

# Puritan Preaching and Pathos: Some Uses from “Puritan Rhetoric”

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As man is not so prone to live according to the truth he knows except it do deeply affect him, so neither doth his soul enjoy its sweetness, except speculation do pass to affection. The understanding is not the whole soul, and therefore cannot do the whole work.... The understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and it must receive them and commend them to the affections.... The affections are, as it were, the bottom of the soul.

—Richard Baxter<sup>1</sup>

This article would like to function as an incentive to become better acquainted in our homiletical courses with “the Puritan style” of preaching.<sup>2</sup> Especially in the face of the times we live in, an age of stirring up our emotions as high as possible, this seems to be very helpful. Since the 1980s so-called “emotions studies” have come up in many scientific disciplines, some theological disciplines included.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, I would like to stimulate

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1. Cited by Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 99.

2. While “Puritanism” is a slippery term whose definition is much debated by historians, this article just focuses on some practitioners of English Reformed “practical divinity.” Cf. W. B. Patterson, *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 90–113.

3. A few examples are as follows. In practical-theological research: Heleen Zorgdrager, “Homosexuality and Hypermasculinity in the Public Discourse of the Russian Orthodox Church: An Affect Theoretical Approach,” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 74/3 (2013): 214–19; in biblical studies: Waller, Alexis G., “Violent Spectacles and Public Feelingstrauma and Affect in the Gospel of Mark and the Thunder,” *Biblical Studies*, 22/4–5 (2014), 450–72; and in the field of systematic theology: Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self. An Essay “On the Trinity”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Coakley makes “affections” her central theme.

some further research on the use and, of course, misuse of *affections* in the field of homiletics.<sup>4</sup>

First of all, I want to plead for—as I already did—using the word *affections* instead of *emotions* because what is connoted by emotions suffers from the danger of shallowness and superficiality. Too often emotions are seen just from a psychological perspective, deprived of the connotations of *passions* or *affections* of the inner Christian life. Therefore, we should go back to the basics in this respect to refrain from the miserable division of the head from the heart as in modernism, or the other way around as in our postmodern times, as is shown from the history of rhetoric. The way back to the basics ultimately brings us to the biblical-theological use of the term “heart” in the Holy Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup>

Why, then, is it very profitable for our times to listen to our heritage from Puritan preaching? Among homileticians and preachers, too often just one classification of Puritan preaching is given—at least in many Dutch homiletical studies; namely, the so-called *plain style*, which is postulated as the most important characteristic of how Puritans preached. This, however, sounds not to be a very attractive quality at first glance. Plain preaching often seems to correspond with boring and dull sermons. One reason why Puritans tend still to be seen as anti-rhetorical is the dichotomy drawn by older scholarship on preaching between “plain style” Puritan preaching and the more ornamented “metaphysical” preaching of literary preachers as, for example, the great poet and cleric in the Church of England, John Donne (1572–1631).<sup>6</sup> Second, therefore, I want to demonstrate from some leading examples within the Puritan movement—Perkins, Baxter, and Sibbes—how they did use rhetoric in a very profound and balanced way, using affectionate language which—and this is very crucial—was accompanied by and savored with good reasoning. Of course, these Puritans need not be our only “masters” as there are many before and after them who did and do

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4. I am looking forward to the defense and publication of the dissertation which Michael Keller has written: *Experiencing God in the Words: Rhetoric, Logic, Imaginative Language, and Emotion in Jonathan Edwards' Sermons. A Computational Analysis*. By means of the *Dictionary of Affective Language*, he mapped out in which period of his life Edwards used which kind of language in his sermons (categorized as abstract-concrete, active-passive, nasty-fun, and high or low imagery).

5. For a short overview, see Alex Luc, “72,” in William van Gemenen, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Carlisle, Pa.: Paternoster Press, 1997), 2:748–53.

6. As Horton Davies, *Like Angels from a Cloud: The English Metaphysical Preachers, 1588–1645* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1986).

preach from the love of Christ and to love Christ with all their minds and all their hearts.

Finally, after we shortly have gone the way “back to the basics” in rhetoric and “back to the Puritan examples” in homiletics we will discuss some practical directions for preaching with *pathos* today.

### **Back to the Basics—the Art of Persuasion**

Rhetoric as the art of persuasion uses several instruments. It is helpful to know what the most important terms originally meant in order to have a clear understanding of them today.

#### *Classical Rhetorical Notions*

From Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, we inherited the well-known classical-rhetorical triplet, *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*, as three ways of persuasion. In this article, just one of them, *pathos*, is central in our thought, which also is central in the second book of Aristotle’s handbook on eloquence. When reading Aristotle it becomes very clear that for him “emotions” or—better and more literally—“passions” are not considered as instinctive, spontaneous feelings, but really are connected with cognitive, rational elements.<sup>7</sup> In his second book, Aristotle gives a systematic account of human psychology, arranged in contrasting pairs (anger-calmness, friendship-enmity, etc.). He underscores the cognitive side of these *passions* or *affections*.

Another famous rhetorician from the Latin tradition, Cicero, adopted these three elements into his triplet: to teach (*docere*), to delight (*delectare*), and to move (*movere*) as the three goals of an address. *Pathos*, then, in classical rhetoric has especially to do with these last two elements: to delight and to move. But an ethical use of *pathos* should always be connected with truth and reality. *Pathos* could be used to lead someone to believe what is not true, but what is humbug, or worse. The power of *pathos* can be a great danger.<sup>8</sup>

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7. D. Konstan, “Rhetoric and Emotion,” in I. Worthington, ed., *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 411–25; W. W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion. A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics and Ethics* (London: Duckworth, 2002).

8. Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* illustrates the (mis)use of that power: “The man who can carry a judge with him, and put him in whatever frame of mind he wishes, whose words move men to tears and anger, has always been a rare creature. Yet this is what dominates the courts, this is the eloquence that reigns supreme.... Where force has been brought

In his homiletical handbook *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine—very well schooled in Cicero’s rhetoric—touched on these aspects in this way:

Just as the listener is to be delighted if he is to be retained as a listener, so also he is to be persuaded if he is to be moved to act. And just as he is delighted if you speak sweetly, so is he persuaded if he loves what you promise, fears what you threaten, hates what you condemn, embraces what you commend, sorrows at what you maintain to be sorrowful; rejoices when you announce something delightful, takes pity on those whom you place before him in speaking as being pitiful, flees those whom you, moving fear, warn are to be avoided; and is moved by whatever else may be done through grand eloquence toward moving the minds of listeners, not that they may know what is to be done, but that they may do what they already know should be done.<sup>9</sup>

In an *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* this special aspect and effect of *pathos* is stated as follows: “Of the three appeals of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*, it is the last that impels an audience to act. Emotions range from mild to intense; some, such as well-being, are gentle attitudes and outlooks, while others, such as sudden fury, are so intense that they overwhelm rational thought. Images are particularly effective in arousing emotions, whether those images are visual and direct as sensations, or cognitive and indirect as memory or imagination, and part of a rhetorical task is to associate the subject with such images.”<sup>10</sup>

It is important to highlight two things from this description. The first one to underscore is the relation between *pathos* and “act.” There is a connection between using *pathos* and our will as the captain and steering wheel of our behavior. Second, as far as our language is concerned, the use of an audience’s imagination to spark emotion consists in employing images and/or metaphors—visual language.

### *Ramist influences*

All this has been mentioned to see that *pathos* always was united with *logos* and *ethos*. After Augustine, during the Middle Ages, *meditation* and

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to bear on judges’ feelings and their minds distracted from the truth there the orator’s true work begins.”

9. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book IV, 229. Emphasis mine.

10. L. D. Greene, “Pathos,” *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

*disputation* went their way, and a rift grew between *logos* and *pathos* in the art of persuasion.

Although it is an overgeneralization, there is much truth in positing the Ramist influence on much Puritan preaching from William Perkins's homiletical manual *The Arte of Prophesying* (1592),<sup>11</sup> which influenced so many preachers. The most striking thing is Ramus's division or even divorce between *logos* and *pathos*. The customary order of the process to create a presentation was, traditionally, invention, arrangement, style, delivery, and memory. Petrus Ramus (1515–1572), however, proposed that invention and arrangement belong to "logic," while style and delivery are considered as "rhetoric." In this method, the sermon is primarily a design with a clear and logical argument. After this composition preachers can use style elements and inspiring and moving language as an ornament, but these elements are ultimately irrelevant to effective preaching. "More fundamentally, his whole way of looking at dialectic and rhetoric was not in terms of speech and debate, but in terms of writing and visual images."<sup>12</sup>

### Affections more than Emotions

Thomas Dixon, in his high-impact book *From Passions to Emotions*, describes the history of the term emotion.<sup>13</sup> Most important: in the 19th century, Charles Darwin and William James gave birth to "emotion" as a psychological category. They cast off the Christian- and inner-connotations of *passions* or *affections*. Dixon shows that the "emotions" became confined to sensorial bodily expressions measured by biological and quantifiable explanations.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, I prefer to speak of *affections* instead of emotions because our *affections* stem from level that is deeper than what people often consider when hearing the word *emotion* or *feeling* nowadays. *Affections* are connected with our mind, heart, and will. *Pathos*, then, has to be in keeping

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11. Walter J. Ong, Adrian Johns, *Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of discourse to the Art of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Mordechai Feingold, Joseph S. Freedman, Wolfgang Rother, eds., *The Influence of Petrus Ramus: Studies in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Philosophy and Sciences* (Basel: Schwabe, 2001); Donald Keith McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

12. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 249–52.

13. Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions. The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

14. Think of the dogmatic view in New Atheism that religion is just feeling, an emotional activity which you can measure on screens, and that it has nothing to do with rationality and science.

in line with the two other components, namely, *logos* and *ethos* in preaching. Theologically seen, this preference has to do with the *image of God* and the central biblical idea of our “heart” as the center of our feelings and knowledge. Moreover, using *affections* corresponds with the current use of it in social science and theology.

### Back to Puritan Rhetoric—Lessons from *Exempla*

We will now show the diversity among the Puritans when thinking about their use of rhetoric. We will see that none of them appears radically opposed to the use of language as an instrument of persuasion, although the only one who really can persuade is the Holy Spirit. These men all use affective language.

#### *William Perkins*

The importance of William Perkins (1558–1602) lies especially in his writing of the first English preaching manual.<sup>15</sup> It was published in 1592 in Latin as *Prophetica* before it was translated into English as *The Arte of Prophecyng* (1607). His outline for a sermon follows Melancthon: Text, Doctrine, and Application.<sup>16</sup> We already mentioned another influence, namely the Ramist influence, in his thinking on preaching and his directions on how a sermon should be prepared and composed.<sup>17</sup> Thus he favors *logos*, the appeal to rational argument, since he understands faith particularly to be a persuasion to right understanding (using the word “mind,” which has in its biblical-theological sense broader connotations). In this way, the propositional aspects of Christian faith are elevated above the experiential. Perkins is rather defending propositions than appealing to affections, though pathos and ethos also have their place in Perkins’s recommended practice of preaching:

15. W. B. Paterson, *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) sees Perkins not so much as a “Puritan” because he avoided controversies over ecclesiology. In another sense, he was, because Perkins was a key figure in the development of English Reformed practical divinity in the line of Richard Greenham, esp. 40–63, 216–19.

16. I used the abbreviated edition of William Perkins, *The Art of Propheying with The Calling of the Ministry* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996); cf. Melancthon’s *Supplementa Melancthonica*, II, in Paul Drews and Ferdinand Cohrs, eds., *Homilletische Schriften* (Leipzig, 1922).

17. For some nuances see Joseph A. Pipa, “William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985), et passim.

What I am stressing is this: a minister must be a divine interpreter, an interpreter of God's meaning. And therefore he must not only read the book but eat it. He must not only have the knowledge of divine things flowing in his brain, but engraved on his heart and printed in his soul by the spiritual finger of God.... If he himself is not reconciled, dare he present another man to God's mercy for pardon when he has never presented himself? Can he commend the state of grace to another without ever having felt the sweetness of it in his own soul? Dare he preach on sanctification with polluted lips, and out of an unsanctified heart?<sup>18</sup>

Perkins presents striking thoughts as he meditates on the position of a minister of the gospel as an interpreter in connection with what Isaiah referred to as the "tongue of the learned" (Isa. 50:4).

To be able to speak with this tongue is to possess three things: (1) human learning; (2) divine knowledge insofar as that may be learned from others; and (3) whoever speaks with this tongue must be inwardly taught and instructed by the Spirit of God.<sup>19</sup>

An important characteristic of Perkins's view on using philosophical and rhetorical wisdom in the pulpit is his reference to Horace's proverb: *artis etiam celare artem*, i.e. "it is also the point of art to conceal the art."<sup>20</sup>

How do we properly use affectionate language? Perkins's pneumatology definitely provides the actuating power to communicate the salvific work of Christ in and through preaching. The holiness of the preacher is the grand ethos when using pathos:

An inward sense of the doctrine we are to preach. Wood that is capable of burning is not set alight unless a fire is put to it. Similarly, anyone who would encourage godly affections and desires in others must first have godly affection himself. Thus, whatever responses a particular sermon requires should be first stirred up privately in our minds, so that we can kindle the same flame in our hearers.<sup>21</sup>

### *Richard Sibbes*

Richard Sibbes (c. 1577–1635) preached in Cambridge and London during the reigns of James I and Charles I. Sibbes did not write any treatise

18. Perkins, *Prophesying*, 90–91; cf. *Calling of the Ministry*, 170–74.

19. Perkins, *Prophesying*, 89.

20. Perkins, *Prophesying*, 71.

21. Perkins, *Prophesying*, 74.

or book on homiletics as such, as Perkins earlier and Baxter later did, and so his thoughts have to be collected from diverse documents wherein he shows his principles and practice. For that reason, I offer some illustrations to show that Sibbes (1) was not an anti-rhetorical preacher and (2) that he placed a greater emphasis on pathos over logos as his preferred mode of persuasion.

He writes in a prefatory epistle to his famous sermon-treatise *The Bruised Reed and the Smoking Flax* that

No creature can take off wrath from the conscience, but he that set it on, though all the prevailing arguments be used that can be brought forth, till *the Holy Ghost effectually persuadeth, by a kind of divine rhetoric*, which ought to raise our hearts to him who is the comforter of his people, that he would seal them to our souls. Now God dealing with men as *understanding* creatures, the manner which he useth in this powerful work upon their consciences, is by the way of *friendly intercourse*, as *entreaty and persuasion*, and discovery of his love in Christ, and Christ's gracious inclination to the weakest and lowest of men.<sup>22</sup>

Surely, when Sibbes speaks about "a kind of divine rhetoric" he draws for the divine persuasion by the Spirit an analogy to the human persuasion through speech. But to express what happens in this divine persuasion Sibbes applies affective language as it is recommended in several handbooks on rhetoric as such. This divine rhetoric consists more of affective words than rational reasons because ultimately it is by the love of Christ that one's heart is persuaded and will receive peace. It's amazing how many times Sibbes works with words such as, *affections, love, delight, desire, relish, sweetness, feel*, and *taste* to persuade everybody of the goodness of the Lord, the love of Jesus Christ, the willingness to receive sinners, and so on. Following this perspective on the triune God as the "God" who "is Love," Sibbes's sermons expose a great affectionate pathos for his message and to his audience.

In connection with an affectionate language, he very often uses another rhetorical means to persuade, namely imaginative language referring to our senses like taste, touch, hearing, and sight. Sibbes opens the windows or gates of the soul. From the hundreds and hundreds of possible illustrations, consider just the following to "taste" his use of affective language:

A man that is born in a dungeon, and never saw the light, when he hears the discourse of the sun and stars, and earth, and flowers, and

22. Richard Sibbes, *Works*, 1:39 (emphasis mine).

plants, he hath imaginations what they should be, but he fancies other things. So a man that never had spiritual eye-sight to see spiritual things in their kind, he fancies them to be this and that, but he sees them not by their own light.<sup>23</sup>

Isn't this the most proper way to deliver an affective appeal, to lower the level of abstraction? Feeling originates in experience, and the more concrete we are, the more feeling is implicit in it.

Sibbes sees even Christ Himself using affectionate rhetoric. Commenting on the words from the Song of songs (5:2), "My love, my dove," in a posthumously published series of sermons on this song of love beautifully entitled *Bowels Opened*, Sibbes writes:

There are all words of sweetness. He labors to express all the affection he can. For the conscience is subject to upbraid, and to clamor much. So that there must be a great deal of persuasion to still the accusing conscience of a sinner, to set it down, make it quiet, and persuade it of God's love. Therefore, he useth all *heavenly rhetoric to persuade and move the affections*.<sup>24</sup>

But this divine seeking for favor and love, or to say God's wooing, entails not only the rhetorical mode of pathos, but of logos as well. Sibbes argues that the reason why Christ persuades utilizing a human preacher, and not through an unmediated communication to the soul—is precisely this: Christ respects the rational nature of humanity:

Because he will preserve nature, and the principles thereof; and so deals with us, working accordingly. *The manner of working of the reasonable creature is to work freely by a sweet inclination, not by violence.* Therefore when he works the work of conversion, he doth it in a sweet manner, though it be mighty for the efficaciousness of it. He admonisheth us with entreaty and persuasion, as if we did it ourselves. But though the manner be thus sweet, yet with this manner there goeth an almighty power. Therefore he doth it strongly as coming from himself, and sweetly, as the speaking is to us, preserving our nature.<sup>25</sup>

When we consider this quotation it appears to be that even when Sibbes touches the rational element, *pathos* functions for the benefit of *logos*.

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23. Sibbes, *Works*, 6:530.

24. Sibbes, *Works*, 2:84 (emphasis mine).

25. Sibbes, *Works*, 2:63.

And what about the third part of persuasion, *ethos*? Ministers are Christ's mouth and their ethos has to be transparent as the ethos of Christ, given to them by the Spirit. Many times Sibbes exhorts ministers and all who love Christ to be sincere and earnest:

If we would be happy instruments to convert others, being converted ourselves, labour to be such as the world may turn to be good and gracious.... Let us labour to be such as the world may conceit are good persons. We say of physicians, when the patient has a good conceit of them, the cure is half wrought. So the doctrine is half persuaded when there is a good conceit of the speaker. Again, labour to be earnest. If we would kindle others, we must be warmed ourselves; if we would make others weep, we must weep ourselves.... Let us labour to be deeply affected with what we speak, and speak with confidence as if we know what we speak... for when we are confident from spiritual experience, it is wonderful how we shall be instruments of God to gain upon others.<sup>26</sup>

Note the repeated exhortation to "labour:" sincerity does only come after much work. Again, this plea for the good ethos is accompanied by and fostered by an effortful pathos.

Of course, I could but skim the surface of the rhetorical aspects in Sibbes's work in this article. Nevertheless, through these few examples, we have at least a taste of it and the whole rhetorical landscape of his sermons and treatises is open to further elaboration for us. Logos, ethos, and pathos are all present in Sibbes's work, but for him, the greatest of these is pathos.

### *Richard Baxter*

Richard Baxter (1615–1691) surely has given some reason to suggest that Puritans were anti-rhetorical men. They made stylistic critiques, warning of preachers who are more concerned about polished speech than about living uprightly *Coram Deo*. Baxter's exclamation in his famous book *Gildas Salvianus*, better known as *The Reformed Pastor*, sounds as follows:<sup>27</sup>

26. Sibbes, *Works*, 2:167.

27. The full title reads: "*Gildas Salvianus: The Reformed Pastor*, showing the nature of the Pastoral work; especially in Private Instruction and Catechizing; with an open Confession of our too open Sins: Prepared for a Day of Humiliation kept at Worcester, December 4, 1655, by the Ministers of that County, who subscribed the Agreement for Catechizing and Personal Instruction at their entrance upon that work, By their unworthy fellow Servant, *Richard Baxter*, Teacher of the Church at Kederminster."

Oh how curiously have I heard some men preach; and how carelessly have I seen them live! They have been so accurate as to the preparations of their sermons, that seldom preaching seemed to them a virtue, that their language might be more polite, and all the rhetorical *jingling* writers they could meet with were pressed to serve them for the adorning of their style (and gauds were oft their chiefest ornaments). They were so nice in hearing others, that no man pleased them that spoke as he thought, or that drowned not affections, or dulled not, or distempered not the heart by predominant strains of a fantastic wit.<sup>28</sup>

Baxter here voices the tradition of the anti-rhetorical polemic wherein rhetoric is associated with empty wit and insincere style. Such a preacher is the antonym of the one “that spoke as he thought.” It is always very nice to see how the anti-rhetorical polemic’s means are used rhetorically, as is the case here in Baxter’s exaggeration as quoted. For the sake of clarity, two illustrations will suffice. First, the “how curiously” and “how carelessly,” in itself, is parallelism, using anaphora, consonance, and similar word endings (*homoiooteleuton*). Second, the sincere preacher is distinguished from the witty preacher by a tricolon of negatives: “drowned not... dulled not... distempered not.”

Baxter’s understanding of rhetoric certainly reflects the Ramist restricted concept: instead of Cicero’s five canons, there are just two of them, namely style and delivery. The most important thing in this Ramist strain of thought ultimately was the “logic” part: the invention and arrangement of the sermon, while all other elements are but ornaments. Yet, there is much more to take into account before a one-sided picture predominates our view of Baxter’s theology and his ideas of rhetoric.<sup>29</sup> Given the purpose of this paper, I will just mention that although Baxter was the most scholastic of all Puritans and his *Methodus* itself the Puritan *Summa* par excellence,<sup>30</sup> his emphasis on theology was on the affective and practical nature of theology, as his definition of theology makes very clear: *scientia-affectiva-practica*.<sup>31</sup> In

28. Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 64. It is a pity that one word in this abbreviated edition has been eliminated, namely the thought-provoking word “jingling,” because it brings in remembrance Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 13:1. Cf. Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000), 4:371.

29. J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Carlisle, Pa.: Paternoster, 2003).

30. Carl Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen’s Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, Pa.: Paternoster, 1998), 26, 32.

31. Simon J. G. Burton, *The Hallowing of Logic. The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter’s Methodus Theologiae* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 4–44.

this respect, in Baxter's work as a whole, logos, on the one hand, and ethos and pathos, on the other hand, go perfectly hand in hand. We should be careful in highlighting but a few famous passages.<sup>32</sup> As Perkins and Sibbes, Baxter stresses time and again how ethos and pathos are connected,

When your minds are in a holy, heavenly frame, your people are likely to partake of the fruits of it. Your prayers, and praises, and doctrine will be sweet and heavenly to them. They will likely feel when you have been much with God: that what is most on your hearts, is like to be most in their ears.<sup>33</sup>

Baxter was opposed to the use of rhetoric in sermons that does the opposite of what it should do when used correctly. Ultimately, Baxter opposed the deficiencies in preaching; its rational content unclear, the person of the preacher insincere, and the affections dulled instead of evoked. Baxter seems above all to reject a style of preaching wherein polish seems of greater importance than earnestness.<sup>34</sup> This seems to be perfectly in keeping with the seventh point from the *Directory of Publick Worship* (1645). At the end it says, "But the servant of Christ, *whatever his method be*, is to perform his whole ministry." So, it's not about the method as such, but seven important prerequisites follow. How has a minister to perform his ministry? Painfully, plainly, faithfully, wisely, gravely, with loving affection, and as a godly man (Acts 20:28).

### Some Uses for Preaching Today

From what we have seen in these illustrations from the Puritan history of preaching, a few remarks follow on preaching with pathos and the use of affectionate language today.

Preaching without pathos definitely and ultimately is impossible. A preacher does not rather have a message, but he *is* a messenger. The message becomes flesh and blood in the person of the messenger, and in the sound of what he is voicing in preaching the Word there will be a kind of

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32. Besides the quote cited above, very often a passage from Baxter's *A Treatise of Conversion* is mentioned to show how Baxter contrasted "witty" and "plain" preaching (cf. Keeble, *Richard Baxter*), 51.

33. Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 61, cf. 111–124 ("The manner of this oversight").

34. I am indebted to the research David Perry (University of Exeter, UK) has already done and am looking forward to the publishing of his study, called *Puritan Persuasion: The Rhetoric of Conversion and the Conversion of Rhetoric*. I am sure this will be very helpful for further investigations.

resonance in his voice and his whole body. The affections of Jesus Himself are worth recalling and taking into account in our homiletical courses. The Gospel writers paint their portraits of Jesus using a kaleidoscope of "affectionate" colors. His affections reflect the image of God without any deficiency or distortion.<sup>35</sup> Lessons from a "Puritan rhetoric" are meant to reflect on our only Master.

We all consider Christian preaching as a communicative form. Every communication is rhetorical because it uses some technique to affect the beliefs, actions, or emotions of an audience. The simplest verbal techniques are pitch, volume, and repetition (i.e., help, Help, HELP). In this way, we use affective language, and there are many other means to paint with words. All these kinds of things we encounter in "Puritan rhetoric."

But the most important reason for the involvement of pathos in preaching has to do with what communication itself is about. There is no communication without communion. Whoever wants to preach must have his audience in his heart. We are to open our hearts before we open our mouth. We have a passion for them in heart and soul. There is much to consider when thinking about a real "inter-esse," a being among. The well-known homiletician Rudolf Bohren mentions the wonderful German word "Sehnsucht" (there is no exact translation, but something like "deep longing," "yearning").<sup>36</sup> Without this *Sehnsucht* there never will be preaching with passion, or affectionate preaching. Our speech will be empty without this. *Sehnsucht*, as Bohren mentions in his book, describes for him especially the mystery of love as the mystery of Christ's presence wherein preacher and listeners are brought together. When our heart is involved in what we want to communicate, it is impossible to speak without *pathos*. It is because of love deeper than the ocean and higher than the sky. Preaching is the communication of love, the love of the triune God. This involves preaching of the wrath of God as well, because of His wounded love.

So pathos is a given in a certain sense. Stuart Olyott posits this question, and it may be of some help especially for European homileticians and preachers, "Why are we so afraid of emotion? As long as it is moved by truth, and *only* moved by truth, how can it be dangerous? Is, perhaps, the problem inside us? Are we scared of being accused of being 'beside ourselves' (see

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35. Just some illustration from the Gospel of Mark: in anger and deeply distressed (3:5), he had compassion (6:34), he sighed deeply and said (8:12), he was indignant, and showed his great love for children (10:14).

36. Rudolf Bohren, *Predigtlehre* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993, 1971), 484–88.

2 Corinthians 5:13)?... Have we become so hypocritical that we honor men like Daniel Rowland, but conveniently forget that he only preached ‘as if on fire’?<sup>37</sup>

But, on the other side, we have to realize that we all live in what is called *post-truth* times. Truth seems not to be based on facts, but is treated just like fiction. Truth is a matter of view or a certain perspective on a certain truth which seems to be exchangeable with any other perspective one could have. In our Twitter culture, emotions are viewed as being decisive of what is going on. Therefore, in preaching the truth, we once more have to debunk the forgery of feelings by showing the power of arguments. But in this process, we are to reckon with the problem that the captain of feeling and the captain of reason have their courses and are like ships passing in the night. So we should make connections between feeling and thinking.

Anyhow, “Puritan rhetoric” shows us that the first condition for preaching is to prepare our hearts by living attentively. Attend to Scripture deeply and immerse yourself in it. Attend to the world around us and prayerfully be open to what God is doing. “Puritan rhetoric” teaches us that the goal of our sermons is, besides teaching, to evoke affections to move heart and will. Love and reasonableness are interconnected.

The most important use from “Puritan rhetoric” in my opinion is to see once again that preaching is “sacred rhetoric.” Homiletics reduced to the latest “how-to” ideas and strategies “quickly forgets the mystery of divine revelation and the working of grace that are necessary to make sacred rhetoric truly sacred as the Word of God.”<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, how happy we might be if preaching were just a part—surely a very important part—of the liturgy as a whole. Performative, formative, affective, and imaginative words should sound around during the whole service in songs and silence, in prayer and preaching.

37. Stuart Olyott, *Preaching Pure and Simple* (Wales, UK: Bryntirion Press, 2005), 152.

38. Michael Pasquarello III, *Sacred Rhetoric: Preaching as a Theologica land Pastoral Practice of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1–13, 134–39.