

## From Cicero to Augustine: Three Styles in Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 69

It is debated whether and to what extent Augustine uses Cicero's rhetorical styles in his own preaching. In his chapter "*Populus Dei*," Brown (2000) acknowledges Augustine's use of an adapted version of Cicero's plain style, but he neglects the contributions which the middle and grand styles supply to Augustine's preaching. Based on a close reading of Augustine's *de Doctrina Christiana* IV and *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 69, this paper will demonstrate that Augustine adopts all three of Cicero's styles, adapting them to fit the context of his own speaking.

In his discussion of styles in *de Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine addresses several aspects of different styles of prose, to which he refers as *acute*, *ornate*, and *ardenter*, corresponding with Cicero's plain, middle, and grand styles. In describing these different styles, both Cicero and Augustine discuss elements of style such as subject matter of the oration, diction and rhetorical figures, purpose of the oration, and results produced in the listener. For Cicero, the level of the subject matter corresponds to the appropriate style. For Augustine, however, this is not the case, since he believes that every topic addressed by a Christian orator belongs to the category of "important matters," but Christian orators ought not to speak in the grand style all of the time (*de Doctrina Christiana* IV.104). Therefore, Augustine must create new criteria upon which to define each of the three styles, but Augustine does not clearly resolve this question in *de Doctrina Christiana*, so it remains to be pondered further. This paper will take the rhetorical theory described in Augustine's *de Doctrina Christiana* IV as outlined by Milovanović-Barham (1993), and examine Augustine's practical application of his own rhetorical theory in *En. Ps.* 69.

This paper will contain three sections, each of which will explore one of the three styles, namely *acute* (plain style), *ornate* (middle style), and *ardenter* (grand style) (cf. *de Doctrina Christiana* 4.133). Each section will present an example passage in *En. Ps.* 69 in comparison with Augustine's chosen examples in *de Doctrina Christiana* as a way to consider specific criteria for the style. Second, each section will examine how particular features effectively accomplish the speaker's purpose of teaching, delighting, and persuading, respectively.

In the first section, I will offer a detailed analysis of an excerpt from *En. Ps.* 69.3, in which Augustine teaches his congregation the meaning of an obscure phrase from Psalm 69, namely "*quaerunt animam*" "to seek a soul." Augustine's explanation contains demonstrative words, articulated purposes and reasons, words repeated for clarity, visual imagery, and scriptural examples. Each of these features is a tool that can be used to communicate in a concise and effective way (*acute*), which marks the passage as corresponding with Cicero's plain style.

In the second section, I will focus on the opening lines of Augustine's sermon, which belong to the middle style, because of features which delight the listener, such as parallel structures with contrasting ideas, for example, the comparison between death and life, but are not strong enough to move him to action. Strikingly, in *de Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine includes similar parallel structures with contrasting ideas as a feature of his sample middle style passage.

In the third section, I will discuss features of the grand style, whose defining characteristic is the passion of the orator (*ardenter* (IV.133), *vehementia* (§V.158)).

In conclusion, I will explore the extent to which identifying clusters of stylistic features is a viable method for determining the style to which a particular excerpt belongs, and whether there are other possible methods for systematic identification of styles. My conclusion will be that Augustine indeed uses three different levels of style, based on the pattern established by

Cicero, and this will elucidate the difficulty in drawing a distinction between the different styles as articulated by Müller (2012). This specific consideration of Augustine's three styles in *En. Ps.* 69 will reveal the extent to which Augustine depends upon classical rhetoric, as well as his own rhetorical innovations, in the very act of his preaching. In this way, Green's (1999) claim that Augustine creates a "discriminating blend of classical and Christian" (p. xix) rhetorical technique will be further reinforced.

### Bibliography

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