

The Rhetoric
of
Saint Augustine of Hippo

De Doctrina Christiana and the Search
for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric

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SYNOPTIC OUTLINE OF SAINT AUGUSTINE'S
*DE DOCTRINA CHRISTIANA**

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PROLOGUE

- I. Response to those who object to precepts for treating the Scriptures.
 - a. Purpose Statement: Augustine reveals that "there are certain precepts for treating the Scriptures" (3).
 - b. There are three kinds of detractors.
 - i. Those who do not understand the precepts this work contains.
 - ii. Those who are unable to "clarify and explain" (3) and who judge that Augustine has labored in vain.
 - iii. Those who think they already are equipped to treat the Scriptures.
 - c. Augustine is not to blame because readers do not understand; they should ask God to give them vision to help understand obscurities in the Scriptures.
 - d. Augustine addresses "Christians who rejoice to know the Sacred Scriptures without human instruction" (4) so that he can convince them that human instruction can be worthwhile.
 - e. Those things that can be learned by men should be communicated without pride or envy (5).
 - f. It is God's intention that men should be taught by other men.
 - g. Charity is important in building "a knot of unity" (6).
 - i. "For charity itself, which holds men together in a knot of unity, would not have a means of infusing souls and

* This synoptic commentary is done for educational purposes and is based on the following work: Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*. Trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1958). Parentheses pagination refers to the general location in the Robertson edition.

- almost mixing them together if men could teach nothing to men" (6).
- ii. Importance of explanation in "human words and discourse" (6).
 - h. True counsel from men should always be attributed to God.
 - i. Our ability to discern obscurity is divinely given.
 - j. "For no one should consider anything his own, except perhaps a lie, since all truth is from Him who said, 'I am the truth'" (6).

BOOK 1—On enjoyment, use, interpretation, word as flesh, love, faith, hope, and charity.

- I. Two items are necessary in the treatment of the Scriptures.
 - a. Discovery: "a way of discovering those things which are to be understood" (7).
 - b. Teaching: "a way of teaching what we have learned" (7).
- II. Faith in future ability through God.
 - a. "... to those benevolently using that which they have received He will increase and heap up what He gives" (8).
 - b. We believe that the ideas here will be "multiplied by His inspiration" (8).
- III. All doctrine concerns signs and things.
 - a. "[T]hings are learned by signs" (8).
 - i. Strictly speaking, things are not used as signifiers (e.g., wood, stone, cattle).
 - b. However, some things can be signs of other things (e.g., Moses' wooden staff, the stone on Jacob's head, the beast that Abraham sacrificed in place of his son).
 - c. Words are signifiers.
 - d. "Thus every sign is also a thing . . . but not every thing is also a sign" (9).
- IV. Some things are to be enjoyed, and others are to be used.
 - a. To enjoy is to appreciate; to use is to interpret.
 - b. "Using" helps us and sustains us.
 - c. If we mistakenly enjoy those things that are meant to be used, we are practicing an "inferior love," and "our course will be impeded and sometimes deflected" (9).
 - d. Enjoyment is to cling to something for its own sake.

- e. To use something is to employ it in order to obtain what you love.
 - f. Illicit use, however, is both waste and abuse.
 - g. The act of interpretation is important in our relationship with the Trinity: ". . . we should use this world and not enjoy it, so that the 'invisible things' of God 'being understood by the things that are made' may be seen, that is, so that by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual" (10).
 - h. The Trinity is to be enjoyed; i.e., the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
 - i. Father = Unity.
 - ii. Son = Equality.
 - iii. Holy Ghost = Concord of unity and equality.
 - i. Words have been given power by God: "God . . . has accepted the tribute of the human voice and wished us to take joy in praising Him with our words" (11).
 - j. Men are moved by different motivations.
- V. Different motivations vary with different people and in different ways.
- a. There are appeals to the human body.
 - b. There are appeals to the mind.
 - c. "Those, however, who seek to know what God is through the understanding place Him above all things mutable, either visible and corporal or intelligible and spiritual" (11).
 - d. God is "life itself" (12).
 - e. Immutable truth is to be enjoyed, and "the mind should be cleansed so that it is able to see that light and to cling to it once it is seen" (13).
 - f. We come to God through "good endeavor and good habits" (13).
- VI. Consider the power of the Word becoming flesh.
- a. Our thoughts assume the form of words but remain thoughts in our heads.
 - b. Wisdom has a healing power that it brings to humanity.
 - i. God uses His principle of contraries—e.g., curing pride by humility.
 - ii. God uses His principle of similarities—e.g., "[I]n death He freed the dead" (15).

- c. All such principles and acts contribute to God's plan: "He has given to each gifts proper to the building of His Church so that what He showed that we should do we may do, not only without murmuring, but also with delight" (16).
 - d. The Holy Church exists as God's body and bride.
 - e. The "health" of the Church is its bond of unity and charity.
 - f. Turning to God is a way for us to leave our past sins behind.
 - g. Salvation can be considered as healing "by that faith and correction" (17).
 - h. Belief is necessary in order to conform to the truth in salvation; lack of belief leads to desperation and disunity.
- VII. Man is made in God's image and likeness.
- a. Man "excels the beasts in the dignity of a rational soul" (18).
 - b. Our existence begs a profound question: Should man enjoy himself, use himself, or both?
 - c. Man is to be used for something else (not just to be loved for his own sake).
 - d. Loving oneself means turning away from God and lapsing toward selfishness (19).
 - e. Heart, soul, and mind must be directed "into that channel into which the whole current of love flows" (19).
- VIII. It is important to love only those things that are associated with God.
- a. Four kinds of things may be loved.
 - i. That which is above us.
 - ii. That which constitutes ourselves.
 - iii. That which is equal to us.
 - iv. That which is below us.
 - b. The spirit cannot help but love itself, but the kind of self-love that aims to rule over others and receive the praise that belongs to God is rightly called "hate" (20).
 - c. Pride leads to corruption by endeavoring to dominate others.
 - d. No one hates himself or his body.
 - e. The body should be rendered subject to the spirit.
 - f. Man should be taught how to love himself profitably.
 - g. The whole law depends on loving God and loving neighbors.
 - h. The appropriateness of love is based on being able to assess intrinsic value.

- i. We should love and try to help those "who are most closely bound to [us] by place, time, or opportunity, as if by chance" (24)—because we cannot help everyone.
 - j. We naturally try to convince others to love what we love.
 - k. Angels enjoy that which we desire to enjoy.
 - l. Anyone who is near and needs our mercy is our neighbor, even our enemies whom we should love and never fear.
 - m. We may also expect this mercy from our neighbors.
 - n. "[W]e should enjoy anything only in so far as it makes us blessed, merely using everything else" (27).
- IX. We have a special relationship with God.
- a. God does not enjoy us; he uses us, but not as humans "use" (27).
 - b. "That use which God is said to make of us is made not to His utility but to ours, and in so far as He is concerned refers only to His goodness" (27–28).
 - c. "The greatest reward is that we enjoy Him and that all of us who enjoy Him may enjoy one another in Him" (28).
 - d. "When you enjoy a man in God, it is God rather than the man whom you enjoy" (28).
 - e. Our purpose is to achieve "the love of a Being which is to be enjoyed and of a being that can share that enjoyment with us" (30).
 - f. We can love the temporal only as an instrument that carries us along toward God.
- X. We can appreciate God's love for us through the Scriptures, faith, and charity.
- a. Understanding of the Scriptures builds a double love of God and of neighbors.
 - b. The goal of the Scriptures is to instill a sense of charity toward others.
 - c. Asserting a misinterpretation rashly leads to further misinterpretation and anger.
 - d. If faith fails, so will charity.
 - e. "Thus there are these three things for which all knowledge and prophecy struggle: faith, hope, and charity" (32); supported by these three, we do not even need the Scriptures except for instructing others.

- f. We love temporal things before we have them and then lose that love once they are attained because they do not satisfy the soul; we love eternal things more when they are attained.
- g. Faith and hope will fall away when we reach heaven, but charity will be multiplied.
- h. Charity is the greatest of the three.

BOOK 2—On signs, ambiguities and obscurities, and methods for (and caveats about) seeking knowledge from the Scriptures.

I. Signs.

- a. "A sign is a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses" (34).
 - i. Natural signs are those things without intention (smoke signifies fire).
 - ii. Conventional signs are those things that humans show to one another to convey an understanding.
 - iii. Augustine focuses on conventional signs here.
- b. Senses related to signs; i.e., sight, hearing, and (very rarely) to other senses.
- c. Verbal signs are the most common signs.
- d. Writing preserves signs "because vibrations in the air soon pass away and remain no longer than they sound" (36). Words are shown to the eyes.
- e. Scripture was written in one language, then translated and scattered worldwide.

II. Ambiguities and obscurities are many and varied, often deceiving those who are casual readers.

- a. Augustine sees obscurities as God's design to motivate us: "I do not doubt that this situation was provided by God to conquer pride by work and to combat disdain in our minds, to which those things which are easily discovered seem frequently to become worthless" (37).
- b. There exists a question of whether there is a difference in learning when one hears the same concept in plain words or with similitude.
- c. This similitude gives pleasure to our minds.
- d. It is important to understand "that things are perceived more readily through similitudes and that what is sought with difficulty is discovered with more pleasure" (38).

- e. Scriptures offer "open places" (38) to avoid indifference in readers.

III. Steps toward knowledge proceed from fear to wisdom.

- a. The first step is that we have to recognize and submit to God's will before we can gain knowledge.
- b. The second step is that we have to "become meek through piety so that we do not contradict Divine Scripture" (38). We have to believe that what we read in the Scriptures is "better and more true than anything which we could think of by ourselves, even when it is obscure" (39).
- c. The third step is the realization of our human predicament and fear of God's judgment; lamentation of the situation.
- d. The fourth step is one of fortitude in hungering and thirsting for justice; a turning away from the temporal and toward the eternal.
- e. The fifth step is attained after purging our minds of contamination and seeking the counsel of mercy.
- f. The sixth step involves cleansing the eye so as to see God as clearly as possible in this world (which is still "through a glass in a dark manner" [40, from 1 Cor. 13:12]); simple and clean heart; loving God and neighbor.
- g. The seventh step involves attaining a clean and simple heart that will not turn away from Truth; such a person ascends to wisdom and the enjoyment of peace and tranquility.

IV. It is important to elaborate on the third step: a canonical knowledge of the Scriptures through fear, piety, and seeking the will of God.

- a. It is necessary first to read and have some knowledge of the canonical Scriptures.
- b. Further, it is necessary to know these books even if we cannot understand them.
- c. Memorizing is one way of gaining familiarity with the Scriptures.

V. We should have a method for approaching the Scriptures and their obscurities.

- a. "Then, having become familiar with the language of the Divine Scriptures, we should turn to those obscure things which must be opened up and explained so that we may take examples from things which are manifest to illuminate those

things which are obscure, bringing principles which are certain to bear on our doubts concerning those things which are uncertain" (42-43).

- b. Obscurity is due to two kinds of signs.
 - i. Literal signs, which designate the thing.
 - ii. Figurative signs, which signify something else.
- c. It is necessary to have a knowledge of languages in order to know literal signs (e.g., Latin, Hebrew, Greek).
- d. Knowledge of other translations would help readers "avoid negligence" because obscure passages may become clear when we look at different translations (44).
- e. Our goal is being a "discerning reader" (45).
- f. Faith and a "cleansed understanding" unite us with Truth (45).
- g. Ambiguity in the original language leads some to misread the writer's intention and to produce false translations that should be emended, not interpreted.
- h. We must be careful in our choice of translators.
- i. Integrity of expression is "the preservation of the customs of others, confirmed by the authority of ancient speakers" (47). Some examples include problems with solecisms and barbarisms.
- j. We need to understand how to deal with unknown signs.
 - i. To understand an unknown word or expression in a foreign language, we must find a translator or learn the language ourselves.
 - ii. Learning and memorizing words in other languages is critical.
 - iii. We must also be able to weigh and compare various translations.
- k. Respect for past scholars is most helpful: ". . . it is not right or proper for any man, no matter how learned, to seek to emend the consensus of so many older and more learned men" (49).
- l. Figurative signs should be studied.
 - i. These signs should be studied partly with reference to knowledge of things and partly with knowledge of languages.
 - ii. Knowledge of names and places helps in clarifying.
 - iii. Knowledge of the way things are and behave is also

important because they can be used to create similitudes (comparisons that will aid understanding).

- iv. Knowledge of the symbolism of numbers is also useful.
- v. Knowledge helps to untie the "knot" of figurative language in the Scriptures (51).
 1. Examples of animals and their ways.
 2. Examples of numbers and their meanings in the Scriptures.
 3. "[M]any other numbers and patterns of numbers are placed by way of similitudes in the sacred books as secrets which are often closed to readers because of ignorance of numbers" (52).
 4. Examples of music's relationship to language also clarify the point.

VI. Questioning the sources of knowledge is essential to our understanding of the Scriptures.

- a. When we are confronted with superstitions, "We must not listen to the superstition of pagans" (53).
- b. "[E]very good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's" (54).
- c. Two doctrines of the pagans are worthy of note.
 - i. Things that are instituted by humans (some of which are superstitious and some of which are not superstitious).
 - ii. Things that are believed to be firmly established or divinely ordained.
- d. Examples of "vacuous observances" (55) include magic, augury, books of haruspicy, amulets, remedies, enchantments, secret signs, wearing of things occultic, wearing earrings.
- e. Saint Augustine's criticism of astrology illustrates the problem with sources of (pagan) wisdom.
 - i. Astrology is "pernicious superstition" (56).
 - ii. This kind of belief makes us servants of wrong ideas, "sell[s] unlearned men into a miserable servitude" (56).
 - iii. Making astrological predictions from the positions of the stars at one's birth is "a great madness" that "may be altogether refuted" (57).
 - iv. Examples of twins born under the same constellation but who are different illustrate the errors of human calculations.

- v. "[T]hose beliefs in certain signs of things instituted by human presumption are to be classed with those which result from certain pacts and contracts with demons" (58).
- vi. Illusion and deception are the rewards of this study.
- f. Diviners and omens also require our skepticism.
 - i. Diviners may be right by coincidence, but they become more and more enmeshed in error.
 - ii. Avoid making sacrifices to false idols that are not "publicly and divinely constituted for the love of God and of our neighbor" or do nothing but "debauch the hearts of the wretched through their love for temporal things" (59).
 - iii. Omens have no innate validity; "they were made to have a validity through being noticed and pointed out" (60).
 - iv. On consent, we should realize the following: "Therefore just as all of these significations move men's minds in accordance with the consent of their societies, and because this consent varies, they move them differently, nor do men agree upon them because of an innate value" (60-61).
- g. Warnings about human institutions should be taken to heart.
 - i. Some human institutions "are superfluous and extravagant, others useful and necessary" (61).
 - ii. "[S]igns are not valid among men except by common consent" (61).
 - iii. Human society could not function without many of these signs.
 - iv. These human institutions vary from nation to nation because they are human creations.
 - v. If a human institution is helpful to the "necessary conduct of life" (62), Christians should not shun it. They should shun the extravagant and the superfluous.
 - vi. We need to realize that human institutions are "imperfect reflections of natural institutions or are similar to them" (62).
 - vii. These institutions may be useful as long as they do not interfere with putting God first.
- h. The corporal senses are important but imperfect and need to be judged accordingly.

- i. Corporal senses are what we:
 - 1. believe when we hear them explained
 - 2. experience when they are demonstrated to us
 - 3. infer when we have experienced them.
 - ii. The importance of history is that it helps us to understand "the sacred books" (63). History is not a human institution; narrations of history should be written faithfully and usefully, not to show the audacity of the author but with faith as a guide (65).
 - iii. Plato was influenced by theology, Augustine argues, not the other way around.
 - iv. Descriptive narratives about the present also assist in solving "enigmas in the Scriptures" (65) if they are used in a Christian and logical way.
 - v. For example, we can study and learn about the stars in order to know about the stars, but not in order to make astrological predictions.
 - vi. We also need knowledge of the three kinds of art (productive, active, and those arts, such as medicine and agriculture, that assist the word of God) because this knowledge will help us in interpreting "figurative locutions" in the Scriptures (67).
- VII. There are institutions that pertain to reason.
- a. Disputation.
 - i. In disputation, "the love of controversy" and "ostentation in deceiving an adversary" are to be avoided (67).
 - ii. Sophisms are false conclusions of the reasoning process (67). Augustine believes "He that speaketh sophistically is hateful" (from *Ecclus.* 37:23).
 - iii. Using verbal ornamentation to "inflate" is also a sophism.
 - b. Valid processes of reasoning may have false conclusions that come from the error of the disputant.
 - c. Correct inferences may be made concerning false as well as true propositions.
 - d. "[T]he truth of valid inference was not instituted by men; rather it was observed by men and set down that they might learn or teach it"; discovery of the truth is the essence of invention (68).

- e. Someone who describes does not describe anything instituted by himself or by other men; the order of things is instituted by God.
- f. Describing is simply pointing out "an existing truth" (68).
- g. "The principle that if the consequent is false the antecedent must also be false was not instituted by men, but discovered" (69).
- h. "[T]he truth of a proposition is inherent in itself, but the truth of a consequent depends on the opinion or agreement of the disputant" (69).
- i. Knowing the rules and knowing the truth are two very different things.
- j. There is a problem with those who boast about knowing the rules as if they knew the truth.
- k. Again, discovering the order of things is invention (e.g., discovering the science of definition, division, partition).
- l. There are two kinds of falsehood.
 - i. That which is not possible.
 - ii. That which is possible but does not exist.

VIII. We need to understand the nature of eloquence.

- a. Precepts of eloquence may be true, but they may be used for good or for ill.
- b. There is the possibility that eloquence will be used "to make falsehoods persuasive" (71).
- c. Principles may be used for true or for false causes.
- d. These principles are "discovered" rather than instituted by men.
- e. These principles are to be used to express "those things which are understood" (72).
- f. Practice and experience are the best ways to learn eloquence.
- g. There is the potential for corruption: "[The precepts of rhetoric] may make men's discernment more alert, but they may also make men malign and proud so that they love to deceive with specious arguments and questions or to think themselves great because they have learned these things and therefore place themselves above good and innocent people" (72).
- h. Our goal is to "turn all . . . knowledge toward the praise and love of one God from whom . . . everything is derived" (73).

- i. False learning is exhibited by those who "seem" to be learned, but are not wise.

IX. Advice to studious youths.

- a. Choose studies carefully, considering the effects of human institutions.
- b. Repudiate and detest those that are extravagant or superfluous.
- c. Involve yourselves in studies that are "helpful to social intercourse in the necessary pursuits of life" (74).
- d. Learning history may necessitate knowledge of the pagans, but this study should be undertaken only to know the history.
- e. Remember St. Augustine's maxim: "Nothing in excess" (74).
- f. Become scholars who will interpret the scriptures with knowledge of the names, locations, animals, herbs, trees, stones, numbers, and so forth referenced.
- g. Know that knowledge of disputation is "interwoven" throughout the Scriptures.
- h. Do not fear learning about the philosophers; they have "said things which are indeed true and are well accommodated to our faith" (75).
- i. Convert the knowledge of the ancients to Christian use.
- j. Find in the philosophers not the pagan thoughts but the "liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and some most useful precepts concerning morals" (75).
- k. Even some truths about worshipping God may be found among the philosophers' writings.
- l. Take and use what is useful.
- m. Always remember, "Knowledge puffs up; but charity edifies" (76, from 1 Cor 8:1).
- n. Remove the impediments that hinder your study so that your work will be "rooted and founded in charity" (77, from Eph. 3:17-18).
- o. The whole action of the Christian is described in the cross: "to perform good deeds in Christ, to cling to Him with perseverance, to hope for celestial things, to refrain from profaning the sacraments" (77).
- p. Our end goal is to know the charity of God, which "surpasseth all knowledge" (77, from Eph 3:19).

- q. Interpret the scriptures with a “meek and humble heart” and examine the “ambiguous signs in the Scriptures” (78).

BOOK III—methods of interpreting ambiguous signs and figures as a way to discover Truth.

I. Truth is found in scriptures.

- a. “A man fearing God diligently seeks His will in the Holy Scriptures” (78).
- b. Man is made gentle.
- c. A man must be “prepared with a knowledge of languages lest he be impeded by unknown words and locutions” (78).

II. Instruction on interpreting ambiguous signs is important for the study of the scriptures.

- a. Mispunctuated or misconstrued words in scripture should be noted.
 - i. Our rule of faith is first to consult what is found in the Scriptures and the Church’s authority.
 - ii. If still ambiguous after “faith has been consulted, then it is necessary to examine the context of the preceding and following parts surrounding the ambiguous place” (79).
- b. Ambiguous constructions are:
 - i. correct according to the rule of faith
 - ii. correct according to the preceding and following passages, the same as for “ambiguous pointing” (81).
- c. Ambiguity in “doubtful sound of syllables” (82) should be studied.
 - i. Look at the passage in an earlier language; if there is disagreement about, say, a Latin word or Scripture, consult the Greek.
 - ii. Also, consult earlier languages for ambiguities that do not depend on punctuation or pronunciation (e.g., “Therefore we were comforted, brethren, in you”—question whether “brethren” should be read as a vocative or an accusative [83, from 1 Thess 3:7]).
- d. Ambiguity of figurative words.
 - i. Be careful not to take such words literally. If you do, then they are understood “carnally” (84).
 - ii. One has to refer to the things signified.

1. “[M]iserable servitude” results in taking signs for things literally (84).
 2. Examples illustrate how Jewish people took signs for things but acted as if “they were pleasing the One God of All whom they did not see” (84).
 3. “He is a slave to a sign who uses or worships a significant thing without knowing what it signifies” (86).
 4. Those who use signs and understand their “signifying force” are “spiritual and free” (87).
- e. Consider how to determine if a locution is literal or figurative.
- i. “[W]hatever appears in the divine Word that does not literally pertain to virtuous behavior or to the truth of faith you must take to be figurative” (88).
 1. Virtuous behavior pertains to love of God and one’s neighbor.
 2. Truth of faith pertains to a knowledge of God and one’s neighbor.
 - ii. Men think in error when they think that whatever the scripture says contrary to their opinion is figurative.
 1. Yet, scripture “asserts nothing except the catholic faith as it pertains to things past, future, and present” (88).
 2. These points of faith “are of value in nourishing and supporting charity and in conquering and extirpating cupidity” (88).
 - a. Charity is “the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for his own sake, and the enjoyment of one’s self and of one’s neighbor for the sake of God” (88).
 - b. “[C]upidity” is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of one’s self, one’s neighbor, or any corporal thing for the sake of something other than God” (88).
 - c. Vice is “that which uncontrolled cupidity does to corrupt the soul and its body” (88).
 - d. Crime is what vice does when it harms someone.
 - e. Utility is “what charity does to the charitable person” (89).

3. "Those things which seem almost shameful to the inexperienced, whether simply spoken or actually performed either by the person of God or by men whose sanctity is commended to us, are all figurative" (90).
4. "[W]hen the tyranny of cupidity has been overthrown, charity reigns with its most just laws of love for God for the sake of God and of one's self and of one's neighbor for the sake of God" (93).
 - a. "[W]hat is read should be subjected to diligent scrutiny until an interpretation contributing to the reign of charity is produced" (93).
 - b. If a locution "commend[s] either vice or crime or . . . condemn[s] either utility or beneficence, it is not figurative" (93).
5. "It often happens that a person who is, or thinks he is, in a higher grade of spiritual life thinks that those things which are taught for those in lower grades are figurative" (94).
6. "[C]aution must be exercised lest anyone think that those things in the Scriptures which are neither vices nor crimes among the ancients because of the condition of their times, even when such things are taken literally rather than figuratively, may be transferred to our own times and put in practice" (94–95).
 - a. Libidinous men do not think that "men of old" can use women "temperately" (96).
 - b. King David, for example, did not lament his son's death when he was killed because of his carnality and impiety.
7. "[A]lthough all or almost all of the deeds which are contained in the Old Testament are to be taken figuratively as well as literally, nevertheless the reader may take as literal those performed by people who are praised, even though they would be abhorrent to the custom of the good who follow the divine precepts after the advent of the Lord" (98).
8. Of first importance is for us to decide whether or not a passage is figurative.

- a. If figurative, it is easy to examine.
 - b. "[T]he words of which it is composed will be seen to be derived from similar things or related to such things by some association" (99).
 - c. Things can signify many different things.
 - d. Many meanings are acceptable, not dangerous, "if any of the meanings may be seen to be congruous with the truth taught in other passages of the Holy Scriptures" (102).
 - e. When examining passages "obscured by figurative words . . . begin with a passage which is not controversial, or, if it is controversial, . . . conclude with testimonies applied from places wherever they are found in the same Scriptures" (102).
9. Understanding tropes will help us to understand the scriptures.
 - a. Recognizing tropes will help in understanding.
 - b. Do not teach tropes to the ignorant, "lest we seem to be teaching the art of grammar" (103). Learn tropes elsewhere.
 - c. Irony relies on inflection; antiphrasis does not rely on inflection but uses its words, which come from the ordinary to imply the contrary.
 10. Tyconius' seven rules in understanding the divine scriptures (from Tyconius' *Book of Rules* [*Liber Regularum*]).
 - a. "Of the Lord and His Body" (106)—indicates one person, Christ and his Church.
 - b. "Of the Bipartite Body of the Lord" (106)—indicates that the body of the Lord will not actually be with him in eternity, since hypocrites will not be with him.
 - c. "Of Promises and the Law" (107)—refers to works given to us by God because of faith's merit; Tyconius inaccurately believes that faith originates in us.
 - d. "Of Species and Genus" (108)—indicates the part and the whole.

- e. "Of Times" (112)—makes discovery of hidden time intervals possible.
- f. "Recapitulation" (113)—involves picking up on previous events that have been omitted from a chronological narrative.
- g. "Of the Devil and his Body" (115)—portrays the devil as head of the impious (his body) "who will go with him to the tortures of eternal fire in the same way that Christ is the head of the Church" (116).

BOOK 4—rhetoric and the teaching of Scripture, the value of eloquence, and the *officia* of the speaker.

- I. Repeats from prologue "two things necessary to the treatment of the Scriptures" (117).
 - a. "[A] way of discovering those things which are to be understood" (117).
 - b. "[A] way of teaching what we have learned" (117).
- II. Augustine will not explain the rules of rhetoric here.
 - a. Readers should know that the rules do have utility.
 - b. However, their utility is better learned elsewhere, "if perhaps some good man has the opportunity to learn them" (118).
- III. Eloquence should be understood in terms of truth and falsehood.
 - a. Use eloquence for the good, because evil forces use it for the bad.
 - b. Learn eloquence quickly or do not learn it at all.
 - c. Learn eloquence by practicing writing, dictating, and speaking "what he has learned according to the rule of piety and faith" (119).
 - d. Rules of rhetoric/eloquence are innate, ingrained; we cannot speak and think of rules at the same time.
 - e. Men are made eloquent by reading and hearing expressions of the eloquent, not by teaching rules.
- IV. Teaching the Scriptures should be done from an understanding of good and evil.
 - a. We should "teach the good and extirpate the evil" (120).
 - b. Exposition must be composed.
 - c. Use whatever devices are necessary to move minds.

- V. Wisdom should be emphasized over eloquence
 - a. Just because something is eloquently said does not mean it is true or wise.
 - b. Memorize the scriptures and understand them.
 - c. "He shall give delight with his proofs when he cannot give delight with his own words" (122).
 - d. "[A] pernicious sweetness" is to be avoided (123).
 - e. There is a certain kind of eloquence that is fine for men of the "highest authority and clearly inspired by God" (123).
- VI. Other points regarding eloquence should be considered.
 - a. Note specific examples regarding digression about *membra, caesa*, and other devices of eloquence.
 - b. Some may think he offers Paul as "our one eloquent speaker" (128), but Augustine says that if anything of Paul's is eloquent, we should go to the epistles for the best examples.
 - i. Eloquence of the prophets may be obscured by tropes, but the more obscurity "the sweeter they become when they are explained" (129).
 - ii. Many examples from the prophets illustrate this point (129–32).
 - c. In conclusion, eloquence ornaments wisdom.
 - d. Eloquence is to be used in teaching.
 - i. One should not imitate eloquence that is cryptic, especially if the purpose is to exercise and sharpen skills.
 - ii. Speech should clarify, not confuse.
 - iii. "He who teaches should thus avoid all words which do not teach" (134).
 - iv. Use less-correct words if you cannot find correct ones, as long as you teach.
 - v. Do not ramble, for "a speaker who insists on what is already known is burdensome" (135).
 - vi. The best teaching "method is that in accordance with which he who hears, hears the truth, and understands what he hears" (135).
 - vii. If eloquence is used unpleasantly in teaching, "its fruits will come only to a few of the most studious who desire to learn what is to be taught no matter how abjectly and rudely it is presented" (135–36).

- viii. A food metaphor illustrates the point: when students receive eloquence, they “feast delightedly on this truth” (136).
- e. The eloquent man has the following traits.
 - i. As a certain eloquent man (Cicero) said, he who is eloquent teaches, delights, and moves (“To teach is a necessity, to please is a sweetness, to persuade is a victory” [136, from Cicero’s *Orator* 21:69]).
 - ii. Sometimes persuasion is not necessary to produce action.
 - iii. Sometimes eloquence is not brought into play.
- f. Sometimes eloquence is a necessary evil, but be careful.
 - i. It can become too sweet and “frothy” (139).
 - ii. It can ornament trivial things (139).
- VII. Divine inspiration is a force in understanding and expressing the truth found in the scriptures.
 - a. One should pray before speaking.
 - b. However, do not take divinity too far; teachers still need to be taught by men.
- VIII. The value of teaching and eloquence should be realized.
 - a. He who wants to teach of goodness should pray that he be heard.
 - b. If he does those things well, he can be called eloquent.
 - i. One “can speak of small things in a subdued manner”—to teach (143, from *Orator* 29:101).
 - 1. An example from Paul (146) reveals this point: most of Galatians is written in subdued style.
 - 2. An example from Cyprian, who discusses the sacrament of the chalice (153), illustrates this mode of speaking.
 - 3. Saint Ambrose speaking about the Holy Spirit (154) is worthy of note.
 - ii. One “can speak of moderate things in a temperate manner”—to please (143, from *Orator* 29:101).
 - 1. An example from Paul (148) illustrates this ability.
 - 2. Examples from Cyprian and Ambrose, regarding the praises of virginity (155), underscore the value of this sort of presentation.
 - iii. One “can speak of great things in a grand manner”—to persuade (143, from *Orator* 29:101).

- 1. That is, one can be “forceful with emotions of the spirit” (150).
- 2. Use what arms (of eloquence) you have and need, for why should one “seek them if it does not need them?” (150)
- 3. An example from Paul (150–51) reveals this point.
- 4. Examples from Cyprian and Ambrose about “women who color, or discolor, their features with paint . . . an attack on the divine work, a corruption of the truth” (157) reveal the importance of concern in the manner of speaking.
 - a. “[W]hen she seeks to please others she reveals her own prior displeasure” (158).
 - b. “If you are ugly, why do you lie in implying that you are beautiful, since you will have neither the reward of your own conscience nor that of another’s deception?” (158).
- iv. One can and should mix styles, “[f]or when one style is maintained too long it loses the listener” (158).
 - 1. Decide which style works best with the other styles.
 - 2. Decide which style should be “employed in specific places” (159).
- v. The speaker may elicit applause from the audience, but this is not necessarily because he is speaking in the grand style.
- vi. Still the “universal office of eloquence, in any of these three styles, [is] to speak in a manner leading to persuasion” (161).
- c. “The life of the speaker [or ethos] has greater weight in determining whether he is obediently heard than any grandness of eloquence” (164).
 - i. Be a good, virtuous “example of the faithful in word, in conduct, in charity, in faith, in chastity” (165, from 1 Tim 4:12).
 - ii. A teacher should not “serve the words” but let the words serve the teacher (165).
 - iii. It is permissible to take something that is eloquent and memorize it, then offer it to the people “in the person of the author” (167).

- iv. However, stealing words and giving false words (hypocritical statements) is wrong.
- v. Remember to pray before you speak.
- vi. Augustine concludes by saying, "I nevertheless give thanks to God that in these four books I have discussed with whatever slight ability I could muster, not the kind of man I am, for I have many defects, but the kind of man he ought to be who seeks to labor in sound doctrine, which is Christian doctrine, not only for himself, but also for others" (169).