish in greed and lust, and their glittering streets become moral sewers. 38

"What About Our Sins?" is the title of a message by Newton in Everyday Religion. With regard to our sins, he says in the message that we should own up to them honestly, admit that we have done wrong, that we have been hard when we should have been kind, fear-driven when we ought to have been faith-led. He feels that we should confess our sins, turn away from them, make a clean job of it, asking the forgiveness of God, and making amends when we can. 39

In a message entitled "The Higher Habits," Newton complains that we live such easygoing, indulgent, careless lives, when just a little self-attention, taking ourselves in hand, and doing the truth, would save us from laxity and defeat. He says that in art, in business, we do not live at random, but in religion inertia overcomes us. He suggests that we put good habits in place of bad ones until faith,

38Ibid.
hope, love, and prayer become life habits.  

The Inner Life. One of the recurring themes in Newton's communication was his stress on the inner life of man. Because I discuss Newton's views on this subject in considerable detail in Chapter II, under the heading "Interest in Mysticism," I shall make here only a few general references to those views.

In The New Preaching, Newton states that a revival of mysticism, or concern about our inner spiritual life, is one of the characteristics of our times. He feels that our fathers sought security; whereas we seek supremacy over life. They wanted guaranties; we want growth. It is the difference between endurance and adventure, according to Newton. He sees the world full of locked-up lives, inhibited by shyness, by fear, by the flatness of life, by a thousand bolts and bars.

With regard to the cultivation of our inner spiritual life, Newton advises us, in his autobiography, to avoid all gadgetry, and yet we must work out a strategy of the inner life, he feels, a habit of meditation, an art for the practice of salvation, and diligently use it, in order to escape aimless drifting or the drag of inertia. Most people have a capacity for religion, according to Newton, but not religion itself. They are only haunted by religion; they are

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41 See Chapter II, pp. 59-64.

unwilling to put forth the extra effort to realize religion in their lives. 43

Prayer. The subject of prayer was another prominent theme in Newton's preaching and writing. In 1928 he published a book of prayers entitled Altar Stairs. He dedicated it "to all who, weary of seeking without finding, are willing to walk the quiet way of prayer." 44 For Newton, prayer is more than saying prayers. Prayer is not merely an act, or a series of acts, however devout. Real prayer is a constant attitude of reverence, of obedience—an inner habit. In Newton's thinking, prayer is the deepest desire of the heart, unuttered or expressed, which seeks in every act, in every situation, to know the will of God and to do it. For him, prayer is the highest habit of the heart, seeking not to get God to do what we want, but to do what He wants. 45

Newton says that an hour of prayer is like the captain of a ship adjusting his compass before he sails. An hour of prayer, or worship, adjusts the compass of the soul, according to Newton, restores any deflection, and points the soul to the will of God. In Newton's view, the soul which thus sets its compass will not find that it is free from the storms of the spirit, but it will be sure of its

43Newton, River of Years, pp. 77-78.


direction through any storm.46

In the following words from one of Newton's published prayers, we have evidence of his high regard for prayer:

O Thou beseeching God, our prayers are in time, brief, broken, and imperfect, shaped by lips that soon must turn to dust; but our desires are in eternity, our needs are immortal, our longings are limitless. Satisfy us with Thy mercy; speak to our hearts in that whisper we so love to hear amid the discords of the world—Thy voice of gentle stillness which renews our faith and brings new strength and hope to those who listen.47

We have looked at Newton's views on ten subjects: God, Christ, the Bible, salvation, immortality, heaven and hell, the church, the moral life, the inner life, and prayer. Ministers, Bible students, and theologians would find themselves agreeing with much that Newton proclaimed. Some, particularly those more conservative in their theology, would disagree sharply with some of his ideas, especially those ideas related to the authority of the Bible and the salvation of all souls. We might ask: was Newton conservative or liberal in his theology? The only logical answer is that he was conservative in some areas and liberal in others.

In his article on "The Theology of Joseph Fort Newton," in The Lutheran Quarterly, Paul Harold Neisey says that from the standpoint of conservative orthodoxy, criticism could be brought against almost all, if not all, the theological tenets of Newton. "It is true that he uses many of the accepted terms of orthodoxy but usually with new

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46 Ibid., pp. 80-81.

47 Newton, An Ambassador, p. 12.
meanings," says Heisey; "and on the other hand he may be expressing old truths in new ways."48

In Heisey's thinking, Newton's whole tendency is that of religious individualism. For Heisey, this tendency is undesirable. He argues that what might satisfy Newton's soul, and also that of another individual, may not offer the solution for the religious problems of the race. In spite of this feeling about Newton, Heisey is very complimentary of him, as we can see in the following words from his article:

In appreciation of Dr. Newton it can be said that he has rendered a great service in making religion real to a host of men and women who have ignored less liberal preachers and religious workers. His sympathetic appeal, his deep religious nature, and his catholic presentation of the Christ (to be experienced rather than to be explained) has appealed to many who have rallied to him to an unusual degree of devotion, loyalty, and admiration. One of the elements that makes his appeal so attractive has been the literary polish and finish of his written and spoken discourses, but this alone would not have accomplished the results. Back of the literary finish is a soul which has wrought much, and which with a confident sincerity presents its message fearlessly.

Unlike many liberals Dr. Newton has been positive rather than negative. This again has strengthened his appeal. With sympathy for all views and tender regard for the experience of every man, Dr. Newton has presented his message in a positive manner; not critical of others; patient with every sincere seeker of the truth. Dr. Newton is not only positive, rather than negative, but is at all times optimistic, hopeful of mankind. Again, his appeal has been dependent, no doubt, upon the fact that he has preached a religion of experience rather than metaphysical explanations of religious facts. While sympathetic and liberal he has at the same time maintained an attitude of independence. There are some things which he positively rejects and fearlessly

denounces, though conceding to others the same privilege to condemn his views. In all he maintains a reverent attitude towards God and a sympathetic attitude towards man; and is deeply religious in all relations of life. In the messages of Dr. Newton, both the conservative and the liberal in theology will find much to stimulate thought, and above all to inspire one's soul.\textsuperscript{49}

Sylvester W. Beach, of Princeton University, was not as complimentary of Newton as was Heisey. In a review of Newton's \textit{The Truth and the Life} (published in 1926), Beach presents some pointed criticism of Newton's theology. He quotes the following words from the Introduction: "If no echo of the angry debates which have agitated the churches is heard in these sermons, it is because the preacher has no interest in such issues, deeming them in no wise relevant to the actual issues of our age."\textsuperscript{50} Beach then charges that the volume is replete with the "echo of the angry debates," into which the author entered as a full-armed warrior on the side of extreme modernism. Beach feels that Newton's dogmatism as a protagonist for "liberal theology" is so sweeping and unequivocal that only a gesture of the hand is necessary to consign conservatism to the limbo of oblivion.\textsuperscript{51}

In his review, Beach calls attention to the following words by Newton, words which could be taken, he feels, as the summing up of Newton's position in \textit{The Truth and the Life}:

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 269.

\textsuperscript{50} Newton, \textit{The Truth and the Life}, p. vii.

\textsuperscript{51} Sylvester W. Beach, review of \textit{The Truth and the Life}, by Joseph Fort Newton, in \textit{The Princeton Theological Review}, XXV (January, 1927), 158.
Today we know that faith is not final; it is a dawn, a spring with infinite summers in its heart. . .

Make your own creed out of the truth learned by living—make it broad enough to include the purest, freest Soul the earth has known, in whose friendship there is power.52

Beach concludes his review with these words: "What a pity that a preacher of rare culture and eloquence should be found shifting from the factual basis of the gospel of the Son of God and erecting upon a foundation of sand a temple dedicated to a Christ unhistoric and therefore unreal."53

What can we say, in summary, of Newton's preaching with respect to the truth standard? One aspect of the truth standard is concern on the part of the speaker for great issues. Newton spoke on important topics. As a minister, he was interested in such vital subjects as God, Christ, the church, immortality, morality, the inner life of man, and prayer.

Another aspect of the truth standard is faithfulness to one's authority. Although Newton had tremendous respect for the Bible, he did not regard it as infallible. His ultimate authority was his own experience, his own insight, as nurtured by his study of literature, philosophy, science, religion, and other subjects. We cannot know if he was always true, or faithful, to his experience and insight; but throughout his ministry, particularly after his brief ministry in the


53 Beach, review of The Truth and the Life, p. 160.
Baptist Church, Newton maintained a great degree of consistency in his basic beliefs—God, Christ, salvation, immortality, et cetera. Such consistency indicates that his experience (his authority) did not dictate that he change his basic beliefs.

Newton's practice, however, of shifting from one denomination to another invited criticism from various sources. When he joined the Episcopal Church in 1925, as Newton himself says, he "was denounced roundly." Although he says he did not change his theology in making the move to the Episcopal Church, by his statement that it was not difficult for him to accept the historic episcopate, he suggests that some adjustment in belief was necessary. But, in his thinking, this sort of change in belief was not really significant. Basic beliefs were the only ones that were really important.

In 1925 The Christian Register published the following uncomplimentary remarks about Newton's denominational changes:

Dr. Joseph Fort Newton goes over to the Episcopal Church. He has been a frequent voyageur in the ecclesiastical sea, having been first a Baptist, then an independent, and next a Universalist. The City Temple in London called and took him into Congregational fellowship, where he had a good ministry

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54 In his dissertation, "Joseph Fort Newton: Minister and Mystic" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1975), Billy Jim Leonard concludes from his research on Newton that he was much more zealous in his conservative Baptist beliefs than his later recollections in his autobiography would indicate. See pp. 29-32 and 389 of the dissertation.

55 Newton, River of Years, p. 234.


57 Ibid.
from 1916 to 1919, though not completely to his liking. He returned to New York and has since served Frank Oliver Hall's old church of the Universalist household. Now he finds the theory of apostolic order congenial, and he will serve a rich parish in Overbrook, suburb of Philadelphia.

For Dr. Newton we entertain a kindly feeling, but we do like a man who stands somewhere. 58

Critics of Newton said that he had no real theology or doctrinal convictions except when it suited him for the sake of expediency or popularity with his congregation. But Newton viewed his denominational transitions as a sign of his having moved beyond the limitations and binding restrictions of dogma and doctrine. He conceived of himself as one who was a part of any and all churches in which he could feel the inner witness of the Spirit. 59 Newton did not consider his denominational shifting to be a weakness in himself, nor would he have considered it to be a weakness in other people. But many individuals frowned on frequent changes in one's denomination, particularly if the changes suggest opportunism.

In this discussion of Newton's denominational changes, we come finally, perhaps, to this issue: While Newton was consistent, after his days in the Baptist Church, with regard to what he labeled basic beliefs, when can a point of religious belief be considered basic or major? For some people, the mode of baptism is a basic point; for others, it is not. For many people, the degree of authoritativness of the Bible is a basic point; for other people, it is not. In sum,

58 "A Roomy Church?" The Christian Register, CIV (September 24, 1925), 930.

then, with respect to Newton's overall consistency in his religious beliefs, there is a question of at least some magnitude.

Another way to evaluate the integrity of a man's ideas is to measure them against the ideas of competent contemporaries. Such an evaluation of ideas is not always safe, but it is an indication of their quality. Were Newton's ideas held to by other competent persons in his day? While there were those who disagreed with Newton, he was a distinguished scholar, writer, and preacher, as is pointed out at various places in this dissertation. Reputable newspapers, reputable publishers, reputable colleges and universities, and reputable churches gave his ideas audience. He was voted by his fellow ministers one of the twenty-five great Protestant preachers in the United States. These acclaims came to Newton not alone for his artistic excellence as a writer and preacher, not alone for his affable personal qualities, but in part because his ideas were significant and worthy of the consideration of thoughtful and intelligent people.

Finally, from my own acquaintance with Newton's ideas in his communications, I would have to say that I would agree with him wholeheartedly on many subjects. His understanding of the problems of everyday life, his grasp of the significance and methods of Christian development and maturity, and his focus on the importance of the life of Christ are, in my view, outstanding indeed. Some of his theology, of course, contradicts my own basically conservative beliefs; but as he would give me the right to my convictions, so I, and others, all of us, must give him the right to his convictions.
The Ethical Standard

Although a speaker's ethical behavior cannot be the sole standard in evaluating his communication, such behavior must be considered, because it affects the way that many listeners respond to messages. People often listen, not just to a speech, but to a person speaking. In appraising public speaking, therefore, we become concerned with ethos, which Kenneth Andersen and Theodore Clevenger, Jr. define as the image held of a communicator at a given time by a receiver. In their summary of the experimental research in ethos, they say that the finding is almost universal that the ethos of the source is related in some way to the impact of the message. But what comprises ethos, or what all is involved in the image that a listener has of a speaker?

In Communication and Persuasion, Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley point out that research evidence indicates that the reactions to a communication are significantly affected by cues as to the communicator's intentions, expertness, and trustworthiness. The Greek rhetorician Aristotle identified similar elements of ethos. He observed that apart from the arguments in a speech,

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61 Ibid., pp. 148-49.

there are three things about speakers that influence our response to
the speech: namely, their intelligence, their character, and their
good will. 63

The nineteenth-century homiletician John A. Broadus identified
elements of a preacher's ethos. Noting that the subject matter of
preaching is divine truth and that the object of preaching is eternal
life, Broadus stated that surely the preacher, the agent of this high
function, must not consent to the omission of any discipline of heart,
mind, or conduct that would be required for preaching effectively.
"Among the requisites," reasoned Broadus, "piety must be placed first,
then natural gifts, knowledge, and skill." 64

Although ethos involves more aspects of the speaker's behavior
than the ethical aspect, it does include his ethical behavior. With
regard to the ethical standard in preaching, we can consider from
Broadus "piety"; from Aristotle, "character" and "good will"; and from
Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, "trustworthiness" and "intentions." With
these elements of the ethical standard in mind, let us look at the
preaching of Joseph Fort Newton.

From the standpoint of sincerity and concern for his listeners
and readers, Newton was a model communicator. Permeating his sermons
and other works is the desire to help, to inspire those who listened

63 Lane Cooper, translator, The Rhetoric of Aristotle (New

64 John A. Broadus, On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons
(New and Revised edition by Jesse Burton Weatherspoon; New York: Har-
per and Brothers, 1944), p. 6.
to him or read after him. In one of his most significant pastorates, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, he was esteemed very highly. With great emotion in her voice, Miss Hazel Brown, one of his parishioners, described Newton to me as "a wonderful, wonderful man." At Cedar Rapids he also was perceived as a man of earnestness and a man of honesty and frankness in his treatment of issues. During the time that Newton was pastoring in Cedar Rapids, H. L. Haywood wrote the following words:

A majority of the members of his congregation are of the elite, intellectually, men and women of professional classes, sicklied over with the troublous thoughts of the time, alive to new ideas, usually with their early faith riddled by the pessimisms and cynicisms of the day, yet each one feels as he sits in the congregation, "This preacher is preaching to my case." Never any backdoor methods of sentimentalism or anecdotage; always a frank recognition of facts and conditions as they are.

One of Newton's greatest sermons is entitled "The Presence."

This sermon is referred to in considerable detail under the effects standard later in this chapter. It is fitting now to mention, in connection with the ethical standard, some comments on this sermon over the signature "The Listener" in The Christian Century of July 2, 1925. First, with reference to Newton's preaching in general, "The Listener" said: "When Newton's sermon is done I rise with an inner sensation as if my heart had been bathed and cleansed." Continuing, "The Listener" stated:

65 Interview with Miss Hazel Brown, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, June 29, 1974.


This was the way I felt on laying down his sermon on "The Presence" in last week's Christian Century. . . . It dealt with our hunger, our weariness, our loneliness, our battles, our victories, our defeats, our griefs, our happinesses—those august simplicities of which the woof and fiber of our human lives are woven. And it dealt with them with such an exquisite touch—so reverently, so fondly, and with an intent to exalt them and to hallow the life in which they dwelt.  

Later in the same article, "The Listener" said: "I do not think we have another preacher in America or Britain whose homiletical approach to the human spirit is so delicate and fine and reverent as Dr. Newton's."  

Two statements made about Newton after his death are helpful in a further evaluation of his preaching with respect to the ethical standard. First, the Reverend Charles H. Long, Executive Director of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, said that Newton was honest and sincere in meeting the issues of the age and was tolerant of the views of men who differed with him. Second, Dr. Russell S. Boles, one of Newton's vestrymen at the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, said that Newton was not just an extraordinary man, but a symbol of all that was noble and precious in life.  

68 "Dr. Newton on 'The Presence,'" The Christian Century, XLII (July 2, 1925), 854.  
69 Ibid., p. 855.  
Newton's motives in his communication appear to be appropriate and lofty. For example, in the Prelude to his book of sermons An Ambassador, he says: "If these sermons make the Living Christ more real to those who walk a shadowy way, and thereby induce a sweeter sense of security amidst the unrealities of time, they will have done what they were sincerely meant to do." Further, in introducing his sermons in God and the Golden Rule, Newton says that they have many titles but only one theme, the life of God in the soul, trying so to strike all the senses of the soul that, from apathy or doubt or weariness, it may be awakened to know God and live in Him, whose law is the one way to go and whose will is our peace.

In my own reading of Newton's sermons and other works, I always feel that he is attempting to lift, to help, to inspire the reader. Long before I knew I would be doing this dissertation on Newton, I read with profit and inspiration his Everyday Religion. I feel that Newton, in his communication, had something to say, said it well, and said it with the desire to benefit his audiences. Admittedly, he was perhaps a little too hard on Billy Sunday, and certain other evangelicals; but the marks of a highly cultured and fair

72 Newton, An Ambassador, p. 8.


74 See Chapter III, pp. 112-16; and Newton, River of Years, pp. 99-100.

communicator—genuine concern, a quest for the truth, honesty, sincerity, earnestness, and straightforwardness—permeate his communication.

One of the most highly respected ministers of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Dr. E. R. Burkhalter, pastor emeritus of the First Presbyterian Church, paid Newton a monumental tribute on the occasion of Newton's farewell sermon as a pastor in Cedar Rapids. In a prayer on that day, Burkhalter said: "Thou hast shown us Thyself through him, O Father." Could any minister hope for a greater tribute?

Three specific situations should be noted in an evaluation of Newton's preaching under the ethical standard. First, there is a discrepancy with respect to his age. Three different years appear in Who's Who in America for the year of Newton's birth—1876, 1878, and 1880. The year 1876 is the one given in his autobiography, and it is the one which Billy Jim Leonard in his dissertation on Newton concludes is correct, based on information he secured from a copy of Newton's sworn affidavit provided in his application for membership in the Sons of the American Revolution, information he obtained from the Newton family, and information he secured from the earliest available newspaper records. Mrs. Josephine Morris, Newton's daughter, told

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78 Newton, River of Years, p. 28.

Leonard that her father often fudged concerning his age during his final years.\textsuperscript{60}

While fudging about one's age is not by any means the worst thing a person could do, this bit of behavior on Newton's part casts a shadow over his life, and could affect his ethos with a reader of his sermons who knows about the matter. It also could cause us to appreciate less the emphasis in Newton's rhetorical theory on the importance of high character in a minister, since we tend to have more respect for theory which is upheld by the theorist in his practice.

The second situation has been referred to already under the truth standard—the situation surrounding Newton's degree of consistency in religious beliefs and his record of shifts from one denomination to another.\textsuperscript{81} This situation, like the one above, could damage Newton's ethos with some readers. It apparently affected the way some people responded to his communication during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{82}

The third situation to be noted was Newton's interest in psychic phenomena and a visit he made to a lady whom he calls a "psychic." He visited her in Washington while he was pastoring in Philadelphia. The psychic told Newton things about himself and his family that were true and predicted other things which came to pass in Newton's life. When Newton asked her how she knew the things she knew, she explained her ability in terms of what we now call extrasensory

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{81}See pp. 214-17.

\textsuperscript{82}"A Roomy Church?" \textit{The Christian Register}, p. 930.
perception. Newton says that he and the lady became great friends. He calls her a noble woman, who did no end of good.\textsuperscript{83} Some psychic phenomena, Newton held, were facts. "When all allowance is made for trickery, the powers of the human mind are amazing,"\textsuperscript{84} he concludes. But Newton was careful to distinguish psychic phenomena and spiritual truths. "They are often bound together," he says, "and one is used to prove the other; but that is an error. Spiritual truth stands on its own feet."\textsuperscript{85} So Newton, while interested in psychic phenomena, was unwilling to place such phenomena in any respect on the level with spiritual truth. The extent to which Newton's ethos would be affected by his visit to the psychic and his interest in psychic phenomena would depend upon the way people view such matters themselves. Some people in religion definitely would frown on any sort of personal involvement with psychic phenomena.

In general, by the ethical standard in communication—the ethical elements of ethos—Newton can be rated high. His audiences perceived him as a man of good character, genuine concern for their welfare; and as a man unafraid to face the controversial issues of the times. Newton was a communicator who was extremely sensitive to the feelings, the problems, and the needs of his audiences. On occasions, he used strong language to communicate his views on subjects; but even on those occasions, he seemed to recognize and respect each

\textsuperscript{83}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, pp. 247-50.

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., p. 342.

\textsuperscript{85}Ibid., p. 124.
individual's attitudes and feelings. Individual human experience being of such importance in his thinking and theology, he would not have infringed on this aspect of another person's rights. By the ethical standard, we can conclude that Newton, in most respects, was an exemplary communicator.

The Artistic Standard

"When the practised and the spontaneous speaker gain their end," reasoned Aristotle, "it is possible to investigate the cause of their success; and such an inquiry, we shall all admit, performs the function of an art." 86

James H. McBurney and Ernest J. Wrage, in The Art of Good Speech, state that the principles of speech, or what causes success, ideally conceived, would be generalizations from all past records of speech in which the results have been observed, and in which reasonable care has been taken to assess the influence of factors other than the speech in producing these results. "Quite obviously," these authors say, "an investigation of this grand scale imposes difficulties which the hardiest scholar would not care to undertake." 87

McBurney and Wrage feel, however, that it is possible and vitally necessary to examine the methods and results of a sufficient number of speakers to discover the causes of their successes and failures under

circumstances in which proper attention is given to other factors. 88 Many such studies have been made. From these studies and from the observations of many students of public communication throughout the centuries, a number of principles have emerged. McBurney and Wrage give a list of principles, which would be widely accepted by rhetorical and communication scholars. They list the following:

1. Good speech deals with significant subjects.
2. Good speech is purposeful.
3. Good speech is analytical.
4. Good speech employs the best available resources.
5. Good speech employs sound method.
6. Good speech claims the attention and interest of the listener.
7. Good speech reveals a person of competence, integrity, and good motives.
8. Good speech is intelligible and in good taste in language and style.
9. Good speech makes effective use of the voice.
10. Good speech makes effective use of bodily action.
11. Good speech is delivered in manner and style best adapted to communication. 89

While other lists of principles could be given, there would be general agreement among scholars to include in a consideration of the art of public speaking such matters as choice of subject, decision about purpose, the use of resources, attention to organization,

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., pp. 37-45.
concern about interesting the listener, good taste and skill in the
use of language, effective use of voice and bodily action, and concern
about the circumstances in which the presentation is given.

Omitting those principles of speech already referred to under
the truth standard and the ethical standard, let us now look at New-
ton's preaching from the standpoint of those principles commonly con-
sidered more directly artistic-use of resources, organization, use of
language, et cetera.

In the thinking of at least some commentators, the artistic
quality of Newton's preaching was its strongest characteristic. Most
of these writers refer in particular to his ability in the use of lan-
guage. Below are given, in chronological sequence, some specific re-
ferences to his preaching ability, all of which include a comment on
his use of words.

In his 1915 article on Newton, H. L. Haywood says of Newton's
sermons: "For beauty of diction, wealth of thought, fullness of mate-
rial, depth of insight and religious passion, they are almost incompa-
rable."90

Arthur S. Hoyt, of Auburn Theological Seminary, in his 1917
review of Newton's An Ambassador in The American Journal of Theology,
says that Newton is a wonderfully well-read man and that he assim-
ilates what he reads. He points out that Newton does not make his
sermons from the last book he has read, but great books often give him
his suggestion and point of contact and the most telling illustrations

of truth. He states that Newton is a fine example of what noble literature, especially poetry, may do for a preacher. In the last paragraph of his review, Hoyt says that the sermons in *An Ambassador* speak especially to cultivated minds; yet through their simplicity and naturalness and humanness, they make the universal appeal. "Here is their real power," he says. He continues:

They do not speak the language of the church, but the language of humanity. They are not great sermons in the spiritual interpretation of the gospel or the prophetic interpretation of life; but they are real sermons of a warm, spiritual, enthusiastic manhood that knows the world's best thought and life and uses its gifts and attainments to glorify the "Lord and Master of us all."\(^{91}\)

In his 1927 *Adventures in the Minds of Men*, Lynn Harold Hough, a former president of Northwestern University, said of Newton that with the possible exception of Dr. Gaius Glenn Atkins, there was scarcely another American preacher who wrote "with such a brooding delicacy of expression, in a style so graciously echoing with subdued undertones the music captured through years of deep companionship with the great writing of the world."\(^{92}\)

One of the most favorable comments on Newton's command of language and overall artistic ability as a preacher comes from Edgar DeWitt Jones' 1933 publication, *American Preachers of Today*. Jones states: "I am inclined to believe that through twenty years Dr. Newton has been a more prolific producer of high-class sermons than any other

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preacher of the period."\textsuperscript{93} Jones says further:

Dr. Newton is a lord of language, the master of a distinctive style. The literary quality of his sermons is opulent, and though saturated with the fragrance of belles-lettres is nevertheless marked by restraint. \ldots If Dr. Newton has ever published a sermon or written a chapter in any of his numerous volumes that is marked by carelessness or unhappy phrasings, I have not come across it, nor expect to do so.\textsuperscript{94}

In a 1933 article in \textit{The Churchman}, Guy Emery Shipler quotes Malcolm Bingay, the managing editor of the Detroit \textit{Free Press}, as saying of Newton:

He is an intellectual who can be readily understood by the lowliest. He is never obvious, trite, or preachy. Instead, he is one of the greatest living masters of the English language, yet so magical in his touch that all who read him have ready understanding of his message.\textsuperscript{95}

In the Newton file at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, there is a 1941 letter to Newton from Melvin J. Chisum, who heard Newton preach at his last pastorate, the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany. In the letter, Chisum calls Newton's English the most superb he had ever heard from the lips of an American. Chisum adds: "I once heard Sir Henry Irving at a banquet given him by New York's Poor Hundred and I thought then, that here is William Shakespeare returned to life; I got that same wonderful intellectual treat from


\textsuperscript{94}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 242.

\textsuperscript{95}Malcolm Bingay, as quoted in Guy Emery Shipler, "Dr. Newton Addresses 10,500,000 Weekly," \textit{The Churchman}, CXLVII (April 15, 1933), 34.
you this morning."  

Before looking at some examples of Newton's use of language, let us note one final comment about his style. In their 20 Centuries of Great Preaching, published in 1971, Clyde E. Fant, Jr. and William M. Pinson, Jr. say that the sermons of Newton are chiefly distinguished by their style. They state, also, that in his heyday, Newton was probably the most admired preacher in the world, principally because of his style.

Newton's sermons are marked by such qualities of style as clearness, energy or force, picturesqueness, and, in some cases, grandeur.

Newton is very clear in the statement of his ideas. Take this sentence, for instance, with which he begins his sermon, "The Remembrancer": "No gift of the Spirit, by whose inspiration we have understanding, is more profound than His ministry to the memory." Note the clarity of the following sentence, which opens his sermon, "The Prophetic Day": "Once again the journeying months have brought us to the day of all the year the best--Christmas Day, with its cheer, its

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joy, and its gentle good will."99

Newton achieves energy or force in his writing through such means as parallelism and climax. He says, for example, in "The One Great Church": "The greatest marvel of our age is not radium, nor radio, nor radar, nor atomic energy, but the emerging oneness of the spiritual community."100 He also says in the same sermon: "Only the vital mind, the spiritual mind, the magnanimous heart, the merciful and skillful hand can take our wild and crumbling world and reshape it after a new pattern."101 In "The Remembrancer," Newton says: "Often Jesus taught in cryptic paradoxes, in flashing repartee, in puzzling parables; and an exposition of a parable was seldom given."102 In the same sermon he has this sentence: "Luther remembered a buried truth; Wesley recalled another; Fox another—each reclaiming a truth needed for his day."103 In "The Secret of Power," Newton says: "Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, and it is only when Truth is made flesh and dwells among us that its presence is a power."104


100 Newton, "The One Great Church," p. 233.

101 Ibid., p. 235.


103 Ibid.

Newton's style is characterized by picturesqueness. Note this quotation from his message "Why Do the Birds Sing?":

Old as it is, there is always something new, something prophetic, in the miracle of the coming of spring. No man of us, unless he be utterly dead of soul, but feels a new thrill and throb of heart as he witnesses the wonder of the world renewed. "Behold, I make all things new" is a text of which Nature writes a new exegesis every year, lest we forget. Gently the earth, but yesterday so grey and winter-worn, is bathed in sunlight; silently a new life wells up from within, and the wonder is wrought. The dead grasses are gone; they are reborn in living green. Since time began this lesson has touched the heart of man with a new hope that, if God so reclothes the grass which perishes, shall He not much more by a mightier ministry renew our souls?  

Notice also the word pictures in the following excerpt from Newton's sermon "The Spirit of Truth":

The appeal to experience makes faith not a cistern, but a fountain. Today we know that faith is not final, it is a dawn, a spring with infinite summers in its heart. Its passion is for reality, and in that quest it tests every affirmation, every negation, as it stands in the service of life. The vision of a universe in which love works by law, moving toward a "far off divine event," stirs the heart like a drum-beat, making history a book of hope, not a desert of despair.  

There is a quality of grandeur, or solemnity, in much of Newton's writing. For example, in "The Spirit of Truth," he says: "The Day of All Saints makes our hearts beat faster, as we remember the brave and beautiful spirits, unknown and unsung, who have ascended from the moral battlefields of time."  

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105 Newton, "Why Do the Birds Sing?" in An Ambassador, p. 217.
107 Ibid., p. 412.
sentence from his message "Divine Guidance in Human Affairs": "Divine guidance does not often come in the shout of the multitude, any more than in the thunder of Mt. Horeb, but nearly always in the still small voice heard by a few lofty and valiant souls who resist the vague overpowering fatalism of the multitude--sensitive, finely fibered, deep-seeing men whom we call prophets." \(^{108}\) Also observe the following sentences from Newton's sermon entitled "Yes!":

> Questions besiege us on every hand. They leap out from the dark corners of life; they meet us at every turn of the road; they rise up from the open grave. They come early and stay late. Every life is full of unanswered questions that lacerate the heart and baffle the mind. Time, itself a riddle, solves many riddles, but the darkest questions follow us to the end and set sail with us on our long journey. \(^{109}\)

Thus, we see that Newton used various stylistic devices in his communication--parallelism, climax, and imagery. Newton's writing is clear; it has force; it is picturesque, and there is a quality of grandeur in much of his writing.

Not only was Newton a master of words, but also he was able to bring into his sermons from his vast reading background, interesting and pertinent materials from such fields as literature, history, and science. His sermons abound with references to, and quotations from, writers like William Shakespeare, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and William James. He refers to statesmen, especially to Abraham Lincoln, and to famous preachers--John Wesley, Frederick W. Robertson,

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\(^{108}\) Joseph Fort Newton, "Divine Guidance in Human Affairs," The Universalist Leader, XXI (November 23, 1918), 900.

\(^{109}\) Joseph Fort Newton, "Yes!" The Christian Century, XLIV (February 3, 1927), 139.
Phillips Brooks, D. L. Moody, Charles E. Jefferson, George W. Truett, and others. Further, Newton often draws materials from the Bible—incidents in the life of Isaiah, Jesus, Paul, et cetera. He makes frequent use of personal experiences and current events. In sum, he runs a wide gamut of sources in his selection of materials. He seemed to have no hesitation to use any source that would help him to communicate his message effectively, as he himself advocated in his theory of preaching.  

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At this point, let us look at some specific sermons by Newton from the standpoint of the materials he uses in them. In a 1912 sermon called "The Secret of Power," the theme of which is that personality is the secret of power, Newton opens with an incident from the life of Jesus, which points up the power of Jesus' personality. Newton then refers to other incidents in the life of Jesus, which, in his view, call attention to His personality. In the second part of the message, Newton stresses the influence of personality. In developing his idea, he quotes from Phillips Brooks, Cardinal Newman, William James, and George Eliot. He concludes the message with an exposition, which includes three lines of poetry, an analogy, and a statement of his theme.  

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In a 1925 sermon in the Homiletic Review, entitled "The Spirit of Truth," Newton, in his introduction, refers to five great festivals of the Christian year, focusing on the Feast of Pentecost, which is the  

feast his subject relates to. In a reference to the current times, he says: "Power we have of many kinds—power of machinery, of money, of equipment—but without the power that cometh from on high we falter and fail, torn between dismay and despair."112 The theme of the message is that nothing can save the church of today and make it equal to its task but the Spirit which created it in the beginning, and which has guided it through the ages. In developing the theme, he quotes from Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Gregory of Tours; refers to science; lists four Bible references in pointing out the functions of the Holy Spirit; uses definition; gives an exposition of what he lists as four movements in history, in which he quotes from Matthew Arnold and refers to Darwin and the industrial revolution in England; and gives a description of what he calls the modern mind. In the concluding part of the message, he discusses the tragedy of transition, quoting from Erasmus; and he ends the sermon with four lines of poetry.113

In a message entitled "The Higher Habits," in Everyday Religion, Newton begins, as his custom was, with a verse of scripture. He refers to a talk by William James called "The Laws of Habits." Then he quotes four lines from an unknown author. In developing his message further, he uses definition, quotes from Aldous Huxley, refers to the artist Rodin, and calls attention to John Galsworthy's short story, "He Kept His Form." Then he refers in some detail to Nicholas Herman's book The Practice of the Presence of God. He quotes from

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113 Ibid., pp. 412-15.
William James and then from an unidentified poet. He ends the message with a definition of conversion.114

Not only did Newton use various kinds of materials in his sermons, but also he used various kinds of organizational plans. Often he employed the inductive method, as he advised in his homiletical theory.115 But he used other methods also, such as asking and answering questions; basing his sermon on the lines of a hymn; or developing his sermon according to a chronological sequence. For the most part, in Newton's sermons, the organizational framework is not too prominent; yet his sermons move systematically and incrementally toward one chief, final point.

Let us now look at three of Newton's sermons with respect to the organizational plan he uses. In his sermon "The One Great Church," Newton follows a chronological method of development. He starts with the present. He says that the marvel of our age is the emerging oneness of the spiritual community. Then he goes back in time to the days of the early Christian church, describes its progress and its eventual persecution under the Roman Empire. Then he moves forward in time to the dark ages and the time of the Reformation. He then discusses the divided church—"little churches" working separately, doing little or nothing together. Not until 1908, says Newton, with the beginning of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, did they begin to cooperate. From that point,


115 See Chapter VI, pp. 320-23.
Newton moves forward in his message through various phases of the Ecumenical Movement to 1939, when the constitution of the World Council of Churches was drawn up and signed in Holland. The churches, having once clasped hands, will never let go, he points out. "They will work together in faith, freedom, and fellowship."116 His last paragraph begins with these words: "Such, in swift survey, is the story of the greatest fact of our generation—a deep current underflowing our crisis and confusion."117 Thus, Newton uses a simple time plan of organization in this sermon—starting with the present, then going back to a specific point in the past, and moving forward step by step to the present again.118

In a sermon entitled "When Is God Near?" Newton uses the inductive plan of development. The sermon is based on a survey Newton conducted among a group of close friends. He wrote each one a letter asking two questions: When does God seem most real? and What is it that seems to bring Him near? He promised his friends that he would not reveal their names. In his sermon, he gives a number of the testimonies he received, listing only the vocation of each man. Testimonies are included from a lawyer, a philosopher, a banker, a journalist, a businessman, a judge, an engineer, a professor, and a man of science. Having given the testimonies, Newton draws from them his conclusions: (1) God has all sorts of ways and means of making

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117 Ibid.

118 Ibid., pp. 233-35.
Himself real to people; (2) In nearly every case, it is in some lovely little thing, some hush in the rush of life, some interlude of clear insight, that God is near; and (3) It is always as an intuition of union with Him, or of the unity of life in Him, that the vision of God comes to help and heal the heart of man. Newton further concludes that each person experiences the nearness of God in his own way; and, by the same token, he adds, each person must respect the way that another person experiences God's nearness. In this sermon, then, on the basis of specific instances, Newton comes inductively to important conclusions.\textsuperscript{119}

In his message at a combined honors convocation and baccalaureate service at the University of Iowa on June 2, 1946, Newton exemplified his interest in adapting to an audience, relating to them. His subject was "What to Do With Life Today." In his third paragraph, he becomes very direct. He asks:

> What kind of a life do you want to live today? A self-centered, self-seeking life, using the world as a kind of automat for self-service? Or a self-spending life which adds something to the worth and beauty of the world in which you live?\textsuperscript{120}

Newton then describes the dynamic times in which they were living, saying that it was a great time in which to be alive. Thereafter, he comes to the basic plan of his sermon—alternatives. He says that


there are really only four things a man can do with his life, and he discusses each one—(1) He can run away from it, or try to, as men have been doing since the days of the prophet Jonah; (2) He can run along with it, run with the herd; (3) He can take hold of life firmly, with some plan, with some purpose, some faith and discipline—and run it to good account; or (4) He can put his life into the hands of One greater than himself and let Him run it. Then Newton introduces four things that we must have in order to do anything with life: a faith fit to live by, a philosophy of life, a self fit to live with, and a work fit to live for. Thus, he uses in the development of this message a basic plan of alternatives, and then moves into a list of essentials for a productive life. Perhaps concluding his message after discussing the fourth alternative would have been better. The list of essentials for a productive life seems to take the message in a direction somewhat different from the direction in which the alternatives plan was taking it.

Having noted the fact that Newton used a variety of organizational plans in developing his messages, and having noted types of organization in his sermons, let us now consider Newton's preaching with respect to delivery, or presentation. Newton was very effective in the delivery of his sermons, although his manner was somewhat oratorical. Miss Hazel Brown, a Cedar Rapids, Iowa, parishioner of Newton's, described Newton to me as being "way up" when he preached.\textsuperscript{121} Richard T. Morris, Newton's son-in-law, told me that

\textsuperscript{121} Interview with Miss Hazel Brown, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.
Newton was an eloquent speaker, a spellbinder.\textsuperscript{122} Edgar DeWitt Jones describes Newton as "a handsome man, with fine eyes and a noble open countenance."\textsuperscript{123} Newton was about six feet tall.\textsuperscript{124} His striking appearance, forceful voice, and dignified manner commanded attention. Seemingly, people listened to Newton with a kind of awe, with esteem, with the feeling that he had prepared a message which they would do well to sit up and listen to.

We are fortunate to have available a description of Newton's preaching by the well-known and highly esteemed speech scholar, A. Craig Baird, who heard Newton speak at the University of Iowa in 1946. Of Newton, Baird says:

\begin{quote}
Before audiences he is dynamic, fluent, conversational, but highly eloquent. He is a master of pause. His pronunciation and enunciation bear slight traces of his cosmopolitan, especially English, associations \ldots. The Iowa address was delivered extemporaneously and without notes. His audience regarded the sermon as appropriate in thought and language and highly effective in presentation.\textsuperscript{125}
\end{quote}

Baird's use of the word "conversational" in describing Newton's preaching, indicates that Newton probably was less oratorical in his delivery during his later years.


\textsuperscript{123} Jones, American Preachers of Today, p. 242.

\textsuperscript{124} Interview with Mrs. Josephine Morris, daughter of Joseph Fort Newton, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 18, 1974.

\textsuperscript{125} Baird, ed., Representative American Speeches: 1945-1946, p. 214.
Usually, when Newton preached, he did so with very few, if any, notes. Because of his superior memory, he was able to commit most of the ideas, if not the exact words, he planned to use, to memory.\textsuperscript{126} Clyde E. Fant, Jr. and William M. Pinson, Jr. say that one of the reasons for Newton's fame was his ability to speak classic sentences of poetic style, abundantly illustrated from literature, without the use of notes.\textsuperscript{127}

Of special interest, in regard to Newton's artistry in preaching, are his own comments in his autobiography. With reference to Edgar DeWitt Jones' \textit{American Preachers of Today}, Newton says that the chapter on himself was written with the extraordinary generosity of a friend. Then he states that among others, Jones "discusses Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, and in that chapter he quotes someone as saying, Cadman ought never to write, Newton ought never to speak, or words to that effect."\textsuperscript{128} Newton says that while Jones does not endorse the saying, "there is a real point to it just the same." Then Newton elaborates, as follows, on his method of preaching:

\textit{... while I have never tried to be an orator . . . I can be persuasive betimes. Besides, spoken speech and written speech are two different things; they ask for different techniques. My sermons are never written until after they are preached, which gives me the benefit of what the congregation sends me in mist, which I try to return to it as gentle rain. In spoken speech there is, and must be, some repetition, for

\textsuperscript{126}Interview with Mrs. Josephine Morris, daughter of Joseph Fort Newton.

\textsuperscript{127}Fant and Pinson, compilers, \textit{20 Centuries of Great Preaching}; vol. IX: Harry Emerson Fosdick to E. Stanley Jones, p. 79.

\textsuperscript{128}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, p. 226.
sake of emphasis, on the ground that "what I tell you three
times is true"; but it must be "artistic repetition." ... Half a dozen times in my life I have written sermons and
read them, but seldom with success. Only one was really
successful, "The Crisis of Christ," delivered at the anni-
versary of the Colonial Missionary Society in the City Tem-
ple, in 1930 ... After all, each must do his work in
the way best fitted to his gifts and his purpose in the pul-
pit.129

That Newton had great understanding of the art of preaching is
discussed in detail in the remaining chapters of the dissertation. He
also was a very effective practitioner of the art. By the artistic
standard in communication, Newton can be rated superior. His sermons
were characterized by quality material, meaningful organization, and
appropriate language. He delivered his messages in an effective man-
ner. Since he took the work of preaching very seriously, he prepared
for his sermons extensively; and he seemingly put his entire self into
the presentation of his messages. Although he was to some extent
oratorical in his delivery, this method of presentation was quite
popular during his heyday—the early part of this century. Eloquent,
scholarly, captivating, moving, and inspirational—these are words
which appropriately describe Newton's artistry as a preacher.

The Effects Standard

Did the campaigner win votes? Did the salesman sell his prod-
uct? Did the lawyer win his case? Did the entertainer get laughs?
Did the pastor have good attendance at his services; did he have addi-
tions to his church? These are the kinds of questions we sometimes

129 Ibid.
ask in our evaluation of a speaker. We want to know if his speaking brought results. At times, we are concerned about immediate results; at times, long-range results. Sometimes we are concerned about both. Can we say that a speaker is good just because he has results? No, this is not the only criterion by which to measure speakers. Further, results in some cases can be traced to causes other than the speaker's speech; therefore, there is not necessarily a causal relationship between certain effects and the speaker's speech. But, if a speaker, over a period of time, in various types of situations, seems to have little or no effect on audiences, we soon see his popularity and his usefulness as a speaker waning.

The preacher, be he a pastor or an evangelist, must have results to be considered effective. We ask, then, was Newton a preacher who had an effect on his audiences? Did he have results? Did his churches grow? Did people testify to being benefited from his preaching? Let us look at some of the facts about Newton's ministry from the standpoint of results.

Newton's preaching attracted sizable crowds. In the words of his daughter, "He could pack a church."\(^{130}\) One of his early pastorates was Dixon, Illinois. Of his work there, Newton says: "People who had not been in a church for years joined and became good workers."\(^{131}\) During the time that Newton gave his reactions to the Billy

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\(^{130}\) Interview with Mrs. Josephine Morris, daughter of Joseph Fort Newton.

\(^{131}\) Newton, *River of Years*, p. 98.
Sunday campaign in Dixon, he drew very large crowds to his church.

The Dixon Daily Sun of March 6, 1905, in its report on the crowd that heard Newton's sermon of March 5 on "The Spirit of the Sunday Meetings," says:

It was the largest crowd that ever gathered there, and where ordinarily 500 is a large crowd for this church, yesterday there were fully 800 present. Hundreds were turned away. Chairs were brought in and hundreds stood during the entire service.\(^ {132}\)

At Newton's next pastorate, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, large crowds heard him preach. When Newton began his work in Cedar Rapids, his congregation was small. As was mentioned in Chapter III,\(^ {133}\) he was filling his church at every service, after being there only a short time. After Newton had been in Cedar Rapids four years, his church was referred to by The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette as the best attended church in the city.\(^ {134}\)

A very large crowd heard Newton's farewell sermon in Cedar Rapids. Henry McClintock reported in The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette that Newton's audience, on that occasion, heard him from the pews, the aisles, the rear of the auditorium, the stairways, and the choir loft. He said that even the rostrum itself was invaded. He stated further that half of those present could not find seats and that half of those standing could not see Newton, but pressed eagerly up the stairways to

\(^ {132}\)J. F. Newton, "Spirit of Sunday Meetings," The Dixon Daily Sun, March 6, 1905, p. 4.

\(^ {133}\)See Chapter III, p. 121.

\(^ {134}\)"Cedar Rapids a City of Active, Prosperous Churches," The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette, May 15, 1912, p. 8.
be within the sound of his voice. McClintock explained that previously the trustees of the church had made arrangements for the service to be in a theater, but because of Newton's desire that he preach his last sermon in his own church, hundreds stood patiently out of respect to his wish.\textsuperscript{135}

Following his pastorate in Cedar Rapids, Newton became pastor of the City Temple in London. There he also attracted large crowds, as many as 3,000 at a service.\textsuperscript{136}

Newton's next pastorate was the Church of the Divine Paternity in New York. Of Newton's ministry there, Thomas Edward Potterton says in \textit{The Universalist Leader}: "He has won great and enduring success in the most stubborn field of America—the Metropolis City—preaching each Sunday to large and increasing congregations."\textsuperscript{137} But in his autobiography, Newton makes no reference to the size of his crowds at this church. His five years in New York were rather trying to him personally. The church work was problematic, and overall progress was slow.\textsuperscript{138}

After Newton pastored in New York, he pastored three churches in Philadelphia. He makes little reference to his crowds at these

\textsuperscript{135} McClintock, "Joseph Fort Newton in Farewell Sermon in The Little Brick Church," p. 6.

\textsuperscript{136} "A Message from Dr. Newton," \textit{The Churchman}, CXLVIII (July 15, 1934), 7.

\textsuperscript{137} Thomas Edward Potterton, "Among Our Churches," \textit{The Universalist Leader}, XXVI (March 24, 1923), 28.

\textsuperscript{138} Newton, \textit{River of Years}, pp. 206-07, 228-29.
churches, but the churches he pastored were prominent ones, and he doubtlessly had reasonably good attendance. Newton says of his last pastorate, the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany: "Our congregations grew, people coming from a distance; many who had been alienated from the church, for one reason or another, returned."

We can conclude that Newton's preaching attracted crowds of considerable size during at least much of his ministry. Perhaps his peak years, as far as influencing attendance was concerned, were his Cedar Rapids and London years.

Another type of numerical effect of Newton's communication was the 90,000 letters he received from readers of his syndicated newspaper feature, "Everyday Religion." To write about religion in a daily column for over eleven years, as Newton did, was a large undertaking. To have so much response from readers is an indication that he was writing about subjects of importance to readers, and that he was doing the writing in an effective way.

Perhaps the most signal effect of Newton's sermons was the part they played in his call to the City Temple. While he was pastoring in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, his sermons were distributed in pamphlet form. Some of them got to London; and shortly after R. J. Campbell's resignation as minister of the City Temple there, Newton received a letter from the editor of The Christian Commonwealth, the

139Ibid., p. 262.
141See Chapter III, p. 126.
City Temple newspaper, asking permission to publish his sermons. Soon afterward, Newton heard that the City Temple was thinking of calling him to be its minister. Later he was invited to preach for a month as guest minister. During that month he was invited to become the pastor of the church. 142

A detailed and penetrating reaction to one of Newton's sermons appears in The Christian Century in an article over the signature "The Listener." The article is entitled "Dr. Newton on 'The Presence.'"

The extensive quotation below indicates the kind of effect this sermon, in the previous week's Christian Century, had on "The Listener."

He says:

Some preachers leave in my mind a great new flaming idea that burns long after I have heard their sermon. Some arrest my vagrant thoughts with an imperial word of duty which lays its hand upon me and turns my steps into the narrow path of service. Some take up the sorrow that presses upon my spirit and show it to me as a glorious thing through which I may share the love that God eternally pours out upon all his children, and I go forth content to bear my burden in fellowship with Him who bears it with me. Some unroll great stretches of life before me which, until they touched my eyes, I had not seen, and I go out to live more widely in the large place in which God has set my feet. Some solve the difficulties in which my foolish mind so easily gets itself entangled, and my thought moves forward and my faith is more secure. Some take my timid hopes and launch them out upon a brave voyage; I almost faint to see them go but I must go with them and they bear me on to havens of undreamed of peace and joy.

But a sermon by Joseph Fort Newton, while it does all these, does not seem to do them, for it distributes its benefits over the whole area of my heart, bringing truth and strength and comfort and vision and trust and courage. But if you ask me what he said that brought these boons I cannot answer by chapter and verse from the sermon, for it has not

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142 Newton, River of Years, pp. 136, 139-40.
been his argument or his outline or his epigram that has quickened me. It is the sermon itself in the total appeal it has made to those innumerable springs of living water which lie below the surface of our hearts and which his words gently startle into action. When Newton's sermon is done I rise with an inner sensation as if my heart had been bathed and cleansed.

This was the way I felt on laying down his sermon on "The Presence" . . . . The sermon theme was the Presence, but it was more than a theme. The sermon was the carrier of the Presence. It actually radiated the personal Reality of which its words were symbols.143

"The Listener" then lists some specific effects of Newton's sermon on him. He says that he cannot go back to his drudgery with the same leaden feet after reading Newton. He cannot go back to his textbook on behaviorist psychology with the same complacent resignation toward a mechanistic interpretation of life. Further, something has beautified the tasks of office and mart and household. "The Listener" climaxes his list of effects with these words: "The faces of children and the people whom I pass in the street awaken in me fresh feelings of wonder and reverence as I think how we are all moving in an atmosphere of loving care, how for each of us, small and great, life's meaning is held in the heart of that great Companion whose comradeship, as we strive to find his will for our lives, and to do it, is the supreme blessing of our brief journey here."144

Under the heading "Dr. Newton's Greatest Sermon," John van Schaick, Jr., editor of The Universalist Leader, also discusses


144 Ibid.
Newton's sermon, "The Presence." He states that it is not often that a religious weekly publishes a sermon so full of blessing as that published by The Christian Century on "The Presence," by Newton. "And it is less often," says van Schaick, "that a published sermon elicits so beautiful a tribute as that by 'The Listener' in the July 2 issue of the same publication." In his own commentary on Newton's preaching and his sermon on "The Presence," van Schaick says:

The power of Dr. Newton to a considerable extent lies in the atmosphere which he creates while he preaches. Men take note of his ideas, but they are not the main thing. They note also the music of his voice and his phrasing, but these are incidental. When Dr. Newton is in his true form the receptive ones at least who hear him are swept along on a wave of religious feeling and thought, which inevitably profoundly affects their action.

In some of his sermons, and especially in this great sermon on "The Presence," Dr. Newton is able to build up this same atmosphere through the printed page. Just why, we don't know. It defies analysis.

Continuing a consideration of the effects of Newton's preaching, let us note two letters from the Newton file at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. On February 17, 1941 Mabel Humphries wrote the following words to Newton:

Each Sunday I leave St. Luke's filled with deep gratitude for the great privilege of hearing your message and each Sunday I feel I must write you. You give your listeners so much beauty, wisdom, love, courage, kindness, as well as a practical psychology for present-day needs, plus history, art, poetry, biography, that I think the Church should be filled by 10:10 instead of 11:10, the "deadline" for pew owners. What you teach is satisfying and creates a desire

145 John van Schaick, Jr., "Dr. Newton's Greatest Sermon," The Universalist Leader, XXVIII (August 1, 1925), 4.

146 Ibid.
for more knowledge and understanding.

Without meaning to preach or to seem better than my friends, I am quoting you frequently. You say so many things that fit so many problems. I have absorbed and thought about all these truths so that it is perfectly natural for me to inject them into my conversation.\(^{147}\)

It is not surprising that Newton kept this letter. Any minister would be pleased to know that his preaching was having this kind of an effect on his listeners.

On July 5, 1943 Miss M. Elizabeth McBride wrote, as follows, to Newton:

Since I have heard you preach every Sunday you have been in the pulpit since October, and since you have helped me more than any other minister in many years, I wish to thank you. You are giving so graciously the garnered wealth of the years, its value enhanced in passing through the medium of your personality. You speak "with authority," as the people said of Jesus, of that which you know. For many reasons in the past year my cup has been running over; but directly through you I have gained new courage, greater faith, a larger conception of God, a new reality in prayer, a deeper certainty of immortality.

Every Sunday I have covered the margins of the bulletins with stenographic notes. Occasionally I have found time to transcribe them and pass them on.\(^{148}\)

In terms of measurable results like the size of crowds, and from the standpoint of having a profound impact on many of his readers and listeners, Newton was an effective preacher. An indication of the scope of Newton's effectiveness was given by President Virgil Hancher of the University of Iowa, who introduced Newton when he spoke there.

\(^{147}\) Letter, Mabel Humphries to Joseph Fort Newton, February 17, 1941, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

\(^{148}\) Letter, Miss M. Elizabeth McBride to Joseph Fort Newton, July 5, 1943, in Ibid.
in 1946 at a combined honors convocation and baccalaureate service. In his introduction Hancher called Newton a "great preacher," adding, "He is a preacher sought for throughout the length and breadth of the United States."^{149} Indicative of the appeal that Newton had with people in general is a simple but significant statement, which Miss Hazel Brown made to me in complimenting the preaching of Newton when he was her pastor in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She said, "I looked forward to going to church."^{150}

Finally, with respect to the effects standard in communication, when The Christian Century, in 1924, asked ministers of many Protestant denominations to name the men of deepest and most prophetic vision, the men of outstanding pulpit power, the men whose messages, in their estimation, most vitally interpreted the mind of Christ, the pulpitateers whose thinking most deeply and potently influenced the thinking of the church and the course of events in the life of the nation, Newton was one of the twenty-five ministers who received the highest number of votes from among 25,000 responses.^{151}

Summary

As we look back at Newton's preaching in terms of the rhetorical standards for evaluating communication--the truth standard, the


^{150} Interview with Miss Hazel Brown, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

ethical standard, the artistic standard, and the effects standard, the following points stand out:

1. Newton's preaching was characterized by an emphasis on a few key subjects, which he considered to be vital to people and central in the message of the gospel—subjects such as God, Christ, the church, immortality, morality, the inner life of man, and prayer.

2. Newton looked to the Bible as an authoritative guide in religion, but he also looked to literature, philosophy, science, et cetera, for authority in religion; his ultimate authority was his own experience and insight.

3. Newton was recognized as one of the great religious leaders of his day; he was a respected scholar, preacher, and writer; theologically, he was conservative on some subjects and liberal on other subjects.

4. By most of his listeners and readers, Newton was perceived as a man of earnestness and integrity; a man of honesty and frankness in his treatment of issues; and a man who was genuinely concerned about the welfare of his audiences. Newton's fudging about his age in his final years; his denominational shifts; and his interest in psychic phenomena, along with his visit to a psychic, cast a shadow over his life, which could affect his ethical appeal with those who know about these situations.

5. In his preaching, Newton excelled in the wealth and variety of material he used; he excelled also in the effective
use of language. His delivery was characterized by good use of his voice; by the inclusion of his total person in his delivery; and by a manner of speaking, highly effective, but somewhat oratorical. Newton generally spoke from very few, if any, notes.

6. The principal effects of Newton's preaching were the large crowds of people he often attracted to his services; the outstanding growth of a number of the churches he pastored; the pronounced impact of his sermons, oral and written, on the thinking, the morale, and the lives of many, many people; and the high esteem in which he was held by contemporary ministers.

For more than half a century, Joseph Fort Newton was involved in the preaching and the writing of sermons. In the thinking of many people, these sermons were extremely beneficial. His written sermons have much to say to us today. Doubtlessly, many of his sermons will live on indefinitely in sermonic literature.

While Newton was an outstanding preacher, he was not always successful in his pastoral leadership. Although many problems were inherent in the following situations, a more capable or aggressive leader may have found an answer: his failure to lead the First Baptist Church of Paris, Texas and the First Christian Church of the same city to a merger, when one was possible; his relatively short (two and a half years) pastorate in London, which was made even shorter when you subtract the time he used in making several trips, though necessary, back to the United States; his failure in New York to find a
more workable plan for church growth and operation; and the failure of the plan for making St. James' Church in Philadelphia the city or cathedral type church that was planned, which failure contributed to Newton's withdrawal from the pastoral scene for three years.

On January 26, 1950, following Newton's death on January 24, an editorial in The Cedar Rapids Gazette said that there are many good men in the world, but one of the misfortunes of humanity is that not many of them have the scope of education and experience, the skill for expression, and the opportunity to make their influence felt. Then the editorial stated: "Dr. Newton was one of the few who had all these advantages. He made the most of them."152

It is significant to note that Newton's practice of the art of preaching exemplified, in a number of important ways, his own theory of preaching. Although his rhetorical theory is examined in detail in the remaining chapters of the dissertation, it is pertinent to mention here that Newton, in his practice of preaching, exemplified, in particular, the following points from his own theory:

1. Emphasize in your preaching the vital subjects in religion.153

2. Give detailed consideration to the nature of the audience addressed, and let this consideration be reflected in the material, the organization, and the language of the


sermon.  

3. Utilize a direct manner in the delivery of the sermon—avoiding whenever possible and practical, any potential barrier to directness, such as extensive notes or a manuscript.  

4. Since preaching is so vital to religion, bring to your preaching the very best that you can offer it, in knowledge and skill.  

Newton's interest in the theory of preaching contributed to his success as a preacher. Also, his experience and ability as a preacher contributed to the high quality of his rhetoric, or homiletics. From his own participation in so many different preaching situations, and from his diligent study of the preaching of other ministers, Newton developed a significant body of rhetorical thought, which is found principally, but not exclusively, in his 1930 publication, The New Preaching. In Homiletic Review, Gaius Glenn Atkins calls The New Preaching the most creative book on preaching produced in a decade.

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154 See Chapter V, pp. 268-71; Chapter VI, pp. 316-24; and Chapter VII, p. 333.

155 See Chapter VII, pp. 338-42.

156 See Chapter V, pp. 286-88; Chapter VI, pp. 307-08; and Chapter VII, pp. 330-32.


Having evaluated Newton's preaching, and having noted that in important ways, Newton exemplified his theory of preaching in his practice of preaching, let us turn our attention in the remaining chapters of the dissertation to a detailed analysis of his rhetorical, or homiletical, theory.
CHAPTER V

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON ON INVENTION

Classical rhetoricians divide rhetoric into five parts or canons: invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and delivery. This division is fairly standard in all major rhetorical works after Aristotle until the eighteenth century. ¹ Although minor changes in the meaning of the terms are developed in various rhetorics, the basic pattern remains the same "until the time of George Campbell, when memory practically drops out of the analysis."²

In Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, Edward P. J. Corbett says that the beginning of all discourse is a subject.³ The subject and what is said about it is invention, the first canon of classical rhetoric. "The concept of invention includes the entire investigative undertaking, the idea of the status, and the modes of persuasion--logical, emotional, and ethical--in all of their complex interrelations."⁴

²Ibid.
⁴Thonssen and Baird, Speech Criticism, p. 79.
In preaching, then, as in other types of public speaking, a proper concern is subject matter, or content. What does the preacher talk about? Where does he get his material? What kind of material does he use in a given rhetorical situation? These are questions which relate to the inventive part of a preacher's rhetorical effort. Nonverbal elements of preaching—setting, symbols such as the cross, and ritual—also are components of a minister's invention.

From the viewpoint of Joseph Fort Newton, what should the preacher say? This is the key question of Chapter V of the dissertation. Appropriate concerns in answering the question are: What are the sources of sermon material? What is the place of logical, emotional, and ethical appeal? What is the significance of nonverbal elements? These concerns are both distinctive and interrelated.

The views of Newton on invention are discussed in the chapter under the following headings: (1) The Subject Matter of Preaching; (2) The Central Issue in Preaching; (3) Logical Invention; (4) Emotional Invention; (5) Ethical Invention; and (6) Nonverbal Elements. To a consideration of each of these aspects of Newton's rhetorical theory of invention, let us now turn.

The Subject Matter of Preaching

For Newton, the content of preaching is the gospel of Christ in its creative, conquering, and redeeming wonder; the same gospel

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5For a definition of "rhetorical situation," see Chapter I, p. 18.
that stirred the souls of Francis, Luther, and Wesley—the eternal faith with larger realizations and wider applications to these new and changed times.  

When Newton says that the preacher's message is the gospel of Christ, he means that certain material is included and other material is excluded. He declares that men do not go to church to learn about science, philosophy, or art, as useful as such studies may be. On the contrary, they go needing and seeking something else—longing to hear a voice out of the heavens, telling them of the things eyes have not seen nor ears heard. In Newton's thinking, people go to church seeking the healing touch, the forgiving word, the hand put forth in darkness, which makes them know that they are not alone in their struggle for the good.

In his sermon on "The House of the Seer," Newton points out that a sermon should (1) make the eternal reality real; (2) lift weary human souls into the presence of God and detain them there; (3) bring healing to the wounded; and (4) bring hope to those in despair.

From Newton's viewpoint, the minister stands as a witness to the reality and authority of the ideal and the immutable necessity of loyalty to it. Further, the minister bears testimony in behalf of the

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life of the spirit, reminding men that their happiness depends not upon things but upon morals. According to Newton, the minister should seek to recall men from the glitter and semblance of life to homage for truth, beauty, righteousness, and character, from the passing show to the eternal realities which, because they are eternal and real, are the only things that really matter.\(^9\)

What the preacher does not talk about was for Newton a very important consideration. Writing in 1930, when from his view a new and improved type of preaching was becoming prominent, Newton said that the new preaching was impatient with sectarianism, finding it intolerably petty in face of the real facts of the gospel and the world. The new preaching was not concerned to debate dead dogmas, but, rather, to poise its bright lance against the real enemies of Christ—the wickedness of war; the atheism of so much of our industrial order; and the materialism which, to gain temporary advantage, imperils the existence, no less than the security, of society. Further, according to Newton, against racial rancor, religious bigotry, and blind greed, the new preaching was aiming its darts with the insight and passion of the prophets of old, in the name of Him in whose gospel hate is the supreme sin and love is the sovereign reality.\(^10\)

In an obvious allusion to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy prominent on the religious scene at the time, Newton said in 1924: "Many preachers today are so troubled about reconciling

\(^9\)Ibid., pp. 107-08.

revelation with the shifting phases of thought that they forget the Divine message, as Christian on the Hill of Difficulty forgot his scroll.\(^{11}\) Newton complained that other preachers were shrinking from declaring the whole counsel of God and, consequently, were shorn of power. In Newton's thinking, another group of preachers, infected by the nervous, jumpy mind of the time, obsessed by motors, movies, and jazz, were but one of the dramatic entertainments which the world enjoys for an hour and then forgets. "Any of these," concluded Newton, "is a surrender, an abdication of authority, a loss of leadership."\(^{12}\)

According to Newton, ministers should preach on subjects related to people's basic spiritual needs. He elaborates:

While the new preaching is toiling in the midst of new visions of truth, it does not forget that the human heart is very old . . . . Man has sought him out many inventions, but he has not made the smile of a babe more sweet, or salt tears less salty, since the first child crowed in a cradle or the last mother wept by a tomb. Nor has the new knowledge hushed the cry of the soul for something beyond time and sense, something cleaner than our minds, clearer than our vision, newer than the buds of spring, fresher than the song of a bird at dawn; something which baffles all but the pure in heart and the doers of the will of God. These old needs are as urgent today, and will be tomorrow, as they were when Solomon reigned in all his glory, or the Son of Man lodged with the fishermen by the sea.\(^{13}\)

For sermon material, preachers, in Newton's theory, should look to certain key sources: (1) the Bible; (2) the masters of the

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\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) Newton, *The New Preaching*, pp. 85-86.
Spirit; (3) experiences with people; and (4) a personal relationship with God. In Newton's thinking, other sources such as literature, science, sociology, psychology, and current events, also are useful in sermon preparation.\textsuperscript{14}

In his own preaching, Newton very frequently used the Bible as a source of material. His high regard for the Bible is indicated in the words below from his sermon, "The Supremacy of the Bible":

My subject takes it to be a fact that the Bible is the one supreme Book of the world. And so it is. Argument is unnecessary; the fact proves it. No one who denies it has any regard at all either for the witness of history or for the realities of life. \ldots

\ldots There is no need that anyone defend the Bible. It is the Bible that defends us from the besieging vanities of life, from the rude cynicism of the world, from the lusts of the flesh and the fear of the grave. What men need to do is to be still and listen to its great and simple words, telling the story of God and the Soul and their eternal life together.\ldots\textsuperscript{15}

In this same sermon Newton declares that wherever the Bible goes, there go light and hope, and noble human living--tenderness in the family, righteousness in the state, and honor among men. "What the Bible has meant to our poor humanity," says Newton, "and will yet mean to unknown ages hidden in the womb of time, by virtue of its power to cleanse the sinful, heal the broken of heart, and lift into faith and love those attacked by despair, wasted by weariness, or worn with

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15}Joseph Fort Newton, "The Supremacy of the Bible," The Biblical World, XLVII (March, 1916), 167-68.
grief, no mortal pen can recite." In a question in his Life Victo-
rious, Newton emphasizes in a very practical way his respect for the
Bible. He asks: "Why not devote the hours wasted on poor scribblers
to the Book by which the Saints were led—the Book which shows us, as
in a mirror, what we are and what we ought to be?"

For Newton, another key source of material for preaching is
the masters of the Spirit. In The New Preaching, Newton says that
sooner or later men will discover that the inner life of faith,
vision, and power is also a realm of law, order, and beauty, where
truth is the trophy of obedience and liberty is the fruit of disci-
pline. Newton feels that psychology is confirming one after another
what he calls the old laws of the spiritual life, which, according to
Newton, were learned by the mystics long ago, obedience to which, he
adds, sent Francis singing through the world and made Wesley a
redeemer of England from rot and revolution. In Newton's thinking,
the power whereby they, and others of like daring adventure, trans-
formed their times is with us still, once we know its laws and yield
ourselves to it. To that end, in Newton's rhetoric, the new preach-
ing will take deep counsel of the masters of the Spirit, who have
charted its laws and moods and roads, the better to help men to know
their own hearts.

16 Ibid., p. 173.
17 Joseph Fort Newton, Life Victorious (New York: Fleming H.
According to Newton, experiences with people are a vital source of sermon material. He feels that unless the man in the pulpit has felt the deep hurt and heartache of humanity, unless he knows the rough places, the dangerous turns, the dismal stretches of the old, winding road, and something of what the pilgrims carry in their packs, he cannot minister to people's needs, much less lead them far along the way they are seeking to go. Newton believes that the preacher must live with the people if he is to know their problems. 19 In his stress on experiences with people as a source for sermonic content, Newton anticipates a view of David K. Berlo, a twentieth-century communication scholar. Berlo says that communication represents an attempt to couple two organisms, to bridge the gap between two individuals through the production and reception of messages which have meanings for both. He states that at best, this is an impossible task; but adds that interactive communication approaches this ideal. "When two people interact," Berlo explains, "they put themselves into each other's shoes, try to perceive the world as the other person perceives it, try to predict how the other will respond." 20 In Newton's thinking, experiences with people help the preacher to perceive the world as they perceive it. This perception on the part of the preacher would contribute to what Berlo calls "interactive communication."

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19 Ibid., pp. 40-41.

A final key source of material for the preacher in Newton's rhetoric is a personal relationship with God. As mentioned above, Newton felt that the preacher must live with the people if he is to know their problems. Additionally, according to Newton, the preacher must live with God if he is to solve them.\textsuperscript{21} Newton's concern about preachers having a personal experience with God can be seen in words like the following:

The great truths of faith, which are the themes of the pulpit, must be known by an immediate and profound personal sense of divine things, if we are to speak with power and persuade others . . . What Milton said of the poet is equally true of his kinsman, the preacher: "He who would be a true poet ought himself to be a true poem—not presuming to sing high praises of what is worthy unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that is praise-worthy."\textsuperscript{22}

In \textit{The New Preaching}, Newton states that no eloquence of tongue, charm of manner, or artistry of homiletics can atone for a lack or loss of a vital inward experience of spiritual reality. In the lives of the great preachers, according to Newton, one nearly always finds a golden year, a shining day—sometimes a single luminous hour—which gives the key to their career. After this year, day, or hour, these preachers, in Newton's view, ceased to stammer; and their sermons moved with the lilt and lift of lyrics.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21}Newton, \textit{The New Preaching}, p. 41.
\item \textsuperscript{22}Joseph Fort Newton, ed., \textit{Best Sermons}, 1927 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), p. x.
\item \textsuperscript{23}Newton, \textit{The New Preaching}, p. 57.
\end{itemize}
Commenting further on the preacher's experience of spiritual reality, Newton says:

Whether the vision flash suddenly or dawn slowly, as determined by temperament, it is the Pearl of Great Price to the preacher, the ineffable, all-solving word of his ministry. The word used to describe it does not matter: it is an experience of union with the Whole which gives unity to the entire personality, body, mind, and spirit, evoking every power of being—sometimes, it would seem, actually discovering new capacities—making the whole man an instrument for the expression of the life of God in the soul.24

Along with an initial spiritual experience, the minister, in Newton's view, needs day by day spiritual perception. He calls the latter "the seer-like quality of soul." He writes: "As we see it in the mighty prophets, it is a power of spiritual perception by which Beauty is found in barren places, as when Hosea discovered in a desolating personal tragedy a new dimension of the love of God; or a moral divination of the trend of facts, forces, events, such as led Isaiah to oppose an alliance with Egypt as a covenant with hell, which it turned out to be."25 Applying this concept of spiritual awareness to the contemporary preacher, Newton says that in any field of vision—the lonely sorrow of a broken heart, the outworking of a national policy, or the crisis of the church—the seer discerns not only what is there, but what may be there, if the waiting will of God is allowed to rule, and what will befall if that will is ignored.26

24 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
25 Ibid., p. 41.
26 Ibid., pp. 41-42.
In summary, in Newton's rhetorical theory, the minister looks
to the gospel of Christ for the subject matter of his preaching. Fur-
ther, the preacher makes prominent in each of his rhetorical situa-
tions those basic truths of the gospel which have particular relevance
to the spiritual needs of his congregation. According to Newton, key
sources of material for the preacher are the Bible; the masters of the
Spirit—the great Christians of history; experiences with people; and
a vital personal relationship with God.

The Central Issue in Preaching

Newton sees preaching as one aspect of the ministry of the
church. He believes that the church can bring light in darkness and
healing for the deep hurts of humanity, and that it is the mission of
preaching to help to do it.27 This view of preaching as one phase of
the program of the church can be seen in the following quotation from
Newton in which he commends one of the publications of Charles E. Je-
ferson:

Some of us regard The Building of the Church as one of
the best of all the historic series of Yale Lectures, if
only because it approaches the preacher through the church.
The thesis of the lectures . . . is that preaching involves
not one man only, but a society of men and women. The ser-
mon does not grow out of the soul of the preacher alone, but
out of the deep heart of the church. It is not the preacher
who makes the church; it is the church which makes the
preacher. He does not shape himself, but is moulded by the
communal life and faith of a body of believers, and gives

27Ibid.
back what he receives.\textsuperscript{28}

For Newton, therefore, the church does not exist for preaching, but, rather, preaching for the church.

In Newton's rhetoric, the principal task of the preacher is the impartation of a body of truth, presented in such a way that it relates to the thought patterns of the contemporary mind. For Newton, the vital spiritual issue is not what our age is asking of religion, but the undertone of God in every age and what He is demanding of our generation.\textsuperscript{29} In Newton's thinking, it is a tangled, troubled world in which ministers preach and their people listen, its life woven of good and ill, where men and women are illumined by love, blighted by passion, entrapped by intrigue, exalted by sacrifice, glorified by courage. Therefore, for Newton, the central issue in preaching is this: the world needs the gospel of Christ, told in simple words and incarnated in lives of grace and truth; a gospel more gentle than its gentilities, more reasonable than its rationalism, more human than its humanism, more practical than its pragmatism, more real than its realism, and profounder than all its philosophies.\textsuperscript{30}

With manifest sympathy for his fellow preachers in their efforts to be true to their real purpose, Newton says that they have no easy task, trying to bring high truth home to moving-picture minds,


\textsuperscript{29}Newton, \textit{The New Preaching}, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 111.
in a day of moral chaos and paprika cleverness. Newton reasons that
the keyboard of the modern mind is new, and that they have not yet
learned to play on it. "But the realities remain," he continues, "and
the ancient needs of the heart; and if we interpret them in terms of
our time—not using a violin as if it were a 'cello—there will be
ears to hear." 31

Central to preaching for Newton is the gospel, which itself
centers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Newton's emphasis on Christ-
centered preaching is evident in a reference he makes to a sermon he
heard W. E. Orchard preach. Newton says:

With the lift of God in his face he cried: "You need Christ,
and I can give him to you!" Surely that is the ultimate
grace and glory of the pulpit—the living Christ mediated to
men. It recalled the oft repeated record in the Journal of
Wesley, in respect of the companies to whom he preached: "I
gave them Christ." It was more than an offer; it was a sac-
rament of communication. 32

In the following words from his sermon "My Christ," Newton
indicates that in his own thinking and preaching, Christ was central:

For some what follows may seem to be a series of wild words,
but it is not. Instead, it is a calm understatement of the
reality of Christ as life, and time, and trial, and struggle
have given me to see it. Blessed, or cursed, with an intel-
lect critical, analytical, of ultra-conservative cast and
habit of thought, tinged by a temperament which, if it had
its way, would make this world dismal and dun-coloured—it is
surely significant that a mind so made up finds itself, mid-
way in this mortal life, a devoted lover of Christ and a hum-
ble student of the great mystics. . . . Studying Christ is
like looking at a sunrise: each man who looks is filled with
the beauty and glory of it, but the splendour is

31 Joseph Fort Newton, Preaching in New York (New York: George

32 Newton, Some Living Masters of the Pulpit, pp. 94-95.
undiminished. 33

An indication of Newton's stress on preaching Christ and preaching for conversions to Christ can be seen in Some Living Masters of the Pulpit in his commendation of George W. Truett's preaching. Newton says that Truett's explicit and purposeful preaching for conversions makes it very worth-while to study him. Calling Truett an adherent of the older conception of Christianity, Newton says that he is by that much ahead of the times, adding that the glib young liberals, who imagine they are progressive, are far behind. For, reasons Newton, unless preachers are winners of human souls, they are not messengers of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. 34

In summary, the central issue in preaching, according to Newton, is that in the context of the overall ministry of the church, the preacher should proclaim the gospel of Christ. The preacher's goal in this proclamation should be to influence people to become followers of Christ.

Logical Invention

Important speeches in religion, government, business, and other areas of activity, generally deal with points of fact, the validity of beliefs, or the appropriateness of proposed actions or policies. We become concerned in rhetorical theory, therefore, with


34 Newton, Some Living Masters of the Pulpit, p. 228.
goals such as proving a proposition or influencing listeners' behavior. How do we accomplish these goals? Rhetoricians since Aristotle usually have accepted his concept that there are three modes of persuasion; namely, logical, emotional, and ethical. While there is considerable overlap in rhetorical practice with regard to these modes of persuasion, or kinds of proof, they commonly are distinguished in rhetorical theory as follows. Logical proof is support for a proposition derived from evidence and argument, or reasoning. Facts, examples, statistics, and testimony are common forms of evidence. Reasoning is often classified as being either inductive (reasoning from the particular to the general) or deductive (reasoning from the general to the particular). Emotional proof is support for a proposition derived from an appeal to one or more of the human emotions—love, hate, fear, pride, et cetera. Ethical proof is support for a proposition derived from the speaker himself; that is, the audience's perception of, and respect for, such characteristics of the speaker as his intelligence, his character, his sincerity, and his concern for the welfare of the audience.

Our interest in this section of the chapter is with Newton's views on logical proof, or invention. In subsequent sections, we shall look at his ideas on emotional and ethical invention. The importance of logical materials in public speaking is freely admitted. Speakers serve as middlemen between reasonable ideas and the world of reality in which those ideas can appropriately take root. Public speeches that are noteworthy deal with ideas that make a difference in the affairs of men and society. Consequently, a seriousness of design
characterizes the majority of speeches which critics pronounce significant. 35

How, then, did Newton advise preachers to develop their sermons so as to accomplish their goals in preaching? As already noted in this chapter, 36 for sermon materials, or evidence, Newton recommended that the preacher look to the Bible, the lives of great Christians, experiences with people, and his own religious experience, or relationship with God. In Newton's thinking, along with these key sources of evidence for sermons, other sources such as literature, science, sociology, psychology, and current events, are useful.

With regard to reasoning in sermons, Newton strongly advocated the use of induction. Writing in 1930, he said that the whole spirit and method of thought of the day was inductive. He reasoned, therefore, that if preachers were to win the people of the day to the truths of faith, they needed to use the method by which the people found truth in other fields. 37

In giving his rationale for his advocacy of inductive reasoning in preaching, Newton recalls that in former days, the Bible text of a sermon was assumed to be true; and the preacher only needed to expound its meaning, deduce its lessons, and apply them. He explains that a brief text often was used to support a vast amount of theology; and so long as people accepted both the text and the theology, all

35 Thonssen and Baird, *Speech Criticism*, p. 332.
36 See pp. 262-67.
went well. He says that the formula, "The Bible teaches an idea; therefore, the idea is true; the church affirms the idea; therefore, the idea is valid," is still sufficient for those who accept such authorities. But in an age of inquiry, when the authority of the Bible and the church is questioned by so many people, reasons Newton, such an appeal does not carry conviction. He adds that preachers may wish it were otherwise; but they must face the facts, he feels, and be wise enough to win men on their own terms, remembering that preachers are persuaders, not soldiers, fishers of men, and not mere critics. Further, Newton feels that if by appeal to the facts of life, preachers can show the truths of faith to be real, they have reestablished the authority of the Bible and the church.  

In their reasoning in sermons, preachers may give their generalizations first (deduction) or last (induction). The key issue, perhaps, is this: does the audience accept the generalizations as truth? In the final analysis, we come back to the question of the source of authority in religion. Of vital importance to the preacher in his attempt to influence an audience, of course, is whether or not the audience accepts the same source of authority that he accepts. If it does, he normally can proceed deductively. If it does not, he may be more effective, if he proceeds inductively. Hopefully, from the ethical standpoint, unless he is trying to corroborate a point, the preacher, in his effort to influence an audience, will not use a source of authority which his audience accepts, but which he does not

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38 Ibid., pp. 139-40.
accept. That is, if he does not accept the Bible as authoritative, for example, but his audience does, he should not attempt to prove his point by the Bible unless he believes the point himself on the basis of some source of authority other than the Bible.

If a preacher's source of authority in religion is not the Bible or the church, it may be science, life, experience, or something else. As is discussed in Chapter IV of this dissertation, Newton's authority in religion was, in some respects, a combination of sources, which included the Bible, literature, philosophy, and science, as well as other sources; but his own personal experience was his ultimate authority.

Although Newton was concerned with the issue of source of authority in his advocacy of the use of the inductive method in preaching, his primary reason for recommending its use was his conviction that the method was a valuable contemporary tool for the minister to use to help people to respond favorably to the message of the gospel. Further development of Newton's ideas on induction is given in Chapter VI—Joseph Fort Newton on Organization, since induction, under the heading "Exploration," is part of his five word method of approach to what he calls the confused mind of the times.

In summary, in his theory of logical invention, Newton advised the preacher to look not only to the Bible for evidence, or material,

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40 See Chapter VI, pp. 320-23.
for his sermons, but also to the experiences of great Christians of
history, as well as to his own experiences with people, and to his
individual relationship with God. With Newton's strong recommendation
for experiential types of evidence, it is not surprising that he also
stressed inductive reasoning as the method of argument to use in
preaching, since the generalization at the end of an inductive chain
of reasoning often depends on the accumulation of a number of signif-
icant examples or experiences. Further, in Newton's thinking, the
inductive method of reasoning was an effective way of dealing with the
problem of declining respect for the Bible and the church as sources
of authority in religion.

Emotional Invention

Most rhetoricians have stressed the necessity for emotional
proof in persuasive public speaking. One who did so was George Camp-
bell, eighteenth-century British rhetorician, who said very emphat-
ically:

The coolest reasoner always in persuading addreseth himself
to the passions some way or other. This he cannot avoid
doing, if he speak to that purpose. To make me believe it
is enough to show me that things are so; to make me act, it
is necessary to show that the action will answer some end.
That can never be an end to me which gratifies no passion or
affection in my nature.42

It is a mistake to assume, as many people do, that logical
invention and emotional invention are mutually exclusive, or that a

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42 James L. Golden and Edward P. J. Corbett, eds., The Rhetoric
of Blair, Campbell, and Whately (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Win-
speech usually consists of only one of these types of proof. Some speeches, of course, contain a preponderance of one or the other, but many speeches contain considerable logical proof and considerable emotional proof. Further, these forms of proof frequently are intertwined. As Wayne E. Brockriede, a contemporary rhetorical scholar, observes: "The dimensions of rhetoric are interrelational: each dimension bears a relationship to every other dimension."44

The twentieth-century American rhetorician James Albert Winans reminds us that we often meet a prejudice against the very words "feeling" and "emotion." He believes that this is due in part to a misuse of the words. Says Winans: "The prejudice is often really against excessive emotion, against control by emotion in defiance of reason, or against the over-free expression of emotion. Perhaps a better word to express the thing objected to is sentimentality."45 For Winans, emotion is a constant factor in our mental behavior, unless we reach absolute indifference. He believes that even our reasons are usually emotions.46

The fact that some public speakers use emotional proof excessively or inappropriately should not cause us to refrain from using it


46Ibid.
in a judicious and ethical manner in public speaking, because it is an effective means of making truth more palatable, and, accordingly, more decisive in the social process.  

With regard to the thinking of Joseph Fort Newton on the use of emotional proof in preaching, let us first of all note that he was opposed to the use of non-intellectually-based emotional appeals. We see indication of this opposition in Preaching in New York in his reference to "the Old Gospel Tent" evangelists. He says:

At 110th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, not far from the gates of Columbia University, stands the Old Gospel Tent, where revival services are held. Nowhere is real evangelism more needed than in New York, but, alas, the men of the Old Gospel Tent think it more important to denounce Darwin and defy the University—challenging its Professors to debate, describing them as "baboon boosters," "monkey-lovers," and the like. . . . To such a depth has Christian evangelism fallen that it must play at clap-trap, belittling philosophy and ridiculing science. 

After referring to the Old Gospel Tent evangelists, Newton suggested, in the following words, characteristics which he liked in evangelistic preaching: "How one longs for the tender, human appeal of Gypsy Smith, the spiritual common sense of Moody, or the winsomeness of George Truett."

Along with his opposition to non-intellectually-based emotional appeals, Newton was opposed to excessive emotionalism of any kind in preaching. This is evident in his criticism of Evangelist

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47 Thomsen and Baird, Speech Criticism, p. 359.

48 Newton, Preaching in New York, pp. 136-37.

49 Ibid., p. 137.
Billy Sunday. While Newton was pastoring in Dixon, Illinois, Sunday held a series of meetings there. In his autobiography Newton describes Sunday's sermon at the first service as "amazing." He elaborates:

It pictured God as a gigantic snake, coiled, its head weaving, ready to strike the people—a deliberate appeal to the most primitive of fears. As a snake-dance it was a success; but it was the most ghastly caricature of religion—to say nothing of the Gospel of Jesus—which it has ever been my sadness to hear.  

Although Newton was opposed to such abuses of emotional appeal in preaching as "clap-trap" and "deliberate appeal to the most primitive of fears," he strongly advocated that preachers feel very deeply what they say in their sermons, as is evident in his definition of preaching as "the urgent announcement of a message." This view of Newton's echoes the thinking of the eighteenth-century British rhetorician Hugh Blair, who said that the internal emotion of the speaker adds a pathos to his words, his looks, his gestures, and his whole manner, which exerts a power almost irresistible over those who hear him. While feeling a sermon would reflect itself primarily in the delivery of the sermon, the need to feel it could influence a preacher in regard to the total investigation and development of his subject.


52 Golden and Corbett, eds., The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately, p. 124.
The most important point in Newton's thinking on emotional proof, then, is that the preacher himself should be profoundly moved in regard to his sermon and the challenge of the preaching situation. Newton declared that faith is seldom, if ever, the fruit of argument. Reflecting George Campbell's classification of the ends of speaking, 53 Newton said that for faith to come to a listener, his mind must be convinced; but, in addition, his heart must be warmed, and his will must be moved. 54

As for specific directions to preachers for warming the hearts of listeners, or eliciting an emotional response from them, Newton was silent. To stir an audience, he said only that the preacher himself should be stirred. It appears that, for Newton, a preacher who is alive to God, or aware of the life of God in him, by contagion, is able to make other people alive to God, or aware of the life of God in them. Conversely, in Newton's thinking, "until the supreme reality of religious faith commands the intellect of the preacher and subdues his heart, no matter how learned or eloquent he may be, there is no power of persuasion." 55

In his own preaching, Newton used emotional proof; but he appealed to what are commonly labeled the higher emotions--love, loyalty, adventure, companionship, et cetera. In his youth, he had heard

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53 To enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, to influence the will. In Corbett and Golden, eds., The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately, p. 145.

54 Newton, River of Years, p. 346.

preachers use very strong appeals to fear, which, from his viewpoint, were inappropriate.\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps this experience, plus his basically intellectual approach to life, religion, and preaching, caused him to refrain from more extensive use of emotional proof.

Newton was aware of the benefit of appropriate emotional appeal in preaching. For instance, in his comments on the preaching of Dean Inge, Newton says that there was no unction in his preaching, no pathos. He describes Inge's preaching as cold intellect, with never a touch of tenderness. He says that much of what Inge said was more able than weighty, more brilliant than moving, leaving one wiser rather than better, abashed rather than lifted.\textsuperscript{57}

In regard to emotional invention, in summary, Newton was emphatic in his condemnation of abuses of emotional appeal. Further, his nature, experience, and training seemed to incline him away from strong, direct emotional appeal in general. Yet, as a preacher, Newton was absorbed by his message, felt it deeply, and communicated his feeling. He advised other preachers to speak with this same sense of urgency and deep feeling. While preachers can appreciate his general advice, knowing that following it will contribute to beneficial results, doubtlessly they would have welcomed from Newton some specific suggestions for warming the hearts of listeners and helping them to experience the religious feeling which he stresses in his writings.

\textsuperscript{56}Newton, \textit{River of Years}, pp. 29, 47.

\textsuperscript{57}Newton, \textit{Some Living Masters of the Pulpit}, p. 58.
Newton was fully aware of the fact that emotions are important in all of life's experiences. In the following words, he makes that point clear; then he adds his simple, but meaningful, recommendation for approaching the human heart:

The human heart remains the same in its needs, its aspirations, its lonely, wistful yearnings, and its broodings on the dim hereafter never fade or die. Today, as in all the past, to any fresh or earnest word on these intimate and mysterious themes men listen with ... eagerness ... 58

Ethical Invention

It is a widely recognized fact that some preachers are more effective than others in their preaching because of their personal, or ethical, appeal with audiences. A number of preachers seem to react in a frustrated or unwise manner to this fact. They may do sensational things in an effort to enhance their image with their audiences; they may try to sound intellectual in their preaching; they may try to be a very popular preacher in the community; or they may try too hard to please their audiences. Other preachers take more constructive steps to improve or maintain their image with their congregations. For example, they may prepare their sermons more thoroughly; they may be more helpful to people in their times of need; or they may be more pleasant, more genuine in their relationships with their audiences. Regardless of how preachers respond to the situation, the fact remains that audiences listen not just to a sermon, but to a person preaching.

Books on preaching and the life of the minister stress the importance of the preacher himself to success in preaching. In his Yale Lectures on Preaching, entitled The Building of the Church, Charles E. Jefferson has some valuable comments on the subject. For instance, Jefferson says: "Laziness, cowardice, vanity, impatience, untruthfulness, envy, ambition, hypocrisy, meanness—are these not sins which eat into the lives of preachers and work havoc in the church of God?" Jefferson feels that the preacher must subject himself to rigid and continuous discipline. He believes that the gate which opens into pulpit power is narrow. In his thinking, every moral delinquency reports itself in the preacher's accent, and every secret sin comes to judgment in his preaching. He adds: "It is the preacher who is the sermon, and it is this sermon which the world remembers." Let us note one final remark from Jefferson concerning the personal appeal of the preacher. He says that sermons are like bullets. "How far they go," he feels, "does not depend upon the text or upon the structure of the sermon, but upon the texture of the manhood of the preacher."

Let us turn our attention now to the thinking of Joseph Fort Newton on that crucial part of the preaching situation called ethical invention. In his discussion of the preaching of George W. Truett in


60 Ibid., p. 301.

61 Ibid., p. 277.
Some Living Masters of the Pulpit, Newton makes an interesting reference to a very well-known work in classical rhetorical theory, The Rhetoric of Aristotle. Referring to it on the subject of Truett's ethical appeal, Newton says:

According to Aristotle--whose book on Rhetoric every preacher should study, if only to learn that rhetoric is not mere cookery, as Plato said in contempt--the office of the orator is persuasion, for which three qualities are necessary: prudence, moral excellence, and the good of the hearers at heart. No man fulfills these conditions more perfectly than Dr. Truett, whose character lights up like an altar lamp the teaching of his words.62

Newton's awareness of the benefit of ethical appeal in preaching is further evident in additional remarks, as follows, which he makes about Truett, in whom he saw ethical appeal so well demonstrated:

More than an evangelist, he is an evangel. As a rough man put it, unconsciously paying a high tribute, "He is a man who means it without trying to." His sincerity is not simply transparent, it is luminous. Men know that he loves them--they feel it--and that his one wish is to win them to Christ, and that to that end he spends his power without thought of himself.63

Newton continues his praise of Truett and his analysis of Truett's ethical appeal. He writes:

... in his character as a Christ-anointed evangelist I doubt if Dr. Truett is surpassed by any man in our generation. Edmund Burke said of Charles Fox: "That man was made to be loved"; but his remark is of far nobler application to George Truett. He was made to be loved. Indeed, it may be truly said that he does his best work through the exalted and wonderful love which he unconsciously and inevitably draws toward himself. People do not try, do not care to analyze or define his power; they simply love him as one altogether

62 Newton, Some Living Masters of the Pulpit, pp. 222-23.
63 Ibid., p. 223.
worthy of their homage and affection.64

In a further reference to Truett, Newton alludes to the responsibility of the preacher who has such outstanding personal appeal. Newton declares: "Here is a burden of confidence and devotion to make a man tremble; and it must be added that no one ever used an opportunity with higher seriousness or nobler power."65 Newton says that back into the hearts of the people, Truett "pours through their love a tide of holy manhood, seeking to lift them by their love into the redeeming fellowship of the great Lover."66

Of all the types of public speakers, good character is perhaps more essential to a preacher than it is to any other type of speaker—not that it is unessential for politicians, teachers, lawyers, et cetera. Newton sees good character as a need for preachers of any period of time. He says that the minister of today, as in all past days, must learn to live where insight is pure and piercing, where moral earnestness rises into passion, and where the ancient oracle of God repeats its truth to the heart. According to Newton, the preacher must look upon life with purified and exalted vision; his vision must become utterance; and his utterance must commend itself by the integrity of his intellect and his life.67 For Newton, the secret of service as a

64Ibid., p. 229.

65Ibid.

66Ibid., pp. 229-30.

preacher lies in this paradox: "Truth taken into the heart sanctifies the life, and life sanctified reveals the truth." 68

In his emphasis on the importance of good character to a preacher, Newton stands in the tradition of Christian rhetoricians like Augustine and George Campbell. Augustine said that the life of a speaker has greater force to make him persuasive than the grandeur of his eloquence, however great that may be. He declared that preachers may do good to many people by preaching even what they do not live up to, but added that they would do good to far more people by practicing what they preached. 69 George Campbell stated that it had become a common topic with rhetoricians, that, in order to be a successful speaker, one must be a good man; "for to be good," reasoned Campbell, "is the only sure way of being long esteemed good, and to be esteemed good," he continued, "is previously necessary to one's being heard with due attention and regard." 70

In addition to emphasizing the importance of good character to a preacher, Newton also stressed the importance to the preacher of extensive knowledge—another commonly accepted element of ethical invention. It was Newton's view that no mental endowment or training is too high for a minister. In this view, Newton echoed the thinking


70 Golden and Corbett, eds., The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately, p. 225.
of the Roman orator and rhetorician Cicero, who felt that a person who aspires to distinction as a public speaker should have vast knowledge—"knowledge of everything important, and of all liberal arts," Cicero said, "for his language must be ornate and copious from knowledge, since, unless there be beneath the surface matter understood and felt by the speaker, oratory becomes an empty and almost puerile flow of words."71

In his rhetorical theory, Newton says that the preacher must know the following:

1. Something of the spirit and facts of science, the propositions of philosophy, the definitions and distinctions of historic theology, and the great ethnic religions of the race;

2. The lives of saints and skeptics;

3. The currents of history and the disclosures of sociology;

4. The findings of psychology, its insight into broken minds, its art of dealing with sick souls; and

5. The riches of literature, art, and song.72

Aware that he has called for tremendous knowledge on the part of the preacher, Newton says that however far the preacher may fall below such an intellectual ideal, he must at least be widely and deeply read in the best that has been thought and achieved by men. Newton then gives an important reason for what he was recommending: "If we take intellect out of religion, give it over to the care of

71 J. S. Watson, ed., Cicero on Oratory and Orators (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1897), p. 17.

half-educated, narrow men, out of sympathy with their times, it will be reduced to a superstition."^73

With all of his emphasis on the minister's need for vast learning, Newton sounds a note of caution. He feels that a preacher should be a man of culture to his finger tips, alive to the ideas and issues of his age, aware of all that goes on in science, letters, and life, whether in the drawing room of the human heart or in the basement—but, says Newton, the preacher should wear his learning lightly.^74 That is, he should not make a show of his knowledge, but he should use it to help him relate to people in regard to their needs and interests. Newton exemplified such an attitude toward knowledge in his own ministry. As an editorial in the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin said of Newton: "He was a very learned man, but knew that no learning is worth while unless it be made useful."^75

Along with the ideas which Newton contributed on those elements of ethical appeal related to the preacher's character and knowledge, or intelligence, he also contributed ideas, in regard to preachers, on what Aristotle called the good will element of ethical appeal in public speaking.^76 In every true minister, says Newton, there is a tender, sympathetic faculty. This quality, in his view, brings out the color

^73 Ibid., pp. 38-39.

^74 Newton, Preaching in New York, p. 145.


in gray human lives, as sunlight evokes beauty from the brown earth. Newton states that this loving genius has been the central and inviting charm of every historic pulpit. In his thinking, it is sympathy that softens the human heart and makes it susceptible to the impress of heavenly truth.77

Newton says that the preacher must be a lover of people, in spite of what he calls their petty ways of thinking and often ugly ways of doing. Further, the preacher must love people for what they are, and for what they are to be, knowing the hidden, unguessed goodness that is in them. For Newton, the preacher must be an instrument of love, knowing that nothing is great, nothing is small, but that the human adventure has worth and meaning only as it embodies the love of God in the life of man. According to Newton, people do not believe any story of divine love when it comes from lips unmoved by human pity.78

Love, sympathy, understanding, concern—these are the words, in summary, which suggest the deep feeling that the preacher, in Newton's thinking, should have for his congregation. Without love, sympathy, understanding, and concern, the minister, according to Newton, is not a true preacher. After all, as Newton sees preaching, the test of any sermon is not its eloquence, nor its learning, nor its artistry, but the regenerative note that is in it, conveying the living word of God to living men, through a tender, triumphant love.79 By this statement,


78 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

Newton does not discount eloquence, learning, and artistry, as such; but only places them in a subservient role to what in his view is the paramount objective in preaching—through the word of God and love for people to affect them for good.

With respect to ethical invention, in general, Newton, in summary, stressed, as many other writers have, the importance of the preacher himself to preaching. In spite of what Newton calls our pitiful confusions and inefficiencies, preaching, in his thinking, is the noblest vocation on earth. No career can compare with the ministry in the opportunity which it offers to serve the souls of men, according to Newton. At the same time, says Newton, no other work asks so much of the manhood of a man. 80 Sterling character, vast knowledge coupled with the intelligence to use it effectively, and genuine interest in people are indispensable requirements, in Newton's rhetoric, for success as a true preacher of the gospel.

Nonverbal Elements

"To build a worshipping mood in his congregation, to create an atmosphere in which souls shall stand awe-struck in the presence of their Creator, is a cardinal part of the preacher's stupendous task," writes Charles E. Jefferson in The Building of the Church. 81 There are various ways to build a worshipping mood in a congregation. One way is through preaching. Another way is through singing; another is through

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80 Newton, ed., Best Sermons, 1927, p. xi.

81 Jefferson, The Building of the Church, p. 123.
prayer. But in addition to these verbal ways, there are means that are nonverbal. These include music; symbols such as the cross, pictures, and the bread and wine of a communion service; and architectural features of the church building, such as stained glass windows, and the arrangement of the pews, the altar, and the pulpit. Another nonverbal element of a church service is the way people are seated. Are they near the pulpit? Are they seated close to each other? Are there many empty seats?

If a minister relies on words alone to create a worshipping mood, he may be ineffective, or at least, less effective than he would be if he utilized nonverbal elements as well. As communicators, we must be conscious of the need for an audience member to organize his environment in a way that makes sense to him.\textsuperscript{82} In regard to a church service, this means that in their effort to build a worshipping mood, preachers should utilize verbal and nonverbal elements in such a way that the worshipper is led incrementally and appropriately to engage in sincere worship.

Newton was aware of the need for preachers to develop a worshipping mood in a church service. Writing of Charles E. Jefferson and a service he conducted, Newton says:

If, as Delsarte once said, "mediocrity is not the too little, but the too much," Dr. Jefferson is a genius in the conduct of public worship. The service was simple, natural, satisfying, rich without being ornate, reverent without being formal; and it did what every service of social worship is intended to do. It welded an audience into a congregation,

\textsuperscript{82} Baird, Knowler, and Becker, \textit{General Speech Communication}, p. 176.
woosing us out of our lonely isolation into liberty and joy of fellowship. 83

Newton was also aware of the role of verbal and nonverbal elements in worship. He indicates such an awareness in a reference to S. Parkes Cadman and one of his services. "The service was planned and conducted by a man who is not simply a preacher, but a minister," states Newton, "and in the highest and best sense a sacramentarian; sane enough to achieve richness of worship without too much ritual." 84 When Cadman began his sermon, Newton reports, one felt that he regarded the sermon as also a sacrament, not a rostrum for a reputation but an opportunity to lead men to God. 85

While Newton recognized the benefit in worship of such nonverbal elements as those which are a part of ritual, he was strongly opposed to any minimization of the place of preaching in a church service. This is evident in some comments he made in his autobiography about the Episcopal Church and its clergy. He said that the longer he worked in the Episcopal Church, and the better he knew it, the more he loved it. But Newton had some criticism of the ministers of his church. He said:

Our clergy lean too heavily upon a lovely liturgy, forgetting, as Melville said, that the pulpit is the prow of the ship, all the rest is in the rear; the pulpit is the first to meet the winds of God, and the bow must bear the earliest brunt, fair or foul. Ritual is not enough, not all people are symbol-minded--the priest is useful, but the prophet is a necessity,

83 Newton, Some Living Masters of the Pulpit, pp. 73-74.
84 Ibid., p. 171.
85 Ibid.
if religion is to survive.86

We can come to the following conclusions in regard to Newton's thinking about worship, the verbal and nonverbal elements of worship, and the relationship of preaching to a church service: (1) He felt that a worship service should weld an audience into a congregation; it should get people out of their lonely isolation into liberty and the joy of Christian fellowship; (2) He felt that a worship service should not be too formal; (3) He recognized the benefit of nonverbal elements in worship; (4) He viewed the sermon, not as a separate entity in a service, but as a part of the service which contributes its share toward the realization of a worshipping mood in the total church service; and (5) He strongly opposed any minimization of the place of preaching in a worship service.

Summary

The principal ideas of Joseph Fort Newton on rhetorical invention for preachers are the following:

1. The subject matter of preaching is the gospel of Christ; the spiritual needs of people can be met with this content.

2. The preacher should seek to recall people from the glitter and semblance of life to homage for truth, beauty, righteousness, and character.

3. The true preacher is concerned with eternal realities; he is impatient with sectarianism; he is an opponent of racial

rancor, religious bigotry and greed; he does not allow current religious questions to cause him to forget his divine message; he declares the whole counsel of God; and he rises above any mood or whim of the times which would distract him from his lofty objectives.

4. For sermon material, the preacher should look to the Bible, to the lives of the great Christians of history, to his experiences with people, and to his own personal relationship with God. Other useful sources of material include literature, science, sociology, psychology, and current events.

5. The central issue in preaching is that the world needs the gospel of Christ, told in simple words and incarnated in lives of grace and truth; and the ultimate goal of the preacher is to influence people to be faithful followers of Christ.

6. In his logical proof, the preacher should focus primarily on experiential types of evidence and use inductive reasoning, because it is the contemporary way of reasoning and the method of reasoning which people use to find truth in other fields.

7. Abuses of emotional appeal should be avoided in preaching; the chief use of emotion in preaching should be as it relates to a sense of urgency with which the preacher approaches the total task of preaching—research, organization, delivery, et cetera. As a natural consequence of the
preacher's being moved or stirred by his message, the audience will be moved or stirred.

8. The very nature of the preacher's task and opportunity demands that every true preacher have good character and extensive knowledge, and that the welfare of his congregation be uppermost in his thinking.

9. Preaching should be a stimulus to worship; other verbal stimuli, as well as nonverbal stimuli, may be used to develop a worshipping mood in a church service; but the place of preaching in worship should never be minimized.

In conclusion, in Newton's view, as the Christian religion is the gospel of a Person, so preaching is the light of God shining through the prism of human personality. The power of the light, for Newton, is measured by the purity, the integrity, the transparency of the preacher through whom it shines. One preacher may be a good conductor, in Newton's view, another a poor one, though each can give us light, he continues, if it has shone within his heart. "For it is light that we want," says Newton, "more light, no glitter of cleverness, no surface-glow of sagacity, but the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in a Face like our own."87

In Newton's theory of rhetorical invention, then, it is the preacher's responsibility to bring the message of the gospel of Christ to the ears of men. To be worthy of such an awesome responsibility,

the preacher, for Newton, must be dedicated, knowledgeable, and disciplined. But, in Newton's thinking, to be a humble preacher of the gospel of Christ is reason enough, joy enough, for one mortal life, whether it be long or short.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{88}Newton, \textit{The New Preaching}, p. 187.
CHAPTER VI
JOSEPH FORT NEWTON ON ORGANIZATION

Once a speaker has discovered, through the process of invention, what he can say on a subject, he must select from the available material that material which will best fit his purpose. Further, he must arrange this subject matter in a way appropriate to his purpose. This selecting and arranging of material is the second canon of classical rhetoric, and it is called disposition or organization.¹

A speaker will be guided in his decisions about the disposition of his material by a number of considerations:

1. The rhetorical situation;
2. The nature of the subject matter;
3. The nature of the audience;
4. The speaker's personality; his moral, philosophical, and religious convictions; and his limitations and capabilities.

Under disposition classical rhetoric identifies the basic divisions of a discourse. One such list is: (1) the *exordium* or introduction; (2) the *narratio* or statement of facts or circumstances that need to be known about the subject of the speech; (3) the *confirmatio* or

proof of the case; (4) the refutatio or discrediting of the opposing views; and (5) the peroratio or conclusion. ²

Classical rhetoric is concerned also with the strategic planning of the whole speech. For example, Cicero says that a speaker ought to arrange his material not only in a certain order, but with a sort of power and judgment. ³

The nineteenth-century homiletician John A. Broadus states that the effective arrangement of the material in a discourse is scarcely less important than its intrinsic interest and force. For him, arrangement is a distinct part of a speaker's work and should be contemplated and handled as something apart from invention on the one hand and style on the other, although closely connected with both. ⁴ That the thinking of Broadus on homiletics influenced Newton's views of the subject was shown in Chapter II. ⁵

To a consideration of Newton's theory of disposition, or organization, let us now turn. I shall discuss his theory under three headings: (1) The Preacher's Rhetorical Situations; (2) Audience Analysis and Adaptation; and (3) Overall Organizational Strategy.


³J. S. Watson, ed., Cicero on Oratory and Orators (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1897), p. 49.


⁵See Chapter II, p. 30.
The Preacher's Rhetorical Situations

In rhetorical situations, people so organize language as to effect a change in the knowledge, the understanding, the ideas, the attitudes, or the behavior of other people. What makes situations rhetorical is the focus upon accomplishing something predetermined and directional with an audience. That preachers are involved in many rhetorical situations, both in and out of pulpits, is obvious to even the occasional church attendant.

As a framework for presenting Newton's theory on rhetorical situations, I wish to call to the reader's attention some ideas from Lloyd F. Bitzer's article on "The Rhetorical Situation." Bitzer defines rhetorical situation as "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence." For Bitzer, there are three constituents of any rhetorical situation: the exigence (an imperfection marked by urgency); the audience; and constraints (elements such as facts, personal character, logical proof, interests, and motives, which have the power to constrain, or compel, the decisions or actions needed to modify the exigence). Pertinent also to the

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following discussion of Newton's theory on rhetorical situations is the fact called to our attention by Bitzer that rhetorical situations come into existence, then either mature or decay or mature and persist, some persisting indefinitely.8

What, then, from Newton's viewpoint, is the nature of the preacher's rhetorical situations? What constraints are needed to modify various types of exigences? To what extent, and in what way, do rhetorical situations persist indefinitely in the area of preaching?

Rhetorical situations for preachers, in Newton's theory, are ones in which there is no common mind, no common understanding, only a common need. He feels that what will interest some listeners or readers is sure to bore or bewilder others. Newton says that in spite of this condition, preachers must deal with the most elusive issues of religion, as well as the secrets of the inner life, seeking to make intangible realities real and impalpable values vivid. For Newton, the preacher's message has to do with the most intimate affairs of the human heart—things we say to no one and allow no one to say to us, except in the most confidential friendship—yet preaching not only permits, but invites, the closest touch of soul upon soul and the opening of heart to heart.9

In regard to the preacher's rhetorical opportunities, Newton says: "Never has there been so vast a force of incipient spiritual

8Ibid., pp. 6, 8, 9, and 12.

activity, to be influenced for good or ill, as there is today." To meet the challenge of this situation, a preacher, in Newton's view, must have authentic spiritual insight and a heart which God has touched with prophetic light and priestly love. Further, a preacher must be fearless and frank, evading no difficulty, if he is to make men see the truth that sets men free from haunting fear and dark fatality.

To make Christ and His gospel known to men is the dominating concern of the true preacher, in Newton's thinking. Such a preacher will bring art, literature, and science to his service, showing that Christ can do for men today what He did for men in the days when He was on this earth.

As mentioned above, Bitzer has pointed out that some rhetorical situations are of the moment; that is, there is a particular exigence or compelling need, and once it is missed or met, it vanishes. For instance, in the rhetorical situation generated by the assassination of John F. Kennedy, there was a time for giving descriptive accounts of the assassination scene in Dallas; later there was a time for giving eulogies. Also, in a political campaign there is a time for introducing an issue and a time for answering a charge. "Every rhetorical situation in principle evolves to a propitious moment for the fitting

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10Ibid., p. 36.

11Ibid., pp. 36-37.


rhetorical response,"^{14} writes Bitzer. After this moment, many rhetorical situations decay.

Rhetorical situations in preaching can be of the moment, or they can persist. Newton puts this matter picturesquely:

Sermons come and go—they are manna for the day—but preaching goes on forever. It is a high, ineffable office, as valid today as at any time in the past, and its power will not die while human nature is the same. There are sermons that live for ages, made immortal by the faith of the preacher, the depth of his heart, the clarity of his vision, and the magic of his mood. Some of the homilies of Chrysostom are as fresh today as when they fell from his lips, and certain notes from the Middle Ages still stir us strangely. The silvery speech of Newman, ascetic and austere, devoid of pictorial illustration, with nothing but a merciless analysis of human motive and an awful unveiling of the Unseen, searches us like a flame. The golden voice of Robertson echoes in our hearts, and many of the sermons of Beecher and Brooks have in them the immortality and joy of youth.\(^{15}\)

In Newton's view, therefore, sermons may meet a particular exigence, or they may be of such a quality or nature that they meet more than the immediate exigence. Then, too, looking at preaching in general, Newton would say that the need for preaching goes on and on. In any church service, for example, there is an exigence which true preaching can modify. Newton expresses great confidence in preaching in the following words from his introduction to the 1926 volume of *Best Sermons*:

"Inspired preaching is the greatest power known among men—that of a kindled, consecrated personality. It is more compelling than literature, more intimate than architecture, more vivid than music. Nowhere else can speech be so clothed

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with power to awaken, rebuke, exalt, and heal.16

While Newton was aware of the preacher's opportunity for meeting the general needs of people in any church service, and while he was aware of the opportunity on occasions of meeting in addition to the needs of the immediate audience, those of subsequent generations even, he also was aware of the very special type of rhetorical situation which calls for a discourse which is geared especially to the moment and perhaps can affect only that moment. A case in point is Newton's reference to a particular speaking occasion which occurred while he was pastor of the City Temple in London during World War I. At a Thursday noon service, the congregation received news that a great battle had begun, but the people little dreamed what turn it would take. Newton recalls that instead of the long-expected Allied advance, it was a gigantic enemy drive, which seemed to be sweeping everything before it. He reports that the Allied lines were first bent, then broken, and it seemed that the Channel ports might be captured. Newton then tells about the church service on the following Sunday:

The City Temple was jammed . . . people were gathering up their final reasons for holding on in the battle of life, seeking the ultimate solace of the Eternal. Not one of that vast, eager, earnest congregation, with their aching hearts, knew what happened in the soul of the preacher. The sermon I had prepared for the day vanished from mind; never have I been able to recall what it was. Instead, a new sermon flashed into my heart, full grown, and preached itself, I was only the voice—twice that has happened to me since. . . . If God allows a preacher to be truly eloquent half a dozen times in his life, he ought to be satisfied—that is

In summary, Newton was keenly conscious of what present day rhetorical scholars call rhetorical situation. In Newton's thinking, rhetorical situations for preachers are challenging but difficult--difficult because of the lack of common understanding on the part of hearers, and difficult because of the need for dealing with elusive, intimate issues in a public meeting. To respond to these challenging but difficult situations, preachers need, in Newton's view, insight, courage, and a supernatural touch in their lives. For Newton, preachers in their rhetorical situations will utilize material from various fields, such as literature and science, in order to have the desired effect on their audiences.

Newton was aware of various kinds of rhetorical situations. He felt that often sermons meet a particular need, and that is all, but that at other times, sermons meet the needs of other congregations or readers, even in subsequent centuries. As for preaching, in general, the need for it goes on indefinitely, according to Newton, because in his view human nature remains the same.

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Audience Analysis and Adaptation

One of the most important lessons a speaker can learn is to see his subject and purpose from the standpoint of his listeners. In *The Process of Communication*, David K. Berlo says that when we write, it is the reader who is important and that when we speak, it is the listener who is important. In all aspects of preparation for communication, the receiver should be kept in mind, according to Berlo. He describes this continuous awareness as follows:

When the source chooses a code for his message, he must choose one which is known to his receiver. When the source selects content in order to reflect his purpose, he selects content that will be meaningful to his receiver. When he treats his message in any way, part of his treatment is determined by his analysis of his receiver's communication (decoding) skills, his attitudes, his knowledge, and his place in a social-cultural context. The only justification for the existence of a source, for the occurrence of communication, is the receiver, the target at whom everything is aimed.

Newton would agree with Berlo, for his chief concern in his rhetorical theory is the problem of making the message of Christ, the gospel, meaningful to present day listeners and readers. Newton also would agree with the twentieth-century homiletician Halford E. Luccock, who says that in preaching, the resources of the gospel must be brought

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to the existing situation.\textsuperscript{20} In preaching to the modern mind, however, it is Newton's belief that the gospel is not "to be truncated, mutilated, and trimmed down to fit the fads and altering fashions of thought in our age."\textsuperscript{21} The gospel, for Newton, will show itself today, as in all other ages, able to live and triumph amid vast and unimagined developments of life and thought.\textsuperscript{22} But the gospel, in Newton's rhetoric, must be presented in a manner suited to the times and to the receivers. The preacher must know the times in which he lives, therefore; and he must also know his audience, according to Newton. On these points he echoes the theory of classical rhetoricians and anticipates the theory of contemporary communication and rhetorical scholars.

In his discussion of adapting the gospel to the times and to present day receivers, Newton refers to two extremes in preaching. "Either it is so much of the age," he says, "so dyed in its colors, as to be unable to lead men beyond the timely to the eternal, or else so remote from the age as to lack all contact with it, save by way of compensation and escape."\textsuperscript{23} Many churchgoers doubtlessly would agree with this observation. In Newton's thinking, the true preacher avoids both extremes.


\textsuperscript{21}Newton, \textit{The New Preaching}, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 103.
Newton discusses in detail the modern mind, as he sees it, with a view toward helping fellow preachers in their efforts to bring the gospel to it. With anxiety about the prospects of success in relating the gospel to modern man, Newton says: "At times one wonders whether the sophisticated modern mind, so wise in its own estimate, so emancipated, so self-conscious in its self-knowledge, so clever and so capable, can ever really enter into the simplicity, the humility, the profound wisdom and childlike wonder of the mind of Jesus."\(^{24}\)

In vivid language Newton describes the world as he saw it in 1930. He paints a word picture which might as appropriately be given in 1976. He says:

> From what source none knows, a spirit has been released among us, pervasive, if not persuasive, wild, restless, ruthless, realistic, rebellious, disillusioned, sad, making mock of chastity, reverence, restraint, and even truth itself. To a degree never known before, it is an age of complexity and perplexity, of mental turbulence, moral cynicism, and spiritual chaos, when the highest life of man is fighting with its back to the wall.\(^{25}\)

How does a preacher of the gospel of Christ relate to such circumstances? What effect do the times have on his method of preaching?

In a striking metaphor Newton focuses our attention on the modern preacher's task:

> ... the preacher has a new keyboard upon which to play the everlasting music, and the fingers of our sermons grope blindly over its unfamiliar keys, seeking a new, ineffable note. When we do strike a great, haunting chord, in a manner not unworthy of the melody it invokes, the hearts of men respond with a startled and wistful joy. Never, in any

\(^{24}\)Ibid., pp. 108-09.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., pp. 92-93.
generation, has there been a more eager, widespread desire for a personal sense of spiritual reality; men want religion, but they do not know how to get it.\textsuperscript{26}

Since the preacher, in Newton's rhetoric, must know his audience from the standpoint of what they are thinking, what is on their mind during their everyday life and when they come to church, it is desirable to look at his detailed description of the modern mind. Newton feels that as there was a medieval mind, so there is an outlook, an attitude, a point of view distinctly modern. "It has its origin in the union of many movements," he says, "and one has only to name some of them to make it plain why and wherein the mind of today thinks so differently from the mind of any former time."\textsuperscript{27}

Newton then lists eight movements which have affected the thinking of men, movements which in his view account for the modern mind. In Newton's rhetoric, it is important to know about these movements and accept them as facts if one is to relate to his times and his audience. A list of these movements with some of Newton's explanations and applications follows:

1. The overthrow of the idea of an outside, "absentee God," and the discovery of God as the soul of His universe working out His purpose of creative good will.

2. The victory of historical research which threw men back from external authorities to find the basis of faith, and its verification, in the living experience of God.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., pp. 67-68.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., p. 73.
3. The advent of science, with its revelation of the reign of law as the organized will of God, and of development as the divine way of working, banishing whim and caprice from the faith and fear of man.

4. The rise of democracy, the increasing sense of human solidarity, making us members one of another, the growth of a more vivid social imagination whereby the injury of one, however small, becomes the hurt and horror of all.

5. A clearer insight into the nature of religion and a better method for its culture, because psychology has brought us a reappraisal of religious experience, its verity, its value, and its varieties.

6. A revival of mysticism, an effort to explore the inner life, in quest of a technique for realizing religion not simply as the truth in life, but also, and much more, as the life in truth.

In revolt against an arid intellectualism, as well as an empty ecclesiasticism, men are turning to the inner life; seeking God where alone He may be found.

7. The passionate longing for religious unity and fellowship and the appalling sense of the folly and futility of sectarianism.

No religious man today thinks solely, much less supremely, of his own particular communion, save as a part of the church universal.

8. The advent of Jesus into the life of our generation, His presence reflected in the sensitive mirror of its art—a most amazing phenomenon, not to be accounted for as a fad.

More lives of Christ have been written in our era than in all the ages since He walked here in the flesh, as if men were unable to find themselves, or any clue to life, until they somehow find His place in the order of things.\(^{28}\)

In addition to knowing and actively remembering the times in which he lives and preaches, the minister, in Newton's theory, must

\(^{28}\)Ibid., pp. 73-83.
know his particular audience—their reasons for coming to church, their human wants and needs, and their background of religious knowledge.

Preachers often wonder why people do not come to church. While they should be concerned about those who do not attend and their reasons for not doing so, perhaps they should spend most of their time reflecting on why people do come to church. What are they seeking? What can the minister do for them? These are questions which preachers ought to ponder. Newton indicates five reasons for church attendance:

1. To be awakened to awareness of the spiritual world;
2. To be led and lifted into "the higher air of God";
3. To seek some glint or gleam to glorify the drabness of the common task;
4. To learn how to live, how to love, how to hope;
5. To be baptized with a vision of blessedness and the benediction of beauty.\(^29\)

Continuing his analysis of church audiences, Newton poses a question: "If an angel with a pen of light were to take a spiritual inventory of the minds of the people in our pews, what would the record reveal?" He answers: "A medley, no doubt, of the faiths, feelings, fears, hopes, and hauntings of a native religiousness, beyond which few ever go; mystic moods, moral edicts, relics of old magic, flashes of insight."\(^30\) Newton then states, as follows, what he believes religion is to various groups of individuals:

1. A few things remembered from childhood;

\(^{29}\)Ibid., pp. 23-24.

\(^{30}\)Ibid., p. 94.
2. A creed inherited or accepted in theory;
3. A grim sense of duty unlocking hidden reserves of courage;
4. A passing awareness, a moment of wonder when the soul trembles with awe;
5. A thing of rite and rote punctiliously performed;
6. A soft shield to blunt the raw edges of reality;
7. A wisp of wistfulness held together by a tenuous tie.\(^{31}\)

Finally, Newton says that in all of us, whether by lack or by loss, religion is more a quest than a conquest; a yearning rather than a realization; more occasional than continuous; less an insight than an instinct.\(^{32}\) While each person would have to respond for himself to this conclusion by Newton, I can state that from my own association with church audiences, both as a pastor and as a parishioner, Newton's description of a general church audience is accurate and inclusive.

Newton preached much to college and university audiences,\(^{33}\) and he made some significant observations on that specialized type of audience. For example, he declares that there is no average student at whom the preacher may direct his message. In Newton's thinking, the college or university preacher must deal with many who, religiously, are up in the air. Further, he must deal with many who are unconcerned about religion. Newton points out that vast numbers of college

\(^{31}\)Ibid.

\(^{32}\)Ibid.

\(^{33}\)See Chapter III, pp. 149-50 and 169-71.
students are from irreligious homes, or homes religiously indifferent. He says that others—a very large group—endured religious rites and customs as long as they were at home, but sloughed them off when they left.  

He states that there are at least three other classes of students; namely:

1. A large number who are in no way disturbed in their studies or social life.

   The faith of their fathers, with its excellences and its limitations, is their faith, and they stand by it.

2. Others, usually from strict orthodox homes, who are greatly troubled, unable to adjust the faith of the past to the new world-view and way of thinking into which they are plunged.

   Many tide over their difficulties by discovering that it is the form of the old faith that is inadequate, not its truth. But not a few renounce religious faith with a finality which determines the issue, influenced often by teachers who are in the same state of mind and who vent their animus.

3. A final group, not large but increasing, made up of those whose faith finds focus, fellowship, and fulfillment in the person of Jesus.

   To this group the religion of Jesus is at once a challenge and an adventure, and they are deeply concerned not only with its intellectual justification, but also with its practical personal and social issues.

Many of us would agree that Newton's analysis of the college or university audiences of his day would be applicable in large part to college or university audiences of this day. Some of Newton's

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34 Newton, The New Preaching, p. 106.

35 Ibid., pp. 106-08.
observations would apply even to church colleges. Although most students at a church college come from religiously oriented homes, many students who are from conservative religious homes have difficulty adjusting to the more liberal views of doctrine and conduct which they often find on a church college campus.

That Newton was a close observer and careful analyzer of audiences has been demonstrated already in this section of the chapter. His own example can be taken as a part of his rhetorical theory for other preachers. A specific reference now will be given to emphasize the type of analyzing that was characteristic of Newton. He writes about an average audience at the City Temple in London. First, he refers to the tourists and sermon-tasters: "The curious tourists who 'do' the Temple count for as little as the jaded sermon-tasters seeking a new thrill." Then he refers to the standing congregation as a mixed multitude in itself, too bewilderingly varied to be described, with which is joined a crowd of lonely, baffled people, drawn or driven by an inappeasable need of the soul. Becoming detailed in his analysis, Newton says: "Men fighting for faith, men who have lost the fight, spiritual derelicts tossed between cynicism and despair—weary, unexcited, tormented—defeated men whose past is ever before them, and women to whom hell is the only reality—these sit side by side at every service." Of the effect such an audience has on a minister, Newton states: "The appeal to the penetrative and compassionate understanding of the preacher is like 'deep calling unto deep,' and if he has the
shepherd soul it is irresistible."36

Highly sensitive to the opportunities and problems involved in preaching the gospel to audiences which are diverse in backgrounds and interests, Newton is optimistic about the potential effectiveness of true preaching. As has been stated already, Newton feels that a preacher must know the age in which he ministers. Additionally, for Newton, a preacher must live in his age and love it. Also, according to Newton, a preacher should learn to play the ancient, eternal music on the strange keyboard of the modern mind—knowing that behind its airy cleverness there hides the wistful need of God, without whom the human theorem has no answer.37

While Newton’s theory about audience analysis and adaptation does not include references to such modern analyzing techniques as attitude tests, audience analyzers,38 and inferences from samples—discussed by Theodore Clevenger, Jr. in his Audience Analysis (1966), Newton probably would have welcomed any scientific instrument which would have helped him to know better the needs, interests, and attitudes of his audiences. That Newton’s analyses of audiences and rhetorical theory based on his analyses are significant can be substantiated by a quotation from Clevenger:


38 Devices for recording individual responses of auditors during a speech.
... neither this book nor any other treatment of audience analysis can substitute for education and experience in analyzing audiences and formulating strategies of communication. Anything at all about an auditor may be useful on some occasion for predicting how he will respond to communication, regardless of whether we are using a demographic or purpose-oriented mode of analysis, and the more a speaker knows about people and their society, the greater will be the variety of ways in which he may understand and respond to his auditors. 39

In summing up this portion of the chapter, I would like to stress the point that Newton looked realistically at preaching the gospel to modern minds. He was aware of the effect that the times have on people as they sit in a church service listening to a man preaching a message which is based on a two thousand year old gospel. Newton also was mindful of the diversified nature of church audiences, and he understood the challenge and difficulty of speaking to such groups. In Newton's theory of rhetoric, it is very important for the preacher to know his audience; it also is very important to adapt to them. Adaptation can be achieved, in Newton's thinking, by knowing the age with the added dimension--living in it and loving it; by learning how to communicate ancient, eternal truth to contemporary minds; and by remembering that there is in all people the need for God--a fact which provides the ultimate rationale for preaching.

Overall Organizational Strategy

As mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, classical rhetoric identifies the basic divisions of a discourse—introduction, proof, et cetera. These divisions can be thought of as structure. Not all pulpit masters have dealt with structure in the same way. Some have caused the structure, or framework, to stand out boldly, while others have not. The twentieth-century homiletician Andrew Watterson Blackwood states that concern about structure tends "to ebb and flow." He indicates that structure seems more important when the teaching function of the ministry is prominent. Blackwood is of the opinion that good structure calls little attention to itself, but he feels that every sermon "ought to embody a bony framework, covered with beauty and charm."

Newton does not discuss the basic divisions of a sermon, but he devotes considerable space in *The New Preaching* to a discussion of a general plan for approaching an audience. At the same time he believes that each preacher must employ the artistry best suited to his gifts. Further, he must use his artistry in his own way. But Newton feels that the general plan which he suggests is the proper method of approach to the confused mind of the times. His plan embraces five steps: translation, reconciliation, interpretation, exploration, and

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40 See pp. 297-98.


42 Ibid.
cooperation. 43 Let us now look at his theory under each of these headings.

Translation. Newton believes that the preacher must make ancient religious truth, the gospel of Christ, relevant to the present age. He indicates that this is a responsibility which faces preachers in each new age. "Every age has its dialect, its accent, its manner of speech, in religion as in art and letters, and the gospel must be so preached . . . that each new age may hear the words of life in its own tongue," 44 Newton explains. He says that Jesus translated imperishable truths out of the abstract into the living, concrete speech of His time, that Jesus used old and simple and lovable things to make His meaning plain, and that the common people heard Him gladly. 45

From his own experience Newton gives an example of the need for the art of translation. He recalls that the necessity for it was forced upon preachers during World War I, when they preached to large crowds of men brought together in the armies. Everywhere the preachers went in the camps and hospitals the report was the same: "The old stuff will not go." This meant that the men simply did not understand the language of the church. "Only a few who had been trained in the church knew what the preachers were talking about," says Newton; "to the rest it was an unknown tongue, unreal and unintelligible." 46

44 Ibid., p. 119.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p. 120.
one, then, in Newton's plan of approach to the preacher's audience, is to make the gospel understandable to present day listeners.

Reconciliation. Newton's discussion of the second step in approaching an audience with the gospel centers largely in the problem of bridging the gap between youth and age. Newton believes that nowhere is the breach between the older and the younger generations wider than in matters of religion. He feels that this breach calls for tact and insight on the part of the preacher. Describing the youth and age conflict which the preacher faces, Newton says:

It is rather trying when our young realists insist upon emptying the garbage can in the drawing-room in order to "see life," but we must be patient, hoping all things while enduring much. At best the mood of the younger set is an engaging sauciness; at worst, a downright impudence. It is the way of youth to shock, startle, and amaze, mistaking audacity for originality and contortions for inspiration.47

Furthermore, in Newton's thinking, youth has a case, and it behooves preachers to listen to young people, trying to understand the point of view of a new generation.48

For Newton, youth and age need to be reconciled, and can be reconciled. Also, from his viewpoint, ancient spiritual truth and present day knowledge need to be reconciled and can be reconciled. The preacher has the responsibility, then, in Newton's rhetoric, to exert considerable effort in the direction of bringing together apparently opposite views and groups, emphasizing in his communication what they have in common.

48 Ibid., p. 127.
Interpretation. "Whenever men hunger and thirst after God and truly seek Him," writes Newton, "there is a response of peace and power." He adds: "Vague and fleeting it may be, baffling words, but that experience is the bedrock of all religion." For Newton, this experience is the impetus for the preacher's communication with people. He declares that nowhere do men need help and guidance as they do along the dim paths by which they seek to find God amid the mists and fogs of life. In Newton's view, the preacher is an interpreter of man's inner life--its devious ways, its delicate laws, and its deep meanings. Further, the "business of preaching" in every generation is to interpret the way and the will of God to men. This task has never been more difficult, in Newton's thinking, than it is today. He attributes the difficulty to what he calls a schism between the head and the heart, a schism which he feels is unnatural and unnecessary. "If man is to win the truth," he reasons, "it must be by the free and harmonious activity of all his finest powers." Because Newton describes a perennial situation which preachers face, I want to quote him at length on the schism between the head and the heart. He writes:

As a result of the divorce of science from mysticism, the critical mind of today seems unable to accept what the human heart must believe, if it is to find health and hope. Not a few actually think that the inner life of faith and vision is an alien, if not an exotic, in a universe of iron law and energy--like a tropical flower trying to grow under an arctic sky. How strange, as if the moral law and the life of

49 Ibid., p. 132.
50 Ibid., p. 134.
51 Ibid., p. 135.
Jesus are not as real as pig iron and potash! Yet these twin activities of the human spirit have not only been put asunder, but set at war, leaving the impression that science gives us facts without values, and religion values without facts. It is an intolerable dualism, not only distressing but dangerous, and it may almost be said to be the crux of the whole question of religious faith in our day.  

For Newton, the schism between the head and the heart presents a challenge to the preacher. He ought to try to unite what, in Newton's view, God has joined together and man has put asunder, making two mighty forces friends. Newton believes if great social ideals are ever to be realized, it must be by the power of a mystical faith using the facts and skill of science to organize a fraternal righteousness upon earth.  

**Exploration.** Newton feels that as a matter of strategy, if for no other reason, preaching must be inductive in its emphasis and approach. His rationale for advocating induction, as was discussed in Chapter V under "Logical Invention," is his belief that the whole spirit and method of thought in our day is inductive. He believes if we are to win the men of today to the truths of our faith, we must use the method by which they find truth in other fields.  

Newton gives a detailed discussion of the inductive method of preaching. He says he had been discussing the matter of inductive

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52 Ibid., p. 136.  
53 Ibid.  
54 Ibid., p. 139.  
preaching with English friends in letters, much to his delight and profit. He states that one of them sent him an example of an inductive sermon so admirable that he wished to pass it along to his readers. The example relates to a plea for single-heartedness in the service of God, using for a text the words of Jesus, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Newton comments:

Had he used the old method, he would have stated the truth of the text as a proposition and gone straight to his deductions, but he would not have carried his hearers with him. Many men today, as all will agree, are unconvinced that such a double service is impossible. Indeed, not a few hold that the great thing in life is precisely a skillful adjustment of the service of God and the service of the world ... .

By the inductive approach it is different; it puts no weight on the text at first, but begins with nearby facts familiar to all, using popular illustrations. ... the truth of the text is approved, not only as upon divine authority, but as a truth of experience.57

Newton argues that the preacher, having led his listeners on a tour of exploration, may then skillfully use a sense of intellectual satisfaction as an opportunity to create a deep sense of spiritual dissatisfaction.58 In this reasoning Newton anticipates the thinking of the contemporary psychologist Leon Festinger who states that the existence of dissonance, or inconsistency, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate a person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance, or consistency.59

57Ibid., pp. 141-42.
58Ibid., pp. 142-43.
Newton says that the inductive method seems to be best in an age which has a peculiar bent toward discovery. He states that for the presentation of unpopular truth, the inductive method is invaluable.\textsuperscript{60}

In this view Newton is in agreement with the nineteenth-century British rhetorician Richard Whately who says:

\begin{quote}
... when the conclusion to be established is one likely to hurt the feelings and offend the prejudices of the hearers, it is essential to keep out of sight, as much as possible, the point to which we are tending, till the principles from which it is to be deduced shall have been clearly established; because men listen with prejudice, if at all, to arguments that are avowedly leading to a conclusion which they are indisposed to admit; whereas if we thus, as it were, mask the battery, they will not be able to shelter themselves from the discharge. The observance, accordingly, or neglect of this rule, will often make the difference of success or failure.\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

Newton calls the inductive method a flank attack on the fortifications of prejudice, its most striking virtue, he feels, being its element of surprise.\textsuperscript{62}

As a final inducement for using induction, Newton refers to the method of Jesus. He says that Jesus' method was distinctly inductive, as can be seen in all His parables. Newton states that Jesus began with facts from the life around Him, and that these were presented with exquisite art, converging upon His main thesis. Further, Jesus always used this method in speaking to the stranger, the doubter, and the

\textsuperscript{60}Newton, The New Preaching, p. 143.


\textsuperscript{62}Newton, The New Preaching, p. 143.
sinner. "Since He has done more good than all of us put together," concludes Newton, "it behooves us to follow His lead."64

**Cooperation.** Under this heading Newton discusses ideas which are related closely to what rhetorical scholars call invention; however, he also discusses purpose, a significant consideration in organization. In regard to purpose Newton says that true preaching will not be content with the culture of a private piety; true preaching will be the prophet, no less, of public religion, not only social in its insight but international in its aspiration.65 According to Newton, Jesus envisioned the communal redemption of all humanity. The church, therefore, in Newton’s view, cannot be called Christian until it sees that vision, not as a vague dream to be longed for, but as the first truth of its teaching.66 Obviously, then, for Newton, the preacher should preach with the goal of the communal redemption of all humanity in mind; and his sermons should be organized in a way which would give prominence to that goal.

In summary, with respect to overall organizational strategy, Newton stresses a plan which includes what he labels translation, reconciliation, interpretation, exploration, and cooperation. Permeating the plan is his intense desire to make preaching understandable, meaningful, and appealing to contemporary listeners.

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63 Ibid., pp. 143-44.
64 Ibid., p. 144.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., p. 145.
Newton's theory of overall organizational strategy does not include many specifics; however, he is specific regarding a few matters such as the use of the inductive method and the use of words which will be comprehended by the listeners. These specifics are related, of course, to invention and style, respectively. In general, we see in Newton's views of organizational strategy an example of the fact that invention and organizational strategy are closely related, lending credence to the position of Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, who are of the opinion that any distinctions we may make between finding and organizing arguments must candidly be accepted as semiarbitrary, as serving the ends of academic convenience almost as much as of theoretical accuracy.67

Summary

Having considered in this chapter, Newton's theory of organization with respect to the preacher's rhetorical situations, audience analysis and adaptation, and overall organizational strategy, I would like to list the following key contributions by Newton on organization:

1. In a preacher's rhetorical situations, there is no common mind, no common understanding, only a common need.

2. Insight, love, fearlessness, frankness, and a supernatural touch in his life are necessary if a preacher is to respond properly to his rhetorical situations.

67 Thonssen and Baird, Speech Criticism, p. 392.
3. Art, literature, and science should be used by a preacher to help him accomplish his central task--making Christ and His gospel known to men.

4. Sermons may meet a particular exigence, or they may be of such quality or nature that they meet more than the immediate exigence.

5. The need for preaching will go on indefinitely, since human nature remains the same.

6. The preacher's message, the gospel of Christ, is not to be changed to fit the times in which a minister preaches; but he should adapt his message to the times and to his audience.

7. In order to adapt to his speaking occasions, a preacher should know in a comprehensive way the times in which he lives, and he should know as much as he can about his particular audiences in terms of their problems, their reasons for coming to church, et cetera.

8. A preacher should employ the organizational artistry best suited to his personality and ability.

9. Sermons should be so organized and so worded as to make them meaningful and appealing to modern hearers.

10. A preacher should attempt to reconcile opposing views and groups, emphasizing in his communication what they have in common.

11. A preacher should be able to interpret the way and will of God to men.
12. A preacher should try to bring into harmony the inner life of faith and the laws of science.

13. Since the method of thought in our day is inductive, a preacher should use induction in developing his sermons.

14. In his objectives a preacher will not be content with the culture of a private piety but will aim also at the cultivation of a public religion, social in its insight and international in its aspiration.

Aristotle indicated that a speaker should try to ascertain in each particular rhetorical situation what the available means of persuasion are. A preacher, like many other kinds of speakers, desires to persuade—to influence the thinking or the conduct of his listeners. In his theory of rhetorical organization, Joseph Fort Newton provides some significant ideas for the preacher as a persuader of men. Newton's points relative to rhetorical situation are especially valuable.

His consuming interest in making the gospel of Christ relevant to the times and audiences is exemplary; it is also rhetorically significant in that it corroborates the thinking of many prominent rhetoricians relative to the general matter of adaptation to circumstances.

Finally, Newton's ideas on overall organizational strategy, while not as specific as some preachers would like for them to be, are nevertheless thought provoking and worthy of careful consideration.

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CHAPTER VII

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON ON STYLE AND DELIVERY

While Newton discusses both style and delivery, he does not refer to these parts of rhetoric in great detail; therefore, I shall present his treatment of them in a single chapter.

On Style

The eighteenth-century British rhetorician Hugh Blair defines style as "the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions, by means of language."¹ Blair's definition of style is typical of those that we find in classical rhetoric. Accordingly, in classical rhetorical theory style is not viewed as an end in itself, but as an integral part of a speaker's total effort. This means that style is subordinate to purpose, but it does not imply that an appropriate style will result automatically if a speaker knows his subject and his audience. On the contrary, as Quintilian advises, a speaker should bestow great care on expression—provided he keeps in mind that nothing is to be done for the sake of words, since words themselves were invented for the sake of things, and since those words are most appropriate which

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express the speaker's thoughts best and produce the impression which he desires to make on his audience.²

If we accept the advice of Quintilian, style must be looked upon as an indivisible element of the process of persuasion. What language does becomes more important than what it is. Edward P. J. Corbett, a contemporary rhetorical scholar, holds to this theory of style; he calls style one of the available means of persuasion.³

Style is the third canon of classical rhetoric, but like the other canons, it is closely interrelated with its correlative members. For instance, style and invention play interacting roles, since the conception of thought and its expression are virtually inseparable. Further, the arrangement accorded ideas is in itself a stylistic consideration, for the position an idea occupies in the total discourse may influence the way in which language is employed to express it.⁴

With the possible exception of invention, no part of rhetoric is more complex than style. Its ramifications are elaborate, extending deeply into the fundamentals of invention and disposition and losing themselves in them, so that what we arbitrarily call style becomes indistinguishable from the other canons of rhetoric.⁵


⁵Ibid., p. 407.
In spite of the interrelation of style with the other parts of rhetoric, certain aspects of style are fairly standard in its treatment by rhetoricians. For example, they generally list correctness, clearness, ornateness, and appropriateness as the qualities that contribute to an excellent style. Also, rhetoricians commonly give word choice, composition, and embellishment as the fundamental constituents of style.

Homileticians have emphasized the importance of good style in preaching. John A. Broadus, nineteenth-century homiletician, says that style is the glitter and polish of the warrior's sword but is also its keen edge. Broadus believes that style can render mediocrity acceptable and even attractive, and power more powerful still. In his view, style can make error seductive, while truth may lie unnoticed for want of its aid. Broadus asks: "Shall religious teachers neglect so powerful a means of usefulness?" To this question Newton would reply with an emphatic "no."

Let us now look in detail at Newton's theory of style. May I remind the reader that many of the compliments on Newton's own preaching include references to his excellent style. For some reason or

6 Ibid., pp. 410-16.
7 Ibid., pp. 417-19.
9 Ibid.
10 See Chapter IV, pp. 228-31.
reasons, though, Newton has relatively little to say about style for others. Perhaps this brevity of coverage was caused by his feeling that it is impossible to teach style. He says, for instance, that some men are able to communicate personality in print; others cannot do it. Further, others can do it in the spoken word; but when what they say is printed, it is as colorless as a cash register. He feels that no one knows the secret of good style, and if he did, he could not impart it to anyone else. Newton calls this situation a mystery past finding out, alike for the man who writes and the man who reads.¹¹

Although Newton feels that style cannot be taught, he makes some significant statements about style. Among them is a reference to the well-known idea that style is the man himself. Newton puts this view in these words: "Style is the man, the accent of his mind, the gesture of his soul."¹² Another of Newton's contributions on style is an allusion to a two element view of style—choice of words and their connection. He says that style is more than a mastery of the weight, worth, color, and music of words. For him, it is also "a blending of words which turns sounds into song."¹³

¹²Ibid.
¹³Ibid.
Newton was aware of the negative view held by some of oratory: that it is not to be trusted.\textsuperscript{14} He says that there are those who believe that oratory always moves on a more or less low moral plane and is an exercise perilous alike to speaker and hearer. Writing of Charles E. Jefferson, Newton says that Jefferson shared this distrust of oratory in spite of his own amazing gift of lucid, fitly colored, gracious, and moving speech. Then Newton states that Jefferson knew how easily an orator is betrayed into saying more than he sees, mistaking ornament for insight; a peril which, if unchecked, eats away the moral fiber of a man. Continuing to indicate his own views, Newton declares that Jefferson knew that a man who sets out to be eloquent, using oratorical tricks, stratagems and pyrotechnics, bids good-bye to truth and sincerity.\textsuperscript{15} Subsequently, Newton quotes the following words by Jefferson:

\begin{quote}
Never endeavor to be eloquent. It may be that God will let you be eloquent half a dozen times in your life, but I am sure you cannot be eloquent if you try to be.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Newton then declares that this advice from Jefferson ought to be

\textsuperscript{14}For example, John Locke says: "If we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment." In John Locke, \textit{Essay Concerning Human Understanding}, collated and annotated by Alexander Campbell Fraser, Vol. II (London: Clarendon Press, 1894), p. 146.

\textsuperscript{15}Joseph Fort Newton, \textit{Some Living Masters of the Pulpit} (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), pp. 77-78.

\textsuperscript{16}As quoted in \textit{Ibid.}, p. 78.
written in the mind of every young minister.17

In his theory of style, Newton would agree with the point made earlier in this chapter concerning the close connection between style and invention.18 For Newton, the minister in his sermon preparation starts with his power of insight and adds the art of making the invisible vivid. The preacher should embody forth the ideal in concrete vision. If the minister preaches in this manner, his word is a command and a deed.19 Style, then, for Newton, as for Quintilian and Corbett,20 is one of various elements in the process of persuasion.

In the preceding paragraph I referred to Newton's suggestion that in preaching, art is to be added to insight. For Newton, however, this art is to be unobtrusive. He expressed such a view in his edited work If I Had Only One Sermon to Prepare: "If in his heart the preacher knows the truth of the story [the gospel], not by rumor but in reality, there need be no striving for style, no filing of fine phrases, but a love-anointed simplicity will find a form of beauty to fit the truth, showing the very shape of the grace within."21 On the other hand, Newton states that it is always difficult, at times impossible, to convey the vividness of spiritual vision in written words.

17 Ibid.

18 See p. 328.


"Often its keen insight is blunted and its beauty blurred," he declares.

While Newton's references to style are, for the most part, general, he does give a few specific suggestions regarding this canon of rhetoric. He feels that a preacher should use the speech of his day in a style familiar, colloquial, conversational, with no filigree (delicate) oratory. Referring to his own experience in World War I in preaching to soldiers, Newton says that the scene from war time, when the soul was near the surface, gives us a hint of how the truths of faith must be translated into the idiom of today, if they are to be real and vivid. Newton feels that though we may suffer some loss in the old associations of words long used, it is more than compensated for by the freshness of insight and the sense of reality which accrue from the use of a more contemporary language.

According to Newton, Jesus did not use the old words of religion. He says that Jesus did not even use the word religion, it would seem, but always the word life instead—preaching on the hillside or by the sea, using the vivid speech of every day, at times even its slang, to make His truth real. Further, Jesus was so wise that He was simple, and so simple that He was wise, taking timely topics if only to make

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22Ibid., p. 136.


25Ibid.
the Eternal near. Newton concludes: "By such artless arts He made men aware of the near-neighborliness and far-friendliness of God the Father, as His new preachers must do in the accent and imagery of our far-off age." 26

In Newton's rhetoric, the style of a preacher is conditioned by his mental quality and the manner of his spoken address. He felt that the stately, sweeping sentences of Frank W. Gunsaulus were suited to the use of his voice—"that magnificent organ whose rich and manifold music follows us down the years." 27 Newton also felt that the style of Charles E. Jefferson with its short sentences and colorful words was very appropriate to his delivery, which Newton describes as clear, gentle, melodious, and of varied modulation. 28

The contributions of Newton on style may be summarized as follows:

1. Style has its origin in the mental habits and power of the speaker.

2. Style is an element in the process of persuasion.

3. Good style results from a mastery of words and the ability to put them together in an effective manner.

4. The pursuit of eloquence or ornamentation in style causes a speaker to lose sight of truth and sincerity.

26 Ibid., p. 125.

27 Newton, Some Living Masters of the Pulpit, p. 79.

28 Ibid.
5. Good style calls for insight on the part of the preacher plus the art of putting abstract truths into concrete terms.

6. The preacher's effort at achieving art in style must be subordinate to a personal and vivid awareness in his own life of the gospel message he proclaims.

7. At best, words and the way they are blended may at times be inadequate to proclaim the full message which the preacher feels or knows; therefore, preaching is to some extent an imperfect instrument.

8. The preacher's style should reflect the speech of his day; that is, it should be familiar, colloquial, and conversational.

9. The preacher's style is conditioned by the mental quality of the preacher and also by his delivery.

Newton's theory of style echoes classical rhetorical thought and contemporary views such as those of Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, who point out that style is not a combination of esoteric elements which are added to a speech, or superimposed upon it, in order to give it literary acceptability. For them, style is important only to the extent that it helps prepare and subsequently open the minds of the listeners to the ideas developed in the speech. In their thinking, style is a medium through which a speaker tries to secure a response. Thonssen and Baird conclude that the language of the speech will be subject to the influences of the speaker's background, his experience, the purpose he wishes to achieve, the ability and willingness of the
audience to comprehend the ideas, and the conditions surrounding the occasion.\textsuperscript{29} With these views of Thonssen and Baird, Newton would agree.

In conclusion, Newton's theory of style is in the best tradition of classical rhetoric. For Newton, style is functional; it is suited to the speaker, the message, the audience, and the occasion. His own command of language was an intrinsic part of him. His love for literature, his ability in writing, and his concern about reaching his audiences combined to form his own style and provided the basis for his theory of style.

On Delivery

From the earliest days of public speaking, there has been a recognition of the need for effective delivery, but along with this acknowledgment has been the suspicion of the use of vocal manipulation to induce responses from listeners.\textsuperscript{30} Aristotle in \textit{The Rhetoric} comments very briefly on delivery, and that he commented at all was because he believed the imperfections of hearers made it essential. He did not regard delivery as an elevated topic of inquiry. He would have preferred that ideas be received upon the basis of their own demonstrable merit, rather than upon the auxiliary support of vocal

\textsuperscript{29}Thonssen and Baird, \textit{Speech Criticism}, p. 430.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 434.
Delivery has received varying measures of emphasis in works on rhetoric. As mentioned above, Aristotle touches upon it very lightly; but in other rhetorics, especially those in the elocutionary tradition, such as John Walker's *Elements of Elocution* and Thomas Sheridan's *Lectures on Elocution*, delivery is the focal point of attention, with the other canons of rhetoric getting little consideration. In the present day there is a tendency among some speech writers to de-emphasize delivery in their textbooks.

From the viewpoint of homiletician John A. Broadus, it can never be necessary to urge the importance of delivery upon persons who correctly understand its nature and who appreciate the objectives of public speaking. His own explanation of delivery is indicative of the breadth of ideas often included in a discussion of delivery, the fifth canon of classical rhetoric. For Broadus, delivery does not consist merely, or even chiefly, in vocalization and gesticulation, but implies that a speaker is possessed with the subject, that he is completely in sympathy with it and fully alive to its importance, and that he is not repeating remembered words but setting free the thoughts shut up in his mind. If we accept Broadus' explanation of delivery, we see that it includes in preaching such distinct, yet related, elements as method of sermon preparation, general manner of delivery, the physical factors

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contributing to a preacher's effectiveness, bodily action, and the use of the voice. With this broad concept of delivery in mind, let us turn to Newton's contributions on this rhetorical canon.

In considering Newton's theory of delivery, I wish to call to the reader's attention a number of descriptive accounts by Newton of preaching situations. These descriptions will provide indications of Newton's theory. First, in his references to the preaching of John A. Hutton—who preached at the City Temple in London on the day of Newton's recognition as pastor there—Newton says that though his sermons have the finish of literary essays, they are delivered with the enthusiasm of an evangelist. Further, the whole man goes into them, "uniting humor, pathos, poetry and hard reason, literature, life,unction, with a certain wildness of abandon as of one possessed, which is the note of truly great preaching." Total involvement, then, for Newton, and a special kind of abandon mark the delivery of the ideal preacher.

In a detailed description of the preaching of a Jewish rabbi, Newton provides additional insight into what he feels good delivery is. He writes:

Every time I hear Rabbi Wise, it makes me want to play truant from my own church; he is so vital, so vibrant with intellectual power, so aglow with moral electricity—like a bit of human radium. Tall, athletic, graceful, his dark brown eyes eagle-like in their brightness; his deep bass voice soft as velvet in appeal, and resonant in denunciation; his style bristling with epigrams, swift epitomes, and phrases that sting the mind with the surprise of beauty—his charm as an orator is equal to his daring as a prophet. One moment he is walking to and fro like a lawyer at the bar; another, he is exploding some injustice or absurdity with a

33Newton, Some Living Masters of the Pulpit, p. 42.
quick sabre-thrust, with now a glint of humor and now a gleam of prophetic indignation.\textsuperscript{34}

This description by Newton of Rabbi Wise's preaching indicates Newton's appreciation for vitality, charm, and physical activity in delivery. This same appreciation can be seen negatively stated in his description of the preaching of Dean Inge. The account suggests what preachers should avoid in their delivery. Of Inge, Newton says:

As he rises to read his sermon--often without noticing that the audience is present--that straight, level, self-contained look makes no appeal, and the thin, flexible lips seem made to set inferior folk right on no very gentle terms. He makes little concession to dullness or ignorance. \ldots{} His attitude is one of aristocratic carelessness, as if he trusted to the vaults and pillars to bear his message, but is not greatly concerned whether they do or not. \ldots{} Without wasting a word, in a style as incisive as his thought--clear, concise, keen-cutting--he sets forth the truth as he sees it. There is no unction in his preaching, no pathos. It is cold intellect, with never a touch of tenderness. \ldots{}

\ldots{} even in his gentlest moods one feels a bleak wind round the corner. It would not do for all preachers to be of his order. Men need comfort as well as castigation.\textsuperscript{35}

In addition to directness and warmth in the delivery of a sermon, Newton also emphasizes what he calls release of personality. Describing the preaching of Edward Powell, Newton says that as often as he heard him, he always seemed able instantly to realize "release of personality--what the old time Methodists called 'liberty.'"\textsuperscript{36} In \textit{Preaching in New York}, Newton tells of going to hear Dr. Kelman at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, when he had just begun his ministry

\textsuperscript{34}Newton, \textit{Preaching in New York}, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{35}Newton, \textit{Some Living Masters of the Pulpit}, pp. 57-59.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{ibid.}, p. 236.
there. Newton describes Kelman's preaching as restrained, as if hesitating to let himself go.\textsuperscript{37} Then Newton refers to his own experience:

I know the feeling. I had the same sense of strangeness the first six months at the City Temple, until one of the deacons said to me, with a smile, "Quit that pussyfooting, like a cat in a strange garret."\textsuperscript{38}

With reference to the opposite of restraint in preaching, that is, release of personality, Newton mentions a sermon by William A. Quayle, saying that the manner of its delivery had all the freedom, directness, and charm of a stump speech.\textsuperscript{39}

According to Newton, those who have heard any of the great Dominicans of our generation, in Paris or elsewhere, can testify to the rush and freedom and fire of their sermons. Newton says that there is no flowery emptiness in their preaching, no vapory rhetoric, no pious pap. Also, they speak as men who are looking straight at the truth and telling it vividly, without sacrificing either candor or caution.\textsuperscript{40} Newton found this same directness in the preaching of T. Reaveley Glover, stating that perhaps the outstanding impression one gets of Glover is a fresh, vivid sense of reality, as of one who is looking straight at the truth he is talking about.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{37} Newton, \textit{Preaching in New York}, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Newton, \textit{Some Living Masters of the Pulpit}, p. 204.

\textsuperscript{40} Newton, \textit{The New Preaching}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{41} Newton, \textit{Some Living Masters of the Pulpit}, p. 153.
One more reference will be given to point out Newton's stress on straightforwardness in delivery. He calls a sermon by S. Parkes Cadman a real work of homiletic art—orderly in arrangement, exquisite in language, apt in illustration. Then he says: "But its art was forgotten in the effortless ease—nay, more, the rejoicing urgency—with which it was delivered."\(^{42}\)

For Newton, then, total involvement, abandon, vitality, charm, physical activity, directness, warmth, release of personality, and straightforwardness characterize an effective pulpit delivery.

A by-product of the theory of Newton on the general manner of delivery in preaching is his position against the use of a manuscript. In *The New Preaching*, he discusses at length a painting by Lucius Van Leyden called "The Sermon." He says that upon looking closely at the pulpit in the picture, one sees no reading desk, not even a ledge on which to lay a Bible, a breviary, a sermon, or so much as a sheet of notes. Then Newton makes the following application:

> If only it were so everywhere; for surely if a preacher cannot remember his sermon long enough to preach it, nobody will remember it long after it is preached. At least the preacher in the picture is not reading from a manuscript; he is too earnest, too eager—his heart is on fire. No doubt his sermon has been thought out—or, better still, wrought out—in his heart, but he is speaking with the directness and freedom of a man on the hustings.\(^{43}\)

Newton is so strongly opposed to manuscript preaching that he states that one half wishes it were impossible for a sermon to be read, \(^{42}\) *Ibid.*, p. 172.

if only that the preacher might be set free to look his people in the
eyes and talk of things he knows too well to forget, and "might feel
the pull and play of soul upon soul and know the revelation of a united
yearning for the Reality, to which all are aspiring." 44 Newton says
that such preaching as he is recommending is talking about God in com-
pany with those who are longing to be aware of Him, and of one another
in His presence, "as simply, as naturally, and as intimately as one
talks with a friend." 45 Newton concludes that if such preaching makes
the sermon less a product of one mind than the fruit of fellowship, in
which many share, it also makes it a Holy Communion of seeking souls in
quest of God. 46

As has been shown, Newton makes a strong case for preaching
without a manuscript. Much debate has gone on through many years
regarding the basic method of delivering a sermon. Good arguments can
be offered on preaching from a manuscript, preaching from notes, or
preaching from memory. Newton himself had a very good memory. When he
preached he used very few, if any, notes. 47 He was mentally equipped
to speak without a manuscript. Also, he had trained himself to use this
method. Therefore, his arguments against manuscript preaching must be
considered in the light of his own experience. Nevertheless, his

44 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p. 27.
47 Interview with Mrs. Josephine Morris, daughter of Joseph Fort
arguments are sound, and among those who would support his general position is twentieth-century homiletician Andrew Watterson Blackwood, who points out that the ordinary reader of sermons from the pulpit seems to lose himself in the manuscript and forget his listeners. Blackwood believes that except in the hands of a minister with rare pulpit gifts, the use of a manuscript constitutes a handicap. By this statement Blackwood does not intend to criticize any preacher who reads a sermon on a very special occasion. 48

In concluding this discussion of the theory of Newton on manuscript preaching, I should point out that his arguments against the use of a manuscript are based primarily on his conviction that public worship is enhanced by a sermon delivery that contributes to maximum involvement of the whole congregation. For Newton, manuscript preaching detracts from public worship; it does not enhance it.

While Newton strongly advocates directness, vigor, and audience awareness in preaching, he does not go so far in this direction as to advocate the getting and holding of attention to the exclusion of good taste, concern with the situation, and long-range effect. In other words, he opposes sensationalism in the pulpit. "Honor bombast, showy claptrap, and the antics of the sensationalist in the spotlight, and verily you will have your reward," 49 declares Newton. His prescription for effective preaching is quite the opposite: "Ask for insight,

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sympathy, and the speech of the heart, for noble thought and clear vision in the service of the ideal, and the true preacher will appear.  

Effectiveness in delivery for Newton is closely bound to the other parts of the rhetorical process, particularly invention. According to him, each preacher must endeavor, by devotional and intellectual preparation, to have a heart worthy of the creative mood and the release of personality of which all real preaching is born. In addition, the man in the pulpit must be utterly persuaded if he is to persuade anyone else. This advice coincides with that of the contemporary communication scholars Alan H. Monroe and Douglas Ehninger, who say that a speaker cannot stir an audience to action unless his own enthusiasm and commitment to the cause are evident.

For Newton, delivery, and any other aspect of the sermon, even the sermon itself, must somehow bow to its potential for affecting men, for he says that the test of any sermon is not its eloquence, its learning, or its artistry, but the regenerative note that is in it, conveying the living word of God to living men, through a tender,

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50 Ibid.

51 Newton, ed., If I Had Only One Sermon to Prepare, p. 186.


triumphant, ministrant love.\textsuperscript{54} Newton would agree wholeheartedly with one of his contemporaries, Charles E. Jefferson, who says in his Yale University Lectures on Preaching:

Great preaching is preaching which sets free the latent energies of the soul and builds up rich and potent personalities. . . . Measure your success as preachers not by the size of your congregation . . . but by the stature and girth of the manhood which you develop in individual believers, by the brotherliness and serviceableness and Christlikeness of the separate disciples whom you build into the Christian brotherhood.\textsuperscript{55}

Summary

Newton's theory on the delivery of a sermon includes the following ideas:

1. The characteristics of an effective delivery are total involvement, abandon, vitality, charm, physical activity, directness, warmth, release of personality, and straightforwardness.

2. The preacher should be convinced of the truth of his message, and he should present his message in a manner which does not indicate hesitation, timidity, or uncertainty.

3. Manuscript preaching hinders the achievement of a sense of corporate worship in a church service; extemporaneous preaching contributes to such an achievement.


4. Speaking from the heart, without bombast or sensationalism, is the appropriate general manner for the delivery of a sermon.

5. The effective delivery of a sermon has its beginning in adequate devotional and intellectual preparation on the part of the preacher for the sermon.

6. The ultimate test of delivery is the contribution which it makes toward the achievement of the spiritual regeneration or spiritual improvement of each listener.

Newton's contributions on delivery indicate understanding of the problems and opportunities of preaching. They also indicate awareness of the setting in which much preaching takes place—the ordinary church service. Although Newton's thinking on delivery is sound, it is rather traditional; yet it is modern in its lack of reference to specifics such as articulation, pronunciation, gestures, et cetera. This is not to say that he was unconcerned about specifics. He simply did not write about them—at least not many of them. But his emphasis on such matters as directness, vitality, and physical activity in delivery implies that he would expect a preacher to give appropriate attention to his physical and vocal behavior. For the most part, Newton is general in all of his rhetorical theory, including his theory of delivery; however, he does become specific at times, as in his statements against manuscript preaching. Evidently, Newton did not intend to provide a complete rhetoric in The New Preaching or in any of his other writings about preaching. His intention, apparently, was to express his ideas on the subject of preaching in a general, philosophical way.
Newton succinctly expresses his theory of delivery in a statement he makes about a preacher: "He must feel with the men and women to whom he speaks."\textsuperscript{56} Thus Newton anticipates the thinking of the twentieth-century rhetorician Kenneth Burke, who stresses the need for a speaker to identify with his audience and become one with them.\textsuperscript{57}

In conclusion, for Newton, delivery in preaching is audience-oriented; it is based on concern about results, effects; and it is closely bound to all of the other elements of the rhetorical process.


CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Life and Preaching of Newton

The death of Joseph Fort Newton on January 24, 1950 closed an unusual career. Newton pastored two Baptist churches, served as an associate pastor of an independent church, pastored three Universalist churches, one Free Church (Congregational), and three Episcopal churches. Born on July 21, 1876, Newton received his early education largely from his mother, who was a teacher. He attended local schools in Texas and spent two terms at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He attended various lecture sessions at Harvard University, and there came under the influence of William James and Josiah Royce.

Newton's education was classical in orientation. He studied languages, literature, philosophy, and religion. He developed a special interest in great personalities. His first book was a biography of a preacher, David Swing. Newton was a student of Abraham Lincoln and wrote a book about Lincoln and his law partner, William H. Herndon. Also, Newton wrote a book about John Wesley and John Woolman. Further, he wrote a book entitled Some Living Masters of the Pulpit. Newton was a student of the saints and the mystics and wrote a book called What
Have the Saints to Teach Us?

Early in his life Newton became interested in journalism. He edited a number of magazines and books, and for over eleven years he wrote a daily religious feature, which appeared in twenty-five American newspapers.

In 1924 Newton was selected as one of the twenty-five great Protestant preachers of the United States in a vote conducted by The Christian Century, which represented some 25,000 responses from ministers of various denominations throughout the country.

The peak of Newton's preaching career was his ministry at the City Temple in London, where he preached regularly to a congregation of two to three thousand; but his days in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he pastored for eight years just before going to London, were some of the most fruitful years of his ministry. There he published sermons, lectured at nearby University of Iowa, and became a highly respected pastor and citizen. His church, though small when he went to Cedar Rapids, experienced phenomenal growth.

After Newton's pastorate at the City Temple (1917-1919), he pastored in New York. He became very popular as a speaker at colleges and universities, and as a speaker at special patriotic and Masonic gatherings. He continued this type of activity after he left New York in 1925 to spend the last twenty-five years of his ministry pastoring three churches in Philadelphia, and being a preacher-at-large for three of those years. He made trips back to England, where he spoke in churches and to educational and governmental groups.
Newton had a special interest in British-American relations. As pastor of the City Temple during World War I, he was considered to be an ambassador of good will from the United States to England. Throughout his life after his first days in England, he promoted good relations between the United States and England.

As a preacher, Newton was not especially interested in formal theological studies. He liked the theology he found in literature. He had no special system of theology. He looked to the Bible for inspiration and guidance, but he looked also to other sources—science, history, philosophy, and to his own experience. His ultimate authority was his own intuition and experience, as nurtured by his years of study in various fields.

Newton had a strong interest in mysticism—the inner spiritual life of man. He felt that it is important to have a vital, close relationship with God—as much so as human beings can have. He considered this relationship to be more important than doctrines or denominational distinctions.

Newton was a strong believer in ecumenism and was strongly opposed to sectarianism. He considered all Christians to be part of one great church. Newton felt that there are many different ways to experience God, and that each person must respect the way the other person experiences Him.

While he was liberal in much of his theology, Newton believed in what he called basic religious truths—God, Christ, immortality, morality, prayer, heaven, the eventual salvation of all souls, et cetera.
As a preacher, Newton was mainly interested in the presentation of basic religious truths. He was primarily an inspirational preacher, rather than a doctrinal or an evangelistic preacher. In his preaching Newton was concerned about his audiences. He had the human touch. He was very much interested in meeting people's spiritual needs. He was greatly concerned that people at church really worship God, and he tried to make the sermon an act of worship, thereby contributing toward the overall goal of the church service.

The style of Newton's sermons was noteworthy. His knowledge of literature, his experience in journalism, and his wide reading in general contributed to his ability to choose words which made for clarity, force, picturesqueness, and, on occasions, grandeur.

The quality of the material of Newton's sermons was rich and varied. He drew material from the Bible, from history, literature, science, current events, and personal experiences. He made frequent use of quotations from preachers, statesmen, and literary figures. Organizationally, Newton used a variety of sermon plans. He liked especially the inductive method of development. In the delivery of his sermons, Newton was dynamic, fluent, and somewhat oratorical, particularly in his earlier years. He ordinarily spoke from very few, if any, notes. His practice was to write out his sermons—after he preached them.

The principal effects of Newton's preaching were the large crowds of people he often attracted, the outstanding growth of a number of the churches he pastored, and the pronounced impact of his sermons on the thinking and lives of many people. Newton seemed to be able to
create an atmosphere of worship when he preached. He did this through word choice, in part; choice of material, in part; and to a considerable degree, through his personality. People were attracted to him. He was warm, friendly, non-offensive. Newton's preaching was a balanced presentation—strong in logical appeal; strong in ethical or personal appeal; and while he was not emotional, in the sense of using a lot of gestures and vocal prowess, he felt his messages and communicated a sense of urgency in his preaching. He considered preaching to be the greatest opportunity for service afforded to man. He called preaching his life.

While much can be said for Newton's practice of treating basic religious truths in his sermons, some readers or listeners prefer a greater variety of subject matter. Congregations often want to hear sermons on stewardship, world missions, and personal witnessing for Christ, for instance, as well as sermons on immortality, prayer, morality, and other basic religious truths.

Several weaknesses in Newton's life could affect the way some people will respond to his ministry. His interest in psychic phenomena, including a visit to a psychic; fudging about his age during his final years; and his practice of shifting from one denomination to another, though apparently justified in his own mind, cast a shadow over his life and ministry.

The Rhetorical Theory of Newton

From the standpoint of personal experience as a preacher, keen observation of the preaching of others, and interest in preaching,
Newton was eminently qualified to write about rhetoric. For subject matter, in Newton's rhetoric, the preacher looks to the gospel of Christ. To develop his messages, the preacher needs to gather material from the Bible, from his study of the great Christians of history, from his experiences with people, and from his own personal relationship with God. Sources such as literature, history, and current events also are useful.

The principal task of the preacher is to impart a body of truth, presented in such a way that it relates to the thought patterns of the contemporary mind. As a means for reaching the mind of the day, Newton strongly urges the use of induction, primarily because of his feeling that it is the way people are used to finding truth in other fields. Newton's contribution on emotional appeal in preaching centers in his condemnation of abuses of emotional appeal and the positive advice that a minister feel deeply his message, communicating thereby deep feeling about the subject to his audience. Like other writers on homiletics, Newton says that it is important for the preacher to have vast knowledge, sterling character, and genuine concern for the welfare of his audience. While Newton recognized the benefit of nonverbal elements in worship, such as ritual, setting, and symbols, he was definitely opposed to any minimization of the place of preaching in worship; but he felt that the sermon should be a vital part of the worship—a sacrament of communication.

In Newton's rhetorical theory, sermons may meet only a particular exigence, or they may be of such a quality or nature that they meet more than the immediate exigence. For Newton, there are sermons which
live for ages, made immortal by the faith of the preacher, the depth of
his heart, the clarity of his vision, and the magic of his mood. Newton
was greatly concerned that preaching be related to the present day
—not too much of the age, not remote from the age. The message—the
gospel—does not change; the method of presenting it does. The
preacher must know his times, live in them, and love them. Further, he
must know his audience—their general needs and their special needs. A
preacher should not contribute to the alienation of members of audi-
ences from each other. He should strive to bring members of audiences
together, emphasizing what they have in common. A preacher should try
to bring into harmony the inner life of faith and the laws of science.

Private piety alone is not a sufficient aim for the preacher.
He should aim also at the cultivation of a public religion, social in
its insight and international in its aspiration.

Newton frowns on any sort of obvious attempt to be effective.
He says the preacher should never endeavor to be eloquent. The preach-
er's effort at achieving art in style must be subordinate to a personal
and vivid awareness in his own life of the gospel message that he pro-
claims. The preacher's style should reflect the speech of the day; it
should be familiar, colloquial, and conversational.

For Newton, total involvement, abandon, vitality, unaffected
charm, appropriate physical activity, directness, warmth, release of
personality, and straightforwardness characterize an effective pulpit
delivery. Timidity, uncertainty, hesitation are not appropriate to the
delivery of a sermon. Newton felt strongly that manuscript preaching,
as a general method of presentation, was not conducive to the kind of
atmosphere and attitude that a preacher needs to cultivate in normal preaching situations. This method inhibits directness, naturalness, and interaction with the audience. Newton wants the sermon to be less a product of one mind than the fruit of fellowship. It should be an indication of souls in quest of God.

In Newton's rhetoric, the ultimate test of the sermon is not its eloquence, its learning, or its artistry, but the regenerative note that is in it, conveying the living word of God to living men through a tender, triumphant, ministrant love.

Newton's rhetorical contributions regarding the purpose of preaching, materials for the sermon, adapting to audiences, and organization are strengths in his rhetoric. Weaknesses in his rhetoric are his slight treatment of emotional appeal and his lack of specifics pertaining to the cultivation of style. While Newton's treatment of delivery is theoretically very sound in terms of classical rhetoric and contemporary rhetorical theory, his failure to be more specific is disappointing. Newton also seems to overemphasize induction as a method of organization.

In his own preaching, Newton exemplified, in particular, the following points from his own theory: (1) emphasize in your preaching the vital subjects in religion; (2) give detailed consideration to the nature of the audience addressed, and let this consideration be reflected in the material, the organization, and the language of the sermon; (3) utilize a direct manner in the delivery of the sermon—avoiding whenever possible and practical, any potential barrier to directness, such as extensive notes or a manuscript; and (4) since
preaching is so vital to religion, bring to your preaching the very best that you can offer it, in knowledge and skill.

The Sources Which Influenced Newton's Rhetoric

Newton's early education under his mother and other teachers in literature and language, his training in debate, his exposure to the basically classical rhetorical theory of John A. Broadus at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and his interest in such master preachers as Frederick W. Robertson and David Swing, with their substantive content and effective style, contributed to Newton's stress in his rhetoric on appropriate language, significant material, and directness in delivery.

Newton's theology based on experience contributed to his advocacy of the use of inductive reasoning with experiences as the basis for establishing truths. Newton's belief that the Bible is fallible contributed to his recommendation that in addition to the Bible the preacher make extensive use of other sources. And Newton's belief that there are only a few really important subjects in religion--God, Christ, prayer, et cetera--definitely influenced him to recommend that preachers deal with the basic matters in religion. As Newton himself says in Some Living Masters of the Pulpit: "Of books about preaching by great preachers we have had many, and the value of each, aside from the fresh wisdom of experience which it teaches, lies in the unconscious self-revelation of its author."¹ Newton's rhetoric tells us

much about Newton. It contributes to our understanding of him as a man and as a preacher. Consequently, in a small way, Newton's rhetoric enables us to understand man himself a little better.

Newton's preaching experience in various churches, not only as a pastor but as guest speaker in still other churches, contributed to his stress on preaching about basic truths—a type message which would meet with little opposition and also do much good. His own command of language contributed to his emphasis on appropriate and contemporary language in preaching. Further, his superior memory and ability to preach his messages with very few, if any, notes, contributed their share to the stress in his rhetoric on directness in delivery, eye contact, and the observation of audience reaction to the sermon.

The times affected Newton's rhetoric. Newton was deeply concerned about the modern mind, feeling that it is unique, just as the medieval mind was unique to that period in history. In his rhetoric, Newton was interested in finding a suitable method of organization and an appropriate language style for communicating ancient truth in a way that would be comprehended and appreciated by the modern mind. The times, particularly the 1920's with the squabbles between fundamentalists and modernists in religion, contributed their part to Newton's emphasis in his rhetoric on preachers dealing with essential matters, the very basics, trying thereby to bring people together rather than separating them farther. Finally, Newton's rhetoric reflected the emphasis of the times on the social note in church work. Again and again Newton says that the sermon should not be a separate entity in a church service but a vital part of the worship of a group of people.
In sum, then, we see that Newton's education, his theology, his own preaching experience, and the times in which he lived contributed their influence in making Newton's rhetorical theory what it was.

Implications of Newton's Rhetorical Theory

Theoretical. Newton advances the theory of total involvement of the preacher in his preaching. The preacher must bring to the preaching situation a spiritual quality and a vital mind. There is no place in Newton's theory for doing less than one's best. Newton has an exalted view of preaching, considering it a tremendous means of influence, if the preacher brings to it his entire and best self. This total involvement reflects itself in the general and special preparation for the sermon and in the manner the sermon is delivered. The results of this kind of preaching are satisfying to the preacher and pleasing to God.

Newton advances the concept of balance in the rhetorical process. He views each aspect of the preacher's task as being important—word choice, selection of material, release of personality in delivery, et cetera. The separate aspects of preaching are closely interrelated, and all aspects are subservient to the dominating objective in preaching—the transformation of people through the gospel of Christ.

Newton advances a theory of priorities in preaching. Artificiality, striving for style, trying too hard to impress, and saying more than you see have no place in real preaching. The preacher's attention must be focused on the central task in preaching—communicating the gospel. The ultimate rationale, the only rationale really, for
preaching is people's need of God. The preacher must not allow his mind to become occupied with methods. His mind must be occupied with the goal of true preaching.

Newton advances the theory of centrality of preaching in the work of the church. For Newton, inspired preaching is the greatest power among men. This view of preaching places all other types of church work in a subordinate position. There is no way to mistake Newton's high regard for preaching.

Newton advances the theory of unity within the individual—no schism between the head and the heart. In his thinking, people can be both scientific and religious. Furthermore, there should be a toning down of the stress on doing things on the basis of intellect versus doing things on the basis of feelings. Man is both emotional and intellectual, and sometimes emotion and intellect are very closely intertwined.

Newton advances the theory of identification with one's audience. The delivery of the sermon is best when the preacher's heart is on fire, when he releases his personality, when he talks intimately, directly, man to man, in a way which gets the audience moving together toward God, reflecting, therefore, Kenneth Burke's emphasis in his rhetoric on identifying with one's audience and becoming one with them.² For Newton, the preacher's role in religion is to make the eternal reality real, and to lift human souls into the presence of God

and detain them there.

Practical. Newton was a devoted minister. By his example in being dedicated to his work, he exemplified the importance in the ministry of being a full-time minister. While there are times when ministers must work temporarily at a secular job, it is important that a work as vital as that of preaching and ministering to people in other ways be given all of a man's available working hours.

Another practical implication of this study has to do with Newton's interest in awakening a new sense of the worth and wonder of the art of preaching. There is much good preaching today, but there is also much mediocre, even poor, preaching. If preaching is as important as many of us say it is, we would do well to contribute our influence in the direction of a new emphasis in our various church circumstances on quality preaching. A preacher may not be a Phillips Brooks, a D. L. Moody, or a Harry Emerson Fosdick, but he should demonstrate a high level of efficiency in his preaching, benefiting us primarily through his content, yet presenting his material in such a way that it is not a chore, but a pleasure, to listen to him.

Pedagogical. An implication of this study for the training of candidates for the ministry comes from Newton's emphasis on the prime purpose of church. Although church can be a place for fellowship, and at times recreation, and while ministers can refer in their sermons to science, literature, current events, et cetera, people go to church, as Newton points out, to find God, to experience His nearness, to find comfort, guidance, and spiritual peace. This point should be stressed repeatedly to young men and women preparing for full-time service in
Another pedagogical implication of this study is that ministers need experiences with people in their pastoral and preaching role. There is a time for the reading of books; there is a time for personal devotions; but there is also a time for relating to people. One of the strong points of Newton's ministry was the human touch. Although this can be developed, to some extent, from reading, there is no substitute for actual contacts with people. These contacts give preachers a firsthand awareness of the problems and interests of people; and although preachers need not refer directly to these experiences in their preaching, indirect references to experiences with people can add the human touch to preaching, making it more interesting, challenging, and profitable.

An additional pedagogical implication of this study is that a minister's education should not end with his formal schooling. To some extent, Newton was limited in his formal education, having no seminary degree; but he studied and read much on his own, and learned from his associations with prominent and interesting people. Newton's example in self-education is worthy of the emulation of ministers of all faiths.

An interesting implication of this study from the perspective of educational philosophy is that while Newton's focus on experience was based on his theology, it coincides with the emphasis on experience or learn-by-doing idea so prominent in the 1930's, as stressed in the
Conclusion

There is little that is unique in Newton's rhetoric, but the following ideas are at least special, as well as prominent, in his theory. First, there is his continued stress on the importance of bringing people together, focusing not on their differences, but on their agreements. Further, there is a special emphasis in Newton's rhetorical theory on the use of the experiences of the saints and the mystics as a vital source for sermonic material. Additionally, there is in Newton's rhetoric a pronounced stress on the preacher's individual experience with God as a source of material.

Permeating Newton's rhetoric is the constant concern with the church as a religious group. And although Newton bases his hope for humanity on the personal religion of individuals--each person being at peace with God--he sees the church as a body of kindred people who should be assisting one another, as well as the preacher, in all that pertains to the life and the service of the church, including the preaching. Newton's rhetoric, therefore, reflects the sociological, or social, emphasis of modern rhetorical theory.  

Finally, it would appear that most, if not all, of Newton's rhetorical theory is applicable to today's preaching situations. What

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Newton discusses, from the importance of the preacher himself to success in preaching, to purpose in preaching, to selection of materials, to method of organization, to the use of contemporary language, to straightforwardness and warmth in the delivery of the sermon, seems pertinent to most of the rhetorical situations in which contemporary ministers find themselves.

Newton's own definition of a classic man is apropos to him as a rhetorician. He says: "A classic man is one who, though deeply rooted in the soil of his age and speaking to its problems, has, nevertheless, by virtue of the depth and clarity of his insight, a message to the times following."

Newton's rhetorical thought was influenced by his education, by his theology, by his preaching, and by his times. The value of Newton's rhetoric lies not so much in its uniquenesses, which are few, but in its worth as a body of significant principles and techniques for those ministers who aspire to competence and productivity in that important aspect of their service as a minister--preaching.

Finally, let us note the following words from Newton's autobiography, River of Years:

The pulpit is a public place, but its message has to do with the most intimate and inward affairs of the heart--things we seldom say to anyone or allow anyone to say to us, save in the most confidential friendship, or in hours of crisis and disaster when the soul is near the surface. Yet the awful public-privacy of the pulpit not only permits, but invites, the opening of heart to heart, and one may speak to a thousand people words which one would hardly speak to a friend.

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Such is the wonder of preaching; it is unlike any other speech known among men.\(^6\)

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